



THE CHINESE NUCLEAR STRATEGY AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 21ST CENTURY

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At the beginning of the 21st century, the People's Republic of China stands as an emergent global military and nuclear power. The expansion of China's nuclear arsenal and its capabilities is a primary objective of the state's defensive efforts, being concurrent with updating China's overall security strategy. The present paper seeks to provide a glance into Chinese perceptions and concerns for nuclear security and to analyse the key points and developments in the country's nuclear strategy over the past decade. Ultimately, the paper has as the primary purpose to provide a comprehensive insight into the objectives of China and its nuclear forces and strategy.

Keywords: People's Republic of China; People's Liberation Army; nuclear strategy; nuclear arms;



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INTRODUCTION

In a manner of specific similarity to the United States of America and the Russian Federation, which in the post-Cold War era have both concurrently modernised and reduced their respective nuclear arsenals, while attributing to them a broader set of deterrent functions to meet the demands of the contemporary global strategic environment, the People's Republic of China has continued developing its more limited nuclear forces, providing them with the key prerogative of nuclear deterrence, albeit with certain “Chinese” characteristics.

The People's Republic of China (PRC or China), unlike the historic nuclear armed states – the United States of America, Soviet Union, France and Great Britain, did not significantly engage itself in the international arena in the decades after the country's first atomic test in 1964, thus becoming an outlier in the system of interstate relations that came to dominate the latter half of the Cold War and the efforts to manage global strategic nuclear stability through a framework of international treaties and informal understandings on the control, limitation and reduction of nuclear weapons systems. After the accession of France to the *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons* (NPT) in 1991, the PRC renewed its previous interest for its own participation in the treaty, but also reiterated its discontent with the treaty's perceived discriminatory nature due to absence of prohibitions on the deployment of nuclear weapons outside the national borders of the member states and the lack of verifiable information on ongoing levels of nuclear disarmament. Nevertheless, in March 1992, China acceded to the NPT Treaty, marking the country's first foray into what can informally be termed the “*international treaty regime*” on nuclear stability, which constitutes the framework of control on nuclear weapons in the international security system. However, in its application for membership of the NPT, the PRC government put forward a set of requests to all other nuclear-armed states, namely: to unconditionally accept a “*no first use*” (NFU) policy, so as to ensure the security of non-nuclear states in the world,

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As of 2021, China possesses the world's third largest nuclear arsenal behind those of the United States and Russia. Despite the quantitative disparity in the number of nuclear weapons, China has committed to narrowing down the qualitative disparity with the nuclear superpowers and has come to rapidly develop a limited but expanding nuclear arsenal of equal and perhaps superior capability in certain spheres.

to help foster the development of “*nuclear-weapon-free zone*” (NWFZ), to withdraw nuclear weapons deployed outside respective national borders, and to stop the militarisation of space (Kiriakov, 2016). The mentioned objectives, as it will be demonstrated, have remained of vital importance to Chinese nuclear policy to this day. Subsequently, on 24 September 1996, the PRC also signed the *Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty* (CTBT). The Treaty, whose signing commenced on 10 September of the same year, came to include 184 states, with ratification from 167 states, three of which are the nuclear powers of France, the Russian Federation and the United Kingdom. However, despite initial intents, the PRC is among the nuclear states that did not in the end ratify the treaty, along with the United States of America. Nonetheless and in accordance with the general notions for nuclear stability in the new era, the PRC stopped nuclear testing, the last known nuclear test having been conducted on 29 July 1996, the year of the signing of the Treaty.

Two decades later and well into the third decade of the 21st century, China has shown a degree of commitment to the ideas of international nuclear stability. However, the country has also demonstrated no intent to enter the strategic dialogue between the United States of America and Russia and the limitation treaties between the two principal nuclear superpowers that defined global nuclear strategic stability in the past, and whom China considers unequal in consideration of its own capabilities. Currently, as of 2021, China possesses the world's third largest nuclear arsenal behind those of the United States and Russia. Despite the quantitative disparity in the number of nuclear weapons, China has committed to narrowing down the qualitative disparity with the nuclear superpowers and has come to rapidly develop a limited but expanding nuclear arsenal of equal and perhaps superior capability in certain spheres.

The paper has as principal objective to discuss, based on arguments, the Chinese nuclear strategy in its present form and the deep changes, which have taken shape in the past decade. The paper further aims to examine the general concerns, notions and security perceptions of the PRC, as presented in official strategic documents, thus providing information on a topic that often lacks in depth in primary source material and that will surely increase in importance for the overarching international security system in the decades to come.

The main thesis of the paper is that, at the beginning of the second decade of the 21st century, the People's Republic of China took drastic steps in transforming its nuclear armed forces. These steps have led to a more concrete and specific doctrine for the utilisation of nuclear force as strategic deterrent, in keeping with China's previous stance of not being seen as a state pursuing an aggressive nuclear policy. The steps have physically transformed the organisation of China's nuclear forces into an official armed forces service, and a broader set of deterrence functions and specific contingencies have been assigned to them, adopting the principles of "active" and "forward" defence. The Chinese nuclear transformation has been backed up by significant strides into developing capable intermediate-range and intercontinental-range ballistic missiles, in an effort to pursue both the capacity to threaten the interests in the Pacific of China's main geopolitical rival, the United States of America, whilst also ensuring China possesses significant deterrence capabilities against the continental United States and its own expanding array of capabilities.

The paper follows the methodology of examining the openly available and published material on Chinese nuclear strategy in the form of white papers, strategic documents, and public announcements by Chinese leadership in forming a coherent picture on the objectives, doctrine and security perceptions of China that have evolved over the past decade. The paper juxtaposes such information with known developments in the qualitative and quantitative characteristics of the Chinese strategic nuclear arsenal and takes into account reactions from other actors in the international arena. The recognised limitations of the paper are related to the candour of the information on the nuclear policy of China, due to the lack of contrasting indigenous analyses and perspectives, and the scarcity of technical details available due to China's state information policies. However, the paper takes into consideration the fact that in the established historical security norms on the objectives of "nuclear deterrence" and strategic stability truthfulness and openness in such provided information to other global actors and especially adversaries is vital in ensuring the above objectives as well as that there is common understanding in averting a potential nuclear disaster. Furthermore, the paper chiefly focuses on nuclear strategy and its development, and as such only limited reference to is made to the specific technical characteristics of the Chinese nuclear arsenal and its capabilities.



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THE NEW CHINESE NUCLEAR STRATEGY AND THE NOTIONS ON THE USAGE OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS

The onset of significant change in the overarching and historical Chinese Nuclear Strategy can be considered to begin with the 2013 update of the *Doctrine for Defence of the PRC*. The new emphasis is on the evolution of the “Active Defence” concept and the adaption of the “forward defence” and “strategic space” strategies in facing the contemporary security challenges for the PRC, as further expanded in subsequent *The Science of Military Strategy* (Fravel, 2016, pp. 3-5). Within the updated doctrine, and with an emphasis on China’s principal strategic nuclear deterrent, the objectives, structure, armaments and readiness of the 2nd Artillery Force (in some sources 2nd Artillery Corps), abbreviated as 2nd AF, which at that point encompassed the strategic missile forces of China, were outlined. The principal objectives of the 2nd AF are stated to be the mission to deter the usage of nuclear weapons against China by other states, and if the need arises, to carry out a retaliatory nuclear strike and to conduct accurate strikes on targets with conventional ballistic missiles. The 2nd AF includes both the nuclear-missile forces, and the conventional ballistic missile forces. At that point in time, the missile inventory included the intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) from the types DF-4 (10), DF-5A (20), DF-31 (12) and DF-31A (30), as well as an assortment of some 122+ medium-range ballistic missiles (MRBMs) of the DF-16, DF-21/21A/21C/21D types and several dozen CJ-10 cruise missiles (IISS, 2013, p. 287). Within the force structure of the 2nd AF there are six principal missile bases, training and test sites, support and logistics units, education centres and research institutes among others (PRC Defence Doctrine, 2013).

The 2nd AF maintains a state of constant combat readiness, which aims to ensure a quick reaction time and effective response to threats of war and in a case of emergency circumstances. In the case of a nuclear threat to the state, the nuclear missile armed detachments increase their combat readiness and prepare to conduct a nuclear counterstrike, as well as all other activities associated with counteracting the usage of nuclear weapons by an adversary. In the event where a nuclear strike has been carried out against the PRC,

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the 2nd AF, individually or jointly with the nuclear forces of the other armed forces services, proceeds to conduct a nuclear missile counterstrike on the military forces of the adversary. Detachments, armed with conventional ballistic missiles, could in an even quicker manner move from a peacetime organisation to a wartime one and conduct precise attacks at medium and long ranges. It has to be of note that previously the operational procedures of the 2nd AF envisioned keeping warheads separate from the launchers. Additionally, the missile launchers assigned to the nuclear deterrent function were dispersed among launchers with conventional warheads. Western observers and the US ones, in particular, are of the opinion that China is moving away from this stance with a larger percentage of its missile forces being kept on high alert for longer periods of time. The causes for such a state of affairs are complex: on the one hand, such steps are economical and optimise the logistical burdens on the 2nd AF, whilst also extending response time and affording a great degree of risk for the survivability of China's nuclear and conventional deterrent; on the other hand, such a stance of the nuclear forces provides the interesting prospect where the intermingling of conventional and nuclear weapons assures that any attempt by an adversary to reduce conventional strike power could be considered by China as a full-scale pre-emptive attack on its nuclear forces (Brown, 2021).

In December 2013, the Military Sciences Academy of the PRC published the aforementioned *The Science of Military Strategy*. The collective work of 35 Chinese military scientists is an attempt to present how the People's Liberation Army (PLA) views the military programmes of both China and the rest of the world. This substantial and authoritative publication is at its third iteration, and stands to examine the evolution of Chinese military strategy, to articulate contemporary Chinese military thought, and to present the way forward for the development, deployment and potential utilisation of Chinese military power.

Of note is that the publication is not directly meant for the international public, but more so for Chinese military expert community, which is the main reason why it should be viewed as a direct and detailed document on the perceptions of the PLA on a number of strategic talks. The new edition presents some of the views



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Within the publication “The Science of Military Strategy”, on the matter of nuclear deterrence and in keeping with the official Chinese position, which has remained unchanged, it is stated that nuclear weapons encompass a limited role in Chinese nuclear strategy. Their only purpose is to deter other nuclear powers from the usage of nuclear weapons as a threatening force and consequently as such against the PRC.

of the PLA on nuclear deterrence, nuclear war, nuclear weapons control, the effectiveness of Chinese nuclear capabilities and the effects of US policy on Chinese nuclear strategy (Kiriakov, Ib.), which will be further discussed in detail.

Within the publication, on the *matter of nuclear deterrence* and in keeping with the official Chinese position, which has remained unchanged, it is stated that *nuclear weapons encompass a limited role in Chinese nuclear strategy*. Their *only purpose is to deter* other nuclear powers from the usage of nuclear weapons as a threatening force and consequently as such against the PRC. Within the document the following key points can be extrapolated:

- China commits to not utilise nuclear weapons against non-nuclear armed states.
- China commits to not retaliate with nuclear weapons against a conventional attack.
- China commits to utilise nuclear weapons only in the case of a confirmed nuclear threat.

These key postulations of the Chinese nuclear weapons policy are presented as the “*special characteristics*” of Chinese nuclear deterrence. Within the document it is also stated that China maintains the no-first-use policy and the deployment of nuclear weapons as a means of defence when such weapons have been deployed against the country, a position that radically contrasts the accepted nuclear doctrines of both the USA and Russia, which to different extents envision a first-use policy. The further statement is made that Chinese nuclear deterrence is based upon the principle of effective countermeasures and that it is purely defensive in its character. It can be thus stated that Chinese strategists consider that the reason for nuclear deterrence is the pure destructive damage inherent within nuclear weapons and their usage against China, it being the unconditional threshold for nuclear retaliation and not their sheer amount and the severity of an attack.

A further encapsulation of the stated nuclear policy of China as expressed within the document is represented by the views and perceptions of the People’s Liberation Army related to the *use of nuclear weapons* in the scenario where nuclear deterrence has proven

ineffective. *The Science of Military Strategy* lists what the response would be to an enemy nuclear attack, namely:

- A Chinese suppressive nuclear attack will be limited in scope;
- A Chinese suppressive nuclear attack will be directed against enemy population centres, and not against military targets;
- The principal goal of a Chinese suppressive nuclear attack will be to ensure that an enemy discontinues future nuclear attacks against China.

From these perceived notions, the extrapolation can be made that the Chinese nuclear strategy envisions that a proportion of its nuclear arsenal remains in reserve. The Chinese nuclear deterrence capabilities are further reinforced based upon the military-political concept of “*countervalue*” (or counter-cities), as more applicable for China as a state with a smaller number of nuclear weapons compared to its principal adversaries and even when considering the deployment of nuclear weapons in combat, their principal objective would be to deter the adversary from strikes against China by openly placing enemy populations as the principal targets, instead of target with military value.

China’s nuclear weapons capabilities are further defined as “*far smaller*” and with “*far more limited capabilities*” than those of the Russian Federation and the United States of America, but still sufficient to meet the baseline demands for effective deterrence.

Within the publication, *the policies of nuclear arms control and nuclear disarmament* are examined in an extremely positive light, albeit contrasting views in respect to China’s own position. It is noted that, on the one hand, nuclear arms control has the notable positive consequences of maintaining the strategic balance, preventing nuclear war from erupting, and reducing defence costs amongst others. On the other end of the spectrum, the control on nuclear arms and disarmament, especially for the larger nuclear powers, is viewed as an important platform for maintaining nuclear supremacy, strategic restriction and the weakening of the capabilities of strategic opponents.

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Within the document, an emphasis is placed on the effectiveness of Chinese nuclear policy in deterring a nuclear attack, deriving from the development of the conventional forces of the United States of America. Specifically, the US development and the current outcomes of the "Prompt Global Strike" project are seen as manifesting in capabilities to strike at the Chinese national nuclear deterrent.

of such weapons. However, when these activities are viewed as an element within a larger global military and political rivalry, it is noted that, in the introduction of nuclear arms controls, a large degree of caution must be observed regarding the conditions and motives of opponents and adversaries, as well as the consequences of their own individual actions. It is within this framework of interactions that, at first glance, the paradoxical opinion of Chinese strategists is expressed, namely that China should reinforce its own nuclear forces with the objective of gaining a higher degree of initiative in the nuclear arms control and reduction talks (Ib.).

The discussed publication *The Science of Military Strategy* places special attention on *the influence of the United States of America on the new Chinese policy*. The United States of America are defined as the primary and most important factor influencing the Chinese policies on nuclear security.

An evaluation is provided related to the tendencies in US military policy, which contribute to limiting the number of nuclear weapons. However, it is noted that such tendencies do not constitute a significant departure in their respective nuclear policy. It is further pointed out that the United States of America still retains its policy on a pre-emptive preventive strike (First Use Policy) and that nuclear weapons are kept in a high state of readiness for immediate launch. Chinese strategists note that the US plans for the development of their nuclear forces place under a high degree of scrutiny the dedication of the USA to the eventual universal elimination of nuclear weapons (*Science of Military Strategy*, 2013, pp. 212-252).

Additionally, within the document, an emphasis is placed on the effectiveness of Chinese nuclear policy in deterring a nuclear attack, deriving from the development of the conventional forces of the United States of America. Specifically, the US development and the current outcomes of the "Prompt Global Strike" project are seen as manifesting in capabilities to strike at the Chinese national nuclear deterrent. It is pointed out that such a final outcome would place China in a passive position and would significantly affect its own response capabilities, thus seriously degrading nuclear deterrence. This exact point along

with other texts within the document allude to the apparent lack of confidence in the then Obama-administration's commitment to nuclear arms control and the assurance of international nuclear stability (Kiriakov, Ib.).



FURTHER EVOLUTION OF CHINESE NUCLEAR STRATEGIC CONCEPTS AND NOTIONS

In the immediate period after China's new forays in redefining its nuclear strategy, as observed beforehand, the international security system as well as the relationship of China with its principal adversaries has changed dramatically. In a progressively more aggressive international environment, supplemented by the rebirth of bloc politics, increasing tensions and the general collapse of the international treaty regime on nuclear stability, China's own policy can be stated to further encapsulate a more pro-active approach. On 26 May 2015, the new *Military Strategy of the People's Republic of China* was published, constituting the further evolution and continuation of the bi-annual *China's Defence White Paper*.

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In the introductory section of the new strategy, it is pointed out that, in an era when the contemporary world is tackling with unprecedented changes, China finds itself in a key stage of reform. The Chinese people, in their fight to fulfil the "*Chinese dream*" of reconstituting the glory of the Chinese nation, hope to cooperate with other states for the common good of the protection of peace and common development and prosperity (Tuid, 2015). The idea of China's current and, in particular, future place on the world stage is thus directly intertwined with its continued prosperity and, more importantly, with the ideas that effective national defence will be key in ensuring it.

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The creation of reliable national defence and a numerically powerful army is defined as a strategic goal for the modernisation of China and a security guarantee for peaceful state development. The further evolution of Chinese strategic perceptions is expressed within the framework of the military *Strategy for Active Defence*, an idea constituted in the creation of the People's Republic of China and continuously enriched and further evolved.



At the 19th Party Congress in October 2017, Xi Jinping put out the statement that the modernisation of the armed forces will be completed by 2035, and by 2050, China should be amongst the foremost military powers in the world.

Amongst the *principal strategic tasks of the Chinese armed forces* in the new strategy is the maintenance of strategic deterrence through a nuclear counter-strike. In accordance with the requirements of strategic and nuclear security for the 2nd AF, a set of different measures have been planned, amongst them *“improving the system for nuclear deterrence”* and *“increasing the capabilities for strategic deterrence and nuclear counter-strike, increasing the range for conducting an accurate strike”* (PRC Military Strategy, 2015). Thus, the active trend of further increasing the technical capabilities of the Chinese strategic forces, noted in the last decade, is part of a long-term strategy that extends far into the future. This *large-scale modernisation of the armaments and structure of the Chinese armed forces has been conducted under the leadership of President Xi Jinping* (since 2012, Secretary General of the Chinese Communist Party – CCP and Chairman of the Central Military Commission of the CCP, and since 2013 President of the People’s Republic of China). At the 19th Party Congress in October 2017, Xi Jinping put out the statement that the modernisation of the armed forces will be completed by 2035, and by 2050, *China should be amongst the foremost military powers in the world*. For these ambitious objectives of the armed forces, 150 billion USD were provided in 2017 alone (Yang, 2018), an increase of 7% over the preceding year, a budget that has kept constantly expanding even during the global economic and financial difficulties in 2020-2021 (Da Silva et al., 2020, pp. 2-10).

Subsequently, in July 2019, the Ministry of National Defence People’s Republic of China published its new *White Paper on the “National Defence of China in the New Age”*.

Within the document it is stated that the contemporary international security environment is undergoing significant alterations. On the one hand, the reconstitution and regrouping of international powers is increasing in pace, and the number of emerging markets and developing states is growing, thus the configuration of strategic power is becoming more balanced. On the other hand, the White Paper notes the increasing strategic competition. The document points to the steps made by the USA in updating its own strategies national security and national defence strategies, adopting unilateral policies

and approaches. According to the document, it is this particularity that provokes and intensifies competition between the larger state actors, exponentially increasing their defence spending in a diversity of fields: developments in the nuclear sphere, outer space, cyber and ballistic missile defence, ultimately undermining global strategic stability (*China's National Defense in the New Era*, 2019).

The principal goal of Chinese national defence, according to the document, remains largely unchanged, but now taking on the more ambiguous definition of being *"detering and counteracting aggression"*. Additionally, and in manner of similarity to the previous publications, it clearly states that the further development of military strategy is in compliance with *"the principles of defence, self-defence and response to an attack, and thus assumes the Active Defence stance"*.

Within the document it is stated that China will always be engaged in the nuclear policy and stance *"not to be the first to utilise nuclear weapons in any time and under any conditions, and unconditionally not to utilise or threaten with the use of nuclear weapons non-nuclear states or zones, free from nuclear weapons"*. China dutifully commits itself to the prohibition of nuclear weapons and their total elimination. The state, according to the White Paper, does not engage in a nuclear arms race with any other state and *maintains its nuclear capabilities to a minimum level, necessary for the national security. China maintains the nuclear strategy of self-defence*, the objective of which is to ensure national strategic security through deterring other states from utilising or threatening to utilise nuclear weapons against China (*China's National Defense in the New Era*, 2019).

As the ultimate strategic objective, the White Paper from 2019 envisions the *complete transformation of the national military forces into a world class force by the middle of the 21st century*. Thus, the strategic and military developments of President Xi Jinping from 2017 and the first notions of such efforts from 2021 are further enforced through the official document of the Ministry of National Defence, which defines the policy of the state in the sphere of defence into the new era.



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The missile forces have been identified as a key component of China's nuclear deterrence strategy for deterring and countering third-party intervention in regional conflicts. The status of these forces called since 2016 the "People's Liberation Army Rocket Force", formerly known as the 2nd Artillery Force, is noted as having been upgraded to a separate type of armed forces service, such as the PLA Land Forces, the PLA Navy and the PLA Air Force, and their renaming is part of large-scale reforms, initiated at the end of 2015.

OUTSIDE PERCEPTIONS AND CURRENT STATE OF THE CHINESE NUCLEAR ARSENAL

According to the US expert community, the White Paper from 2019 directly opposes the United States' National Security Strategy from 2017 and the National Defence Strategy of the Pentagon from 2017, defining US forces in Asia as an aggressive and destabilising factor. The new White Paper is further viewed as an answer to the significant evolution of US strategy from its focus on countering terrorism and extremism to a focus on competition and a possible conflict with Russia and China (Cordesman, 2019). Western observers also express the opinion that the leadership in Beijing has thus provided an open warning that rising strategic competition between the established superpower of the USA and the emerging one of China is of great significance and will define relations between the two states for decades to come (Werner, 2019).

In the 2020 Pentagon annual report to the US Congress on the military and defence programmes of China, the year 2019 is defined as pivotal for the PLA. As noteworthy achievements in 2019, and achievements of concern to US security policy, in the section of the report on *Missile Forces of the People's Liberation Army* it is stated that "The Missile Forces have advanced in the implementation of long-term modernization plans to increase their strategic deterrence capabilities" and "China has fired more ballistic missiles for testing and training than the rest of the world". The missile forces have been identified as a key component of China's nuclear deterrence strategy for deterring and countering third-party intervention in regional conflicts. The status of these forces called since 2016 the "People's Liberation Army Rocket Force", formerly known as the 2nd Artillery Force, is noted as having been upgraded to a separate type of armed forces service, such as the PLA Land Forces, the PLA Navy and the PLA Air Force, and their renaming is part of large-scale reforms, initiated at the end of 2015 (*Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2020*).

The report "Annual Threat Assessment of the American Intelligence Community", issued on 9 April 2021 by the Director of US National Intelligence, expands on Western perceptions and concerns on the development of Chinese nuclear capabilities, stating that China is building larger and more capable nuclear missile forces, which are

more survivable, more diverse and to a higher standard of readiness than in the past, including nuclear missile systems designed to deal with scenarios of regional escalation and intercontinental second-strike capability. The report estimates that Beijing will be continuing the trend of the rapid increase and diversification of the platforms in its nuclear arsenal, with the intention of at least doubling its nuclear assets over the next decade and the construction of a reliable and survivable nuclear triad. According to the report, China is not interested in arms control agreements that limit its modernisation plans and will not accept negotiations that preserve US and Russian nuclear advantages (*Annual Threat Assessment of the US Intelligence Community*, 2021, p. 7).

Overall Western assessments seem to collaborate the stated goals of Chinese nuclear strategy and planning over the preceding decade. By 2021, China is on course to possess a diversified and survivable nuclear triad, as well as a conventional and nuclear ballistic missile arsenal, radically different in composition and objectives from any other world power, and that is geared towards a wide variety of tasks, from the regional to the strategic level. In comparison to the provided missile inventory at the beginning of this paper and the inventory that constituted China's deterrence capabilities at the beginning of its large-scale reforms a decade ago, the current inventory of PLA Rocket Forces is reported by Western observers to include:

- 104 ICBMs: 10 DF-4; 20 DF-5A/B; 8 DF-31; 24 DF-31A; 24 DF-31A(G); 18 DF-41
- 110 IRBMs: DF-21 (dual-purpose);
- 186 MRBMs: 80 DF-21A/E (nuclear); 36 DF-16, 16 DF-17 with HGV, 24 DF-21C; 30 DF-21D ASBM (conventional)
- 297 SRBMs and GLCMs: 108 DF-11A; 81 DF-15B; 54 CJ-10/CJ-10A; 54 CJ-100;
- ~72 SLBMs: up to 72 JL-2. (IISS, 2021, p. 249)

In conjunction with the greatly expanded missile inventory, China has also, despite its public assurances and commitments, continued the steady growth of its quantitative nuclear arsenal to between 272 and 350 warheads (Brown). This is substantially lower than the 1,500 warheads individually deployed by the United States of America



and Russia, and can be seen as an effort by China to not only expand its deterrence capabilities, but to also potentially enter the broader strategic dialog, which it has so far strayed away from, considered detrimental to its own nuclear strategy.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, the summarisation can be made that in the past decade the People's Republic of China has taken the steps to transform its nuclear armed forces. China has thus expanded their qualitative capabilities and also their quantity within a key set of primary objectives that have come to define China's nuclear strategy: to make its nuclear and conventional strategic arsenals (which China views as encompassing the same strategic objectives of deterrence) more survivable, more technologically capable, and capable of achieving a broader set of objectives; to ensure strategic deterrence with its main geopolitical rival, the United States of America, through the ability to strike against targets at long distances; to possess the ability to engage diverse regional targets in a limited conflict. All of these parameters of China's strategy have been very publicly visible and have had an unprecedented level of openness and disclosure, leading to the final conclusion that China is engaging in the strategic dialogue of making its newly built capabilities known, as well as the conditions for their employment, all in an effort to maintain strategic stability and peace through the primary conditions for deterrence, mutual awareness and predictability.

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