

# Sejong Policy Brief



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## *Executive Summary*

### **China's Future Military Security Strategy in the Era of U.S.-China Competition**

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*This article is written based on the author's personal opinions  
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## **Executive Summary**

### The Arrival of the U.S.-China Strategic Competition

- Since the outbreak of COVID-19 early this year (2020), scope of conflict between the U.S. and China has begun to expand. From trade and commerce to military and security issues, strategic competition between the two countries has begun to take shape as China's dream of strong army (强军梦) through military modernization has become more concrete.
- The Trump administration has recently announced a new strategy against China, highlighting its containment strategy and competitive approach towards the country. It was a signal of a full-fledged strategic rivalry between the U.S. and China.
- In line with the U.S. hardline stance towards China, China has also expressed its strong will in realizing the Chinese Dream (中国梦) and becoming a global superpower by 2049, and vowed not to give in to or back down from the strategic competition with the U.S.

### Changes in the U.S. Military Security Strategies against China and China's Perception

- Recently, the U.S. has announced the concept of Multi Domain Battle, which aims to secure, maintain and utilize higher leverage in every military operation, defeat enemies and achieve its military purpose by integrating all available military capabilities. Also, the U.S. is in the process of launching the Multi Domain Operation, which neutralizes China's A2/AD (Anti-Access/Area Denial) strategy among five regions of battlefield.

- In line with the newly published Indo-Pacific Strategy Report, the U.S. plans to focus on strengthening the capacity of naval and air forces, nuclear and missile forces as well as cyber and space warfare, to design a new method for military development in the Asia-Pacific region, in response to China's military threats.
- China has perceived recent military activities in the area including the U.S. deployment of THAAD, the establishment of Missile Defense (MD), Korea-Japan GSOMIA initiative, strengthening of military alliance among Korea-U.S.-Japan, strengthening of military cooperation with India and Australia, implementation of the Indo-Pacific Strategy, and a full-fledged launch of the Quad-Plus (Asia version of NATO) as new hardline measures devised by the U.S. in an effort to build an upgraded military siege against China.
- As China is well aware of the fact that the possibility of winning a full-scale military confrontation with the U.S. is low, it is using as much time as possible in controlling the level of military tension with the U.S. in order to prevent any regional conflicts (e.g. conflicts over the South China Sea and the Taiwan Strait). At the same time, China is mobilizing all diplomatic, public opinion and intelligence warfare so that the country can “win without fighting (不戰勝).”

#### □ Directions of China's Military Security Strategy

- The Chinese military believes that reinforcing of military capabilities will lead to the peaceful development and modernization of China. Thus, China has proclaimed its aim to fulfill the dream of building strong military (强军梦) through three major stages: completing mechanization and making significant progress in information technology (信息化) by 2025 (Stage 1), completing modernization of military by 2035 (Stage 2), and establishing the world-class military

by 2049 (Stage 3).

- China's active defense strategy for the new era is to perform and maintain defense, self-defense (自衛) and post-attack (後發制人) principles. In this context, China has already been making progress in increasing mechanization and informatization capacity through constant military reform and modernization. In line with such effort, China has strengthened military cooperation, modernized military districts, reorganized command structure, restructured military organization from army-based to naval and air force-based military, established new units for strategic support (cyber, intelligence, space) in preparation against future and cyber warfare, and enforced civil-military (軍民) integration and development strategy. Overall, China has been showing some promising progress and achievements in consideration of warfare in the 21st century.
- The Army was reorganized to carry out precision operations, stereoscopic operations, field operations, and multi-functional operations at each theater of war, stepping away from the existing regional defense strategy. The Navy moved from the offshore defense type to the deep-sea defense type and carried out a series of modernization to strengthen strategic deterrence and counterattacks, maritime maneuvers, and joint maritime operations. Meanwhile, the Air Force reinforced its capabilities of early warning, air and missile defense, and strategic lift by shifting from a territorial defense type to an offense-defense-combined type. The Rocket Units focused on increasing its mid- and long-range pinpoint strike capability and strategic deterrence in order to enhance nuclear deterrence and counterattack capacity.

#### □ Key Take-aways and Implications

- The U.S. is perceiving China as a new military and security threat and a challenge to the country. In response to such threat, the U.S. has newly implemented military and security measures against China including Indo-Pacific

strategy, Quad strategy, a hardline stance on China's A2/AD strategy, withdrawal from INF and modernization of nuclear missiles, development of new advanced weapons, and strengthening of military and security cooperation with regional allies.

- Competition and conflict between the U.S. and China in areas of military and national security are expected to intensify, as China maintains its strong stance against the U.S. China aims to achieve military modernization and reform by 2035, secure capabilities in the areas of the army, navy, air force, space, information technology, cyber space and civil-military relations, and establish the world-class military force that can fight and win any battle at hand (能打仗、打勝仗) by 2049.
- Tensions are rising recently in the areas of arms race, territorial conflict (e.g. Taiwan Strait, East and South China Sea), the Indo-Pacific strategy, the Quad initiative as the Asian version of NATO, and North Korea's nuclear issue. In this context, it is recommended that the South Korean government maintain a cautious approach against sensitive diplomatic and security issues and prepare multiple scenarios for every possible cases. Specifically, South Korea should determine very carefully whether to join the Quad or not as such decision can directly affect the issues of denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and inter-Korean relations.
- As it is highly likely that the Chinese military will maintain its current posture in weapons modernization and enforcement of military capabilities in order to secure China's core national interests and prevent the U.S. from military intervention, South Korea should actively seek for the establishment of the more friendly U.S.-China relations, and rebuild military communication channel with China to restore communication deficiency. ❖

*※ Translator's note: This is a summarized unofficial translation of the original paper which was written in Korean. All references should be made to the original paper.*