

China publishes a white paper on military strategy

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In late May, China published its tenth biennial white paper on security entitled '*China's Military Strategy*'. The document includes a diagnosis of China's current security situation, highlighting a growing number of local challenges against the background of a largely peaceful global situation. It sets tasks for the Chinese armed forces, the most important of which is to uphold the political power of the Communist Party of China and the 'socialist system with Chinese characteristics'. The strategy also indicates the direction of changes within the structure of the Chinese armed forces. Although the white paper has a clear ideological cast, it does reveal the current priorities in Chinese foreign and security policy, and allows the reader to reconstruct the Chinese elite's world view.

Commentary

- The white paper reflects the ongoing changes in Chinese security policy, and serves as a political signal to the rest of the world. The white paper is directed towards the United States, Japan and China's other neighbours in East Asia, who are not mentioned by name. All these countries are accused of violating China's interests, including its sovereignty over the East and South China Seas.
- The most important message from the white paper is the emphasis on the importance of protecting China's interests on the high seas. The document states that it is necessary to abandon the 'traditional mentality', which gives primacy to land-based policies over the maritime policy. The Navy should move from defending the coastal waters to protecting the open seas. This approach heralds a more active security policy, and suggests an increase in Chinese assertiveness in territorial disputes in the East and South China Seas. The emphasis on the role of the Navy is also a response to the widening scope of China's political and economic interests on a global scale, including the concept of the maritime New Silk Road currently being developed. This defines a need to increase the degree of mobility of the Chinese ground forces, and stresses that the Air Force should also develop its offensive capabilities in tandem with its defensive capabilities.
- China attaches particular importance to the growing role of cyberspace in its security policy. This strategy emphasises the need to prepare for offensive and defensive operations in cyberspace, and in the spheres of information and propaganda in case of potential local conflict.
- The strategy reflects the dual nature of Chinese thinking about the international environment. On one hand, the document indicates China's growing economic and

political ties with the outside world, including Western countries, and links China's prosperity with that of the rest of the world. On the other hand, the 'besieged fortress' mentality remains strong among the Chinese elite. The document points to the threat of 'separatism' in Taiwan, Tibet and Xinjiang, and stresses that 'anti-China forces' have never abandoned their attempts to provoke a 'colour revolution' in China.