

Example of research paper on political science how will a chinese aircraft carrier...

[Engineering](#), [Aviation](#)



Introduction

The Chinese Armed Forces, the largest armed forces in the world and the second strongest military force next to the U. S., has experienced tremendous expansions in size and advancement in terms of military technology in the past five to ten years. China's recent military developments raised tensions not only in the South and East Asian regions but also in the far Western regions such as the Caspian Sea Regions and U. S. Federal Regions. One of most recent Chinese military development is their acquisition of a refurbished Soviet Air Craft Carrier formerly named Varyag. Although the said Aircraft carrier is not yet loaded with fully-capable ship crews, updated weaponries, and aircrafts, the Chinese military department has already ordered the initiation of the ship's sea trials. Overall, it has been speculated by Chinese and other foreign strategic research analysts that China's acquisition of the Soviet Aircraft Carrier Varyag can directly influence the balance of forces between China and other nations in and around the vicinity of the Pacific. The presence of a now-stronger navy—chiefly because of the new sea trial-operation aircraft carrier can be seen by not only the U. S. but also by other nations as an aggressive move by China to improve its naval presence in the Pacific Region.

Background and Issues

China is not only one of the most population counties in the world; it is actually the most populated one. If the world is still in an era where a nation's military might could be measured in terms of the area of the country and number of people who could fight, China could have been on top of the

world's military hierarchy. The Chinese Armed Forces has over 2, 285, 000 active military personnel, 800, 000 enlisted as reserved military personnel, and 1, 500, 000 paramilitary personnel. All in all, the size of China's Armed Forces is worth 4, 585, 000 combined military and paramilitary personnel (Hackett, 2010). However, that is clearly not the case anymore. A lot of factors are now being considered in determining a country's military might. Meaning, the sheer size of a nation's armed forces cannot be the sole factor in considering the strength and capability of a country anymore. Factors such as the overall firepower, the availability of military tools and equipment are now being heavily considered in quantifying a nation's military strength. Currently, The Chinese Armed Forces lies second to the United States' in terms of military strength when all of those factors are considered.

Nevertheless, People's Republic of China still owns the largest armed forces in the world. This is why in the past decades, not just years, the Chinese government has been striving to direct its military attention in developing an advanced and modernized navy. One of the People's Liberation Army's long term goals is to develop an advanced and militarily competitive Green-water and Blue-water navy. In line with these two goals, China has recently acquired in an auction a refurbished Soviet Russian Aircraft Carrier which was formerly named Varyag in an effort to strengthen their naval presence in the Pacific Region.

The objective of this paper then is to discuss the capabilities of the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) before and after the acquisition of this newly-acquired Aircraft Carrier; the advantages that having a fully-operational (not just in sea trials) could bring them, and other serious military, political, and

social issues that may be involved with China's considerably big move in expanding its naval military presence.

Research and Analysis

A Brief Background of the Chinese Armed Forces

The Chinese Armed Forces, otherwise known as the People's Liberation Army (PLA) is China's official army and is currently classified as the largest national army in the world in terms of the number of members. According to recent statistics, PLA is composed of over 3 million members assigned to the different service branches of the main military force. Due to the established and long history of the United States Army, the PLA only lies second to it in terms of overall military strength, technology and capabilities.

The People's Liberation Army is subdivided into three service branches which were all founded in the same year, 1927: The PLA Ground Force, The PLA Navy, and the PLA Air Force. Operationally, the PLA Ground Force is the main service branch responsible for the management and regulation, especially the dispatching, of Chinese military ground units. The PLAGF (People's Liberation Army Ground Force), stands as the largest ground army in the world with over 1, 700, 000 active and 800, 000 reserve personnel (Blasko, n. d.). The PLAAF (People's Liberation Army Air Force) is the service branch responsible for the management and regulation of all Chinese aviation units. It lies third in the list of countries with the largest air force in the world but it is nevertheless considered the largest air force in continental Asia with over 330, 000 designated military personnel and 2, 500 aircrafts. Some 1, 600 of these 2, 500 are pure combat aircrafts. It can therefore be assumed that the

remaining 900 aviation units are for other purposes aside from combat (bombing, dog-fight, etc.) such as refueling and transport (Cliff et al., 2011).

Lastly, the PLAN (People's Liberation Army Navy) is China's Armed Forces service branch responsible for the acquisition of all modern and updated military naval tools, equipment, and vessels. It is also the one responsible for the management and regulation of such and of the navy personnel. PLAN—250, 000 personnel armed forces service branch, lies next to the United States Navy (the largest in the world) in terms of sheer size.

Over the last 60 years, there have been a lot of improvements with the way how the Chinese government funds and manages their navy. China currently places third in terms of military spending, next to the U. S. and Russia. Most of China's naval armaments and vessels are of Soviet classification. This can be attributed to their past but significant involvement with the now obliterated Soviet Union. During the 1950s up to unspecified periods in the 1960s, the Chinese were trained to maneuver, handle, maintain and repair Soviet class ships, submarines and other amphibious vessels. Later on, they were taught how to build and construct the same soviet war toys they used to handle and maintain, within their own naval shipyards, part by part. The then PLAN personnel quickly learned how to construct such vessels part by part until they became fully capable of building one from scratch.

The fast and efficient transfer of shipbuilding technology can be attributed to the presence of numerous soviet naval advisers in China during the early years of the 1950s. According to records, there were over 2, 500 naval advisers that were sent by the Soviet Union to advise and assist PLAN

personnel (Kim, 2000). Ever since the military naval technical assistance given by the Russians, PLAN's naval capabilities in peace and war times dramatically increased leading to China's classification as a superpower in the Asia-Pacific region in the 21st century.

People's Liberation Army's Acquisition of the Aircraft Carrier Varyag

One of the most significant developments that also dramatically increased PLAN's presence not only in the Asia-Pacific region but in the whole world is its recent acquisition of a refurbished Soviet Aircraft Carrier formerly named Varyag. This serves as a good evidence for strategic analysts who are still having second thoughts about the aggressiveness of China's military development and modernization plans. Although the aircraft carrier they just acquired is not really updated compared to the ones that the U. S., United Kingdom, and Russia have, such move still draws some attention because they are actually planning to acquire two more aircraft carriers in the future. What is more surprising is the fact that China has decided not to acquire these 2 aircraft carriers by means of purchasing from an international entity. They are actually planning to build these additional two aircraft carriers in their own naval shipyards. The construction of the first one will allegedly start in 2013 and the second one by 2015 (France, 2012). With regards to the delivery dates, the construction of the first aircraft carrier will be finished by 2020 and the second one by 2022 (France, 2012). One of the most obvious benefits of acquiring at least one, but preferably more aircraft carriers is the PLAN's obtainment of a Blue-water navy capability which will be discussed in the next section of this paper.

Blue-Water Navy and Blue-Water Navy Capabilities

Before the start of the 21st century, that is, a few decades before the closing of the 20th century, the PLA Navy was actually moving towards the development of a green-water navy. However, due to rapid shifts in economic and military interests, PLAN has decided to focus on another slightly different long-term goal—a blue-water navy. A green-water navy is basically a naval-fleet that is capable of providing swift and effective coastal defense. This is actually one of the strengths of a green-navy—they can be dispatched under short notice and reach a target destination as far as 200-300 nautical miles from the coastline faster compared to conventional navies. Although green-water navies can be dispatched in areas farther than a nation's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and out to the open sea, their capabilities outside such zones can be limited because they are simply not built for that compared to Blue-water navies.

Blue-water navies, the type of navy which China has been yearning for, are usually composed of significantly larger ships accompanying one or more aircraft carriers. One of the distinct factors of a Blue-water navy is the presence of ships which contain supplies such as oil and food for replenishment. Blue-water navies are those fleets that can operate across and in the deep-ocean waters for longer periods of time. In essence, a blue-water navy enables a country to exercise power and flex military naval muscles in areas that are far from the home country where only green-water navies can become effective and efficient. A blue-water navy is usually composed of a group of warships such as destroyers, frigates, submarines, replenishment ships, and one or more aircraft carrier.

With China's acquisition of the ex-Varyag aircraft carrier, they are one-step closer to their goal of developing a Blue-water navy. According to the statement of Chinese Major General Qian Lihua, should China succeed in developing a blue-navy with their own set of aircraft carriers in the future, it will not be used for global reach (BBC News, 2008). Their future blue-water navy, according to them, will be used to reach China's 1st and 2nd island chains only which encompass nearly the entire South China Sea and some areas northwards and eastwards towards Taiwan and Japan.

Regional and Global Affectations

China has, for the past years, been involved in some of the most aggressive territorial conflicts with its neighbors in the area surrounding the South China Sea. South China Sea, according to recent geological analyses, contains vast amounts of natural resources such as oil, natural gas, and methane and these resources can easily be tapped provided that all territorial conflict present between the claimants of territories in the South China Sea are already solved. China, Philippines, Taiwan, Malaysia, and Vietnam are some of the countries involved in that territorial conflict. In terms of the size and overall military power, China can easily dominate all of the countries involved in the South China Sea territorial conflict. The presence of the new ex-Varyag aircraft carrier just lengthens the gap between China and these countries' military power. According to Jim Webb, a senator at the U. S. Senate of Foreign Relations Committee, only the " United States has both the stature and the national power to confront the obvious imbalance of power that China brings" to frequent and recent situations such as the conflicting

claims to the Spratly Islands and other parcel islands claim at the South China Sea (Voice of American, 2009).

With a further strengthened military naval force, as well as a strong economic influence in the Asia-Pacific region, it can easily intimidate either by military or economic means, countries who would dare stand on its way of finding and tapping natural resources that are just lurking in its or other countries' backyards. China's aggressiveness regarding issues of national sovereignty, territorial conflicts and interpretation of International Laws such as the UNCLOS (United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea) is actually starting to raise concerns of other countries, especially the neighboring ones. This is why countries involved in territorial conflicts with China like the Philippines, Vietnam, and Taiwan are seeking the intervention of a third-party in solving disputes and conflicts within the region because of China's military prowess. This can also be the reason why these countries will most likely encourage U. S. intervention in the region to counter China's aggressive behavior towards the aforementioned issues.

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