



Wide Comprehensive Report: The Military Power of China

The People's Liberation Army (PLA) of China has evolved from a large, historically peasant-based infantry force into a highly advanced, technologically sophisticated joint military superpower. Under the direction of President Xi Jinping, the PLA is undergoing an institutional transformation designed to challenge Western military dominance, establish regional hegemony in the Indo-Pacific, and achieve global power projection by the mid-21st century. [1, 2]

1. Grand Strategy and Modernization Timelines

The national military strategy of China is officially termed "Active Defense," which prescribes ways to prevail over a militarily superior adversary by utilizing offensive operational and tactical maneuvers within a defensive strategic framework. [1]

[STRATEGIC MODERNIZATION ROADMAP]

2027 (PLA Centennial)	→	2035 (Core Completion)	→	2049 (Centenary of PRC)
Complete Intelligentization "World-Class"		"Basically Complete"		Achieve True
& Taiwan Force Readiness		Military Modernization		Global Superpower Status

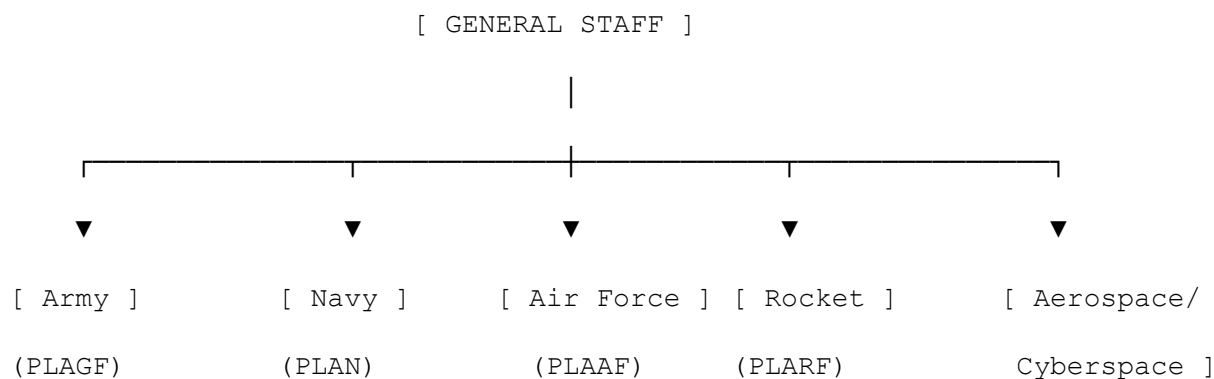
- The Three-Step Modernization Strategy: Xi Jinping formalized strict developmental timelines for the PLA:
 1. 2027 (The PLA Centennial): Complete the initial push for "intelligentization" (the integration of artificial intelligence and network-centric warfare) and establish credible military readiness to potentially seize Taiwan by force if ordered.
 2. 2035: "Basically complete" the wholesale technological and structural modernization of national defense.
 3. 2049 (The Centennial of the PRC): Transform the PLA into a "world-class" military capable of fighting and winning global wars. [[1](#) [2](#) [3](#)]
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 - The 15th Five-Year Plan Framework: Spanning 2026 to 2030, the updated state economic and military plan focuses heavily on the AI-Plus Initiative and Military-Civil Fusion (MCF). MCF mandates that advanced commercial research in quantum computing, automation, and aerospace must be directly shared with the state defense apparatus. [[1](#)]
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2. Resource Allocation and Defense Budget Dynamics

The official Chinese national defense budget stands at 1.91 trillion yuan (~\$277 billion USD), representing a nominal 7% increase from the previous year. [[1](#)]

While Beijing continuously emphasizes that its official defense spending consistently tracks below 1.5% of its total GDP—compared to the United States which averages 3.5% to 4%—international intelligence organizations like the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) and the U.S. Pentagon estimate that China's actual military expenditures are 32% to 63% higher than reported. This discrepancy stems from hidden allocations under civil space exploration, state-run paramilitary research, and local government infrastructure initiatives. [[1](#) [2](#)]

3. Comprehensive Service Branch Breakdown



People’s Liberation Army Navy (PLAN)

- The World's Largest Fleet: By total ship count, the PLAN possesses the world's largest naval force, functioning as a true blue-water navy. [\[1\]](#)
- Aircraft Carrier Evolution: The fleet is anchored by three operational aircraft carriers: the *Liaoning*, the *Shandong*, and the advanced *Fujian* (Type 003), which features electromagnetic catapult systems (EMALS) to launch heavy multirole fighters.
- A2/AD Submarine Shield: Rapid production of Type 055 guided-missile destroyers and advanced nuclear-powered attack submarines forms the backbone of China's Anti-Access/Area Denial (A2/AD) strategy, aimed at preventing foreign navies from entering the First Island Chain. [\[1\]](#) [\[2\]](#)

People’s Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF)

- System-of-Systems Dogfights: The PLAAF has successfully transitioned into a modern 4.5 and 5th-generation force. Tactical air war games focus heavily on "System-of-Systems" warfare. [\[1\]](#)
- Key Platforms: The fleet relies on mass production of the J-20 stealth fighter, the heavyweight J-16 multirole jet, and Y-20 strategic transport aircraft capable of rapid transcontinental power deployment and mid-air refueling operations. [\[1\]](#) [\[2\]](#)

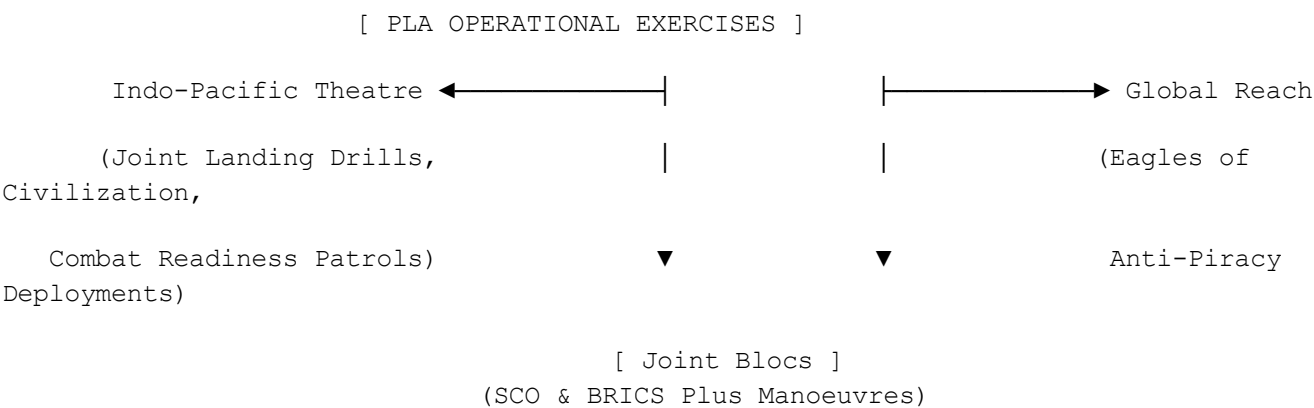
People’s Liberation Army Rocket Force (PLARF)

- Nuclear Triad Expansion: The PLARF controls China's land-based conventional and nuclear missile arsenals. Beijing is expanding its nuclear deterrence posture, moving away from a historically "minimal" deterrent toward a robust arsenal estimated to exceed 600 operational nuclear warheads.
- Carrier Killers: The Rocket Force deploys specialized DF-21D and DF-26 intermediate-range ballistic missiles, frequently dubbed "carrier killers," engineered to track and destroy moving naval carrier strike groups from thousands of kilometers away. [1]

Strategic Support and Specialized Forces

- Orbital and Electronic Superiority: Reorganized space, cyber, and electronic warfare commands focus heavily on domain dominance. Operations utilize low-earth-orbit (LEO) military constellations, quantum encryption communications, and high-intensity electromagnetic warfare systems designed to blind enemy satellite and command networks during the opening stages of a conflict. [1]

4. Operational Readiness, Exercises, and Global Footprint



Structural Weaknesses & The Command Dilemma

Despite rapid equipment procurement, the PLA faces a distinct lack of modern combat experience, having last fought a major war in 1979. State planners are actively researching a shift away from traditionally rigid, highly centralized Soviet-style top-down command networks toward "Mission Command with Chinese Characteristics"—a doctrine attempting to delegate flexible decision-making authority to subordinate field officers during high-speed precision conflicts. [[1](#), [2](#)]

Regional Coercion and Taiwan Preparedness

The PLA's Eastern and Southern Theater Commands are structured primarily for a cross-strait conflict. Military exercises are increasingly geared toward Joint Island-Landing Operations, featuring advanced amphibious assault ships, massive drone swarms, and regular combat readiness patrols around Taiwan and contested features in the South China Sea. [[1](#), [2](#), [3](#)]

Expanding Global Military Footprint

China's global projection is rapidly expanding through complex multilateral maneuvers:

- Africa and the Middle East: Exercises like "Eagles of Civilization" with Egypt feature long-range strategic deployments of J-16 fighters and YY-20A aerial tankers, signaling true power projection far beyond domestic borders.
 - Strategic Blocs: Beijing frequently coordinates massive tri-lateral naval operations, such as the "Will for Peace" exercises alongside Russia, Iran, and South Africa under the auspices of BRICS Plus, establishing a counter-weight to Western maritime alliances. [[1](#)]
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5. Analytical Summary: PLA Strengths and Structural Vulnerabilities

Military Vector	Core Strategic Advantages	Primary Structural Vulnerabilities
Industrial Capacity	• Rapid, high-volume ship and aircraft shipbuilding pipelines • Direct supply lines via Military-Civil Fusion	• Heavy reliance on foreign designs for specialized aircraft engine parts
Technological Prowess	• Global leader in hypersonic missile deployment • Aggressive AI-integration across all commands	• Vulnerabilities to Western technology export bans on elite semiconductors
Geographic Context	• Home-field advantage within the First Island Chain • Massive land-based missile shield (PLARF)	• Lack of real-world joint combat experience since the late 1970s • Rigid institutional command structures