

China Seeks Global Leadership Through Economic Means, Rather than Through War and Conquest

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China is clearly on the way to regaining its historic position as the world's largest economy, displacing the US. With a population of 1.3 billion, more than four times as much as the population of the US, China has over 2.3 million in active service, with an additional 1.1 million as reserves.

Though China is known for mass-produced goods, it has now clearly put quality ahead of quantity in its developments.

The Chinese Communist Party has delivered prosperity to ordinary Chinese, which is why it enjoys their support. Eighty-six percent of Chinese think their country is on the right track.

China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) has embarked on a modernization program commensurate with the country's expanding national interests. From the Clinton Administration forward – which did not consider this modernization to be a threat to the US – the dominant voices in the US have started obsession with China's rapid growth.

The US spends more on its military than the rest of the world combined and has enjoyed absolute military superiority in every region of the globe. The US would have to abandon interests worldwide in order to focus on China, whereas China's entire military would focus on defending its borders and few interests in the Pacific.

China's last war was a short fight against Vietnam in 1979. The Chinese have not been in a sustained conflict since the Korean War that ended in 1953, according to Congressional Research Service.

A series of foreign acquisitions and domestic innovations, [possibly bolstered by cyber espionage](#), have led to a huge push in modernization for the Chinese PLA. Chinese have engaged in stealing military secrets from the US and others because they can.

China is actively considering how to put effective pressure on the US to halt arms sales to Taiwan. China wants Washington to live up to Ronald Reagan's commitment to restrain and reduce such sales in return for credible pursuit by Beijing of a peaceful settlement of its differences with Taipei.

The rising Chinese defense capabilities erode American supremacy. China's new anti-carrier weapons endanger US force projection capabilities in the Western Pacific; its anti-satellite programs imperil US global surveillance and communication capabilities; its growing operations in cyberspace menace US government operations and the economy of the American homeland alike.

On the opposite, while China commands the largest ground force in the world, it is plagued by mobility problems. The bulk of PLA's equipment remains obsolete. The Chinese defense ministry is unable to produce modern weaponry and relies on Russian technology since 1970s. The Chinese fighter jets fly on Russian engines. China lacks sufficient transport helicopters, and still largely relies on trains for transportation across the mainland.

Additionally, China may seek to buy Russia's advanced S-400 missile-defense system, which would bolster its already-substantial missile defenses.

China has tremendous space assets, including 70 military satellites used for communications, navigation, positioning and timing, meteorology and electronic and signals intelligence.

Additionally, China sees the US's reliance on GPS technology and space assets as a weakness, and has developed anti-satellite capabilities, such as directed-energy weapons, satellite jammers, and anti-satellite missiles.

China has three types of cyber forces: (1) specialized military network warfare forces in the PLA, (2) PLA-authorized teams of network warfare specialists in government organizations, and (3) non-governmental forces that may be mobilized for network warfare operations.

Potentially, China could access foreign networks and even deny foreign nations' access to their own networks. There have been numerous and credible reports that China has used cyber espionage to steal military secrets from the US.

The Chinese, in addition to traditional warfare, would confront an enemy with media and propaganda, legal actions, and psychological warfare.

The latest announcement of technological upswing in the Chinese industry was a hypersonic heavy bomber that could reportedly reach from Beijing to New York City in just two hours. Chinese Researchers say the aircraft would travel at speeds of more than 3,700mph (6,000km/h) or five times the speed of sound. Since 2013, China has conducted seven successful test flights of its hypersonic glider DF-ZF. The vehicle will be capable of speeds of between Mach 5 and Mach 10, or five to 10 times the speed of sound.



Launch of HTV-2a on a Minotaur
IV Lite rocket

The US officials tested HTV-2 in 2011, an unmanned aircraft capable of Mach 20, but the hypersonic flight lasted just a few minutes before the vehicle crashed.

China is Cautious in Dealing with the US

The role of the dollar as the international reserve currency allowed the US to spend beyond its means but that may end soon. The Global Financial Crisis delivered a huge blow to the American economy. The costs of bank bailout and the Afghanistan and Iraq wars pushed the US's national debt to new heights.. By August 2012, the US federal debt topped \$16 trillion, rising by 1 trillion in less than a year.

At the same time, China has become a major lender to the US government. National wealth underpins military strength, and a frail economy can't support a robust foreign policy.

Since 1974, when Deng Xiaoping addressed the United Nations General Assembly in New York, China has been at pains to deny any possibility that it might seek such dominance. As the Chinese defense "white paper" put it:

"China will never seek hegemony or engage in military expansion now or in the future, no matter how developed it becomes."

In saying this, China is inadvertently echoing the American isolationists of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. The US did not then seek to dominate or control the international state system, nor did it pursue military solutions to problems far from its shores. In time and in reaction to events, however, America came to do both.

China has a very persuasive explanation of its national interests. It says it needs domestic tranquility and peace on its borders in order to pursue its continued modernization and economic development.

Whatever the meaning of China's assurances that it will not pursue hegemony or engage in military expansionism in future, we cannot be certain that it will not.

In a speech to the National Committee on US-China relations in 2005, Robert Zoellick invited China to become a responsible stakeholder in the international system. What he left unsaid was that the responsible stakeholder would need to submit to American Leadership.

The Secretary of State of the Bush administration, Condoleezza Rice, a proponent of the invasion of Iraq once wrote that China resents the role of the US in the Asia-Pacific and wants to change the balance of power. She went on saying:

"China is a strategic competitor, not a strategic partner and will do what it can to enhance its power, including stealing nuclear secrets and bullying Taiwan"

AIIB, another Challenge to US Hegemony

China announced its first largest bank, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, in October 2013, to expand its influence at the expense of the US and Japan. Although, China is the biggest economy in Asia, the Asian Development Bank [ADB] is dominated by Japan; Japan's voting share is more than twice China's and the bank's president has always been Japanese.

Reforms to give China a little more say at the US-led International Monetary Fund have been delayed for years. China is, understandably, impatient for change. It is therefore taking matters into its own hands.

The US administration suffered a humiliating diplomatic defeat in March 2015 when most of its closest allies signed up for the AIIB, including Britain, Germany, Australia and South Korea, among 57 countries, leaving the US and Japan aloof.

At its launch in January 2016, there were 57 signatories to AIIB's Articles of Agreement, and in March and May, the bank announced the approval of another 20 prospective members, who are currently in the process of finalizing their membership, according to a statement from the bank.

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