

CHINA-ASEAN EXPO P.12 | CONTROVERSIAL TOLL FEES ON LEAVE P.20

BEIJING REVIEW

VOL.55 NO.41 OCTOBER 11, 2012

北京周報 WWW.BJREVIEW.COM



SEA POWER

China's up-and-coming aircraft carrier unveiled

RMB6.00
USD1.70
AUD3.00
GBP1.20
CAD2.60
CHF2.60

ISSN 1000-9140



41 >

9 771000 914123

JPY188 邮发代号2-922 · 国内统一刊号: CN11-1576/G2

CHINAFRICA

中国与非洲



12 issues a year at a subscription rate of 180 RMB

SUBSCRIPTION HOTLINES
(8610) 6831 0644, 6899 6223, 6899 5808

An Africa-oriented English monthly covering China and Africa published by BEIJING REVIEW, ChinaAfrica is the only one in China featuring news, views and analysis for an African audience.

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北京周报

BEIJING REVIEW

A News Weekly Magazine
Published Since 1958

iPad APP

<http://www.bjreview.com>

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Published every Thursday by

BELJING REVIEW, 24 Baiwanzhuang Lu,

Beijing 100037, China.

Overseas Distributor: China International Book Trading

Corporation (Guoji Shudian), P. O. BOX 399,

Beijing 100044, China

Tel: 86-10-68413849, 1-416-497-8096 (Canada)

Fax: 86-10-68412166

E-mail: fp@mail.cibtc.com.cn

Website: <http://www.cibtc.com>

General Distributor for Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan:

Peace Book Co. Ltd.

17/F1, Paramount Bldg, 12 Ka Yip St, Chai Wan, HK

Tel: 852-28046687 Fax: 852-28046409

Beijing Review (USPS 2812) is published weekly in the United States

for US\$64.00 per year by Cypress Books,

360 Swift Avenue, Suite 48, South San Francisco, CA 94080

News Postage Paid at South San Francisco, CA 94080

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Beijing Review*,

Cypress Books, 360 Swift Avenue, Suite 48,

South San Francisco, CA 94080

Cradle for a Stronger Navy

With the *Liaoning*, China's first aircraft carrier recently handed over to the People's Liberation Army (PLA) Navy, the long-standing goal of the Chinese navy from the late 1920s has finally come true, much to the joy and fulfillment of in-service and old-generation naval personnel and the people of China.

More than 80 years ago, the then-ruling Kuomintang first put forth plans to modernize the nation's naval force, including manufacturing aircraft carriers, just a decade after the British launched the world's first functional aircraft carrier the *HMS Hermes*. But as China then suffered from both civil war and foreign aggression, and its economy was plagued with a frail industrial base, vulnerable farming and financial constraints, this grand plan remained only a fantasy.

The desire to build a strong navy is well-founded. China boasts large territorial waters, with four seas lying along its eastern continental shelves—the Bohai Sea, the Yellow Sea, the East China Sea and the South China Sea—covering a total of 3 million square km and a combined coastline of 18,000 km. China needs to defend its territorial sovereignty and maritime interests with a strong naval force. Moreover, the country was repeatedly invaded and bullied by foreign powers from the sea since the mid-19th century, resulting in its ceding of territories and payment of indemnities. At least twice, the Chinese navy suffered major defeats with Japan—once during the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-95, and again in the battle on the Yangtze River by Jiangyin, east China's Jiangsu Province, in 1937. Naturally, these setbacks aroused the entire nation's conviction to consolidate the naval defense system.

China's humiliating modern history has taught us a hard lesson: A weak and backward country is likely to be beaten down. Considering its bitter past experience, it is well justified for China to put the *Liaoning* to use in an effort to build up a strong naval force.

The launch and service of the *Liaoning* aircraft carrier is counted as one of the latest steps to further strengthen the country's navy. As the aircraft carrier is largely intended for training and research purposes, it could well be the cradle for raising a more modernized naval fleet with greater combat effectiveness.

A modern aircraft carrier is largely seen as the symbol of a strong navy and a nation's comprehensive power. Of the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, China is the last to acquire an aircraft carrier. While the country will not employ the giant vessel to intimidate other countries or police international waters, it will nonetheless help boost the prestige of the PLA and the Chinese nation. ■

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北京周报 英文版 2012年 第41期 ISSN 1000-9140 广告许可证 0171号

北京市期刊登记证第733号 邮发代号2-922 国内统一刊号: CN11-1576/G2 国内零售价: 人民币6.00元

CHINA...RMB6.00 U.S.A....USD1.70 AUSTRALIA....AUD3.00 UK....GBP1.20 CANADA....CAD2.60 SWITZERLAND....CHF2.00
JAPAN....JPY188 EUROPE....EURO1.90 TURKEY....YTL5.00 HK....HKD3.90 NEPAL....RS40



CPC Congress to Open in November

On September 30, a mother and son pass by a flower bed in Beijing set up for the upcoming 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC).

The Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee proposed to convene the congress on November 8 in Beijing and will submit the proposal to the Seventh Plenum of the 17th CPC Central Committee, which will be held on November 1.

The CPC Constitution stipulates that the national congress of the Party be held every five years. The 17th CPC National Congress was held in October 2007.

The 18th CPC National Congress will make plans for China's further development and Party building, according to the Political Bureau meeting. It will also elect the Party's new Central Committee and Central Commission for Discipline Inspection.

A total of 2,270 delegates were elected to attend the congress. The CPC now has more than 80 million members.

After the top Party leadership reshuffle, new state and government leaders of China are expected to be elected by the National People's Congress, the country's top legislature, next March.

Yunnan Landslide

Eighteen students in class were killed in a landslide on October 4 in southwest China's Yunnan Province, local authorities said.

The landslide, estimated to be around 160,000 cubic meters in size, also injured a villager and left one person missing in Zhenhe Village, Yilian County.

The government has relocated more than 800 affected residents to safer places.

On September 7, multiple earthquakes struck Yiliang and its neighboring areas in Yunnan and Guizhou provinces, killing 81 people and injuring 800 others.

PMI Contraction

China's manufacturing activity continued to contract in September but the rate of deterioration eased slightly compared with the previous month, official data showed.

The official purchasing managers' index (PMI), released on October 1 by the National Bureau of Statistics and the China Federation of Logistics and Purchasing, rose to 49.8 percent last month from 49.2 percent in August. However, it remained below the 50-percent threshold that divides expansion from contraction.

The September index ended the manufacturing PMI's continuous decline for four straight months. The index fell below the boom-bust line in August for the first time since November 2011.

Tax Reform

Two more Chinese provinces, Jiangsu and Anhui in the country's east, started a pilot reform on October 1 to replace turnover tax with value-added tax (VAT) in the transport sector and some areas of the service industries, following Beijing, Tianjin and Shanghai.

The reform has been launched to lower the overall tax burden and boost involved sectors.

Turnover tax and VAT are two major tax categories in China. Turnover tax applies to a production process of a business with the tax rates varying from 3 to 15 percent depending on the sectors, while VAT is deducted from the difference between a commodity's price before taxes and cost of production.

According to a decision made in July at an executive meeting of the State Council, China's cabinet, the trial program will be expanded to more than 10 provinces and cities.

Christian Campaign

The China Christian Council (CCC) and the

Bo Expelled From CPC, Public Office

The Communist Party of China (CPC) announced that Bo Xilai, former Party chief of southwest China's Chongqing Municipality, had been expelled from the Party and removed from public office. He also faces criminal charges.

The announcement came on the heels of a decision made at a meeting of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee on September 28.

Bo is accused, among other things, of abusing his power in the case of Neil Heywood, a British businessman who was killed by Bogu Kailai, Bo's wife, and of taking "massive bribes" directly and through his family, according to Xinhua News Agency.

The decision also held Bo responsible for the incident in which former Chongqing Vice Mayor Wang Lijun entered the U.S. Consulate General in Chengdu, Sichuan Province, without permission.

"Investigations have found that Bo seriously violated Party discipline while heading the city of Dalian, Liaoning Province, and the Ministry of Commerce and while serving as a member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and as Party chief of Chongqing," Xinhua said.

Bo has also been accused of taking advantage of his office to seek profits for others, and the Bo family accepted a huge amount of money and property from others, according to Xinhua.

Bo had or maintained improper sexual relationships with a number of women. He was also found to have violated organizational and personnel discipline and made erroneous decisions in the promotion of personnel.

The investigation also uncovered evidence that suggests his involvement in

other crimes.

The decision stressed that the investigation and handling of Bo's case further shows the CPC's basic requirement of being strict with Party members and governing the country in accordance with the law and its distinct position and resolution to fight corruption.

"The entire Party must fully realize the perennial, complex and arduous nature of the anti-corruption fight and give fighting corruption and building a clean government a more prominent place on its agenda so as to wage a resolute battle against corruption, leaving no room for corrupt figures to hide within the Party," the decision said.

Commenting on the decision, Xinhua News Agency said that China's anti-corruption drive is set to be a long-term, complicated and arduous one.

"It is not surprising that the CPC, with more than 80 million members, has some black sheep. The important thing is that the Party is fully aware of the grave situation and has been resorting to forceful measures to improve the institutions for punishing and preventing corruption," it said.

It called for a greater effort to effectively spot corrupt behavior, such as strengthening a declaration system for officials' assets, adopting more measures to protect and reward whistleblowers, and enhancing inspection and supervision.



National Committee of Three-Self Patriotic Movement of the Protestant Churches in China on September 25 launched a theological exchange campaign to strengthen theological thinking.

The campaign, which will run from 2013 to 2017, aims to guide the country's church rostrums and promote the spirit of theological thinking through publishing, exchanges, discussions and evangelism, according to the campaign's guidelines.

"[The campaign] aims to increase a sense of identification for both pastors and believers and encourage priests and church volunteers

to extract morals that are consistent with the times from the *Bible*, religious doctrines and the traditions of churches in order to encourage believers to make more contributions to the country's economic development, social harmony and cultural prosperity," said CCC President Gao Feng.

Anniversary Celebration

The Foreign Languages Press (FLP) of China celebrated its 60th anniversary on September 28.

Established on 1952, the FLP has pub-

lished more than 30,000 book titles in 43 languages on politics, literature and social life in China, totaling over 400 million printed copies. Its publications have been distributed to more than 100 countries and regions around the world.

The FLP has also been an active player in conducting cooperation with foreign publishing houses. It has co-published, sold or bought the rights of several hundred titles.

Art-Science Meeting

The Third Art and Science International Exhibition and Symposium will be held at the China Science and Technology Museum in Beijing from November 1 to 30. The theme of this year's exhibition is Information, Ecology and Wisdom, applying information and ecological technology in the creation of art. More than 120 works of art from 22 countries and regions—including the United States, Germany, Austria and France—will be on display.

The event was created in 2001 by Tsung-Dao Lee, the 1957 Nobel Laureate in Physics, and Wu Guanzhong (1919-2010), a contemporary Chinese painter, with the purpose of exploring the relationship between science and art. It was previously held in 2001 and 2006.

Air Information

Beijing authorities on September 28 began releasing official air-quality data collected by 20 monitoring stations across the city, including real-time data on particulate matter (PM) 2.5.

The PM2.5 air-quality standard monitors fine particles with a diameter of 2.5 microns or less.

The city's air-quality monitoring network is designed to accommodate a total of 35 monitoring stations, with 20 stations having been operational by the end of September.

The rest of the stations are expected to produce data later this month.

The Beijing Environmental Protection Monitoring Center will release an evaluation of the city's air quality in January 2013 according to the national Ambient Air-Quality Standard.

Growing Wealth

The China Investment Corporation (CIC), the nation's sovereign wealth fund, announced on September 27 that the annualized yield of its overseas investment stood at 3.9 percent since it was founded five years ago.

According to the company's 2011 business report, its overseas investment portfolio included 31 percent of long-term investment, 25 percent of diversified public equities, 21 percent of fixed-income securities, 12 percent of absolute return investments and 11 percent of cash funds and others.

Due to the slow recovery of global economy and the European debt crisis, the return on the CIC's global investment portfolio declined 4.3 percent last year.

Headquartered in Beijing, the company was established on September 27, 2007 with a registered capital of \$200 billion. Its total assets reached \$482 billion at the end of 2011.



LAST RESPECTS Officials of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region observe three minutes of silence for the victims of a fatal ferry crash in front of the city government's headquarters on October 4. Thirty-eight people were killed after two ferries collided on October 1 off Hong Kong's Lamma Island



SEEKING TRUTH Readers leaf through the Chinese version of Diaoyu Dao, an Inherent Territory of China white paper at Xidan Bookstore in Beijing on September 28. The white paper, issued on September 25 by the State Council Information Office in Chinese, English and Japanese versions, asserts China's indisputable sovereignty over Diaoyu Dao and its affiliated islands

THIS WEEK WORLD



XINHUA/AFIP

Rescue teams and security forces search at the scene of car bomb explosions that hit the northern city of Aleppo on October 3. Three car bombs killed at least 35 people and wounded 70 others

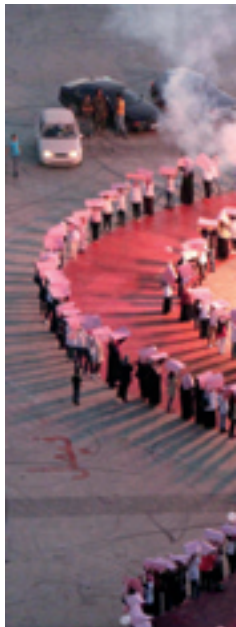
SYRIA



AP/WIDEWORLD

Police vans block a street leading to the parliament building in Madrid on September 29, during a demonstration against a political system that protesters say deprives ordinary Spaniards of a voice in the crisis

SPAIN





U.S. President Barack Obama shakes hands with Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney on October 3 in Denver, Colorado, at the start of the first of three presidential debates

THE UNITED STATES



Benghazi residents and activists make a human chain in the shape of a "pink ribbon" lit by a central firework during a rally to mark international breast cancer awareness month on October 1

LIBYA



A ranger inspects a 10-day-old baby elephant at Sarah Deu conservation response unit in Sampoiniet, Aceh Jaya, on September 27. There are fewer than 3,000 Sumatran elephants remaining in the wild, a 50-percent drop in number since 1985

INDONESIA



An Ariane 5 rocket carrying two satellites, *ASTRA 2F* and *GSAT-10*, blasts off on September 28 from the European space center of Kourou, French Guiana. The *ASTRA 2F* will provide satellite TV links to Africa, Europe and the Middle East. The *GSAT-10* carried equipment for GPS and GEO navigation systems

THE EUROPEAN UNION

COVER STORY

HERE COMES THE *LIAONING*

China's naval force strengthens with the introduction of its first aircraft carrier By Yao Bin

September 25 has become a hallmark day for China, especially its naval force, as the country's first aircraft carrier, the *Liaoning*, entered service.

Overseen by President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao, the carrier was officially handed over by the China Shipbuilding Industry Corp. to the People's Liberation Army (PLA) Navy at a ceremony held at a naval base in Dalian, northeast China's Liaoning Province.

China is the 10th country in the world and the last among the five permanent members of the UN Security Council to have an aircraft carrier in active service. The United States, the United Kingdom, France, Italy, Spain, Russia, India, Thailand and Brazil all possess aircraft carriers.

"The delivery and commissioning of the first carrier are milestones in the PLA's history and embodies a major achievement of China's weaponry and equipment development, as well as its national defense modernization," said Premier Wen Jiabao at the handover ceremony.

Ge Lide, an associate professor at the PLA National Defense University (NDU), told the China News Service that *Liaoning's* entry into service will promote the PLA Navy's strategic transformation to become a

blue-sea force able to operate on the high seas and raise the country's capabilities in handling non-conventional security threats.

An accomplished dream

The *Liaoning* is a conventionally powered carrier rebuilt from the former Ukrainian vessel *Varyag*.

Construction of the *Varyag* began in 1985 at a shipyard on the Black Sea. The vessel, with a displacement of around 60,000 tons, was designed to be among the largest carriers in the world at that time. But with the break up of the Soviet Union in 1991, the *Varyag* had been only two thirds completed before construction stopped. China bought the carrier's immense armored hull—with no engine, electricity or propeller—from the Ukraine in 1998 and began to refit the vessel in Dalian in 2002.

After 10 years of refitting, the aircraft carrier conducted its first sea trial in August 2011. Before its commissioning, the vessel had undergone 10 sea trials, with the longest one lasting 25 days in July.

"The main system of the *Liaoning* is the result of independent building and modification," said Yang Yujun, a spokesman for the Ministry of National Defense, at a press conference on September 27. He said the



country has always adhered to the principle of independent innovation in building weaponry, relying on the country's own capacity for research and development.

After 10 years of refitting, the carrier is equipped with a China-made defense system able to launch attacks on missiles, aircraft and approaching vessels. It also uses a Chinese radar system that can evaluate risks and has a strong anti-interference capability. Since August 2011, the aircraft carrier has undergone 10 sea trials, with the longest one lasting 25 days in July.

During a recent online interview with people.com.cn, a website of the *People's Daily*, Major General Qiao Liang, a professor at the Air Force Command Institute, said, "Among medium-sized aircraft carriers around the



BIG TIME: China's first aircraft carrier, the *Liaoning*, is delivered and commissioned to the PLA Navy at a ceremony at a naval base in Dalian, Liaoning Province, on September 25

world, there's no doubt ours is advanced."

Chinese military experts say aircraft carriers in active service are of vital importance to China, a country with more than 18,000 km of coastline and 3 million square km of territorial waters. But the process of acquiring its first aircraft carrier, which began more than 40 years ago, has been long and complicated.

Admiral Liu Huaqing, China's former naval commander known as the "father of China's aircraft carrier" because of his great support for the program, wrote in his memoir that, "China launched its initial plan for a carrier as early as 1970."

Besides the *Varyag*, China has imported three other carriers since the 1980s.

China's first imported carrier was the retired Melbourne from the Australian Navy

in 1985. But the vessel proved nothing more than a pile of scrap metal, and it was dismantled in a shipyard in Guangzhou, southern Guangdong Province, where the iron was recycled.

Two decommissioned Russian vessels were imported and converted into theme parks in 1998—the *Kiev* in north China's Tianjin and the *Minsk* in Shenzhen in Guangdong.

Some Chinese military enthusiasts have questioned the significance of massive expenditures on refitting an old aircraft carrier rather than building a new one, and some have expressed doubts about the combat effectiveness of a refitted vessel.

But Du Wenlong, a researcher with the PLA's Academy of Military Science, said that refitting an imported carrier for research and

training is like writing a draft for an article.

"The draft might be totally deleted in the future, but its value for reference is irreplaceable," Du said, adding that the most valuable use of the refitted carrier is to help the PLA build a carrier battle group and learn how to use such vessels.

Many high-ranking military officers have suggested China build more aircraft carriers based on the country's economic strength.

"China will need at least three aircraft carriers," said Xu Xiaoyan, a PLA lieutenant general, in March.

At the September 27 press conference, Yang said that China will plan the development of aircraft carriers based on its economic and social development and national defense needs. He dismissed foreign media reports ►►

The *Liaoning*

Overall Length: > 300 meters

Beam: > 70 meters

Displacement: > 50,000 tons (standard)

Crew number: > 1,000

Holding capacity: Fixed-wing fighters and helicopters

Captain: Senior Captain Zhang Zheng

Political commissar: Senior Captain Mei Wen

(Source: PLA Daily)

saying China is building a second aircraft carrier in Shanghai to be launched later this year.

Combat effectiveness

Though the *Liaoning* has been commissioned, Li Jie, a researcher at the China Navy Military Academy and a senior colonel, said that it would not be combat ready until 2017.

“Normally, it takes three years for an aircraft carrier to be commissioned after its first sea trial and another five to eight years to be able to enter combat,” Li said. “An aircraft carrier cannot conduct missions alone, but needs protection and support from a fleet including frigates, destroyers and cruisers. Some submarines are also necessary for scouting and anti-submarine tasks.”

A U.S. aircraft carrier is normally accompanied by two missile cruisers, two frigates, two nuclear-driven submarines and a depot ship.

When asked to confirm reports that the

The PLA Navy

- The PLA Navy was founded in 1949, with two fleets made up of 20 poorly equipped vessels. Four years later, China purchased four advanced ships from the Soviet Union. Over the next two decades, they became the PLA Navy’s most powerful surface ships.

- The 1970s saw the PLA Navy move away from importing and imitating other countries’ ships to designing and producing vessels on its own. China has developed three generations of home-produced sur-

face ships since then.

- Since 2005, the PLA Navy has entered an era of rapid expansion. It is now well armed with hundreds of class-three or higher combat vessels.

- The PLA Navy now encompasses the East China Sea, North China Sea and South China Sea fleets.

(Source: CNTV)

MILITARY REVIEW: Chinese President Hu Jintao, also Chairman of the Central Military Commission, inspects the naval guard of honor on the *Liaoning* on September 25



PLA Navy will create an aircraft carrier formation in the future and build an aircraft carrier base in the eastern Chinese city of Qingdao, Shandong Province, Yang told reporters that China will study the issue in accordance with the development and needs of the aircraft carrier.

Yang also revealed that China is developing carrier-borne aircraft based on domestically built planes for which the country has independent intellectual property rights, and relevant procedures are moving forward

as scheduled.

Hu Siyuan, a professor at the NDU, was quoted by the *Shanghai Daily* as saying that the *Liaoning*’s accompanying warships might include China’s newly developed 052D missile destroyers and Jiang Kai-II frigates. The destroyer is equipped with a 130-mm caliber cannon and has two vertical launch systems to set off Redflag-9B missiles, and the frigate has a helicopter pad. The No.88 ship that accompanied the aircraft carrier during its sea trials is expected to be its depot ship.

China’s J-15 fighters, which analysts say are match for U.S. F-18 *Hornet* fighters, would probably be used on the carrier. Many photographs have been published showing the plane on the carrier’s deck.

Personnel training is also vital for *Liaoning*’s combat capacity, according to military experts.

The carrier reportedly has more than 1,000 officers and sailors onboard, with women accounting for 5 percent. More than 98 percent of the crew hold bachelor’s degrees and more than 50 of them have master’s or doctoral degrees.

But Yin Zhuo, Director of the Expert Consultation Committee of the PLA Navy, said that operating an aircraft carrier is no easy task. “Maintenance staff have to learn to



ZHA CHUNMING



IN THE WORKS: China's first aircraft carrier underwent more than 10 years of refitting and sea trials in Dalian, Liaoning Province, before it entered into service on September 25



ZHA CHUNMING

NAVAL COMMAND: Zhang Zheng (left), Captain of the *Liaoning*, and Mei Wen, the vessel's political commissar

maneuver around limited space to repair or refuel the aircraft. And for the command staff, it is a tough task to master the operations of all the aircraft on deck, and it takes time to build a well-coordinated team around the carrier," he said.

The training of pilots is especially challenging, Yin said.

The *Liaoning* is reportedly capable of carrying around 30 fixed-wing fighters and helicopters.

"Generally, the training cycle of a carrier-borne aircraft pilot lasts for three years. The pilot then has to go through a three-year residency period on the aircraft carrier, plus one more year of training on the carrier before being permitted to fly alone," Yin said.

Not a threat

When the Chinese Ministry of National Defense first confirmed the country's aircraft carrier program last July, spokesman Geng Yansheng said, "The pursuit of an aircraft carrier program will not change the navy's inshore defense strategy."

Geng told reporters at a press conference that the aircraft carrier platform will be used for "scientific research, experiments and training."

Yang reiterated at the September 27 press

conference that the *Liaoning* will be used to conduct scientific experiments and military training.

"China adheres to the path of peaceful development, sticks to the independent foreign policy of peace and pursues a defensive national policy," he said, adding that the development of the aircraft carrier is to protect national security.

"As a weapon, an aircraft carrier can be used for both defense and offense, and it can also be used for humanitarian purposes," said Fang Bing, an associate professor at the NDU.

Fang said he did not believe that the commissioning of the *Liaoning* was directly related to China's current territorial dispute with Japan over the Diaoyu Islands in the East China Sea. But he warned that China has zero tolerance for foreign infringement of the country's territorial waters, with or without an aircraft carrier.

"In dealing with the territorial and mari-

time right disputes with some neighboring countries, China has remained committed to solving the problems through diplomatic channels and negotiations, and opposes the use of force or the threat of force. China's sincerity is well known and should not be doubted," said Yang Yi, a rear admiral and former director of the Institute for Strategic Studies at the NDU, in an article in *China Daily*.

In order to counter claims that its new aircraft carrier is a threat, Yang said that the country should not only continue to make clear its strategies and policies, but also take practical steps to convince the world that with the development of its military strength, especially the strengthening of its navy, China will enhance its role as a defender of regional stability and world peace. ■

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全国翻译专业资格(水平)考试

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English



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French



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Russian



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Spanish

China International Publishing Group is responsible for organizing, implementing and administering the test under the guidance of the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security



Tel: 010-68995947, 68328249

Web site: <http://www.catti.net.cn>

National Translation Test and Appraisal Center