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## MILITARY-TECHNICAL COOPERATION AS A TOOL OF CHINA'S FOREIGN POLICY

**Background.** From the moment of its proclamation, the People's Republic of China sought to modernize the armed forces – the People's Liberation Army. The lack of a military-industrial complex was a significant problem, which the Chinese communist leadership has been trying to solve through active military-technical cooperation with international actors. Indeed, the active procurement of weapons allowed the PRC to reach parity or even surpass the US in a number of aspects. Meanwhile, the MTC has turned into not only a mechanism for strengthening national security, but also a tool of foreign policy.

**Methods.** The following methods were used: analytical, historical, statistical, generalization. In the course of the research, the author relied on the principle of objectivism.

**Results.** Solving the problem of the weakness of the technical and technological level of the PLA, China used the geopolitical conjuncture to obtain arms supplies. A key role was played by cooperation first with the USSR, and then with the Russian Federation. This partnership was associated with the introduction of an embargo by Western countries due to the events in Tiananmen Square. An important factor was also the supply of military equipment from Ukraine. At the same time, in the conditions of a full-scale Russian-Ukrainian war, Beijing became an exporter of dual purpose products to Russia. Overall, using the factors of unauthorized copying, low price policies and arms sales to sanctioned regimes, Beijing has become one of the world's top five arms exporters. China mainly exports weapons to Asian countries, and has also significantly strengthened its position in the African market. However, quality and service issues are causing more and more questions from buyers.

**Conclusions.** Among the consequences of China's MTC: 1. creation of its own autonomous military industry; 2. obtaining an additional source for financing the modernization of the PLA; 3. significant strengthening of military capabilities in the context of global rivalry with the USA; 4. increased aggressiveness in foreign policy and worsening of relations with neighboring countries and the USA; 5. course on militarization of neighboring Asian countries and strengthening of their cooperation with the USA; 6. creating additional opportunities for strengthening authoritarian regimes through military and technical support and even promoting its aggressiveness towards other countries; 7. fueling bloody wars by non-democratic regimes; 8. obtaining greater access to the minerals of the countries of the Global South and increasing the level of dependence on cooperation with Beijing; 9. strengthening of new arms exporters (such as Pakistan) and weakening of others (Russia, USA, Germany).

**Keywords:** China, arms trade, international arms market, military-industrial complex, dual-use products.

### Background

Modern successful China has long been associated mostly with significant economic gains, which began to gain momentum from the 1980s due to the implementation of the concept of "socialism with Chinese characteristics" and the program of The Four Modernizations. In turn, the stunning economic successes created a financial, technological and ideological basis for building up the military potential, which would correspond to the achieved economic level.

The People's Republic of China (PRC), in fact, from the moment of its proclamation in 1949, sought to modernize the armed forces – the People's Liberation Army of China (PLA). However, special efforts in the direction of the development of military potential are noted with the coming to power of General Secretary Xi Jinping in 2012. This is not least thanks to the declaration by Xi as a key priority of the state development the "Chinese dream" – a concept that involves the revival of the greatness of the Chinese nation simultaneously in the context of domestic development and international status. It is clear that this idea cannot be implemented without a powerful army.

Moreover, the Chinese leadership has announced ambitious goals of achieving basic military modernization by 2035 and entering the "world class" armies by 2049.

It should be taken into account that the importance of the development of the armed forces stems not only from the traditional need for any country to ensure territorial integrity and sovereignty, but also from the presence of a number of economic and geopolitical imperatives for official Beijing, among which it is worth noting:

1. the vulnerability of the sea routes of communication, which are of exceptional importance for the foreign trade of the PRC, primarily from the naval power of the United States – the key geopolitical opponent, which, in addition, has a

technological advantage and a network of anti-Chinese partners in the immediate vicinity of the Celestial Empire;

2. strained relations with other Asian powers – India, which also possesses nuclear weapons, and Japan;

3. territorial claims of the PRC in the South China and East China Seas, the desire to reintegrate Taiwan.

It is obvious that the cornerstone of the modernization of the armed forces is the improvement of military-technological capabilities. The Chinese leadership is well aware of this, especially given the historical lessons of the Opium Wars and the Boxer Rebellion, whose defeats against the more advanced Western armies led to the so-called "century of shame" (1840–1949).

However, the desire to modernize the armed forces faced a significant problem – the insufficient technological level and the absence of its own military-industrial complex (MIC). In turn, this necessitated the development of military-technical cooperation (MTC) with other countries. It is interesting that as a result of military transfers, China managed to repeat the successes of economic development, gradually entering the list of the world's top arms exporters.

**The purpose of research** is to analyze stages, trends, specifics and consequences of the using of MTC's tool in China's foreign policy.

### Methods

In the course of the research, the author relied on the principle of objectivism. Along with this, the following methods were used: analytical – dividing the PRC's MTC into a number of aspects and studying their features, generalization – in the context of determining the general features of the arms trade in China's foreign policy, historical – researching the transformation of the MTC from the moment of the declaration of the PRC to the present, statistical – in during the examination of arms trade volumes for different periods.

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## Results

In 2011, the Western researcher Richard Bitzinger emphasized that the technological level of China's weapons lags far behind the leading Western countries in several critical aspects (Kirchberger, 2017). Subsequently, this opinion was used for a long time as a basis for analyzing the technological power of the PLA.

However, modern estimates demonstrate significant shifts in the technological capabilities of the Chinese army. Thus, in the Pentagon's annual report to the US Congress, it is emphasized that China has already reached parity or even surpassed the US in a number of areas: shipbuilding, production of medium-range cruise and ballistic missiles, and integrated air defense systems.

But the PRC had to go a long way to reach such a level of achievements, which was primarily connected with the development of the MTC. In this regard, the author proposes to highlight a number of periods in China's MTC.

The first period concerns the historical moment of the ideological closeness of the PRC and the USSR in the 1950s and early 1960s. Moreover, ideology was closely intertwined with the geopolitical imperative to oppose the United States and its allies. During this period, thanks to the help of the USSR, the foundations of the military industry of the China were laid. Special mention should be made of the Soviet contribution to the development of air force and missile capabilities and the transfer of nuclear weapons technologies (Godwin, 1988). However, for security reasons, the Soviet side avoided the transfer of advanced weapons. It is interesting that the influence of this period is noted in some aspects of the military sphere of the PRC even today.

Nevertheless, after the death of Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin in 1953, the Chinese leader Mao Zedong gradually began to show ambitions for leadership in the socialist bloc. This led to an increase in contradictions in Sino-Soviet relations to the point of direct armed conflict.

Indeed, under such conditions, military cooperation ended. Official Beijing was forced to concentrate its efforts on improving the Soviet models on its own. This strengthened the understanding of the military and political leadership of the PRC of the importance of creating its own autonomous military industry. In addition, the conflict is a new window of opportunity – cooperation, including of a military and technical nature, with the West. In turn, this defined a new period of the Chinese Air Force in the 1970s and 1980s, during which attempts were made to master military technologies from the United States and Europe. In particular, the Celestial Empire gained access to large-scale factory equipment, products of the US aircraft industry, as well as electronics and guided missiles of Italian and French production (Kirchberger, 2019).

Along with this, the PRC is already beginning to master the role of an arms exporter. In particular, the Chinese leadership effectively took advantage of the war between Iran and Iraq, selling weapons to both sides. In addition, deliveries of missile systems were made to Saudi Arabia (Bitzinger, 2019). At that time, official Beijing realized that arms sales are an effective tool for obtaining financial income and improving relations with countries that have value from the point of view of obtaining strategic resources, in particular, oil and gas.

Another feature of this period (especially under Mao Zedong) was the export of weapons on the basis of "ideological affinity" and even at a reduced price. For example, China supplied military-industrial complex products to Albania, Vietnam, Indonesian communist

rebels, newly proclaimed African countries, Pakistan and Thailand (Bitzinger, 2019).

The next period, in our opinion, became in many respects decisive for the MTC and the military-technical development of China in general. This phase, which began in 1989 with the introduction of an arms embargo by Western countries in connection with the events in Tiananmen Square, is marked by a combination of a number of factors. In addition to cutting off the supply of Western weapons, the need for a fundamental technical modernization of the armed forces became obvious in view of the course and results of the Persian Gulf War of 1990–1991, when the Iraqi army, armed with Soviet equipment similar to that of the PLA, suffered a crushing technological defeat by western technology. In addition, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) began to feel its position threatened due to the collapse of the USSR and the dismantling of the socialist camp. The need for technological improvement was demonstrated by Taiwan crisis of 1995–1996, where the Chinese Navy was forced to retreat in the face of the theological superiority of American military formations.

At the same time, the collapse of the USSR, the elimination of ideological contradictions in combination with the difficult situation of the military industry of the newly proclaimed Russian Federation (RF) opened access to Russian military technologies for China. As a result, China turned into the largest buyer of Russian weapons in the 1990s and 2000s, which saved the Russian military industry and, accordingly, strengthened both the military power of the Kremlin and the construction of an authoritarian regime, for which the power sector is one of the key pillars.

It was at that time that a number of features of China's MTC became apparent. In particular, purchases of less technologically complex products were initially made. This is explained quite simply – it is easier to master such a technique and, on this basis, create your own analogues both for your own needs and for mastering the world market.

It was the "copying strategy" that became the key reason for the decrease in the volume of the MTC with Russia, which went into decline in the second half of the 2000s. It is interesting that "copying" as a method of activity can be attributed to the legacy of the Confucian tradition, according to which one of the greatest benefits is in repeating what has already been done.

Cooperation with the Russian Federation was of decisive importance for China, since its broad nature made it possible to close many shortcomings of the technological equipment of the Armed Forces. In this context, it is worth adding that the Celestial Empire managed to achieve significant achievements, in particular, to create a military complex capable of independently producing the entire range of weapons with the necessary components necessary to meet the needs of the Armed Forces.

However, despite the successes, it is the desire of the PRC to gain wider access to Russian technologies that demonstrates the lack of its own desired achievements at the moment. The dependence of the Chinese military industry on the Russian supply of helicopters, aircraft engines, warships, armored personnel carriers and vehicles is also maintained to some extent (Richard, 2017; Popescu, 2017).

It should be emphasized that in the case of the RF, as well as other partners in sphere of the MTC, for China there is a problem of management resistance to providing access to advanced technologies. Of course, that will greatly deter

the strengthening of China in the status of a military superpower. At the same time, in order to eliminate such obstacles, the Chinese side is trying to actively promote the mechanism of operation of joint military developments, because in this way the degree of control is reduced and the opportunities for espionage, which allows to bypass restrictions and accelerate the technological process, increase. In this context, it should be emphasized that the PRC is actively and successfully engaged in industrial espionage, for which it has been repeatedly accused of similar illegal activities, including the largest exporter – Russia. It is impossible to assess the real scale of Chinese espionage, but obviously, for China, military-technological progress and expansion in the global market are much more important than the legal framework of cooperation.

Another mechanism for overcoming this obstacle is the development of joint military developments, which allows to reduce vigilance in terms of access to defense technologies.

Considering the above-mentioned problems, it will be appropriate to highlight some features of cooperation with Ukraine in this area, because one of the motives for building a military alliance with official Kyiv was precisely the lower level of control over military technologies and the absence of fears about the growth of Chinese power. In addition, the Ukrainian military-industrial complex is also based on the technological base of the USSR. Considering this, on the one hand, the import of military equipment from Ukraine was a logical continuation of the course of rearmament with newer Soviet models, and on the other hand, it reduced the risks of unilateral dependence on Russian imports.

Among the critical technologies that China received, it is possible to note the first aircraft carrier in the history of China "Liaolin" (which was actually bought at the price of the metal from which it is made), gas turbines, radar systems, aerospace components.

It is worth emphasizing that Ukraine managed to occupy the third place among the key arms exporters of the PRC in the period 2018–2022, which became possible despite the fact that the volume of Ukrainian arms exports in general decreased by as much as 70 % (Ziwen, 2023). China mainly imported gas turbines and engines for navy destroyers and trainers and combat aircraft.

In general, research of Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) shows that China's military imports increased by 4,1 percent in the 2018 to 2022 period compared with the previous five years, with Russia remaining the dominant supplier, accounting for 83 percent of all Chinese imports (China's arms exports declined..., 2023). France took the second place among the top exporters.

The behavior of the PRC as an arms importer causes moments of tension, and Ukraine also fell into a conflict situation. The most striking example is the situation with the aspirations of the Chinese authorities through their companies to gain control over the Ukrainian strategic enterprise "Motor Sich", which specializes in the production of engines for aircraft and missiles. Given the specialization, the purchase of such an enterprise became a significant strengthening of the Chinese military industry. The American administration was clearly aware of this and forced the Ukrainian leadership to block the aspirations of official Beijing, which was carried out by introducing a decision of the National Security and Defense Council in 2021 regarding sanctions against Chinese companies Beijing Xinwei Technology Group Co., Ltd; Beijing Skyrizon Aviation Industry Investment Co., Ltd; and Skyrizon Aircraft

Holdings Limited along with its parent company, Hong Kong Skyrizon Holdings Limited (Hurska, 2021). Such a move caused a sharp diplomatic protest from China. Subsequently, the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine made a statement regarding the nationalization of the enterprise (Ukraine intends..., 2021).

In this situation, Ukraine acted as a hostage as one of the fields of the geopolitical game not only between the USA and the PRC, but also Russia, since control over this enterprise would be a significant blow to Moscow's positions in the context of the arms trade dialogue with Beijing. This conflict of interests will lead to significant problems for Ukraine in terms of payment of compensation, investment image and the position of the PRC in terms of the war with Russia.

It is interesting that the factor of Ukraine contributed to strengthening the technical and technological potential of China in the context of the MTC with Russia. It is impossible not to miss the point that the complication of relations with the West against the background of the annexation of Ukrainian Crimea and the invasion of Donbas in 2014 became the reason for the sale of more advanced Russian technologies (S-400 anti-aircraft missile systems) to the PRC. It seems interesting that, although the first contract for the supply of the S-400 was signed by Beijing, the first country to which the first division was delivered was India. This demonstrates that Moscow sought to counterbalance China's geopolitical weight by strengthening New Delhi through the MTC. However, it is also worth stating that Russia's economic and later geopolitical problems became a significant driver of the development of the Chinese military industry.

However, the vector of arms exports between Beijing and Moscow changed in the course of the RF's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. The defeat and depletion of Russian technical potential caused a tendency for Moscow to import military technologies from China.

Of course, the China-Russia MTC in the context of a full-scale war is influenced by the geopolitical rivalry between Beijing and Washington, and even more broadly with the collective West. It is worth considering the factor of Beijing's economic dependence on the sale of its goods on the American and European markets. With this in mind, the West has warned China against supplying arms to Russia, threatening sanctions (Masih, 2023; Francis, 2023; Taylor, 2023). It is obvious that the aggravation of relations with China in the economic sphere in the context of geopolitical confrontation with the Russia will complicate the position of the collective West, therefore, in official rhetoric, American high-ranking officials note the absence of signs of Chinese military supplies to the RF (Bidensays..., 2023). However, there is the factor of "dual-use products", that is, those that are officially purchased for civilian purposes, but can also be used for military equipment. So journalistic investigations note that Chinese companies actively supplied Moscow with drones, optical sights, titanium alloys (actively used in the production of equipment and weapons) and even two helicopters (Yan, 2023). The logical continuation of such information can be official statements by Ukrainian officials that more and more components from China are being found in Russian equipment (Williams, 2023; O'Donnell, 2023).

It is clear that China does not currently seek a severe worsening of economic relations with the West, but it does not want the Russian Federation to suffer a complete defeat in the war with Ukraine, because it will be the defeat of the authoritarian camp against the democratic camp,

and therefore supplies components and metals for the Russian army. In addition, in this way, Beijing demonstrates that it is not going to follow the instructions of the collective West. Also, by making such deliveries and actively purchasing Russian energy carriers, the PRC strengthens the formation of an anti-democratic axis of countries, to which, along with China and the Russian Federation, we can safely add Iran and the DPRK, which directly supplied weapons to Moscow.

It can be added that China actively used the factor of dual-use products to circumvent the arms embargo from the West. The PRC has effectively used this tool, for example to purchase French and German engines for aviation and navy. As a result, according to experts, supplies of "dual-use products" played a critical role in the functioning of the Chinese Navy (Hancock, 2014).

The success of the "copying strategy" in combination with the policy of low prices led to a change in the vector of the PRC's MTC, which since the beginning of the 2010s is gradually transforming from a mostly importer to an exporter of military equipment, including the growing export of unmanned aerial vehicles, artillery, armored vehicles, and ships (Raska, 2020; Bitzinger, 2020). According to SIPRI analysts, success on this path was demonstrated in 2012, when China firmly established itself in the top 5 world arms exporters, and 2020 was already marked by the second rung.

To demonstrate the effectiveness of arms exports, you can cite statistical data: for example, the increase in exports amounted to 195 % in the period between 2004–2008 and 2009–2013 (Bitzinger, 2019). Moreover, 3 Chinese arms manufacturing companies (Aviation Industry Corporation of China (AVIC), China North Industries Group Corporation (NORINCO), China Electronics Technology Group Corp. (CETC) are among the top 10 world leaders in this field (Tian, 2020; Su, 2020).

Another factor that contributed to the strengthening of the People's Republic of China on the international market was the practice of supplying weapons to countries under international sanctions regimes. Among such examples, it is worth mentioning the sale of military equipment to Iran, North Korea, Venezuela during the presidency of Hugo Chávez and Zimbabwe during the rule of Robert Mugabe (Bitzinger, 2019). Obviously, such a policy has become not only a source of financing, but also a factor in strengthening China's geopolitical influence.

Dialogue at the military-political level is an important lever for capturing the market. Thus, in 2010, the Chief of the General Staff of the armed forces visited Namibia, Angola and Tanzania in order to promote Chinese technology. Powerful advertising tools are also used, including in the framework of holding international weapons exhibitions (Hull, 2012; Markov, 2012).

As for the key buyer partners, Pakistan plays an extremely important role, which, according to SIPRI estimates, accounted for 54 % in 2018–2022. The next two largest importers of Chinese weapons are Bangladesh and Serbia with shares of 12 % and 4,5 %, respectively (Ziwen, 2023).

In general, the geographical structure of exports of the Chinese military industry is as follows: more than 77 % – Asia and Oceania, Africa – more than 19 %, the rest of the world regions – more than 3 % (HowDominantisChina..., 2021).

It is noteworthy that Asia was a key buyer of Chinese weapons even in the period when the PRC did not play a prominent role in the global market. This position of Asia continues to strengthen, in particular, the volumes of

purchases by the countries of South and Southeast Asia have increased. At the same time, countries such as Pakistan, Bangladesh and Myanmar traditionally account for the lion's share of exports (China'sarms..., 2023). It should also be noted that the growth of exports to these countries was significantly facilitated by the implementation of the "One Belt, One Road" project, the provision of loans for purchases, sanctions and conflict relations with neighbors.

It is interesting that despite the presence of disputes in the South China Sea and the hardening of Chinese policy regarding their implementation, official Beijing sometimes manages to sell arms to rival countries in Southeast Asia. For example, the region of Southeast Asia accumulated 13 % of Chinese exports in 1999–2018, while among the buyers of China's competing countries in territorial claims are Indonesia, the Philippines, and Malaysia (Rakesh, 2020). Among the reasons for the success of the implementation of Chinese business interests are, again, the price policy and the absence of requirements for the buyer. Of course, in the case of the Philippines, the political factor of complicating relations with the West during the presidency of Rodrigo Duterte (2016–2022) played a key role. Moreover, expert assessments note the positive impact of arms trade on reducing the number of incidents between the parties in disputed water areas.

It should be noted that within the framework of the Asian region, Beijing seeks to advance its position in the Middle East region, because it considers it a profitable direction of arms exports. Among the largest importers of Chinese equipment are Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). At present, China's position in the region is growing, but limited, but Beijing hopes to strengthen it due to permanent conflict, military modernization programs, the financial capabilities of the countries of the region, the complication of their relations with the United States, as well as the status of rogue countries (Iran) (Ningthoujam, 2021). It is a sign that China uses the MTC to solve energy security problems, because the sale of weapons contributes to more active sales of Iranian oil to China. Beijing has been particularly keen to sell drones to countries in the region, taking advantage of tensions in Tehran-Riyadh relations. American military analysts have observed that Chinese drones are often used by Iranian proxies, which, in turn, increases the potential for conflict in the region (China'ssupply..., 2022).

As for the "Black Continent", the share of African countries in the structure of exports increased from 15 % to 19 % in the period from the 1980s to 2020. At the same time, North Africa buys about 49 % (the continental leader-importer is Algeria), 21 % – East Africa, and the rest is distributed among other regions of the continent (China'sarms..., 2023). The tendency to expand the list of buyers is characteristic, especially in the African market, where Chinese weapons currently account for about a third. Obviously, this is closely related to the active development of China's economic cooperation with the continent, as well as Beijing's interests in the natural resources of African countries. At the same time, Beijing, as in the case of the Middle East, supplied weapons to both Sudan and South Sudan at the same time in order to create a certain military-technical neutrality, because it invested resources in the energy sectors of both countries (Mariani, 2021).

It should also be emphasized that the strengthening of positions on the African continent coincided with the weakening of Russia's export capacity. This situation is a clear indication of the specifics of China's behavior as an economic and technological partner. The concentration of

the Russian military industry on the needs for the continuation of the war against Ukraine, the weakening of the influence of Paris in Equatorial Africa against the background of a series of military coups with anti-French statements, a flexible price policy and the possibility of barter – may become factors in the strengthening of the PRC in the African arms market, if Beijing does not concentrate efforts to military operation against Taiwan.

South and North America accounted for only 3 % of exports. The largest importers in 2008–2018 were Venezuela, Bolivia, Trinidad and Tobago, Peru, and Ecuador (China'sarms..., 2023). Again, geopolitical factors played their role. For example, Venezuela began to actively import Chinese weapons during the presidency of U. Chavez, against whom the United States imposed an embargo.

In general, in addition to the weakening of the Russia, the expansion of Chinese exports is realized due to the displacement of the products of the German and French military industry (in particular, in such aspects as aviation, electronics, tanks and armored vehicles, missiles and engineering equipment).

Export success is also demonstrated by a significant expansion of the range of products, which, according to experts, has become competitive in comparison with the equipment of other leading exporters. It is important to note that the PRC has become a leader in the export of unmanned aerial vehicles, which have already been tested in combat conditions in Iraq, the UAE and Nigeria.

However, SIPRI's research of 2022 demonstrates the decline of China's role in the global arms market: Chinese arms exports in the period 2018–2022 decreased by as much as 23% compared to 2013–2017 (Wezeman, Gadon, & Wezeman, 2023). Experts explain that such a situation requires the accumulation of military and technical capabilities against the background of growing tensions in relations with neighboring countries or preparations for an invasion of Taiwan, as well as the consequences of the pandemic (Fabbri, 2023).

Considering this, it will be logical to highlight the problems in the context of strengthening the PRC as a global arms exporter: 1. targeting mostly countries with a low level of purchasing power; 2. dependence on imports from several buyers (Pakistan, Bangladesh); 3. dissatisfaction of some partners with the conditions (Iran has not concluded new contracts for several years in a row); 4. low interest in advanced Chinese development (typically, some importers buying Chinese equipment, for example, Algeria, replace important components of equipment with Western models); 5. weak level of approbation of Chinese weapons in combat conditions; 6. already existing problems with the use of equipment, both from the point of view of their quality and efficiency, and the difficulties of maintenance, which in the end can neutralize the factor of the cheap price of weapons; 7. opposition from the West (for example, Turkey refused the agreement on the sale of missiles for air defense under the influence of Western NATO partners).

Thus, among specific examples of "failures" of Chinese weapons in importing countries, a number of cases can be noted. In 2022, Myanmar had to stop most of its JF-17 fighters due to technical problems (China's arms exports face sharp decline..., 2023). The largest importer – Pakistan remained unsuccessful with Chinese-produced F-22P frigates, especially the low level of engine performance (Zheng, 2023).

However, despite the shortcomings of the PRC's MTC, it has brought a number of important consequences of a national, regional and global nature.

The mentioned successes of the MTC cause a multiplier effect China. It is clear that precisely thanks to Chinese imports, it was possible to significantly strengthen the military-technological component of the PLA. This, in turn, made it possible to create its own military-industrial complex, which gradually moved from meeting domestic needs to occupying a significant niche in the global market. It is clear that the position among top-exporters achieved on this path reflects the combined successes of the PRC in the field of technology, science, defense and innovation.

At the same time, it should be taken into account that revenues from exports significantly contribute to the further modernization of the PLA in accordance with the goal of strengthening the status of a military superpower. In this context, it is necessary to recall the issue of the military budget of the PRC, which is systematically growing. Active and growing revenues from the MTC play a significant role in military appropriations. In turn, the growing military budget allows for the development and improvement of innovations, which greatly contributes to the advancement of the world arms market.

The growth of export capacities plays an important role in the system of multifaceted strengthening of China as a superpower, because along with economic profits, the export of military equipment allows active implementation of geopolitical interests, changing and shaping systems of regional partnerships and balances of power. In this regard, the unrestricted sale of weapons at reduced prices, especially to the countries of Africa and Latin America, becomes an instrument of global competition with the United States. Therefore, these successes create even more opportunities for China to adjust this competition to its advantage. Confirmation of this is the call of the administration of the American ex-president D. Trump not to buy weapons from China (along with Russia), as this strengthens its influence in the world and weakens the position of the United States (US urges..., 2019). An additional argument for the products of the American military industrial complex was its quality and suitability for use at the time of purchase. Instead, according to the American diplomat, China is using a reduced price, financing its own purchases, corruption not only for profit, but also for obtaining opportunities to gather intelligence.

The transfer of nuclear technologies to Pakistan and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) became a special lever of influence on geopolitical balances.

In conclusion, we can summarize that arms exports are successfully used by China to strengthen political relations, gain access to important minerals, create points of presence and project geopolitical influence on regional arms races.

In addition, the active MTC contributed to gains in the elimination of weaknesses in the context of military-technological competition with the United States. An example is the testing of hypersonic missiles by the Ukrainian Armed Forces in August 2020, the presence of which can significantly threaten the dominance of the US Navy at sea, in particular, in the issue of using the key advantage – aircraft carriers (Brimelow, 2021). In this regard, it would be appropriate to recall that the PRC currently has two aircraft carriers on combat duty, the first of which was purchased from Ukraine. For this purpose, the PRC purchased destroyers, submarine attack boats and multi-purpose fighters from Russia.

The importance of the mentioned aspects becomes clearer if we remember that it was the US aircraft carriers that caused the PRC to not dare to invade Taiwan.

In addition to concerns in the US, concerns are growing among neighboring countries that have conflicting relations with China. First of all, this concerns Japan, which in the national memory of the PRC has secured for itself the status of an aggressor country, perhaps even with the status of "number one".

It is characteristic that arms supplies, including unofficial ones, to the DPRK act as a tool of blackmail and pressure on the USA and Japan.

As a result, the growth of the capabilities of the PRC and North Korea lead to the strengthening of the military potential of Japan, which, in turn, is agreed to by the United States, which, following the results of the Second World War, acts as the "regulator" of the development of the "Land of the Morning Sun", in particular, in matters of military construction. As a result, the modernization of the so-called self-defense forces is gaining an increasingly purposeful character in accordance with the concept of "flexible self-defense", which involves countering the invasion of a hypothetical enemy on long distances. Moreover, the Japanese leadership is gradually moving away from postwar restrictions: 1. involvement in peacekeeping operations; 2. cancellation of the ban on the export of weapons; 3. the appearance of a military base in Djibouti; 4. increase by 2027 allocations for the security sphere from 1% to 2% of GDP.

However, Chinese economic power also affects the military construction priorities of another Asian giant – India. Evidence of this is that, despite the conflict with geographically adjacent Pakistan, India is developing a system of intercontinental ballistic missiles that can reach Beijing. In addition, China's military buildup and arms sales to Islamabad are among the key factors in India's transformation into the world's second largest arms importer, with its main partners being the RF and the United States, which see Delhi as a counterweight to the PRC (Pandit, 2020).

Fears of neighboring countries are growing in connection with the increasing aggressiveness in the foreign policy course of the PRC in matters of satisfying territorial claims. However, the latest wave of escalation, initiated by the Chinese side, took place against the background of the outbreak of the pandemic in 2020, which led to a general weakening of the neighbors and a diversion of attention of governments to solving this problem.

Indeed, the possibility of an invasion of Taiwan is growing. In order to protect against such a scenario, the US concluded an agreement in 2020 for the supply of salvo fire systems and cruise missiles. This caused a protest and the imposition of sanctions on American companies by official Beijing.

This leads to a strengthening of the network of partnerships and cooperation between the United States and the countries of East and Southeast Asia. A vivid illustration is the informal alliance of the four leading democratic countries of the Indo-Pacific region – the USA, Japan, Australia and India, within which work on conducting joint military exercises and formalizing the idea of creating a regional security system is increasingly active (Chellaney, 2020). Certainly, this framework is intended to contain China's ambitions.

However, the side effects of the sale of Chinese arms, in particular to Iran, are the increase in the conflict potential of one of the most "hot" geopolitical regions. It is interesting

that this leads to the strengthening of the export positions of the USA, because the world leader in the import of weapons is Saudi Arabia, which at the same time is the largest buyer of American weapons (Hein, 2020).

It is also worth emphasizing that official Beijing successfully and efficiently uses tensions between the US and other countries on the basis of human rights violations. Examples include Thailand, the Philippines.

It is interesting that the PRC MTC promotes the growth of new, albeit not very influential, players in the world market. As an example, the largest buyer of Chinese weapons is Pakistan, which tripled its exports while improving its range of aircraft equipment, which was sold to Nigeria, Myanmar and Turkey (Bokhari, 2019).

#### Discussion and conclusions

Military-technical cooperation played a significant role in the creation of a technical-technological base for the PLA, because the PRC did not possess its own military-technical assets from the moment of its emergence. At the same time, an extremely important role in the initiation and then the large-scale development of the Chinese military industry was played by cooperation with the USSR / Russia, which allowed Beijing to turn into one of the key arms exporters in the world already in the 21st century.

However, several important stages should be highlighted in such a high-quality transformation of China's MTC.

1. 1950s-early 1960s of the 20th century: the establishment of a modern military base thanks to cooperation with the USSR;

2. the second half of the 1970s – 1989: gaining access to Western technologies and attempts to strengthen own presence on the international market, lack of supplies of Soviet weapons;

3. the determining influence of the "Russian factor" since the beginning of the 90s of the XX century: Russia is the largest supplier of weapons to China, but from the mid-2000s to 2014 stagnation due to China's expansion of its own export potential, 2014–2022 – strengthening of Sino-Russian MTC due to problems in relations between the RF and the West, and from 2022 – a change of roles, where Beijing is an exporter of dual-purpose products to support Moscow in a full-scale war with Ukraine.

4. Since 2012 – China has been among the top five global arms exporters.

It is noteworthy that the following factors played a role in the transformation of China from mainly an importer to an exporter: 1. "copying strategy" of purchased military products with subsequent sale at reduced prices on the international market (primarily, Russian equipment); 2. the low price of weapons, which leads to interest on the part of resource-rich, but economically weak countries of the Global South; 3. arms sales to countries subject to international sanctions regimes; 4. use of dialogue at the military-political level; 5. active advertising of products of the own military industry; 5. use of economic cooperation within the framework of the "One Belt, One Road" project.

At the same time, the largest buyers are the countries of Asia (the largest buyers are Pakistan, Myanmar, Bangladesh), and at the same time, the presence on the African market has increased significantly. Beijing seeks to win a niche in the market of financially capable countries of the Middle East.

Among the destructive factors for China's role as a global arms exporter, can be noted: 1. orientation mostly towards countries with a low level of purchasing power; 2. dependence on the import of several buyers; 3. dissatisfaction of some partners with the conditions;

4. low interest in advanced Chinese development; 5. weak level of approbation of Chinese weapons in combat conditions; 6. already existing problems with the use of equipment, both from the point of view of their quality and efficiency, as well as the complexity of maintenance, which in the end can neutralize the factor of the cheap price of weapons; 7. opposition from the West.

Among the consequences of MTC, it should be noted: 1. creation of its own autonomous military industry; 2. obtaining an additional source for financing the modernization of the PLA; 3. significant strengthening of military capabilities in the context of global rivalry with the USA; 4. increased aggressiveness in foreign policy and worsening of relations with neighboring countries and the USA; 5. course on militarization of neighboring Asian countries and strengthening of their cooperation with the USA; 6. creating additional opportunities for strengthening authoritarian regimes through military and technical support and even promoting their aggressiveness towards other countries; 7. fueling bloody wars by non-democratic regimes; 8. obtaining greater access to the minerals of the countries of the Global South and increasing the level of dependence on cooperation with Beijing; 9. strengthening of new arms exporters (such as Pakistan) and weakening of others (Russia, USA, Germany).

It is obvious that in the conditions of a full-scale war against Ukraine, the Kremlin will lose positions in the international arms market, which China can quickly fill and thus strengthen its geopolitical influence. However, SIPRI data show that the PRC's share of the world arms trade has decreased, probably due to the accumulation of potential for a possible seizure of Taiwan by force. These aspects determine the need for further monitoring of the dynamics of the PRC's MTC.

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## ВІЙСЬКОВО-ТЕХНІЧНА СПІВПРАЦЯ ЯК ІНСТРУМЕНТ ЗОВНІШНЬОЇ ПОЛІТИКИ КИТАЮ

**Вступ.** КНР від моменту свого проголошення прагнула модернізувати свої збройні сили – Народно-визвольну армію Китаю (НВАК). Суттєвою проблемою стала відсутність військово-промислового комплексу, яку комуністичне керівництво Китаю прагнуло розв'язати завдяки активній військово-технічній співпраці (ВТС) з міжнародними акторами. Вочевидь активна закупівля зброї дала змогу КНР досягти паритету або навіть випередити США в багатьох аспектах. Водночас ВТС перетворилася не тільки на механізм зміцнення національної безпеки, але й інструмент зовнішньої політики.

**Методи.** Було використано такі методи: аналітичний, історичний, статистичний, узагальнення. У ході дослідження автор спирався на принцип об'єктивізму.

**Результати.** Розв'язуючи проблему слабкості техніко-технологічного рівня НВАК, Китай використовував геополітичну кон'юнктуру для отримання поставок озброєнь. Ключову роль відіграла співпраця спочатку з СРСР, а потім із Російською Федерацією. Таке партнерство було пов'язано з введенням ембарго з боку країн Заходу через події на площі Тяньаньмень. Важливим чинником стали також поставки військової техніки з України. Проте в умовах повномасштабної російсько-української війни Пекін став експортером продукції подвійного призначення до Росії. Загалом, використовуючи чинники несанкціонованого копіювання, низької цінової політики та продажу зброї режимам, що перебувають під санкціями, Пекін увійшов до топ'ятірки світових експортерів зброї. Китай експортує зброю переважно до країн Азії, а також значно посилив свої позиції на африканському ринку. Однак якість і проблеми з обслуговуванням викликають дедалі більше запитань у покупців.

**Висновки.** Серед наслідків ВТС Китаю можна виокремити: створення власного автономного ВПК; отримання додаткового джерела для фінансування модернізації НВАК; суттєве посилення військових можливостей у контексті глобального суперництва із США; посилення агресивності в зовнішній політиці та загострення відносин із сусідніми країнами та США; курс на мілітаризація сусідніх азіатських країн і посилення їхньої співпраці із США; створення додаткових можливостей для зміцнення авторитарних режимів шляхом військово-технічної підтримки та навіть сприяння їхній агресивності щодо інших країн; живлення кровопролитних воєн з боку недемократичних режимів; отримання більшого доступу до корисних копалин країн Глобального Півдня та збільшення рівня залежності від співпраці з Пекіном; посилення нових експортерів зброї (як Пакистан) та послаблення інших (РФ, США, Німеччина).

**Ключові слова:** Китай, торгівля зброєю, міжнародний ринок зброї, військово-промисловий комплекс, продукція подвійного призначення.

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