



## DOCUMENTATION

This Issue’s “Documentation” section reprints the Executive Summaries from two important recently-published reports. Document No. 1 is the Executive Summary from the bipartisan and consensus report of the 2023 Strategic Posture Commission, which reviewed and made recommendations on America’s many tools of state power, including conventional forces, nuclear forces, and missile defenses. Document No. 2, reprinted below, is an illustration of one aspect of the threat environment the Strategic Posture Commission had to consider in making its recommendations: the Department of Defense’s 2023 *Military and Security Developments Involving the People’s Republic of China*. The conclusions in both documents will undoubtedly make an impact on U.S. and allied officials and should serve as calls to action.

Document No. 1. Madelyn R. Creedon and Jon L. Kyl, Chair and Vice Chair, *America’s Strategic Posture: The Final Report of the Congressional Commission on the Strategic Posture of the United States*, Executive Summary (Washington, D.C.: Institute for Defense Analyses, October, 2023), pp. vii-xi.

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The United States faces a strategic challenge requiring urgent action. Given current threat trajectories, our nation will soon encounter a fundamentally different global setting than it has ever experienced: we will face a world where two nations possess nuclear arsenals on par with our own. In addition, the risk of conflict with these two nuclear peers is increasing. It is an existential challenge for which the United States is ill-prepared, unless its leaders make decisions now to adjust the U.S. strategic posture.

The Congressional Commission on the Strategic Posture of the United States was established by the Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), and concludes that America’s defense strategy and strategic posture must change in order to properly defend its vital interests and improve strategic stability with China and Russia. Decisions need to be made now in order for the nation to be prepared to address the threats from these two nuclear-armed adversaries arising during the 2027-2035 timeframe. Moreover, these threats are such that the United States and its Allies and partners must be ready to deter and defeat both adversaries simultaneously.

We arrive at these conclusions following a comprehensive year-long review of the threats America faces and its strategy and planned capabilities to address those threats. The evidence demonstrates that the U.S.-led international order and the values it upholds are at risk from the Chinese and Russian authoritarian regimes. The risk of military conflict with those major powers has grown and carries the potential for nuclear war. Therefore, the Commission reached the unanimous, non-partisan conclusion that today’s strategic outlook requires an urgent national focus and a series of concerted actions not currently planned. In sum, we find that the United States lacks a comprehensive strategy to address the looming two nuclear-peer threat environment and lacks the force structure such a strategy will require.



In reaching that overall conclusion, we make clear that the fundamentals of America's deterrence strategy remain sound, but the application of that strategy must change to address the 2027-2035 threat environment. Those changes drive necessary adjustments to the posture of U.S. nuclear capabilities—in size and/or composition. A full spectrum of non-nuclear capabilities is also essential to the nation's strategic posture. Such adjustments, in turn, drive the need to strengthen and expand the capacity of the infrastructure required to sustain and enhance U.S. strategic capabilities. In addition, Allies and partners are central to our findings regarding strategy and posture. We also emphasize the need for robust risk reduction efforts as fundamental to the U.S. approach in the new threat environment.

Adhering to the stipulations of our mandate, the report that follows delineates 131 findings and makes 81 recommendations. Those findings and recommendations are found at the beginning and end, respectively, of each chapter that follows; a complete list is also included following the report's conclusion. Our most important recommendations are summarized here:

## **STRATEGY**

- To achieve the most effective strategy for stability in light of the 2027-2035 threat environment, the Commission identifies three necessary changes:
  - The United States must develop and effectively implement a truly integrated, whole-of-government strategy to address the 2027-2035 threat environment.
  - The objectives of U.S. strategy must include effective deterrence and defeat of simultaneous Russian and Chinese aggression in Europe and Asia using conventional forces. If the United States and its Allies and partners do not field sufficient conventional forces to achieve this objective, U.S. strategy would need to be altered to increase reliance on nuclear weapons to deter or counter opportunistic or collaborative aggression in the other theater.
  - The size and composition of the nuclear force must account for the possibility of combined aggression from Russia and China. U.S. strategy should no longer treat China's nuclear forces as a "lesser included" threat. The United States needs a nuclear posture capable of simultaneously deterring both countries.
- The Commission recommends the United States maintain a nuclear strategy consistent with the Law of Armed Conflict (LOAC), based on six fundamental tenets—assured second strike, flexible response, tailored deterrence, extended deterrence and assurance, calculated ambiguity in declaratory policy, hedge against risk—and apply these tenets to address the 2027-2035 threat.

## **STRATEGIC POSTURE**

In the context of a strategic posture deploying both conventional and nuclear capability, the Commission believes the traditional role of nuclear weapons in U.S. defense strategy remains

valid and of continuing importance: deterrence of adversaries; assurance of Allies; achieving U.S. objectives should deterrence fail; and hedging against adverse events.

- The Commission recommends fully and urgently executing the U.S. nuclear modernization Program of Record (POR), which includes replacement of all U.S. nuclear delivery systems, modernization of their warheads, comprehensive modernization of U.S. nuclear command, control, and communications (NC3), and recapitalizing the nuclear enterprise infrastructure at the DOD and DOE/NNSA.
- The current modernization program should be supplemented to ensure U.S. nuclear strategy remains effective in a two-nuclear-peer environment.
- Comprehensive risk-mitigating actions across U.S. nuclear forces must be executed to ensure that delays in modernization programs or early age-out of currently deployed systems do not result in militarily significant shortfalls in deployed nuclear capability.
- The U.S. strategic nuclear force posture should be modified to:
  - Address the larger number of targets due to the growing Chinese nuclear threat.
  - Address the possibility that China will field large-scale, counterforce-capable missile forces that pose a threat to U.S. strategic nuclear forces on par with the threat Russia poses to those forces today.
  - Assure the United States continues to avoid reliance on executing Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) launch under attack to retain an effective deterrent.
  - Account for advances in Russian and Chinese integrated air and missile defenses (IAMD).
- The U.S. theater nuclear force posture should be urgently modified to:
  - Provide the President a range of militarily effective nuclear response options to deter or counter Russian or Chinese limited nuclear use in theater.
  - Address the need for U.S. theater nuclear forces deployed or based in the Asia-Pacific theater.
  - Compensate for any shortfall in U.S. and allied non-nuclear capabilities in a sequential or simultaneous two-theater conflict against Russia and China.
  - Address advances in Russian and Chinese IAMD.

## **NUCLEAR SECURITY ENTERPRISE INFRASTRUCTURE AND ORGANIZATION**

- The Commission recommends the DOD and DOE/NNSA strategic infrastructure be expanded to have sufficient capacity to:
  - Meet the capability and schedule requirements of the current nuclear modernization POR and the requirements of the force posture modifications recommended by the Commission in time to address the two-peer threat.

- Provide an effective hedge against four forms of risk: technical failure of a warhead or delivery system, programmatic delays, operational loss of delivery systems, and further deterioration of the geopolitical environment.
  - Flex to respond to emerging requirements in a timely fashion.
- To support the proposed strategy, the Commission recommends Congress fund an overhaul and expansion of the capacity of the U.S. nuclear weapons defense industrial base and the DOE/NNSA nuclear security enterprise, including weapons science, design, and production infrastructure. Specifically:
  - Congress should fund the full range of NNSA’s recapitalization efforts, such as pit production and all operations related to critical materials.
  - Congress should forge and sustain bipartisan consensus and year-to-year funding stability to enable the defense industry to respond to innovative DOD contracting approaches and invest with more certainty.
  - Congress should enact annual DOD and DOE authorization and appropriation bills before the beginning of each fiscal year.
  - Congress should place the purview of all “050” programs (President’s Budget line item for “national security”) that are in NNSA under Defense appropriations subcommittees (House Appropriations Committee-Defense (HAC-D), Senate Appropriations Committee Defense (SAC-D)).
  - Cabinet Secretaries, working with states and union leaders, should establish and increase the technical education and vocational training programs required to create the nation’s necessary skilled-trades workforce for the nuclear enterprise.
- The Commission recommends a number of specific actions to expand the capacity and effectiveness of the nation’s infrastructure and supply chain for its strategic capabilities.

## **NON-NUCLEAR CAPABILITIES**

- The Commission recommends: The United States urgently deploy a more resilient space architecture and adopt a strategy that includes both offensive and defensive elements to ensure U.S. access to and operations in space.
- The United States and its Allies take steps to ensure they are at the cutting edge of emerging technologies—such as big data analytics, quantum computing, and artificial intelligence (AI)—to avoid strategic surprise and potentially enhance the U.S. strategic posture.
- The United States prioritize funding and accelerate long-range non-nuclear precision strike programs to meet the operational need and in greater quantities than currently planned.

- The United States develop and field homeland IAMD that can deter and defeat coercive attacks by Russia and China, and determine the capabilities needed to stay ahead of the North Korean threat.
- The Secretary of Defense direct research, development, test and evaluation into advanced IAMD capabilities leveraging all domains, including land, sea, air, and space. These activities should focus on sensor architectures, integrated command and control, interceptors, cruise and hypersonic missile defenses, and area or point defenses. The DOD should urgently pursue deployment of any capabilities that prove feasible.
- The Secretary of Defense and the Military Departments transfer operations and sustainment responsibility for missile defense to the appropriate Military Departments by 1 October 2024. This will allow the Missile Defense Agency (MDA) to focus on research, development, prototyping and testing.

## **ALLIES AND PARTNERS**

The Commission believes it is in the U.S. national interest to maintain, strengthen, and when appropriate, expand its network of alliances and partnerships. These relationships strengthen American security by deterring aggression regionally, before it can reach the U.S. homeland, while also enabling U.S. economic prosperity through access to international markets. Withdrawing from U.S. alliances and partnerships would directly benefit adversaries, invite aggression that the United States might later have to reverse, and ultimately decrease American, allied, and partner security and economic prosperity. Further, the Commission believes that our defense and the defense of the current international order is strengthened when Allies can directly contribute to the broader strategic posture, and the United States should seek to incorporate those contributions as much as possible.

- The Executive branch should recognize that any major change to U.S. strategic posture, policies, or capabilities will have great effect on Allies' perceptions and their deterrence and assurance requirements. As a result, any changes should be predicated on meaningful consultations.

## **RISK REDUCTION**

The Commission believes it is of paramount importance for the United States to work to reduce strategic risks. This involves activities and programs across the U.S. government, including in nonproliferation and arms control, as well as maintaining strong, viable, and resilient military forces.

- The Commission recommends that a strategy to address the two-nuclear-peer threat environment be a prerequisite for developing U.S. nuclear arms control limits for the 2027-2035 timeframe. The Commission recommends that once a strategy and its

related force requirements are established, the U.S. government determine whether and how nuclear arms control limits continue to enhance U.S. security.

- The Commission recommends that the United States continue to explore nuclear arms control opportunities and conduct research into potential verification technologies in order to support or enable future negotiations in the U.S. national interest that seek to limit all nuclear weapon types, should the geopolitical environment change.
- Where formal nuclear arms control agreements are not possible, the Commission recommends pursuing nuclear risk reduction measures to increase predictability and reduce uncertainty and the chances for misperception and miscalculation.

The 2009 Congressional Commission on the Strategic Posture of the United States reported that the United States was at “a moment of opportunity, . . .but also a moment of urgency”—because the security environment had improved and the threat of nuclear proliferation was the principal concern. Since 2009, the security environment has dramatically worsened and new existential threats have emerged. This Commission concludes that the United States now faces a high-stakes challenge that requires urgent action. Nevertheless, the Commission has not seen the U.S. government demonstrate the urgency and creativity required to meet the challenge. Nothing other than synchronized steps taken by the Executive and Legislative Branches will craft the strategy and build the posture the nation requires.

The challenges are unmistakable; the problems are urgent; the steps are needed now.

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**Document No. 2. U.S. Department of Defense, *Military and Security Developments Involving the People’s Republic of China, 2023* (Washington, D.C.: Department of Defense, October 2023), pp. ii-xii, available at <https://media.defense.gov/2023/Oct/19/2003323409/-1/-1/1/2023-MILITARY-AND-SECURITY-DEVELOPMENTS-INVOLVING-THE-PEOPLES-REPUBLIC-OF-CHINA.PDF>.**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY UNDERSTANDING CHINA’S STRATEGY**

### **CHINA’S NATIONAL STRATEGY**

- The PRC’s national strategy is to achieve “the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation” by 2049. The strategy is a determined pursuit of political, social, and military modernity to expand the PRC’s national power, perfect its governance, and revise the international order in support of the PRC’s system of governance and national interests. The PRC views the United States as deploying a whole-of-government effort meant to contain the PRC’s rise, which presents obstacles to its national strategy.



- The PRC characterizes its view of strategic competition in terms of a rivalry among powerful nation states, as well as a clash of opposing ideological systems. PRC leaders believe that structural changes in the international system and a confrontational United States are the root causes of intensifying strategic competition between the PRC and the United States.
  - In March 2023, Xi Jinping told delegates to the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference that “Western countries led by the United States have implemented comprehensive containment, encirclement and suppression against us, bringing unprecedented severe challenges to our country’s development.”
- The PRC’s strategy entails deliberate and determined efforts to amass, improve, and harness the internal and external elements of national power that will place the PRC in a “leading position” in an enduring competition between systems.
- In the 20th Party Congress Political Work Report, the CCP expanded on its calls to prepare for an increasingly turbulent international climate, while reporting it had “enhanced” the PRC’s security on all fronts and “withstood political, economic, ideological, and natural risks, challenges, and trials.”

## **FOREIGN POLICY**

- The PRC’s foreign policy seeks to build a “community of common destiny” that supports its strategy to realize “the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.” The PRC’s ambition to reshape the international order derives from the objectives of its national strategy and the Party’s political and governing systems.
- Beginning late 2022 Beijing launched a diplomatic ‘charm offensive’ targeting European countries in an apparent effort to improve perceptions of Beijing following years of ‘wolf warrior’ diplomacy and COVID isolation.
- In April 2022, Xi Jinping announced the Global Security Initiative (GSI). Echoing the previous year’s rollout of the Global Development Initiative (GDI), Beijing has promoted GSI extensively and attempted to insert GSI language into multilateral forums and documents.
- Russia’s war on Ukraine in February 2022 represented a major, unexpected challenge for the PRC as it sought to react to the largest military conflict in Europe since the end of World War II. As Beijing deliberates the scale and scope of materiel commitments to Russia’s war on Ukraine, it probably will seek to balance its strategic partnership with Russia while avoiding reputational or economic costs that could result from its assistance.

## **ECONOMIC POLICY**

- At the end of 2022, China abruptly reversed its zero-COVID policy. The decision to implement China’s reopening took most by surprise and was probably triggered by

country-wide protests against the PRC's zero-COVID policies, economic pressures, and fiscal difficulties for local governments.

- The 20th Party Congress emphasized the importance of quality growth rather than the speed of growth. General Secretary Xi also highlighted “common prosperity,” more equitable access to basic public services, a better multi-tiered social security system, and cultural and green developments as a few of the PRC's economic initiatives.
- The PRC's ongoing military modernization objectives are commensurate with and part of China's broader national development aspirations.

### **CHINA'S BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE (BRI)**

- The PRC uses BRI to support its strategy of national rejuvenation by seeking to expand global transportation and trade linkages to support its development and deepen its economic integration with nations along its periphery and beyond.
- In 2022, BRI projects saw mixed economic outcomes, experiencing both growth and decline. However, overall spending on BRI projects remained consistent with the previous year and Beijing continued to prioritize public health, digital infrastructure, and green energy opportunities.
- Overseas development and security interests under BRI will drive the PRC towards expanding its overseas security relationships and presence to protect those interests.

### **MILITARY-CIVIL FUSION (MCF) DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY**

- The PRC pursues its Military-Civil Fusion (MCF) (军民融合) Development Strategy to “fuse” its security and development strategies into its Integrated National Strategic System and Capabilities in support of China's national rejuvenation goals.
- The PRC's MCF strategy includes objectives to develop and acquire advanced dual-use technology for military purposes and deepen reform of the national defense science and technology industries and serves a broader purpose to strengthen all of the PRC's instruments of national power.
- Since early 2022, the CCP appears to have been deemphasizing the term “Military Civil Fusion” in public, in favor of “integrated national strategic systems and capabilities.”

### **DEFENSE POLICY AND MILITARY STRATEGY**

- In 2022, the PRC's stated defense policy remained oriented toward safeguarding its sovereignty, security, and development interests, while emphasizing a greater global role for itself. The PRC's military strategy remains based on the concept of “active defense” (积极防御).



- PRC leaders stress the imperative of strengthening the PLA into a “world-class” military by the end of 2049 as an essential element of its strategy to rejuvenate the PRC into a “great modern socialist country.”
- In October 2022, Xi secured his third term as the general secretary of CCP at the Party Congress and his appointment of loyalists to top positions in the CMC probably will enable Xi to expand upon military modernization and operational goals during his next 5-year term.
- During his October 2022 speech at the opening ceremony of the 20th Party Congress, Xi reaffirmed his commitment to the PLA’s 2027 milestone for modernization to accelerate the integrated development of mechanization, informatization, and intelligentization of the PRC’s armed forces. If realized, this capability milestone could give the PLA the capacity to be a more credible military tool for the CCP’s Taiwan unification efforts.
- In 2022, the PLA continued discussing a new “core operational concept,” called “MultiDomain Precision Warfare (多域精确战)” (MDPW). MDPW is intended to leverage a C4ISR network that incorporates advances in big data and artificial intelligence to rapidly identify key vulnerabilities in the U.S. operational system and then combine joint forces across domains to launch precision strikes against those vulnerabilities.
- COVID-19 mitigation measures and multiple outbreaks throughout 2022 probably did not significantly impact PLA combat readiness.

### **FORCES, CAPABILITIES, AND POWER PROJECTION**

- The PLA has sought to modernize its capabilities and improve its proficiencies across all warfare domains so that, as a joint force, it can conduct the full range of land, air, and maritime as well as nuclear, space, counterspace, electronic warfare (EW), and cyberspace operations.
- The PLA’s evolving capabilities and concepts continue to strengthen the PRC’s ability to “fight and win wars” against a “strong enemy (强敌)” (a likely euphemism for the United States), counter an intervention by a third party in a conflict along the PRC’s periphery, and project power globally.
- **People’s Liberation Army Army (PLAA).** The PLAA continues to modernize equipment and focus on combined arms and joint training in effort to meet the goal of becoming a world class military. The PLAA demonstrated a new long-range fire capability in the PLA military response to the August 2022 U.S. Congressional Delegation (CODEL) visit to Taiwan. The PLAA continues to incorporate a twice a year conscript intake. The long-term effects of the policy are not clear.

- **People’s Liberation Army Navy (PLAN).** The PRC has numerically the largest navy in the world with an overall battle force of over 370 ships and submarines, including more than 140 major surface combatants. The PLAN is largely composed of modern multi-mission ships and submarines. In 2022, the PLAN launched its third aircraft carrier, CV-18 Fujian.
  - It also commissioned its third YUSHEN class Amphibious Assault Ships (LHA) and has likely begun construction on a fourth as of early 2023. In the near-term, the PLAN will have the ability to conduct long-range precision strikes against land targets from its submarine and surface combatants using land-attack cruise missiles, notably enhancing the PRC’s power projection capability.
  - The PRC continues to challenge foreign military activities in its exclusive economic zone (EEZ) in a manner that is inconsistent with the rules of customary international law as reflected in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. At the same time, the PLAN conducts activities in the EEZs of other countries, including the United States, Australia, Philippines, Vietnam, and Malaysia.
- **People’s Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF) and PLAN Aviation.** The PLAAF and PLAN aviation together constitute the largest aviation force in the Indo-Pacific region. The PLAAF is rapidly catching up to western air forces. The PLAAF continues to modernize with the delivery of domestically built aircraft and a wide range of UASs. In October 2019, the PLAAF signaled the return of the airborne leg of its nuclear triad after the PLAAF publicly revealed the H-6N as its first nuclear-capable air-to-air refuelable bomber.
- **People’s Liberation Army Rocket Force (PLARF).** The PLARF is advancing its long-term modernization plans to enhance its “strategic deterrence” capabilities. The PRC is developing new ICBMs that will significantly improve its nuclear-capable missile forces and will require increased nuclear warhead production, partially due to the introduction of multiple independently targetable reentry vehicle (MIRV) capabilities.
  - The PRC may be exploring development of conventionally-armed intercontinental range missile systems. If developed and fielded, such capabilities would allow the PRC to threaten conventional strikes against targets in the continental United States, Hawaii, and Alaska.
- **Strategic Support Force (SSF).** The SSF is a theater command-level organization established to centralize the PLA’s strategic space, cyberspace, electronic, information, communications, and psychological warfare missions and capabilities. The SSF’s Network Systems Department (NSD), sometimes referred to as the Cyberspace Force (CSF; 网络空间部队), is responsible for information warfare with an integrated mission set that includes cyberspace warfare, technical reconnaissance,

electronic warfare, and psychological warfare. The PLA SSF's Space Systems Department (SSD), sometimes referred to as the Aerospace Force (ASF; 航天部队), is responsible for military space operations. The PRC continues to develop counterspace capabilities—including direct-ascent anti-satellite missiles, co-orbital satellites, electronic warfare, and directed-energy systems—that can contest or deny an adversary's access to and operations in the space domain.

- **Joint Logistic Support Force.** The JLSF is concentrating its efforts on improving joint strategic and campaign-level logistic efficiencies through training and integrating civilian products and services. The JLSF supports multimodal transportation methods to facilitate the movement of PLA forces and equipment for training.
- **Special Operations Forces (SOF).** Despite unilateral and multilateral training, all of China's SOF units lack real-world combat experience. China's SOF does not have a national-level special operations command to oversee all of China's SOF activities. Despite an emphasis to conduct joint training, theater commanders have no authority over PAP units, making it difficult to incorporate PAP SOF into PLA training exercises.

#### **JOINT CAPABILITIES IN DEVELOPMENT**

- The PLA is aggressively developing capabilities to provide options for the PRC to dissuade, deter, or, if ordered, defeat third-party intervention in the Indo-Pacific region, and to conduct military operations deeper into the Indo-Pacific region and globally.
- 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 (FIC).

#### **JOINT CAPABILITIES FOR COUNTERINTERVENTION**

- The PRC's counter-intervention strategy aims to restrict the United States from having a presence in the East and South China Sea regions—within the FIC—and increasingly to hold at risk U.S. access in the broader Indo-Pacific region.
- **Long-Range Precision Strike and Supporting ISR.** PLA texts state that precision attack in all warfare domains is critical in modern war. PLA writings state that precision weapons are not only force multipliers, but also a means of “war control” to prevent escalation.
- **Integrated Air Defense System (IADS).** The PRC has a robust and redundant IADS architecture over land areas and within 300 nm (556 km) of its coast that relies on an extensive early warning radar network, fighter aircraft, and a variety of SAM systems. The PRC has also placed radars and air defense weapons on outposts in the SCS, further extending the range of its IADS.

- **Hypersonic Weapons.** The PRC's deployment of the DF-17 HGV-armed MRBM will continue to transform the PLA's missile force. The system is possibly intended to replace some older SRBM units and is intended to strike foreign military bases and fleets in the Western Pacific, according to a PRC-based military expert.

#### **ADVANCING TOWARDS AN INFORMATIZED MILITARY**

- The PLA considers information operations (IO) as a means of achieving information dominance early in a conflict and continues to expand the scope and frequency of IO in military exercises.
- The PLA is pursuing next-generation combat capabilities based on its vision of future conflict, which it calls "intelligentized warfare," defined by the expanded use of AI and other advanced technologies at every level of warfare.
- The PRC is advancing its cyberspace attack capabilities and has the ability to launch cyberspace attacks—such as disruption of a natural gas pipeline for days to weeks—in the United States.

#### **SPACE AND COUNTERSPACE CAPABILITIES**

- The PLA views space superiority, the ability to control the space-enabled information sphere and to deny adversaries their own space-based information gathering and communication capabilities, as critical components to conduct modern "informatized warfare."
- The PLA continues to invest in improving its capabilities in space-based intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR), satellite communication, satellite navigation, and meteorology, as well as human spaceflight and robotic space exploration.
- The PLA continues to acquire and develop a range of counterspace capabilities and related technologies, including kinetic-kill missiles, ground-based lasers, and orbiting space robots, as well as expanding space surveillance capabilities, which can monitor objects in space within their field of view and enable counterspace actions.

#### **NUCLEAR CAPABILITIES**

- Over the next decade, the PRC will continue to rapidly modernize, diversify, and expand its nuclear forces. Compared to the PLA's nuclear modernization efforts a decade ago, current efforts dwarf previous attempts in both scale and complexity.
- The PRC is expanding the number of its land-, sea-, and air-based nuclear delivery platforms while investing in and constructing the infrastructure necessary to support further expansion of its nuclear forces.
- In 2022, Beijing continued its rapid nuclear expansion, and DoD estimates that the PRC possessed more than 500 operational nuclear warheads as of May 2023—on track to exceed previous projections.

- DoD estimates that the PRC will probably have over 1,000 operational nuclear warheads by 2030, much of which will be deployed at higher readiness levels and will continue growing its force to 2035 in line with its goal of ensuring PLA modernization is “basically complete” that year, which serves as an important milestone on the road to Xi’s goal of a “world class” military by 2049.
- The PRC probably will use its new fast breeder reactors and reprocessing facilities to produce plutonium for its nuclear weapons program, despite publicly maintaining these technologies are intended for peaceful purposes.
- The PRC probably completed the construction of its three new solid-propellant silo fields in 2022, which consists of at least 300 new ICBM silos, and has loaded at least some ICBMs into these silos. This project and the expansion of China’s liquid-propellant silo force is meant to increase the peacetime readiness of its nuclear force by moving to a launch-on-warning (LOW) posture.
- The PRC is fielding the DF-5C, a silo-based liquid-fueled ICBM armed with a nuclear warhead with a multi-megaton yield. The PRC is fielding the longer-range JL-3 SLBMs on its current JIN class SSBN, rendering them capable of ranging the continental United States from PRC littoral waters.

#### **CHEMICAL AND BIOLOGICAL RESEARCH**

- The PRC continues to engage in biological activities with dual-use applications, which raise concerns [sic] regarding its compliance with the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC). This includes studies at PRC military medical institutions on potent toxins with dual-use applications.
- The PRC likely possesses capabilities relevant to chemical and biological warfare that pose a threat to U.S., Allied, and partner forces, military operations, and civilian populations.
- The United States cannot certify that the PRC has met its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) due to concerns regarding the PRC’s research on pharmaceutical-based agents (PBAs) and toxins with potential dual-use applications.

#### **OPERATIONAL STRUCTURE AND ACTIVITIES ON CHINA’S PERIPHERY**

- The PRC continues to refine military reforms associated with the establishment of the Eastern, Southern, Western, Northern, and Central Theater Commands, which are organized based on the PRC’s perception of peripheral threats.
- Under the direction of the CMC, each Theater Command has operational authority over the PLA conventional forces within the theater.

- In August 2022, the PLA carried out large-scale joint military exercises aimed at pressuring Taiwan. The exercises included firing ballistic missiles over Taiwan’s main island, over a dozen naval patrols, and hundreds of flights into Taiwan’s claimed ADIZ.

#### **DEVELOPMENTS IN THE SECURITY SITUATION IN THE SCS**

- The PRC states that international military presence within the SCS is a challenge to its sovereignty.
- Throughout 2022, the PRC deployed PLAN, CCG, and civilian ships to maintain a presence in disputed areas, such as near Scarborough Reef and Thitu Island, as well as in response to oil and gas exploration operations by rival claimants within the PRC’s claimed “nine-dash line.”
- During 2022, the PRC conducted multiple coercive actions against the Philippines in the SCS, including cutting the tow line of a Philippine Navy vessel, executing dangerous maneuvers in close proximity to Philippine vessels; and reportedly reclaiming several unoccupied land features in the SCS, which the Philippines noted contravenes the Declaration of Conduct on the South China Sea’s undertaking on self-restraint and the 2016 Arbitral Award.

#### **DEVELOPMENTS IN THE SECURITY SITUATION IN THE TAIWAN STRAIT**

- In 2022, the PRC amplified diplomatic, political, and military pressure against Taiwan. The PLA’s increased provocative and destabilizing actions in and around the Taiwan Strait included ballistic missile overflights of Taiwan, sharply increased flights into Taiwan’s self-declared ADIZ and a series of major military exercises near Taiwan.
- At the 20th Party Congress in 2022, Xi Jinping repeated the CCP’s longstanding public position that China seeks peaceful unification with Taiwan but would never renounce the use of force as an option.
- The PLA practiced elements of each of its military courses of action against Taiwan during its August 2022 large-scale military exercise aimed at pressuring Taiwan, and again in April 2023 in response to Taiwan president Tsai Ing-wen’s transit of the United States.

#### **PLA COERCIVE AND RISKY OPERATIONAL BEHAVIOR**

- Between the fall of 2021 and fall of 2023, the United States has documented over 180 instances of PLA coercive and risky air intercepts against U.S. aircraft in the region—more in the past two years than in the previous decade. Over the same period, the PLA has conducted around 100 instances of coercive and risky operational behavior against U.S. Allies and partners, in an effort to deter both the United States and others from conducting lawful operations in the region.
- Examples of the PRC’s coercive and risky operational behavior against U.S. and Allied aircraft have included lasing; reckless maneuvers; close approaches in the air or at



sea; high rates of closure; discharging chaff or flares in front of, or in close proximity to, aircraft; and other actions.

- The PLA's behavior contravenes flight safety protocols and the international maritime rules of the road, and increases the risk of a major accident, incident, or crisis, including the potential for loss of life.

### **THE PLA'S GROWING GLOBAL PRESENCE**

- CCP leaders view the PLA's growing global presence as an essential part of the PRC's international activities to create an international environment conducive to 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. This has led to the PRC's greater willingness to use military coercion— and inducements—to advance its global security and development interests.
- In 2022, the PLA continued to normalize its presence overseas through participation UN peacekeeping operations and anti-piracy escorts in the Gulf of Aden and waters off Somalia. The also PLA restarted in-person military diplomacy in 2022 that was suspended due to COVID-19.

### **PLA OVERSEAS BASING AND ACCESS**

- The PRC is seeking to expand its overseas logistics and basing infrastructure to allow the PLA to project and sustain military power at greater distances. If realized, a global PLA military logistics network could disrupt U.S. military operations as the PRC's global military objectives evolve.
- Beyond the PLA support base in Djibouti, the PRC is very likely already considering and planning for additional military logistics facilities to support naval, air, and ground forces projection.
- In June 2022, a PRC official confirmed that the PLA would have access to parts of Cambodia's Ream Naval Base. The PRC probably also has considered other countries as locations for PLA military logistics facilities, including Burma, Thailand, Indonesia, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, United Arab Emirates, Kenya, Equatorial Guinea, Seychelles, Tanzania, Angola, Nigeria, Namibia, Mozambique, Bangladesh, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, and Tajikistan.
- The SSF operates tracking, telemetry, and command stations in Namibia, Pakistan, Argentina, and Kenya. The SSF also has a handful of Yuan-wang space support ships to track satellite and ICBM launches.

## **LESSONS LEARNED FROM RUSSIA'S WAR ON UKRAINE**

- The PRC almost certainly is learning lessons from the Russian war of aggression in Ukraine that are most applicable to the PRC's goal of strengthening its whole-of-government approach to countering a perceived U.S.-led containment strategy.
- Western sanctions against Russia almost certainly have amplified the PRC's push for defense and technological self-sufficiency and financial resilience.

## **RESOURCES AND TECHNOLOGY FOR FORCE MODERNIZATION**

- The PRC's long-term goal is to create an entirely self-reliant defense-industrial sector—fused with a strong civilian industrial and technology sector—that can meet the PLA's needs for modern military capabilities.
- The PRC has mobilized vast resources in support of its defense modernization, including through its Military-Civil Fusion (MCF) Development Strategy, as well as espionage activities to acquire sensitive, dual-use, and military-grade equipment.
- In 2022, the PRC announced its official annual military budget would increase by 7.1 percent, continuing more than 20 years of annual defense spending increases and sustaining its position as the second-largest military spender in the world.

## **DEVELOPMENTS AND TRENDS IN ITS DEFENSE INDUSTRY**

- China's hypersonic missile technologies have greatly advanced during the past 20 years and many of the PRC's missile programs are comparable to other international top-tier producers.
- China is developing beyond-visual-range air-to-air missiles and exploring missile capabilities that improve target-selection and make the missiles more resistant to countermeasures.
- In 2022, China launched its first domestically designed and manufactured aircraft carrier, featuring an electromagnetic catapult launch and arresting devices. The carrier will be able to deploy up to 70 aircraft, including J-15 fighters and Z-9C anti-submarine helicopters.

## **ESPIONAGE ACTIVITIES SUPPORTING CHINA'S MILITARY MODERNIZATION**

- The PRC presents a sophisticated, persistent cyber-enabled espionage and attack threat to military and critical infrastructure systems through its efforts to develop, acquire, or gain access to information and advanced technologies.
- There have also been multiple U.S. criminal indictments since 2015 involving espionage by PRC nationals, naturalized U.S. citizens or permanent resident aliens from the PRC, as well as U.S. citizens, for their efforts to illegally acquire information and technology to advance PLA modernization.

## **DEFENSE CONTACTS AND EXCHANGES IN 2022**

- In 2022, the PLA largely denied, cancelled, and ignored recurring bilateral engagements and DoD requests for communication. The PLA's refusal to engage with DoD has largely continued in 2023.
- The PLA's refusal to engage in military-to-military communications with the United States, combined with the PLA's increasingly coercive and risky operational behavior, raises the risk of an operational incident or miscalculation spiraling into crisis or conflict.
- DoD is committed to re-opening lines of communication with the PRC to ensure competition does not veer into conflict. DoD's objectives in opening lines of communication include ensuring crisis communications channels, reducing strategic and operational risk, and avoiding misperceptions.