

China's National Defense in 2010

by Jaeho Hwang

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On March 31, 2011, the Chinese government published the *China's National Defense in 2010*. China has published white papers every two years to explain its defense environment and defense policies. This white paper is the seventh since 1998 and consists of 10 chapters and eight appendixes.

The 2010 white paper is significant for the following reasons. First, People's Liberation Army (PLA) modernization is in a separate chapter. Reviewing the last 60 years of military modernization and the difficulties it experienced, China emphasized new attack powers such as firepower, mobility, and protection capabilities for winning in regional warfare under the condition of informatization. Second, over the last 60 years it has shifted focus from developing individual branches of the army to modernization and informatization. To do this, China introduced efforts to strengthen consolidation among the branches of the PLA.

Third, by mentioning security interests in outer space, electronics, and cyberspace, the white paper suggests that the Chinese military is strengthening its ability to deny access through new sources of power. Fourth, military confidence building was handled in a separate chapter for the first time, which stated that China will try to forge better relations and lessen tensions in other areas such as Taiwan, through joint trust systems and participating in regional security mechanisms. Although this has been attempted before, those efforts were described more fully in this volume.

Fifth, the diverse uses of the military in peace time were highlighted. These included maintaining social stability, disaster relief, nation building, UN peacekeeping, activities regarding the Gulf of Aden and the coast of Somalia, and joint military training. Sixth, this white paper is the first to include major expenditures of the defense budget such as earthquake disaster relief, and activities in the Gulf of Aden and the coast of Somalia. Seventh, the military legal system was separated into a single chapter to indirectly emphasize the Chinese ideology, politics, and control of the military.

Several implications can be drawn from this white paper. The first is the change in how China perceives international order. The shift in China's international power sprouts from changes in economic power. After the economic crisis, there have been structural problems and contradictions between nations that have triggered shifts in comprehensive national power and the strategic balance. However, this does not work against China, and a spotlight has been put on China for its

abilities and presence. Second, China's confidence is evident in its acknowledgment of its rising national power rather than denying it. China is entering a new stage of comprehensive national power and China admits this. Third, China is trying to use this rising power for diplomatic projection. For example, China is an active participant in the international community through such institutions as in the UN.

Fourth, the white paper was extremely conscious of the United States. Although the last six white papers were published in late December, this white paper was published in late March. This may reflect the results of the US-China Summit last January. Fifth, the white paper was created under the influence of a strategy of ambiguity. The US says that the uneasiness in international affairs accounts for opacity in the military sector and argues that an increase in transparency will help reduce threats posed by the Chinese military. China believes that it is still vulnerable and therefore transparency threatens its national security, and it is better to maintain ambiguity regarding the military. China still believes that it is not yet able to counter the US. Therefore, the format and content of the white papers will be maintained.

Sixth, regarding the North Korean nuclear issue (of extreme interest to South Korea), China has stated that dialogue and negotiation, rather than coercion, will be key to solving this problem. It maintained its position that peace in Northeast Asia and denuclearization must come through Six-Party Talks, which reaffirms the structural limit to ROK policies on North Korea and China. Seventh, we can see the Chinese perspective of the North Korean nuclear issue. The white paper expressed it as a nuclear problem in the "Korean Peninsula" rather than just in "North Korea," and called for denuclearization of the "Korean Peninsula" rather than "North Korea." This shows that South Korea is also a target for denuclearization and anticipates Chinese thinking about the possible redeployment of US tactical nuclear weapons to South Korea, as some in this country request.

The PLA emphasized that this white paper is the "product of reform and openness" and an "important symbol." While there were improvements on its content and form, the white paper has not satisfied international and domestic expectations in regard to PLA transparency. Since this white paper maintains the traditional ambiguity of the Chinese military, it remains difficult for outsiders to judge Chinese military capacity and skills.

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