

China's New Naval Power: A Challenge to the Freedom of Navigation in Asia-Pacific?

25 March 2021, 17:00 – 18:30
Online evening conference

Prof. Peter ROBERTS, Director of the Military Sciences research group at the Royal United Services Institute (UK)
Dr Collin KOH SWEE LEAN, Senior Research Fellow at Nanyang Technological University (Singapore)

Dear Madam, Sir,

We are pleased to invite you to an **online evening conference**, organised on **Thursday 25 March 2021** by the **Centre for Security and Defence Studies** of the Royal Higher Institute for Defence.

The development of China's military might at sea has been particularly quick and impressive in recent years. Beyond nearby seas, Beijing is now dispatching its forces more frequently in the broader Indo-Pacific waters, yet also in Europe's neighbourhood and the Atlantic Basin, also potentially via the Arctic route. Taken together, the fast-paced development of China's naval capabilities, its military build-up in the South China Sea, its first base in Djibouti, the prospects for other such developments and the expansion of exclusionary A2/AD capabilities over adjacent seas are all diffusing the image of a more assertive military posture in line with consistent geopolitical aspirations and claims, which are often stated to be inherently detrimental to established, i.e. U.S., interests and the ability of the United States to underwrite stability in the Asia-Pacific region.

Beyond U.S.-centric depictions and analyses, current developments in China's naval modernisation certainly raise a broad range of policy issues regarding the country's strategic positioning as well as its objectives and growing aspirations within the patterns of regional and global geopolitics. Important questions also remain about what is at stake when we speak of China's naval modernisation. How, and to what extent, if any, does it pose a challenge to the freedom of navigation in Asia-Pacific and the global ocean? What does it mean for European maritime states and the future of shipping along vital intercontinental sea lanes? How to respond at best to growing risks and uncertainties?

In order to assess those critical issues for maritime security and the changing balance of power in Asia, we will be pleased to welcome Professor Peter Roberts, Director of the Military Sciences research group at the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), United Kingdom, and Dr Collin Koh Swee Lean, Senior Research Fellow for the China Programme of the Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies at the Rajaratnam School of International Studies, based in Nanyang Technological University, Singapore.

This conference will take place on **Thursday 25 March 2021 at 17.00 hours** and will be given in **English**. We thank you in advance for registering via the following link: <https://www.defence-institute.be>. **Registration, subject to availability, is compulsory and must be received by Monday 22 March 2021 at the latest.** You will then receive the link to connect to the conference.

(Signed)

Filip BORREMANS, MSc Eng
Air Force Colonel GS
Director-general
Royal Higher Institute for Defence

Programme:

16.00 – 17.00 : Registration – connection to online conference
17.00 – 18.30 : Conference and Q & A