

FACT SHEET |

2024 CHINA MILITARY POWER REPORT



U.S. Department of Defense

On December 18, 2024, the Department of Defense publicly released its annual report, *Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China (PRC)*, commonly known as the *China Military Power Report (CMPR)*. This congressionally mandated report charts the current course of the PRC's national, economic, and military strategy, and offers insights into the People's Liberation Army's (PLA) strategy, current capabilities, and activities, as well as its future modernization goals. The CMPR illustrates why the 2022 *National Defense Strategy* identified the PRC and its increasingly capable military as the Department's top pacing challenge.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ▶ *Expanding PRC National Power to Confront a Strategic Environment that Beijing Views as Increasingly Turbulent.* The PRC aims to accrue national power through political, social, economic, technological, and military development to achieve “the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation” by 2049. With this power, the PRC seeks to revise the international order in support of the PRC's system of governance and national interests.
- ▶ *Increasing PRC Military Coercion.* Since late 2023, the PLA reduced the number of coercive and risky air intercepts of U.S. platforms compared to the previous two years, though it continues to conduct unsafe maneuvers in the vicinity of allied forces operating in the region.
- ▶ *Developments in PRC Defense Industry.* The PRC has the world's leading hypersonic missile arsenal and has advanced its development of both conventional and nuclear-armed hypersonic missile technologies over the past 20 years. Similarly, the PRC is capable of producing a wide range of naval combatants, weapons, and electronic systems, making it nearly self-sufficient for all shipbuilding needs.
- ▶ *Intensifying Pressure Against Taiwan.* In 2023, the PRC increased diplomatic, political, and military pressure against Taiwan. Throughout the year, the PRC continued to erode longstanding norms in and around Taiwan by maintaining a naval presence around Taiwan, increasing crossings into Taiwan's self-declared centerline and Air Defense Identification Zone, and conducting highly publicized major military exercises near Taiwan.
- ▶ *Deepening PRC-Russia Ties.* In 2023, the PRC maintained robust support for Russia's war against Ukraine. It promoted Russian narratives blaming the United States and NATO for the war, buoyed Russia's economy against international sanctions, and sold Russia dual use inputs that Russia's military industries rely on. The PRC almost certainly is applying lessons from Russia's war against Ukraine toward its own strategic objectives and coercive activities.
- ▶ *Continuing PRC Resistance to Military-to-Military Communications with the United States.* In 2023, the PLA largely denied, cancelled, and ignored recurring bilateral engagements and DoD requests for communication; then, in November 2023, President Biden and PRC leader President Xi Jinping agreed that the United States and the PRC would resume military-to-military communication at all levels. DoD is committed to maintaining open lines of communication with the PRC to ensure competition does not veer into conflict.

WHAT'S NEW

- ▶ *Special Topic: Impacts of Corruption on the PLA.* In 2023, the PLA experienced revelations of a new wave of senior leader corruption, which may have disrupted the PLA's progress toward its stated modernization goals. This wave of corruption touches every service in the PLA, and it may have shaken Beijing's confidence in high-ranking PLA officials. Rooting out corruption in the military had been a major focus for Xi Jinping since 2012.
- ▶ *Special Topic: Political Training in the PLA.* The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) extends control of the PLA at every level of command using a dual-command structure, by which each PLA unit at or above the regimental command is headed by a military commander and political commissar. The military commander and political commissar are considered equals and share joint leadership in issuing orders and daily tasks.
- ▶ *Special Topic: PRC Views of Comprehensive National Power.* For Beijing, "comprehensive national power" (CNP) represents a country's overall measure of power across multiple domains in the international system. CNP is inexorably tied to military competition as, for the PRC, confrontation on the battlefield represents a systemic confrontation based on the overall strength of each country.

PLA STRATEGY IN CONTEXT

- ▶ In 2023, PRC leaders continued to call on the PLA to prepare for an increasingly turbulent international climate. In this context, the PRC's stated defense policy remained oriented toward safeguarding its sovereignty, security, and development interests, while emphasizing a greater global role for itself.
- ▶ One key part of this defense policy is the PRC's approach to counter-intervention, which aims to restrict lawful U.S. presence in the East and South China Sea regions and limit U.S. access in the broader Indo-Pacific region. At the same time, the PRC is strengthening its reach farther into the Pacific Ocean and beyond.
- ▶ At the end of 2023, PRC leaders claimed their power to shape world events continues to grow, presenting "new strategic opportunities" to create an international environment favorable for PRC interests and national rejuvenation.
- ▶ The PLA made uneven progress toward its 2027 capability milestone for modernization, which, if realized, could make the PLA a more credible military tool for the CCP's Taiwan unification efforts.

PLA CAPABILITIES

- ▶ In 2023, the PRC continued the development of capabilities and concepts to strengthen the PLA's ability to "fight and win wars" against a "strong enemy."
- ▶ DoD estimates that the PRC possessed more than 600 operational nuclear warheads as of mid-2024. DoD estimates that the PRC will probably have over 1,000 operational nuclear warheads by 2030 and will continue growing its force through at least 2035.
- ▶ The PLA remains focused on developing capabilities for the PRC to dissuade, deter, or if ordered defeat third-party intervention in the Indo-Pacific region. The PLA has undertaken important structural reforms and introduced new military doctrine to strengthen joint operations and is testing joint capabilities in and beyond the First Island Chain.