

IS CHINA'S MILITARY JUST RICH KIDS PLAYING WITH TOY SOLDIERS?

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Xi Jinping has been

doing a great deal of saber-rattling of late, threatening both Australia and Taiwan.

China has also been building islands in the South China Sea, flying hypersonic weapons, stealing and illegally buying vast amounts of military technology, and overtly working to make its military more manly, even as the U.S. military deals with maternity flight suits and the needs of the so-called transgender troops.

Nevertheless, when all is said and done, a military is only as good as the people doing the fighting, and there are indications that China has a problem in this area.

The Epoch Times recently published an article entitled “Corruption Wears Down Chinese Military’s Combat Effectiveness,” a problem that marches hand in hand with a lack of battle experience:

“Corruption is a widespread phenomenon in China’s military where officers, including generals, have relied not on their duration of service or military prowess to rise in the ranks but rather bribery and connections.”

Experts commented that a lack of competent leaders now threaten to be severely detrimental to China’s warfighting capabilities.”

Another problem for the Chinese military is that, as in England of old, members of the upper classes don’t earn

their commissions; they buy them:

“‘A commander from a military district bribed Xu Caihou [then vice chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC)] 20 million yuan (\$3.14 million) for a senior position. Xu then promoted this one, rather than another commander who just bribed him 10 million yuan (\$1.57 million),’ Major General Yang Chunchang [said](#) [in 2015].”

China’s People’s Liberation Army is the world’s largest military with over 2.2 million in active duty. In the entire PLA, there’s only one general who has real combat experience. Li Zuocheng, 68, who served in the Vietnam War in 1979 as the director of a company consisting of about 100 soldiers. Li is the chief of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the CMC.

Thus, for all the snazzy uniforms and drills we see when the Chinese military puts on a parade in Beijing, it’s possible that the people in charge are just big, rich boys playing with toy soldiers.

Xi has apparently been trying to clean up the military, according to the article, for he’s fired several high-level officers over the past few years. The same article details myriad instances over the past four years of efforts to purge the military of corrupt officers. That may be impossible, though:

“The Chinese military has become a puddle of mud, without combat effectiveness,” Luo Yu, son of former revolutionary Chinese Gen. Lou Ruiqing, told The Epoch Times on Nov. 14, 2017. “No Chinese official or officer isn’t involved in bribery, it’s a systematic problem. “There’s no way to stop the corruption in the Chinese military.”

The Epoch Times, which is openly hostile to the Chinese communist regime, is not the only one reporting on this corruption. As far back as 2012, Foreign Policy wrote, “The institution is riddled with corruption and professional decay, compromised by ties of patronage, and asphyxiated by the ever-greater effort required to impose political control.”

With Xi having consolidated even more power since then, that asphyxiation must have increased.

Then, in 2018, the Rand Blog pointed out the same problem the Epoch Times article noted, which is that the Chinese military is woefully lacking in combat experience.

Today, China’s military has an increasingly impressive high-tech arsenal, but its ability to use these weapons and equipment remains unclear. There are reasons to be skeptical.

The People’s Liberation Army (PLA) struggles under the legacy of an obsolete command system, rampant corruption, and training of debatable realism, among other issues.

President Xi Jinping, the chairman of the Central Military Commission, has directed major efforts to address each of these defects and improve the military’s ability to fight and win wars. Since 2016, these organizational and other reforms have gained momentum.

Yet, it’s hard to believe that the chaos of 2020 and 2021 will have improved the military’s corruption and inexperience.

For all that, only a fool would underestimate the risks that the Chinese military presents to Taiwan, Australia, and others in the free world.

For one thing, it's probably got missile launchers arrayed on cargo ships throughout the world. For another thing, as the Battle of the Chosin Reservoir showed, if you hand enough peasants a gun, even if they're wearing cotton shoes and jackets in sub-zero temperatures, their sheer mass can wear down a better trained and better equipped military.

Nevertheless, it's as problematic to overestimate a military's strength as it is to underestimate it. While the latter can lead to disastrous military defeats, the former can lead to bad, even dangerous, political decisions taken from a sense of military inferiority.

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