Chinese defence paper warns of US “hegemonism”

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The Chinese defence ministry issued a major white paper on Tuesday, in what amounts to a response to the aggressive US “pivot” to Asia. Entitled, “The Diversified Employment of China’s Armed Forces,” the document warns of the danger of US “hegemonism.”

Confronted by the Obama administration’s efforts to undermine China strategically, as well as diplomatically and economically, Beijing is being forced to rethink its military doctrine, and prepare for a potential nuclear war instigated by Washington.

As part of the “pivot,” the Pentagon’s Air/Sea Battle strategy envisages a massive bombardment using conventional weapons of China’s basic command and communications infrastructure and missile forces to cripple the Chinese military. Aided by key allies such as Japan and Australia, the US would blockade the Chinese mainland by cutting key shipping routes through South East Asia for energy and raw materials from Africa and the Middle East.

For the first time, Beijing’s latest white paper stresses the protection of China’s maritime territories, overseas investments and shipping routes. “With the gradual integration of China’s economy into the world economic system, overseas interests have become an integral component of China's national interests,” it states. “Security issues are increasingly prominent, involving overseas energy and resources, strategic sea lines of communication (SLOCs), and Chinese nationals and legal persons overseas.”

Without naming the US, the paper refers to a country that “has strengthened its Asia-Pacific military alliances, expanded its military presence in the region, and frequently makes the situation tenser.” Japan, the principal US Asian ally, is specifically accused of “making trouble” over the disputed Diaoyu/Senkakus islands in the East China Sea.

The paper points to “signs of increasing hegemonism… and neo-interventionism.” This is a reference to the repeated military interventions led by the US, in particular since the late 1990s, from the bombing of Serbia to the invasions of Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003, the violent toppling of the Libyan regime in 2011, and the mounting intervention in Syria.

The paper also nominates threats to China’s “national unification.” Among them are “terrorism, separatism and extremism”—that is, separatist movements among national minorities such as Tibetans and Xinjiang’s Uyghur Muslims that could be exploited by the US and other imperialist powers. At the same time, the paper warns that “Taiwan independence” forces and their activities are still “the biggest threat to the peaceful development of cross-Straits relations.”

China continues to maintain a large military presence along its coastline facing Taiwan, including hundreds of thousands of Peoples Liberation Army (PLA) troops and an estimated 1,000 tactical ballistic missiles. The Obama administration, although aware of the extreme sensitivity of China’s claims over Taiwan as its integral territory, has begun selling billions of dollars of weapons to Taiwan. The US is also including Taiwan in its Asia-Pacific anti-ballistic missile network, which is part of the Pentagon’s preparations for a potential nuclear war against China.

The white paper refers to the first ever large-scale overseas evacuation mounted by China. During the Libyan war in 2011, some 35,860 Chinese nationals were pulled out with the assistance of Chinese warships and air force transport planes. As a result of the US- and European-led “regime change” operation, billions of dollars’ worth of Chinese investments were lost in

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Libya.

Yue Gang, a former officer in the PLA General Staff, noted on *Sina.com* that China has huge economic interests at stake. Total Chinese investment overseas has reached $US500 billion, and is projected to reach $1 trillion by 2020. He said 81 million Chinese travelled overseas each year, half a million seamen were working around the world, and China operated a merchant fleet of 3,300 ships—the fourth largest in the world. As 55 percent of China's energy production depended on imports and 93 percent of its exports relied on sea shipment, protecting China's maritime routes was a vital question.

Yue noted that China's military had only begun to face these tasks and lacked sufficient aircraft carriers or amphibious assault ships, as well as large transport planes capable of the "strategic lifting" of forces to distant regions.

In an effort to counter the mounting US threat, China's military spending has steadily risen during the past decade, from $20 billion in 2002 to $114 billion this year. China has made some breakthroughs in military equipment. It is testing two prototype stealth fighters, the only nation to do so, apart from the US.

However, the US military budget of more than $680 billion dwarfs China's. Moreover, the US possesses more than 5,100 nuclear warheads, compared to China's estimated 240-400. The US has 11 nuclear-powered aircraft carriers, while the Chinese navy has just one conventionally-powered carrier, and will take years to form a functional battle group with warplanes and escort warships. The US also has military bases and alliances throughout Asia and around the world.

The US media has focused on the fact that the white paper makes no mention of China's long-standing "no first use" nuclear warfare policy. Beijing's longstanding pledge not to launch a first nuclear strike has been reiterated in all previous defence white papers. Its omission from the latest indicates deep concerns that the US is developing the capacity to knock out China's entire nuclear arsenal.

The US has never relinquished its "first strike" nuclear war doctrine. Moreover, it is clearly constructing the anti-ballistic missile systems to enable it to invoke that doctrine with impunity, by neutralising any Chinese counter-attack with nuclear weapons.

The Chinese white paper is another sign that Beijing is being compelled to respond to the Obama administration's "pivot" that is aimed at preventing China from becoming a future threat to American global domination. Washington's aggressive policies have dangerously inflamed flashpoints in Asia such as the Korean Peninsula and are fuelling an arms race throughout the region that can only lead to conflict and war.

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