

## Im Fokus

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### **China's Defence White Papers – A Different Perspective on the “Peaceful Rise”**

### **Chinas Verteidigungsweißbücher – eine andere Perspektive auf den “friedlichen Aufstieg”**

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#### **Abstract**

China's defence doctrine, which is declared in its white papers on national defence, indicates the PRC's strategic planning and its progress in capacity building. While China's foreign-policy initiatives and engagement in international relations are perceived as being increasingly constructive, Beijing's defence papers offer a different view – one of a considerably assertive China. The government of the People's Republic demands capability building in order to be able to win wars and is calling on the PLA not only to develop its defensive capacity, but also its readiness to go on the offensive. China will have to explain this strong military language and build-up of forces and equipment to the international community and especially to its neighbours.

*Keywords: China, military doctrine, government white paper, defence policy, PLA, UN Security Council, Taiwan, China-US relations*

#### **Peaceful Politics – Aggressive Militarism?**

On the stage of international relations, the People's Republic of China is successfully trying to convince the world that it has embarked upon a peaceful path of development (a “peaceful rise”, it says) and has no aggressive intentions as regards offensive power politics. It is trying to achieve this by becoming a successful international mediator in political and security crises (Korea), and on the rhetorical side by

- emphasising the “Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence”,
- contributing peacefully to regional security building,
- tirelessly promising win-win situations to the neighbouring nations,
- condemning (American) hegemonism and demanding multilateralism.

The question is how China's new international role and peaceful road to

development is expressed in military terms. Does China's defence rhetoric suggest peaceful development or rather aggressive power politics? This short analysis suggests that China's peaceful rise is not fully reflected in its defence documents – quite the contrary, in fact. China is not only on a road of enforced military modernisation, but has also been demanding capacity building to win wars, especially since the 2004 white paper on defence was published.

Furthermore, China faces competition from other major Asian nations like Japan and India regarding resource imports. The Middle East exports the majority of oil products to Asia, and there is a race for concessions in commodities in other parts of the world as well, especially in the southern hemisphere. Domestic challenges and social imbalance will force the Chinese government to develop new markets and energy resources abroad (IISS 2006a:269). In Asia there is not only an absence of an established security mechanism, but also no comprehensive energy security system like the tools the International Energy Agency established for its members. These two shortcomings combined with a new assertive Chinese military doctrine are a threat to regional stability and international peace.

This paper argues that there is another side of China's rise that is often overlooked – the military dimension. While China's foreign-policy behaviour on an international scale is largely perceived as co-operative, the PLA's modernisation and strategic outline suggests a rather forward- and outward-orientated military doctrine. Extracts from China's recent defence white papers will be used to explain the potential threat through capacity building – especially against Taiwan.

### **The Evolution of Defence White Papers: Just a Snarling of Teeth?**

The 1998 white paper stressed peace and development and expressed opposition to hegemonism. A system of multipolarity is demanded as being more beneficial, and US military alliances and interventions are described as factors of instability. In 1999, China's New Security Concept demanded a new international political and economic order, clearly challenging Western global control. The 2000 white paper mainly expressed the PRC's opposition to neo-interventionism. The 2001 white paper was published in the shadow of 9/11 and focused on regional security, terrorism and trade. China became a member of the WTO and clearly had to try to adapt quickly to international standards. In 2002 a new white paper described the government's concern about the effects of economic globalisation (or rather about China's role in it) and demanded multi-polarisation. Defence interests



clearly and inevitably moved away from border defence: active, forward-oriented defence and the capacity to fight regional wars was what was called for. In 2004 the Chinese government described its successful confidence-building measures and claimed it had been conducting "constructive great power diplomacy" (State Council Information Office 2004) since 2001. Not that China has only perceived itself as a great power since 2001; it is the truly global scale of diplomacy which Beijing is referring to. Growing economic imbalance, however, is of real concern, and this leads to the call for a democratic international order, especially in the Third World. Meanwhile, China has indeed developed an order of its own as regards the developing world, and it is even issuing credit and debt relief to questionable regimes without taking into account frameworks set by the international community or the World Bank.

The 2002 and 2004 papers showed a gradual tightening of the military power projection in a Taiwan scenario. Some experts argue that there had always been political campaigns and slogans in China; many vanished again and nobody cared anyway. To be precise, this is true to some extent, but the only policy approaches that were completely abolished were the inevitability of the Third World War and the inevitability of the World Revolution. Otherwise, slogans were developed, issued differently, altered or not mentioned again, but not necessarily officially buried.

Now what does that mean for defence white papers? It is largely accepted that they can be regarded as official statements about a country's security environment and military doctrine. Not all of them are academic when it comes to numbers, but the trend is what counts, as is the picture this government is putting itself and its neighbours in. How many missiles are being stationed opposite the coast of Taiwan is certainly an issue. But a more important matter is the fact that not only the People's Liberation Army, but the Chinese people will rise to prevent Taiwan from breaking away from the PRC altogether. The average Chinese will confirm that the people will defend Taiwan. This situation shows that the training, the political education concerning Taiwan, the one-China principle, and concepts of national unity and territorial sovereignty all work. They also work when it comes to creating hostile or biased feelings concerning Japan.

"The situation in the Taiwan Strait is grim" (State Council Information Office 2004). This statement from China's 2004 defence white paper indicates a potentially confrontational perception of the security environment. Such descriptions are an expression of a country's strategic culture and display how

fragile and potentially ill-perceived security issues in East Asia can be. If a situation is “grim”, all the parties concerned have a right to flex their military muscle. Hence the call to build up the capacity to win local wars. The notion of winning is a new one in the 2004 paper; the 2002 white paper merely demanded the capacity to be able to fight wars (State Council Information Office 2002). As it has been set in a local context, this strongly hints at Taiwan, particularly since China has been driving its military modernisation ahead for more than two years now to cope with a potential confrontation in a Taiwan scenario – not only against Taiwanese troops, but also against the American military.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, many European countries have abandoned ideas of “winning wars” in favour of the objectives of conflict prevention and security building (The European Union 2003:11). Not so China. The capacity demanded to fight wars in 2002 was not only followed by win[ning] (local) wars in 2004, but went even further in 2006, demanding capacities to win modern, integrated large-scale wars by 2050.

The government white paper on China’s national defence in 2004 is one of a series of official publications informing readers about China’s security interests and the need for military modernisation. It seems that the language and the defence rhetoric have been building up a rather assertive stand in recent years. This paper’s intention is to describe the defence rhetoric, doctrine and military culture of the People’s Republic of China vis-à-vis its neighbouring countries and the rest of the world. Parts of the white paper display a disturbing absence of regional security-building measures and create a threat perception that might at best anger neighbouring countries and at worst challenge stability and development in the region. Defence white papers as well as many other Chinese documents on international and security policy issues certainly contain a thorough commitment to peaceful development and peaceful coexistence, but the harsh parts must not be overlooked. To ease tensions, China issued other government white papers, like the 2005 Road for Peaceful Development (State Council Information Office 2005). Recently, at the end of December 2006, the Information Office of the State Council published the 2006 white paper on national defence (State Council Information Office 2006). It will remain to be seen if and how new government white papers continue to use forceful language concerning security issues and defence policy, or whether China is able to present itself as a trustworthy neighbour and is, as parts of the press grandly put it, indeed embarking on a new and comprehensive path as a responsible stakeholder in the



international community.

The newly issued December 2006 white paper on Chinese defence (State Council Information Office 2006), the fifth one to appear since 1998, seems to be more moderate than its predecessors in some parts. World peace and security offer more opportunities than challenges, it says. But China simply ignores the US as a global power and describes the world as moving toward multi-polarity and a place where the major international forces compete with and hold each other in check. One reason for this development is seen in the growing strength of regional groupings and the developing world. Another reason for a more peaceful world is that world wars or all-out confrontation between major countries are avoidable for the foreseeable future. Only when it comes to the United States does the government abandon its soft speaking: "The United States is accelerating its realignment of military deployment to enhance its military capability in the Asia-Pacific region. The United States and Japan are strengthening their military alliance in pursuit of operational integration" (*ibid.*). But it is also interesting that the Chinese government addresses the North Korean nuclear and missile tests and thus describes the situation on the Korean Peninsula and in Northeast Asia as "more complex and challenging" (*ibid.*).

The chapter on international security co-operation is disturbing due to its shortness and contents. Apart from a brief description about China's commitment to UN missions, peacekeeping operations and disaster-relief programmes, one learns how important regional security co-operation is, namely through the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), how China is committed to International Arms Control and Non-Proliferation, and the role of military exchanges. We are told that China has made "sound preparations for implementing the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT)" (*ibid.*), that it "honours [...] its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention" and "obligations under the amended Landmine Protocol", and that it is "firmly opposed to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery". What's more, it claims to "follow strict procedures in approving exports to ensure effective export control" (*ibid.*). Concerning the Chemical Weapons Convention, China has a strong national interest in recovering chemical weapons abandoned by Japan on Chinese territory during the Second World War.

According to another chapter on international security co-operation concerning military exchange, China has established military ties with over 150 countries.

PLA delegations pay visits to half the nations of the world, and senior defence and security policy officials from more than 90 countries have visited China. China and Russia have a long tradition of military exchanges and strategic consultations. Military ties to the US and to European states are undergoing development; at present, there are consultations and contacts. But it would be exaggerated to describe the exchange with the US as institutionalized defence consultations and the ties to European countries as “high-level military contacts and defence consultations” (ibid.). It is interesting to note, however, that only consultations with Europe are described as being high-level. China’s interests in the southern hemisphere and in the developing world obviously include military dimensions, and it has held workshops for senior officers from Latin American and Middle Eastern countries since 2005. Since 2002, China has held 16 joint military exercises with 11 countries, one of the larger ones being the joint exercise with Russia in 2005. The PLA also held exercises with Pakistan, India and Thailand, although the focus was on rescue and communication. In September and November 2006, the Chinese Navy and the US Navy conducted joint maritime search and rescue exercises in the offshore waters of San Diego and in the South China Sea. In December 2006, China and Pakistan held the Friendship 2006 joint counterterrorism military exercise. In the past two years, the PLA has sent observers to military exercises held by Turkey, Thailand, Pakistan, India, the US and Australia. In September 2005, the PLA invited 41 military observers and military attachés from 24 countries to attend the North Sword 2005 exercise. In military training, over 500 military personnel have been dispatched to study in more than 20 countries, and over 2,000 military personnel from more than 140 countries have come to China to study in military academies. This is certainly a constructive approach, adding to transparency in strategic thinking and mutual understanding of defence planning.

One of the ten pillars usually mentioned in a Chinese defence white paper is the rather technical part known as the revolution in military affairs with Chinese characteristics. As there are both high-tech and rather underdeveloped units, this basically means that the modernisation of the information-technology and the mechanical dimensions is required to happen at the same time. “In its modernization drive, the People’s Liberation Army takes informationalization as its orientation and strategic focus”. “The ability to provide operational information support has been greatly enhanced while more IT elements have been incorporated into main battle weapon systems” (ibid.). In a more political



sphere, the PLA is asked among other things to enhance centralised leadership and overall planning, and to develop new military and operational theories. The 2006 white paper comes up with a new three-step development strategy in modernisation: “The first step is to lay a solid foundation by 2010, the second is to make major progress around 2020, and the third is to basically reach the strategic goal of building informationized armed forces and being capable of winning informationized wars by the mid-21st century” (ibid.). Here we find one of the most striking and important pieces of the whole document: China’s declared will to be able to not only fight, but win modern, integrated wars by 2050. This is a clear step forward from the 2002 paper (“fight regional wars”) and the 2004 paper (“win local wars”); China is sending out strong signals concerning its future military power. This might sound disturbing (and certainly is), but one has to keep in mind that most NATO forces, and above all the US forces, are already well able to fight modern, integrated and informationised wars. American forces have not just been proving this capability since the Kuwait war of 1990/91 either.

### **China’s International Role**

China is one of the world’s main economic engines; it possesses a considerable amount of the world’s economic power and political leverage in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond. The People’s Republic, an isolated third-world state up to the 1970s, has entered the international arena and managed to play a major role both in the political and economic development of this planet in only three decades. Around China, there has certainly been a remarkable improvement in the security setting, institution building and economic co-operation. The challenge of globalisation and the war against terrorism require comprehensive approaches, which is why existing organisations and institutions in Asia are experiencing new vigour and new initiatives have finally kicked off. Admittedly, Asia does not have a security alliance comparable to institutions like NATO. But there are organisations like the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) that now far exceed one of the original motives, viz. designing influence in Central Asia. The Six-Party Talks are trying to establish a secure situation in and around the Korean Peninsula. China’s presence in security issues as well as in the economic world has become more international. China is now part of multilateral efforts such as the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), ASEAN plus 3 and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). China hosted ARF seminars (even if they

were only on logistics and tropical diseases, as was the case in 2004) and it also hosted the 2004 ARF Security Policy Conference. In the context of ASEAN, the Chinese government signed the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea and the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation. Unfortunately, apart from regular attempts, the world has not seen much practical co-operation in the South China Sea yet. There are governmental initiatives like Beijing's Boao Forum and more academic meetings like the Shangri-La Dialogue. Asia even experiences multinational training events like the 2006 Exercise Khan Quest in Mongolia (part of the U.S. Global Peace Operations Initiative).

In short, there are ample meetings and fora. But there is no institutionalised security system, and defence rhetoric in many Asian countries is troublesome. Furthermore, major trouble is brewing inside Asia, namely the North Korea problem right on China's and Japan's doorstep. Dealing with Pyongyang will require even more co-operation and joint approaches. Apart from North Korea and occasional protests against Taiwan's potential move to independence, however, the surface of the water still looks smooth. If one were to dig a little deeper, though, one might well find a wide array of defence policies and military rhetoric under the flag of China's national interest, an array that is either threatening to China's neighbours or can only be regarded as a source of grave concern.

Beijing initiated the China-Arab States Cooperation in 2004 and established the China-Africa Summit in 2002. China is participating in security dialogues with Australia, France, Germany, the United Kingdom, the United States, Thailand, Russia, North and South Korea, Mongolia, India, Pakistan and South Africa. The People's Republic entertains strategic partnerships with countries and multinational bodies around the world, among others with ASEAN (2003), Egypt (1999), the EU, the UK, Japan and South Korea (1998), the USA, France, Canada, Mexico (1997), India and Pakistan (1996) and Russia and Brazil (1993). The substance of these strategic partnerships is highly contentious. In reality, despite demanding multipolarity, these partnerships and relations actually put Beijing in a position to create a network of bilateral relations and set its own agenda. However, China, a permanent member of the UN Security Council, is increasingly contributing to UN peacekeeping missions and counterterrorism dialogues and has almost silently become one of the larger contributors to United Nations missions. Since 1990 the People's Republic has dispatched almost 5,000 troops, 960 observers and 890 police personnel to UN peacekeeping missions (State Council Information Office 2006). At present, China has 1,490



military peacekeeping personnel serving in nine UN mission areas and the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations. According to official Chinese figures, there are 92 military observers / staff officers, 175 engineering troops and 43 medical personnel in Congo; 275 engineering troops, 240 transport troops and 43 medical personnel in Liberia; 275 engineering troops, 100 transport troops and 60 medical personnel in Sudan; and 182 engineering troops are stationed in Lebanon. China also has a total of 180 peacekeeping police officers in Liberia, Kosovo, Haiti and Sudan (*ibid.*). The People's Republic has established or deepened relations with existing centres of strategic gravity as well as with emerging regions (IISS 2006a:267). There is nothing new in China building on the whole range of relations: diplomacy, trade, energy, military, etc.; this has always been stated as a foundation of its foreign policy. What's new is the considerable geographic expansion of relations to regions outside China's traditional spheres of interest, namely Latin America and Africa. The at least temporary improvement in relations with Asian neighbours, especially India and Japan, is also a new development. As the extent of diplomatic and economic activity grows, China's importance to major strategic challenges has become undeniable. In the field of security policy, however, not only China's emergence is worrying the region, but also other factors. One of these is the new US strategic alliance with India – a state that is not a member of any international nuclear control bodies. The other troublesome factor in regional security is the increase in Taliban fighting in Afghanistan. The international peace mission in this troubled central Asian state does not seem likely to come to a successful end soon. The situation in the region is troublesome for China as it is close to all of Asia's potential conflicts and current crises, viz. those in Afghanistan, North Korea, Taiwan, Kashmir and the other Asian giant, India. The People's Republic would be heavily affected by a disruption of trade, especially along its tanker routes. Blockades by foreign powers and/or domestic political explosions in the Middle East would certainly be followed by cuts in oil production and consequently in crude carrier traffic (IISS 2006a:269).

China's defence documents contain a regular commitment to peaceful co-existence and go to great lengths to convince the nation's neighbours and other parts of the world that the People's Republic is on a path of strictly peaceful development. The new defence paper does not hold any surprises in this respect. The introduction to the chapter on international security co-operation reads as follows:

China pursues a new security concept featuring mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality and coordination, and adheres to the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence. It works to promote good-neighbourliness, mutual benefit and win-win, and endeavours to advance international security cooperation and strengthen military relations with other countries (State Council Information Office 2006).

Its bid to strengthen military relations on an international scale and not only in the region is rather a recent move. The question remaining for partners in China's military relations is how far China might want to dominate this exchange.

The white papers give us an idea about China's strategic thinking, its national interests and its perception of regional and international security. The Chinese government has often been accused of not releasing enough information about its military expenditure and power projection capabilities. But the new 2006 white paper clearly admits that the annual increase in defence expenditure since 1990 has been around 15% and therefore more than the annual economic growth. Certainly, many topics are useful for downsizing China's military spending: the rising consumer price index, China's moderate percentages of defence expenditure in GDP, and the sky-high military expenditure by the United States, etc. But the view that China is completely vague and opaque concerning its defence budgets is no longer justified. Also, the experienced analyst should be able to piece together a picture from various sources of information. What I consider even more important than exact figures are trends in China's military planning and defence doctrine. Without a doubt, a trend towards ever-increasing military budgets and military capabilities is visible and has been confirmed by Chinese calls for military modernisation for a couple of years now. Still, such a trend is worth little without a comparison. Compared to other Asian nations, China is in possession of a forceful and potentially threatening army. Senior American military experts may well be much less impressed by China's military force, however.

### **Examples of Assertiveness – Case 1: Winning a War over Taiwan?**

There is a core field of China's national interests, Taiwan, where we find various levels of forceful language in military rhetoric. The 2002 white paper demanded the capability "to fight regional wars", meaning being able to survive against US forces for a certain time. The 2004 white paper stepped up the rhetoric and



demand capabilities “to win a local war” – clearly hinting at a Taiwan scenario and most possibly containing the revolting demand to win such a constellation against the United States. Since local means domestic in China, this indicates that Beijing might choose not to accept North American dominance and control over the Taiwan Strait any longer:

The separatist activities of the ‘Taiwan independence’ forces have increasingly become the biggest immediate threat to China’s sovereignty and territorial integrity as well as peace and stability on both sides of the Taiwan Straits and the Asia-Pacific region as a whole. The United States has on many occasions reaffirmed adherence to the ‘one China policy’. However, Washington is increasing arms sales to Taiwan, thus sending a wrong signal to the Taiwan authorities. The US action does not serve a stable situation across the Taiwan Strait (State Council Information Office 2002).

In Beijing’s point of view, Taiwan is not an international issue, but purely a domestic matter. However, Taiwan remains troublesome to many outside China. President Chen’s administration in Taipei never went so far as to put election campaign calls for independence into action, but the new government in Taipei also hardly had anything to offer to keep relations with Beijing from going further downhill.

The Anti-Secession Law passed in March 2005 caused a lot of anxiety, but it also offers a constructive approach. It says that the Chinese government will employ non-peaceful means and other measures against the Island if Taiwan declares independence or if all peaceful means of reunification are exhausted. But once the country has been reunified peacefully, Taiwan may practise systems different from those on the mainland and enjoy a high degree of autonomy. In the new 2006 white paper the language used concerning Taiwan appears less hostile compared to earlier documents. “The struggle to oppose and contain the separatist forces promoting Taiwan’s independence and their activities remains a hard one” (State Council Information Office 2006) and the Taiwanese authorities aiming at creating independence pose “a grave threat to China’s sovereignty and territorial integrity” (ibid.) But there are no more demands being made to crush Taiwanese activities. The United States is no longer accused of destabilising the whole region, but is called to adhere to the one-China policy and “honour” the three joint communiqués between China and the United States.

## Case 2: China and the USA – Overcoming the Gap in Military Technology

Another threat Beijing perceives is the gap in military technology (through the American Revolution in Military Affairs) and the growing military challenges against China, namely those caused by the US and Japan. China's relations to Washington and vice versa have not experienced any improvement – in fact, the contrary is true. China's willingness to join the international war against terror and the international shoulder-rubbing that took place in 2001/02 seem to have been forgotten. The U.S. Quadrennial Defense Review for 2006 states that China's growing military power “puts regional military balances at risk” and has “the greatest military potential to compete militarily with the US, and to field disruptive military technologies that, in time, could offset traditional US military advantages” (United States Department of Defense 2006:29). Clearly, this is a rather confrontational approach, too. There is a new international dimension to the Taiwan Strait situation and that is the state of power of the United States, Taiwan's major source of external protection. The United States is without doubt the only global superpower and possesses the most powerful armed forces in the world. But the war in Iraq and the war against terrorism – with its questionable methods and Washington's disregard for international accords concerning environmental protection or child labour – have created doubt regarding the ability and moral capability of the United States to defend international peace and human values and properly address international problems (IISS 2006a:21). In short, a number of key questions exist concerning the existing international order and the United States' leading role, the power that settles and guarantees this order. The United States is losing its internationally accepted legitimisation to be on the right path to lead the world at a time when new centres of power are developing, especially in Asia, where China's unprecedented rise and the rise of other Asian nations are turning the region into a new focal point. China's trade with Asia and intra-Asian trade now exceed the trade level with other parts of the world. In 2006, China's trade with other Asian states surpassed the level of trade it conducted with the United States.

As China's previous white papers are often believed to have concentrated on the regional dimension rather than the global one, some observers believe that the 2006 white paper on defence has a special focus on the United States. In reality, though, the US has always been a target of Chinese defence white



papers. Other analysts perceive the 2006 as being open-minded and constructive, but it is simply not the case that parts of the present document are any less belligerent than its predecessors. Announcing a large-scale military build-up to fight modern integrated wars is hardly what one understands as constructive for international peace. China is certainly trying to convince the world of its peaceful intentions. Yet apart from the 2002 white paper, which partly took into account the September 2001 terrorist attacks and the subsequent international understanding, all of the documents on defence and national security were directed against hegemonism and unilateralism – clearly addressing the one hegemon, the one remaining superpower, viz. the United States. Without naming the American government, the United States is more or less openly accused of threatening or undermining international and regional security. In Beijing's eyes, US forces in the region, the new and strengthened US-Japan military alliance (and the missile and nuclear weapon tests), are responsible for an increasingly complex and unsettling security situation.

### **Case 3: Military Modernisation**

The following figures show that there are over seven million active troops in Asia – a region without established security mechanisms. Besides general military modernisation, we have witnessed a naval build-up in particular. There are more than 200 tactical submarines and a major number of principal surface ships, including more than 150 frigates sailing in Asian waters. These are only official figures, and we also lack a comprehensive picture of North Korea's capacity. Air-force equipment and land warfare using artillery have not been taken into account either.

With military modernisation, naval expansion and rising defence expenditure, it is becoming even more necessary for Asian governments to change their strategic culture and rework their defence rhetoric. Every nation has a right to follow national interests in security and defence matters. However, an increasingly globalised world, international terrorism, organised crime, and disaster relief will pose new challenges to Asian governments. All of the countries involved will have to invest in and contribute to multinational responses. National pride, historical problems and traditional rivalries have burdened relations in Asia long enough. It is high time for this dynamic part of the world to impress neighbours and the international community not only with economic and military growth rates, but with a more constructive strategic culture and defence rhetoric.

Table 1 *Armed forces compared – military modernisation under way*

	Armed Forces (Active)	ICBM	SSBN	Sub.	Destroyers	Frigates	Official Defence Budget (US\$ bn.)
China	2,255,000	46	1	58	27	44	34.9
Indonesia	302,000			2		12	2.5
Japan	260,250			18	45	9	40.7
N. Korea	1,106,000			88		9	1.9
S. Korea	687,700			20	6	9	23.5
Malaysia	110,000					4	3.1
Taiwan	290,000			4	9	22	7.9
Thailand	306,600					12	1.5
Vietnam	455,000			2		6	3.2
	no mil. alliance						
India	1,325,000			16	8	17	23.5
Pakistan	619,000			7		7	(2005) 3.74
Asia total	over 7 mill.			~ 215		~ 150	
USA	1,546,370	~ 500	14	72	47 + 11 C	30	~ 500

Source: IISS (2006b): 28, 195, 314, 322, 346, 352, 354, 357, 359, 362, 373, 375, 377.

At present, the United States' 7<sup>th</sup> Fleet, which includes approximately 50 major surface vessels, 250 planes and more than 20,000 personnel, guarantees peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific area. It achieves this by conducting over 100 military exercises per year and by means of its comprehensive Theatre Security Cooperation Program (United States Navy 2007). Considering the absence of regional security mechanisms combined with alluring oil import competition between Asia's major economies and China's partly forceful military rhetoric, the peace and quiet could well be interrupted. The United States might well demand a stronger Asian contribution in the near future and seek to balance the widespread free-riding (including China's) in the region when it comes to securing stability. It is without doubt that the United States Armed Forces' presence kept Asian hot spots under control and that trade is flowing through



international sea lines of communication in an unimpeded fashion. Not only will the People's Republic of China have to explain to its neighbours and especially to the United States why it is seeking the capability to win modern, large and integrated wars by 2050 and why it perceives the need to build up an air force that is able to conduct not only defensive, but offensive operations. China's international political interaction might mostly be constructive and beneficial to world development – its assertive defence doctrine shows a different and potentially dangerous picture. The demand to be able to win modern wars, to outbalance American influence (in Asia) and a large-scale military modernisation drive are hardly proof of its constructive and confidence-building intentions.

## Conclusion

To sum up the military rhetoric in China's defence white papers, the core focus is on upholding national security and unity and on ensuring the interests of national development. The PLA will not only defend its borders, but also its territorial sea and air space and take "precautions against and crack down on terrorism, separatism and extremism in all forms" (State Council Information Office 2006). Taiwan's independence is certainly to be opposed and contained. It is interesting to note the new stage in the PLA's mission to provide "an important source of strength for consolidating the ruling position of the Communist Party of China (CPC)" (ibid.).

The future task of China's military forces is not only to counter various security threats, but to deter and win wars under complex circumstances. An explanation of what is meant by complex circumstances is not provided, but the demand to win wars is certainly a new quality in China's defence rhetoric and a potential threat to regional and international peace. The PRC's intention to win not only local but modern, large-scale wars in the future should be a disturbing warning to the Pacific Rim. It is also a clear signal that China is prepared to actively and even aggressively defend its strategic interests concerning national unity, economic growth and its increased international interests. It is time for the international community to seek some straight answers from the PRC government.

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