

# China holds military parade to mark anniversary of victory over Japan

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4 September 2015

The Chinese government held a large military parade yesterday in Beijing's Tiananmen Square to mark the 70th anniversary of Japan's defeat in World War II. The United States and its allies effectively boycotted the event, declining to send their national leaders, amid rising frictions in the Asia-Pacific region, fomented by Washington.

With social tensions also mounting internally, fuelled by a sharp economic downturn, the authorities locked down Beijing, with much of the downtown off-limits. They declared a three-day holiday and kept ordinary people well away from the commemoration.

In his speech, Chinese President Xi Jinping sought to counter US and Japanese accusations of Chinese expansionism and militarism. "The experience of war makes people value peace even more," Xi said, declaring: "No matter how much stronger it may become, China will never seek hegemony or expansion. It will never inflict its past suffering on any other nation."

While making no direct mention of Beijing's territorial dispute with Tokyo over the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands in the East China Sea, Xi made several references to "Japanese aggression." Xi stated: "War is the sword of Damocles that still hangs over mankind. We must learn the lessons of history and dedicate ourselves to peace." There is little doubt that this was a reference to Japan and the United States, warning them against further stoking tensions in the Asia-Pacific region.

Despite Xi's appeals for peace, the military parade amounted to a display of might, both in an attempt to counter the US pressure and to channel popular discontent in a reactionary nationalist direction. Along with 12,000 troops, the event featured 500 pieces of military hardware and 200 aircraft, most being shown

to the public for the first time.

The display included China's DF-26 intermediate range ballistic missile (IRBM), which the Western media has dubbed the "Guam killer." The DF-26, with a range of 4,000 km, is capable of striking the US territory of Guam, which hosts critical US war bases. During the parade, an announcement was made that the missile had been deployed already.

Other missiles included the DF-21D, dubbed a "carrier killer" because it has been designed to strike US aircraft carriers, which are a linchpin of American military forces across the Pacific. Battle tanks, anti-armor missiles and bombers were also shown.

Xi announced that 300,000 troops would be cut from the military's total of 2.3 million soldiers, in what he claimed was a measure to assure other countries of China's peaceful rise. Previous presidents made similar gestures—this is the fourth time since the 1970s that troop numbers have been reduced—but the move is a further step to modernize the armed forces.

The Defense Ministry later stated: "Cutting troop numbers is beneficial for concentrating resources, speeding up informatisation and raising quality. We have the confidence and ability to deal with all kinds of security threats and risks."

Rory Medcalf from the National Security College at the Australian National University commented: "Thinning the ranks of low-skilled soldiers will free up resources for high-tech capabilities like cyber and hypersonic missiles, and of course naval modernization."

Neither US President Barack Obama nor Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe attended yesterday's event. Many European leaders were also absent, despite invitations. Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga criticized China yesterday, saying: "We have

conveyed to China our position that we would like it to adopt a future-oriented stance instead of placing a spotlight on the past.” The Obama administration made similar remarks, while sending its ambassador to China, Max Baucus, to observe the parade.

Notably, other foreign dignitaries attended, such as Russian President Vladimir Putin, South Korean President Park Geun-hye and United Nations General Secretary Ban Ki-moon. In total, 30 heads of state, largely from Africa and Asia, took part. Tokyo criticized Ban’s involvement, claiming that the UN should show neutrality.

Shortly before the parade, the United States reported that five Chinese naval vessels had been spotted in the Bering Sea off the coast of Alaska, seemingly coinciding with a trip to Alaska by Obama. The Western media immediately painted this as evidence of Chinese aggression.

Such complaints reek of hypocrisy. Washington, with various allies in the region, regularly carries out military exercises on China’s doorstep. These include the recently concluded “Ulchi Freedom Guardian” exercises with South Korea, which featured the largest ever joint live-fire drill conducted by South Korea.

In November 2013, the United States dangerously and provocatively sent nuclear-capable B-52 bombers into Beijing’s newly-declared Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) in the East China Sea. Earlier this year, US Defense Secretary Ashton Carter called for plans to be drawn up to send US planes and ships into the 12-nautical mile zone surrounding Chinese occupied territory in the South China Sea.

China’s military parade is another indication that in response to growing US aggression in the Asia-Pacific region, the Beijing regime is resorting to nationalism and militarism. At one point in his speech, Xi asserted that “Marxism-Leninism” was one of China’s “guides to action.” In reality, the Chinese Stalinist regime restored capitalism in China, turning the country into a brutal cheap labour platform for global conglomerates.

There is nothing progressive about the Beijing elite’s opposition to United States imperialism and the Obama administration’s “pivot to Asia,” which is designed to militarily surround China to undercut its interests in the region. Thursday’s military display can only further escalate tensions, while seeking to stir nationalist sentiment.

For the Chinese regime, the parade served as a diversion from escalating economic, social and political problems. Plunging share prices have dealt a blow to its efforts to build a social base among middle-class layers. Economic growth has fallen well below the 8 percent long considered necessary to stave off rising unemployment and social unrest. Last month’s explosions at a chemical warehouse in Tianjin, killing at least 160 people, heightened popular discontent.

For its survival, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) regime will increasingly rely on police-military repression at home. Since coming to power in 2012, Xi has rested on the military as his administration moved to “reform” the country’s state-owned enterprises, opening them up to the interests of international capital. After becoming the leader of the CCP, he quickly moved to consolidate his power by taking over as chairman of the Central Military Commission, which supervises the military, then swiftly purged senior generals.



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