

Foreword by Dr. Andrew Erickson

Ships are the ultimate embodiment of maritime strategy. Today, the People's Republic of China (PRC)'s military 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 impacts and implications.

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. Powered by the world's second-largest economy and defense budget, and what until very recently was indisputably the world's largest population and fastest-growing multi-trillion-dollar economy, the PRC has surged seaward with scale, sophistication, and superlatives that no continental power ever before achieved in the modern era. Amid European decline and American fiscal and strategic challenges, this historic transformation has the potential to end six centuries of largely Western dominance of the world's oceans.

Paramount leader Xi Jinping is personally guiding China's transformation into a "great maritime power." He is China's first great navalist statesman, the world's foremost navalist statesman today, and the greatest navalist head of state since World War II. Over the past eight decades, no other national leader has placed such a concerted emphasis on naval development over so many years (thirteen and counting) and mobilized so many resources to achieve such dramatic growth in fleet numbers, associated systems, and related capabilities.

Rather than operating on exterior lines like such geographically advantaged sea powers as the United States, the United Kingdom, Japan, and Australia, China must radiate sea power from interior lines in a way that prioritizes increasing control over its disputed sovereignty claims in the "Near Seas" (the Yellow, East, and South China Seas) while seeking growing influence across the Indo-Pacific region and nascent global presence. To pursue these radiating ripples of maritime interests and activities, Beijing 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 PRC sea force has the world's most ships in its category. China has the world's most numerous conventional submarine force and is now focusing on third-generation nuclear submarine production. This volume tracks all three PRC sea forces in unrivaled detail.

China's military has the world's largest fleets of space support ships and oceanographic research vessels at its call. China boasts the world's largest port system. It consistently logs six of the world's ten busiest container ports by container throughput. PRC ports account for more than 40% of global container traffic. Other military-relevant PRC assets include global port infrastructure networks, logistics support, and emerging overseas facilities. On the civilian side, PRC sea power is supplemented by the world's largest marine sector overall, including the world's largest commercial fleet in terms of gross tonnage in shipping capacity, merchant marine, fishing fleet, number of fishers, and aquaculture and pisciculture industries; as well as a large nationally flagged tanker fleet.

PRC ship numbers matter greatly, but China increasingly enjoys both quantity and quality at sea. In recent years China has transcended Cold War shipbuilding that produced crude Soviet-style, post-World War II ship designs. The PLAN, naturally China's most advanced sea force technologically, has most dramatically replaced backward rust buckets 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, enjoys the greatest global numerical superiority, and operates the world's largest platforms.

China's shipbuilding juggernaut has sustained rapid modernization of all three sea forces even as numbers of modern vessels grow substantially. Beijing's sea forces are supported by the world's largest shipyard infrastructure and naval-industrial ecosystem, which has achieved the largest, fastest production-capacity expansion since the Second World War. China accounts for more commercial shipbuilding output than any other country in history and is commissioning major warships at a pace unmatched by any navy in recent decades.

This is part of the largest postwar military buildup, for which Beijing leverages the world's largest human-organizational technology acquisition and application infrastructure. PRC commercial shipbuilding subsidizes overhead costs for construction of all three sea forces' vessels, an impossibility for America's military-focused shipbuilding industry. CCG construction is particularly 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. PAFMM vessel building is even easier and cheaper.

Worryingly, Beijing has the world's most numerous and extensive disputed island and feature claims, with the largest number of other parties. No flashpoint looms larger than Taiwan, and Xi's Centennial Military

Building Goal of 2027 risks making the 2020s a decade of maximum danger of heightened tensions, crises, and even conflict with the United States as well as key allies and partners. Beyond that, Xi seeks to basically complete naval/military modernization by 2035, and to achieve a "world-class military," including a "world-class navy" second to none, by 2049—potentially well before.

For all these reasons, a full accounting of China's Navy, Coast Guard, and Maritime Militia has long been needed. This pioneering volume has filled that vital void by offering the most comprehensive unclassified, open-source PRC sea forces order of battle, data, and ship drawings available anywhere. Even casually perusing its pages reveals the staggering scope and extent of Beijing's sea power today. This second edition includes new sections for PLA Army and Air Force watercraft; the latest data updates, particularly concerning nuclear-powered submarines; and a flotilla of new illustrations. 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.

Disclaimer: The opinions and views expressed are those of the author alone and do not necessarily represent those of the U.S. Government, U.S. Department of War or its components, to include the Department of the Navy or the U.S. Naval War College.

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Acknowledgments

Thanks to Mr. Werner Globke for his support and his permission to use the drawings, which also appear in *Weyer's Flottentaschenbuch*

Thank you to Peter Grining, Patrick Hreachmack, Ed Kettler, Christoph Kluxen, and Steve Thorne for their careful reviews.

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 2018.

