



# Chairman Xi's World Class Navy

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# *What Does “World Class” Mean to Xi?*

- We do not know!
  - Officially undefined.
- Unofficial hints
  - “Ability and strength to compete on par with world class militaries.”
  - “Strength and deterrent force to match the militaries of world class powers”
  - “Compete with world class powers.”
  - “Compete with worlds' strongest players..”
- Implication seems clear: China can match and deter the United States

# *China's Current Strategy*

- Emphasis on the maritime domain
- Main strategic direction is east toward Taiwan and the Pacific
- Forward defense ...keep the United States at “arms length”
- Anxiety over vulnerability of sea lanes, especially in Indian Ocean
- However, focus today is East Asia
- U.S. National Defense Strategy and Indo-Pacific Strategy Report say:
  - China seeks regional hegemony
  - Over long term China seeks global preeminence
- If DOD is correct about this, China will need a world class navy

# *The PLA Navy Today*

- Realities
  - It depends on land-based air cover and ballistic and cruise missiles
  - Very vulnerable once it sails beyond second island chain
  - This is why it needs carrier-based airpower and long endurance submarines
- On the other hand, today China has a credible “Blue Water navy”
- “Sea lane” and Belt and Road protection are driving Blue Water Growth
- Over 105 blue water capable ships built since 2005



## *Liaoning* (CV-16) entering Hong Kong





# *Shandong CV-17 (launched April 2017)*







# *Lhasha (DDG-101)*

## First Type 55

- Big ship –13,000 tons full load
- 591 feet in length
- Impressive firepower: 122 VLS cells
- Three more fitting out
- Perhaps 20 eventually





*So what?*

China has the second most capable blue water fleet in the world....in terms of modern warships

	PLA Navy	UK	France	Japan	India	Russia	United States
Carriers	2	2	1	2 ( Izumo class being adapted for F-35B aircraft.)	1	0	11
Aegis-like Destroyer	28	6	4	6 (AEGIS) 6 (AEGIS like)	4	0	90
Modern Frigate (FFG)	30	13	6 (FREMM)	0	4	10	0
Large Amphib	8	3	3	3+2 DDH	1	0	33
AOR/AOE	10	3	3	5	5	3 very old	30
SSN	6	6	5	0	1	17+8 SSGN	48+4 SSGN
SS	28			22	16	19	0
SSBN	6	4	4	0	1	13	14
Total	118	37	26	44	33	70	230

The peacetime naval balance in East Asia  
today



	China Total	Eastern and Southern Theater	Taiwan	U.S. Seventh Fleet	Japanese Maritime Self Defense Force
Aircraft carrier	1	0	0	1	0
Cruiser/Destroyer	33	23	4	10-14	47
Frigate	54	43	22	0	6
Corvette	42	33	0	0	0
Missile equipped attack craft	86	68	44	0	6
Diesel Attack submarines	50	34	2	0	18
Nuclear attack submarines	6	2		8-12	0
Sub-total (ships that can shoot at you with aircraft, cruise missile or torpedo)	272	203	72	19-27	81
Amphibious ships all classes	59	41	14	3-4	3
Totals	331	244	86	22-31	84

# What does all this mean?

- PLAN on the way to World Class
  - Huge firepower advantage in vicinity of Taiwan and first island chain
  - A modern global navy already number two in size
  - With the new Type-075 (LHD) large amphibious ship PLAN on the cusp on a global expeditionary Marine Corps capability...useful for BRI issues.
- Weaknesses when away from East Asia
  - The “five incapables” and lack of combat experience
  - Lack of air cover.
  - Limited airwing capabilities on the CV’s they have
  - Limited number of SSN’s, but conventional subs already operate in far reaches of Indian Ocean
  - Limited base structure...working on correcting that

# *How big will the PLAN blue water navy be in 2035?*

*We don't know!*

- Absent a sustained major economic dislocation, it seems that China can replace the oldest of today's units while duplicating the last 15 years' worth of blue-water building growth over the next 15 years.
- *The result would be a PLA Navy blue water capability of around 250 carrier, destroyer/frigate, submarines, replenishment and expeditionary amphibious ships.*
- *When combined with 150 or so warships optimized for "near seas" operations, a total PLAN warship/submarine/replenishment ship capability of around 400 ships would result.*
- (This count does not include many different classes of auxiliaries such as minesweepers, tenders, oceanographic ships, smaller amphibious assault units and so forth.)
- *This number and mix of ships would certainly qualify as a regional "world class navy." Think the IJN in 1941.*
- My guess is that China has no interests that would require a globally predominant navy, but they do aspire to protect Indian Ocean sea lanes and will establish a joint land-based air, ballistic missile, and naval capability to accomplish this.



# *PLA Base at Djibouti*

