

Defeat, not merely compete



Defeat, Not Merely Compete

China's View of Its Military Aerospace Goals and Requirements in Relation to the United States

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As China develops its armed forces, what role does competition with the United States play

in shaping the military aerospace capabilities development of the People's Liberation Army

(PLA)? The U.S. Air Force (USAF) vision statement lays out a goal of “global vigilance, global

reach, and global power,” a set of ambitions that PLA authors appear to be mimicking with their

“bright eyes, strong fists, and long arms” (光眼，重拳，长臂) slogan for the PLA Air Force

(PLAAF). Similarly, Chinese authors treat the quest for the capacity to “simultaneously be able

to conduct offensive and defensive integrated air and space operations” in ways that appear to

mimic the thinking of the U.S. armed forces on military aerospace. This study examines how the

PLA, in seeking to accomplish the Chinese Communist Party's missions, strives to match or

exceed the capabilities of the United States in military aerospace. It also explores how, in

benchmarking its ambitions against the U.S. military, the PLA approaches the question of

whether to copy from a leading foreign aerospace power or to develop a new and innovative

approach to accomplishing a mission or fielding a capability. The study reviews the drivers for

Chinese military aerospace development and identifies instances when China has copied or

innovated in military aerospace development over the past two decades while also noting those

areas where China has chosen not to compete.

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RAND Project AIR FORCE

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