

# China's Maritime Forces

by  
Manfred Meyer



A compilation of all ships and boats of the Chinese Navy, Coast Guard and other state authorities and agencies

# Modern China's Maritime Forces

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Coast Guard and other state authorities and agencies

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The author of *Modern China's Maritime Forces* is prepared to answer questions about the book. He can be reached in care of The Admiralty Trilogy Group at [AdTrGroup@aol.com](mailto:AdTrGroup@aol.com). Visit our website at [www.AdmiraltyTrilogy.com](http://www.AdmiraltyTrilogy.com).

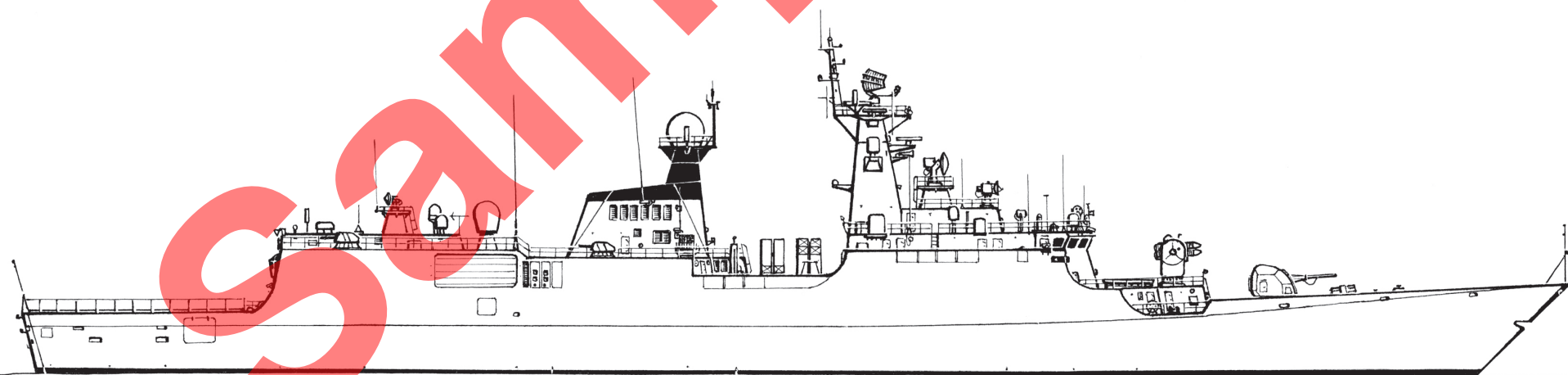
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Cover: Ex-Russian Project 1143.5 carrier *Liaoning* (16) with two Type 52C Luyang II class guided missile destroyers, *Haikou* (171) in the foreground and *Zhengzhou* (151) in the background, and one Type 054A guided missile frigate, *Yantai* (538), during PLAN exercises in late March 2018.

Back Cover: Flag of the People's Liberation Army Navy and the badges of various Chinese maritime agencies. These are usually carried on the funnel.

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Type 054 Jiangkai class Frigate

M. Meyer, 2016

## Foreword by Dr. Andrew Erickson

Ships are the ultimate embodiment of maritime strategy. Today, China's maritime forces have the most ships of any nation. This pathbreaking book documents their force structure in unprecedented detail, making it an invaluable reference for all who seek to understand Beijing's seaward surge and its manifold implications.

While remaining shackled to undeniable geostrategic realities on land, and hemmed in by "island chains" surrounding peripheral seas, China has gone to sea dramatically in both commercial and military dimensions. It is arguably the first continental power in two millennia to become a successful hybrid land-sea power and keep that sea change on course sustainably. Rather than operate freely on exterior lines like such geographically advantaged sea powers as the United States, the United Kingdom, and Japan, China must radiate sea power from interior lines in a way that currently prioritizes the assertion of increasing control over its disputed sovereignty claims in the Yellow, East, and South China Seas while seeking growing influence across the Indo-Pacific and nascent global access and presence.

To pursue these radiating ripples of maritime interests and activities, China draws on three sea forces, each the maritime component of one of its three armed forces: the (1) People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN), (2) China Coast Guard (CCG), and (3) People's Armed Forces Maritime Militia (PAFMM). Each Chinese sea force has the world's most ships in its category. This volume covers China's first and second sea forces, the PLAN and CCG, which contain the vast majority of its purpose-built government vessels.

China's ship numbers matter, greatly. First, China increasingly enjoys both quantity and quality at sea. In recent years China has overcome Cold War shipbuilding that produced crude Soviet-style hulks. The PLAN, naturally China's most advanced sea force technologically, has most dramatically replaced backward rustbuckets with increasing numbers of sophisticated platforms. But the CCG and PAFMM are also modernizing significantly. Of China's three sea forces, its coast guard has grown the most rapidly in numbers and enjoys the greatest global numerical superiority.

China's shipbuilding juggernaut, powered by what until very recently was indisputably the world's fastest-growing multi-trillion-dollar economy, has sustained rapid modernization of all three sea forces even as numbers of modern vessels grow substantially. China's commercial shipbuilding juggernaut subsidizes overhead costs for construction of all three sea forces' vessels, an impossibility for America's military-focused shipbuilding industry. CCG construction is thus both economical and efficient. Commercial off-the-shelf drivetrains and electronics, together with a lack of complex combat systems and weapons, facilitate rapid assembly with multiple units constructed simultaneously.

Second, when it comes to deployment, even the most advanced ship simply cannot be in more than one place at once. Numbers matter significantly when it comes to maintaining presence and influence in vital seas. This is particularly true regarding the growing Sino-American strategic competition where the United States is playing a distant away game. U.S. Coast Guard cutters are focused near American waters, far from any international disputes, while the U.S. Navy is dispersed around the world, with many forces separated from maritime East Asia by responsibilities, geography, and time. Meanwhile, all three major Chinese sea forces remain focused first and foremost on the contested "Near Seas" (the Yellow, East, and South China Seas) and their immediate approaches, close to China's homeland bases, land-based air and missile coverage, and supply lines.

For all these reasons, a complete unclassified order of battle for China's navy and coast guard is long overdue. This pioneering volume finally fills that vital void. I commend it to everyone seeking to understand how China is making such great waves on the world's oceans, and what course it may take in coming years.

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## About the Author

Manfred Meyer grew up behind the Iron Curtain. Since childhood, he's been very interested in both aviation and ships. He started flying at the age of 15. After training as a technician at the railroad, he served in the Air Force as an air traffic controller. After that, he worked for 25 years in the engineering branch of the GDR airline, Interflug. One of his hobbies has always been drawing and painting.

After the liquidation of the GDR and Interflug, he started a business as a draftsman and illustrator for aviation and naval books and magazines. He's also written a few books, sadly no longer available. Since 2000, as part of this activity, he has been making the ship sketches for *Weyer's Flottentaschenbuch*. As a result of this job, he became aware of the interesting developments in the People's Republic of China and made it his specialty.

He now lives in Berlin. He celebrated his 70th birthday in May.

