

# NEW ARMS RACE? U.S. Fuels Massive Arms Spending in Asia

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*Asia's total military spending is still limited. According to the International Institute for Strategic Studies report, Asian countries spent \$262 billion on defense in 2011, less than Europe's expenditure of nearly \$270 billion; furthermore, the per capita spending levels in Asia remain significantly lower than those in Europe.*

*[C]ompared with the US' military spending, Asia's is much lower. Despite the unprecedented pressure to cut the fiscal deficit, the US military budget for the 2013 fiscal year is as high as \$613.9 billion.*

*China's modernization of its military is only a part of Asia's military spending and it is not the largest spender. The three biggest arms importers from 2007 to 2012 were India, South Korea and Pakistan in that order. India was also the top importer in 2002-2006 and it will increase its military spending by 17 percent this year.*

*[T]he US as part of its "return to Asia" strategy is fanning the flames of disputes between China and some neighboring countries in a bid to control the Asian security situation and, of course, sell more weapons. And it is worth noting that the US Department of Defense is the country's largest employer. In fact it is the largest employer in the world.*

Recently, two Western think tanks, the London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies and the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute in Sweden, published research reports on defense spending in Asia, hyping the so-called "Asian arms race" scenario and attributing the military build-up to Asian countries reacting to China's rise.

The International Institute for Strategic Studies says in its newly released Military Balance 2012 report that Asia's defense spending is likely to exceed Europe's this year, concluding that a classic arms race was occurring in Asia, with China on one side and neighboring Asian countries on the other. The report says that China's growing military spending is the main reason for the United States pivoting to Asia.

According to the study by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, released in March, Asia has become the biggest regional importer of weapons and in 2011 the five biggest arms importers were all in Asia.

But the West is making a storm in a teacup in this regard. The growing military spending of Asia, including that of China, is legitimate, rational and inevitable.

First, the growing military spending in Asia is the natural result of Asia's sustained and rapid

economic development. Asian countries in general are becoming more affluent, so it is reasonable for them to correspondingly increase their defense spending.

Second, to safeguard their growing economic and development interests, including overseas interests and the safety of shipping routes, and to address the challenges posed by terrorism, ethnic separatism and religious extremism, Asian countries are increasing their military spending to safeguard national unity and their territorial integrity.

Third, Asia's total military spending is still limited. According to the International Institute for Strategic Studies report, Asian countries spent \$262 billion on defense in 2011, less than Europe's expenditure of nearly \$270 billion; furthermore, the per capita spending levels in Asia remain significantly lower than those in Europe.

That the defense spending in Asia will outstrip that of Europe this year is simply because European countries have slashed their military budgets as a result of the sovereign debt crisis.

And compared with the US' military spending, Asia's is much lower. Despite the unprecedented pressure to cut the fiscal deficit, the US military budget for the 2013 fiscal year is as high as \$613.9 billion.

Fourth, complex issues, such as territorial, border and maritime disputes, counter-terrorism operations, nuclear issues and the need to secure resources and energy and regional influence, have propelled the rise of military spending in Asia.

A lack of trust and doubts and misunderstandings concerning China's rise have also to some extent resulted in a "security dilemma". Security cooperation among Asian countries lags far behind the thriving economic cooperation.

Fifth, China's modernization of its military is only a part of Asia's military spending and it is not the largest spender. The three biggest arms importers from 2007 to 2012 were India, South Korea and Pakistan in that order. India was also the top importer in 2002-2006 and it will increase its military spending by 17 percent this year. China plans an increase of 11 percent.

Meanwhile, the US' renewed efforts to strengthen and adjust its Asia-Pacific military deployment against rising regional powers has not only aggravated military tensions in Asia, but also led to alienation and even confrontation among Asian countries, further stimulating Asia's military spending.

The US falsely blames China's rise for the growing military spending of neighboring countries, yet it is the main beneficiary of Asia's military spending. The US remains the world's top arms supplier and it accounted for 30 percent of all arms exports between 2007 and 2011.

In fact, the US as part of its "return to Asia" strategy is fanning the flames of disputes between China and some neighboring countries in a bid to control the Asian security situation and, of course, sell more weapons. And it is worth noting that the US Department of Defense is the country's largest employer. In fact it is the largest employer in the world.

Asian countries should remain vigilant and be aware the US is trying to sow discord in Asia in order to reap the profits.

China adheres to a path of peaceful development and is committed to peaceful coexistence with its neighbors. China has become the largest trading partner of a number of its neighbors. In 2011, the trade volume between China and other Asian countries reached \$1.9 trillion.

This demonstrates that peaceful development is actually the popular sentiment and general trend in Asia.

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