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SYLLOGE ON CHINA

Focus: Nuclear, Space, Missiles and other Security Issues

An Initiative by Indian Pugwash Society and Centre for Nuclear Issues and Arms Control (MP - IDSA)



INDIAN PUGWASH SOCIETY

China increasing nuclear arsenal at exponential rate, expected to double by 2030, Pentagon report says

Brie Stimson

Fox News, October 21, 2023

China is rapidly increasing its nuclear arsenal and is expected to double its number of nuclear warheads from more than 500 currently to more than 1,000 by 2030, which exceeds earlier projections, the Pentagon's annual report on China's military growth said. The Pentagon previously estimated that Beijing had more than 400 nuclear warheads as of 2021. The Chinese military's "evolving capabilities and concepts continue to strengthen the PRC's ability to 'fight and win wars' against a 'strong enemy' (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," the report said, noting the Chinese Communist Party's goal of having a "world-class" military by 2049.

<https://www.foxnews.com/world/china-increasing-nuclear-arsenal-exponential-rate-expected-double-2030-pentagon-report-says>

Ten years of China's Belt and Road: what has \$1tn achieved?

Joe Leahy, James Kynge and Benjamin Parkin

Financial Times, October 22, 2023

For Xi, the two-day forum to celebrate the flagship \$1tn global infrastructure initiative — the biggest multilateral development programme ever undertaken by a single country — was a chance to further embed China's influence across the developing world. China's capacity to deliver large infrastructure projects has never been in doubt. But the questions that critics of the BRI, who are mostly outside China, are asking is whether the project has been worth the tremendous cost and whether it can continue to operate as it has in years to come. For China, the BRI has won valuable overseas business for its large state-owned enterprises and strengthened diplomatic ties with the countries in the so-called global south.

<https://www.ft.com/content/83501dd5-fe6d-4169-9d83-28a8cf46e681>

Chief scientist outlines space plans for next 15 years

Deng Xiaoci

Global Times, October 22, 2023

Regardless of the US' suppression of China's development in the space sector, which has been no less than that of the chip industry, China's capabilities in moon and planetary exploration have

advanced to a world leading level, according to Wu Weiren, chief designer of China's lunar exploration program and an academician at the Chinese Academy of Engineering. Wu, who is also the chief scientist and director of China's Deep Space Exploration Laboratory (DSEL,) made the remarks during his keynote speech at the opening ceremony for the 25th Annual Meeting of the China Association for Science and Technology, the most important gathering of Chinese scientific circles, held this year in Hefei, capital city of East China's Anhui Province.

<https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202310/1300332.shtml>

China intercepts Philippine vessel carrying illegal materials

China Military Online, October 22, 2023

China Coast Guard lawfully intercepted a Philippine vessel attempting to transport illegal building materials to the warship that is illegally "stranded" in the Ren'ai Reef, China Coast Guard said in a brief statement. Since early August, the Philippines has frequently violated China's territorial sovereignty by sending official vessels and warships to trespass into waters adjacent to Chinese islands in the South China Sea, including the Ren'ai Reef and the Huangyan Island. The Philippines' repeated attempts to send construction materials to repair and reinforce a grounded military vessel in Ren'ai Reef have been thwarted by China Coast Guard, which has conducted necessary measures in response.

http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/CHINA_209163/TopStories_209189/16260784.html

China says it uncovered another spying case in US

Reuters, October 23, 2023

China's top spy agency said that a Chinese citizen who worked for a defence institute had been accused of spying for the United States and his case had been transferred to a court in the southwestern city of Chengdu for trial. The case is the latest to underscore Beijing's heightened commitment to national security, its expanded anti-spying laws and crackdown on domestic corruption. Chinese state broadcaster CCTV said in a television report that a man surnamed Hou who worked at an undisclosed defence institute was sent in 2013 as a visiting scholar to a U.S. university, where he was coerced into revealing Chinese state secrets.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/china-says-it-uncovered-another-spying-case-us-2023-10-22/>

China, Japan exchange congratulations on 45th anniversary of peace, friendship treaty, a ‘significant move’ in stabilizing tense ties

Chen Qingqing

Global Times, October 23, 2023

Despite the severe difficulties facing the China-Japan relations, Chinese Premier and Japanese Prime Minister exchanged congratulations on Monday on the 45th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship Between China and Japan. Some experts considered the move a significant gesture of stabilizing bilateral relations, as Tokyo could make some tactical diplomatic adjustments in engaging with Beijing and easing tensions, considering its domestic political and economic dilemma as well as geopolitical challenges on the global stage.

<https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202310/1300410.shtml>

Hypersonic Race 2.0: China tests next-gen ‘waverider’ with revolutionary technology

Stephen Chen

South China Morning Post, October 23, 2023

China has developed a new surface material for hypersonic vehicles that can remain intact after a long flight, scientists involved in the project announced. This technology was previously thought impossible. In a test conducted by the Chinese military, the thin material was applied to the surface of a “waverider” aircraft – which uses shock waves generated by its own flight to improve lift. The air around the hypersonic aircraft was then heated to thousands of degrees Celsius.

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/science/article/3238440/hypersonic-race-20-china-tests-next-gen-waverider-revolutionary-technology>

Chinese Nuclear and Missile Proliferation

Congressional Research Service, The U. S. Government, October 24, 2023

China did not oppose new states’ acquisition of nuclear weapons during the 1960s and 1970s, the Department of State wrote in a declassified January 1998 report to Congress. According to a 1983 National Intelligence Estimate (NIE), China had exported “nuclear materials since 1981” that were not subject to International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards. Beijing did so “mainly to earn hard currency,” the estimate assesses. Consequently, according to the NIE, Beijing ended its “abstention from commercial trade in conventional arms and nuclear materials.” During the 1980s and 1990s, China transferred nuclear and missile technology to other countries’ weapons programs.

<https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF11737>

US chip curbs stymie efforts by China surveillance group to diversify

Eleanor Olcott

Financial Times, October 24, 2023

SenseTime, once the darling of China's artificial intelligence sector, has been pushing to diversify away from unreliable government revenues by snapping up high-powered chips that every AI company wants. Its effort now seems doomed by the latest round of US government export controls preventing Nvidia and its rivals from selling the powerful chips, needed to train the latest AI systems, to Chinese customers and their foreign subsidiaries. Since it went public in 2021, SenseTime has been seeking to reduce its reliance on its core surveillance business, which sells AI-powered security cameras to Chinese authorities.

<https://www.ft.com/content/36f7261a-f338-44bb-a47f-cdc4c794465a>

China's nuclear arsenal must be strong enough to deter any potential US nuclear blackmail

Hu Xijin

Global Times, October 24, 2023

China must possess a more powerful nuclear arsenal because the US has already identified China as its "top competitor," and increasing military pressure on China is one of its inevitable means of containment. China's nuclear arsenal must be strong enough to eliminate the possibility of nuclear blackmail from the US. To achieve this, our second-strike capability needs to be highly credible and powerful. This capability should make the political elites in Washington tremble just by thinking about it and effectively suppress any impulse of the US hawks to threaten China in an extreme way.

<https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202310/1300484.shtml>

China missile edge over U.S. puts Japan at risk of threats: analyst

Masahiro Okoshi

Nikkei Asia, October 24, 2023

China's advantage over the U.S. in theater-range missiles in Asia could enable it to "intimidate" frontline states like Japan during a crisis over Taiwan, according to an expert specializing in China's military strategy. In an interview with Nikkei, Toshi Yoshihara, a senior fellow at the Washington-based Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, said that Washington has "few symmetrical or in-kind options" to match the rapid growth in Beijing's intermediate-range arsenal described in the Pentagon's recent report on China's nuclear buildup.

<https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/International-relations/China-missile-edge-over-U.S.-puts-Japan-at-risk-of-threats-analyst>

China removes Defence Minister Li Shangfu after two-month disappearance

Nectar Gan and Wayne Chang

CNN, October 24, 2023

China's Defence Minister Li Shangfu was fired two months after he disappeared from public view, becoming the second high-profile minister to lose his job recently without any official explanation. Li was also removed from his state positions as a member of the Central Military Commission – a powerful body headed by Chinese leader Xi Jinping who ultimately commands the armed forces – and as one of China's five state councillors – a senior position in the cabinet that outranks a regular minister, state broadcaster CCTV reported. The decision was approved by the standing committee of the country's rubber-stamp legislature, the National People's Congress, according to CCTV. The committee did not name any successor to Li.

<https://edition.cnn.com/2023/10/24/china/china-names-new-defence-minister-intl-hnk/index.html>

China is making the same mistakes the Soviets did

Minxin Pei

Bloomberg, October 24, 2023

At the same time, Xi has sought diligently to modernize China's armed forces, building them into a force capable of seizing Taiwan by 2027, according to US intelligence estimates, and of rivaling the US by 2049. Most worryingly, the latest Pentagon report warns that China's efforts to expand its nuclear arsenal “dwarf previous attempts in both scale and complexity.” With such a costly buildup — China's official defence budget grew to around \$230 billion in 2022, while its actual spending is thought to be significantly higher — Xi's government threatens to repeat the same mistakes as the Soviet leadership in the 1970s.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2023-10-23/china-will-lose-arms-race-with-us-like-soviets-did>

U.S. Focuses on deterrence as China raises stakes in Indo-Pacific

Joseph Clark

U.S. Department of Defence, October 24, 2023

The U.S. remains laser-focused on deterring conflict in the Indo-Pacific as China doubles down on its efforts to boost its military power and engage in increasingly provocative behavior, a senior

Pentagon official said. Ely S. Ratner, assistant secretary of defence for Indo-Pacific security affairs, said as China continues to raise the stakes in the region, the Defence Department has responded with a steady hand to ensure competition does not become conflict. "We're not losing sight of the fact that the department has identified China as the top pacing challenge," Ratner said. "We're investing focused capabilities on solving operational problems associated with that."

<https://www.defence.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/3566970/us-focuses-on-deterrence-as-china-raises-stakes-in-indo-pacific/>

China launching new submarines with guided-missile capabilities

Greg Torode

The Japan Times, October 25, 2023

China has launched its first nuclear-powered guided missile submarines, according to the Pentagon's latest report on China's military, giving it land and sea attack options once the sole province of U.S. and Russian vessels. The Pentagon report, published Oct. 20, marks the first apparent confirmation that modified submarines seen in Chinese shipyards over the last 18 months are Type 093B guided missile submarines.

<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2023/10/25/asia-pacific/politics/china-submarine-capabilities/>

Chinese defence ministry slams U.S. report for distorting China's defence policy

Xinhua, October 25, 2023

A Chinese defence spokesperson criticized a report recently released by the U.S. Department of Defence for its disregard of facts and distortion of China's national defence policy and military strategy. Wu Qian, a spokesperson for the Ministry of National Defence, expressed strong dissatisfaction with and firm opposition to the U.S. 2023 Report on Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China, saying that the report hypes up the baseless "China's military threat." He stressed that China is committed to peaceful development and pursues a defensive national defence policy. China's military development "targets no specific countries or objectives" and is "legitimate, legal, reasonable and moderate," Wu said.

<https://english.news.cn/20231025/fca33dad3263407cb53945ab2b648461/c.html#:~:text=BEIJING%2C%20Oct.,defence%20policy%20and%20military%20strategy.>

Russia unconcerned by China increasing nuclear arsenal capabilities, says Kremlin

Reuters, October 25, 2023

The Kremlin said it was not concerned by China increasing the capabilities of its nuclear arsenal, stressing Moscow's "advanced strategic partnership" with Beijing and China's sovereign right to ensure its own security. China has launched its first nuclear-powered guided missile submarines, according to the Pentagon's latest report on China's military, giving it land and sea attack options that were once the sole province of U.S. and Russian vessels. "This does not cause us concern, our relations are an advanced strategic partnership, we have the most advanced stage of political dialogue, economic interaction," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/russia-unconcerned-by-china-increasing-nuclear-arsenal-capabilities-says-kremlin-2023-10-25/>

China, Pakistan to hold "Sea Guardians-3" joint maritime exercise: Defence Spokesperson

Ministry of National Defence of the People's Republic of China, October 26, 2023

"According to the annual plan for international military cooperation, Chinese and Pakistani navies will hold the 'Sea Guardians-3' joint maritime exercise in the waters and airspace of the northern Arabian Sea in November," said Senior Colonel Wu Qian, spokesperson for China's Ministry of National Defence, at a regular press conference. He introduced that with the theme of "joint response to maritime security threats", the exercise will include formation movement, VBSS (visit, board, search and seizure), helicopter cross-deck landing, search and rescue, anti-submarine operation and main gun shooting, during which some professional exchanges and mutual visits will also be included.

http://eng.mod.gov.cn/xb/News_213114/TopStories/16262278.html

Shenzhou-17 crewed spaceflight mission successfully launched

Deng Xiaoci

Global Times, October 26, 2023

On the momentous occasion of the 20th anniversary of China's first manned spaceflight the Shenzhou-5, the Shenzhou-17 spacecraft soared into the sky from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in Northwest China on October 26 morning at 1114h. Sitting atop the Long March-2F Y17 carrier rocket, the spacecraft, carrying taikonauts Tang Hongbo, Tang Shengjie, and Jiang Xinlin,

embarked on the journey toward the China Space Station. Following a smooth flight of around 10 minutes, the Shenzhou-17 spacecraft entered its planned orbit, marking a successful launch, according to the official release by the China Manned Space Agency (CMSA).

<https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202310/1300614.shtml>

Dire warnings of Russia and China threats challenge aging U.S. nuclear arsenal

Robbie Grame and Jack Detsch

Foreign Policy, October 26

The report, “America’s Strategic Posture,” is 160 pages of grim warnings, doom and gloom, and a bevy of recommendations on how to modernize and revamp the U.S. nuclear arsenal. Twelve seasoned foreign-policy experts—six Republican and six Democratic experts—penned the report that concluded the United States was, for the first time in its history, facing “two nuclear peer adversaries for the first time.”

<https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/10/26/dire-warnings-of-russia-and-china-threats-challenge-aging-u-s-nuclear-arsenal/>

China slams 'sensationalized' US claims about its military

Jiang Chenglong

China Daily, October 26, 2023

China has expressed its strong dissatisfaction with and firm opposition to the United States Department of Defence's latest report on China's military and security developments, saying it disregards facts and fabricates falsehoods. Ministry of National Defence spokesman Wu Qian said on Wednesday the report distorted China's national defence policy and military strategy, exaggerated and sensationalized the nonexistent "China military threat", and speculated about China's military development in areas such as nuclear capabilities, space and cyberspace.

<https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202310/26/WS6539ba51a31090682a5eac4a.html>

Biden meets top Chinese diplomat as rivals seek to manage tensions

Michael Birnbaum

The Washington Post, October 27, 2023

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi capped two days in Washington with an hour-long visit with President Biden at the White House, part of an ongoing effort to thaw relations between the two

superpowers after a year of anger and distrust from both sides. Wang's visit was itself a positive marker for a relationship that U.S. officials say they have to manage carefully to address irritants between the two nations. "The United States and China are in an intense competition, and we believe the best way to manage that competition is through equally intense diplomacy," National Security Council spokesman John Kirby told reporters.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2023/10/27/biden-china-wang-yi-washington-visit/>

Why the US fixation on increased nuclear capability won't deter China but could lead to instability and nuclear war

Andrew Facini

Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, October 27, 2023

In the span of two weeks, several major policy documents—including a bipartisan Congressional report on strategic posture and a Defence Department update on China's estimated nuclear stockpile—have put the US nuclear posture vis-à-vis China front and center. The reports, which focus heavily on hardware and capability, contribute to a years-long deliberation with policymakers and analysts attempting to counter a perceived risk of tipping military balance in the Indo-Pacific. China's nuclear weapons buildup is driving concerns among US allies and partners in the region over the aggression Beijing could possibly engage in, once its nuclear arsenal can "shield" the country from retaliation.

<https://thebulletin.org/2023/10/why-the-us-fixation-on-increased-nuclear-capability-wont-deter-china-but-could-lead-to-instability-and-nuclear-war/>

Minilateral groups cannot patch up cracks in US' Asia-Pacific partnership

Global Times, October 28, 2023

On one hand, the US has been attempting to rope Asia-Pacific countries into its anti-China cliques by smearing China, hyping up "China threat" stories and even coercion, but most of these nations don't desire to take sides between Beijing and Washington. On the other, the variability in US' diplomatic approach, in fact, means disposability. Washington seeks to engage with Asia-Pacific countries in the manner of playing with toy blocks. While the US highlights exclusiveness and competition in its Asia-Pacific minilateral groupings, China pushes for openness and win-win cooperation with its neighbors in the region and beyond. Accomplishments of the development of relations between China and neighboring countries are summarized in the "Outlook on China's Foreign Policy on Its Neighborhood in the New Era" while the future of Asia's development is visualized.

<https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202310/1300747.shtml>

China's naval provocations are getting too blatant to ignore

The Washington Post, October 29, 2023

The South China Sea has long been seen as the likeliest potential flash point between the United States and China — which is why we have argued on these pages the importance of resuming military-to-military contacts as quickly as possible, including a crisis communications hotline, to avoid accidents or unintended mishaps from escalating into all-out conflict. There appeared to be some small hope for restoring those ties with the announcement that the Defence Department will be sending a representative to Beijing for an international three-day gathering, known as the Xiangshan Forum, hosted by the Chinese Defence Ministry.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2023/10/29/south-china-sea-confrontation/>

China powers uranium exploration, development to new level

Zheng Xin

China Daily, October 29, 2023

Uranium exploration and development efficiency in China has significantly increased over the past few years, with the incremental resource amount in the past 10 years accounting for one-third of China's total confirmed reserves, said a top company official. The nuclear fuel supply increase in China has greatly improved the country's energy security, said Chen Junli, president of China Nuclear Uranium Co Ltd, a subsidiary of Chinese nuclear giant China National Nuclear Corporation, during the first International Forum on Natural Uranium Industry held in Beijing.

<https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202310/29/WS653db3dfa31090682a5eb45e.html>

China pledges to renew military dialogue with US while criticising meddling

Kathrin Hille

Financial Times, October 30, 2023

China's most senior military official has delivered a veiled rebuke of the US as he pledged to seek renewed military exchanges with Washington. The remarks by Zhang Youxia, vice-chair of the Central Military Commission, China's top military body, at the Xiangshan security forum, highlighted the challenges for the global powers to restart dialogue amid growing tensions. "We will deepen strategic co-operation and co-ordination with Russia, and we are willing to develop military relations with the US based on mutual respect, peaceful coexistence and win-win co-operation," Zhang said.

<https://www.ft.com/content/11b7f3ab-282e-484a-b2d5-1a535006a322>

PLA blocks Philippine warship trespassing in waters off China's Huangyan Island

Liu Xuanzun

Global Times, October 30, 2023

The Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) blocked a Philippine warship that trespassed into waters off China's Huangyan Dao (Huangyan Island) on Monday, amid escalated provocations by the Philippines around Chinese islands and reefs in the South China Sea, observers said. Without authorization from the Chinese government, a Philippine corvette on Monday illegally trespassed into waters off China's Huangyan Island, Senior Colonel Tian Junli, a spokesperson for the PLA Southern Theater Command, said in a press release.

<https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202310/1300861.shtml>

China's military strategy finds expression in Sun Tzu's Art of War

Li Weichao

China Military Online, October 30, 2023

The first seminar of the 10th Beijing Xiangshan Forum, the Seminar on Sun Tzu's Art of War, was held at the Beijing International Convention Center. Under the theme of Sun Tzu's Art of War and Current International Security Challenges, six experts and scholars from China, Türkiye, Switzerland, India and the US had in-depth exchanges and heated discussion. One idea that was mentioned frequently at the Seminar is Sun Tzu's military thought of subduing the enemy without fighting. Michael Vatikiotis, senior adviser from the Center for Humanitarian Dialogue, Switzerland, pointed out that the focus of Sun Tzu's art of war is not entirely about fighting, but about how to avoid war. To win a war in a non-violent way is very much in line with the traditional Chinese culture and ancient Chinese philosophy, which places great importance on peace and harmony.

http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/CHINA_209163/TopStories_209189/16263046.html

'War of money': can China drag rivals into bankruptcy in a new arms race with drones?

Stephen Chen

South China Morning Post, October 30, 2023

A new generation of high-speed, long-endurance drones powered by low-cost jet engines has entered military service in China, according to a lead scientist on the project. And part of their job

is to lure the US, among other nations, into an arms race where the real trap lies in the budget. The thing that sets the new Chinese drones apart from other models is the low cost of their power source.

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/science/article/3239222/war-money-can-china-drag-rivals-bankruptcy-new-arms-race-drones>

Shenzhou-16 crew returns to Earth after 154 days in space

Deng Xiaoci

Global Times, October 31, 2023

In a monumental achievement for China's manned space program, the return capsule of the Shenzhou-16 manned spacecraft has successfully returned to Earth after a historic mission that lasted 154 days in space. According to the China Manned Space Agency (CMSA), the craft landed at the Dongfeng Landing Site at 0811h on October 31, with the on-site medical team confirming that the three taikonauts onboard led by mission commander Jing Haipeng were in good health. This marks the successful completion of the first manned spaceflight mission since China's Tiangong Space Station entered the application and development stage.

<https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202310/1300880.shtml>

Beijing Xiangshan Forum: Officials and experts share thoughts on South China Sea disputes

CGTN, October 31, 2023

The South China Sea issue is one of the top agendas of the Beijing Xiangshan regional security forum which closed on October 31. Analysts and defence officials agreed that differences over claims to the area can be reconciled through dialogue. He Lei, Former Vice President, PLA Academy of Military Sciences said, “How to resolve these differences and disputes? Our attitude is two-fold. First, we should abide by the signed Declaration on Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea and the Code of Conduct in the South China Sea that is being actively promoted, and adopt the 'dual-track approach' to resolve the issue through peaceful negotiations. Second, we should firmly oppose intervention by countries outside the region. The United States is provoking trouble and causing instability in the South China Sea.”

<https://news.cgtn.com/news/2023-10-31/VHJhbnNjcmlwdDc1NjU5/index.html>

*Sylloge on China is compiled by Mr. Niranjan C. Oak
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