

The Chinese-style Approach of aerospace military industry development – A case study of the "Peace Pearl Program"

Научный руководитель – Пономаренко Людмила Васильевна

Ли Мэнлун

PhD

Российский университет дружбы народов, Факультет гуманитарных и социальных наук,
Москва, Россия

E-mail: 244591055@qq.com

In examining China's history of aviation military industrial cooperation, it becomes evident that China has steadily advanced towards technological autonomy. This is closely related to the "Peace Pearl Program" program after the detente between China and the United States. While the cessation of the "Peace Pearl Program" program initially posed challenges to China's aerospace military industry, it ultimately propelled China towards the path of self-sufficiency. Indeed, prioritizing independence and self-reliance in international collaborations emerges as the primary avenue for major nations to realize substantial advancements in their military industries through leapfrog development. The military industry, particularly the aviation sector, is characterized by robust international collaboration, a fully integrated industrial chain, high specialization, and significant cyclical fluctuations. Moreover, military cooperation is profoundly influenced by international politics and geopolitics. Thus, the imperative for China or Russia lies in maintaining independence in military cooperation, reducing reliance on foreign technology, and ensuring the resilience of the military industry chain. The "Peace Pearl Program" program, also known as the Peace Model Program or Project 82, denotes a Sino-American military initiative in the 1980s aimed at enhancing the Chinese J-8II fighter jet. Examining the "Peace Pearl Program" program is of great significance for contemporary China or Russia regarding maintaining independence in military cooperation, navigating technological blockades imposed by Western countries in the military industry, and overcoming crucial technological challenges in military production. The "Peace Pearl Program" program emerged within the unique international context of the late Cold War era. During the 1970s, significant shifts occurred in the power balance and strategic landscape between the United States and the Soviet Union as they vied for hegemony. Concurrently, tensions escalated between China and the Soviet Union. Strategically motivated to counter Soviet expansion, China and the United States began drawing closer. With the thaw in China-US relations, avenues for military exchanges opened, prompting exploration into expanding military relations across various domains. In 1973, China signaled its interest in procuring high-performance technology, including satellites, radar and communication systems, as well as military aircraft such as fighter jets and transport planes, from the United States.[1] During this period, technology transfer and the sale of defensive weapons constituted the focal points of Sino-US military relations. Following numerous investigations and negotiations, the US offered China a substantial array of finished defensive weapons to select from. However, China approached the procurement and adoption of advanced military weaponry and technologies from the US with a long-term perspective. The primary focus for China was on acquiring combat support and information technologies, including radar, avionics, fire control systems, imaging, and night vision capabilities, rather than purchasing complete systems as finished products.[2] The initiation, progression, and eventual suspension of the "Peace Pearl Program" were all contingent upon the fluctuations in Sino-American relations. These dynamics were particularly evident in 1989 when President Bush addressed the situation in China and announced three sanctions against the country, the most significant being the suspension of all arms sales and

commercial arms exports between China and the US. Concurrently, with the gradual easing of tensions between China and the Soviet Union, the Soviet side extended an offer to sell cutting-edge aviation technology to reestablish military ties between Moscow and Beijing. Faced with this shifting landscape, the Chinese government opted to completely suspend the "Peace Pearl Program" after carefully weighing the advantages and disadvantages.[3] Additionally, there were four significant reasons contributing to the suspension of the "Peace Pearl Program". Firstly, the US military sought to deepen its understanding of the People's Liberation Army (PLA). Transparency within the Chinese military has always been a topic of concern for the US military. However, at the time, China, which had long operated outside the international community, was reluctant to disclose its military information. Secondly, the United States had a history of oscillation on the issue of arms sales to Taiwan. Thirdly, the US intervened in China's arms sales to third-world countries. Fourthly, the US had potential concerns regarding the reactions of its Asia-Pacific allies. Against the backdrop of deepening economic globalization, maintaining an intact weapons development and production system is no longer the sole focus of nations. Instead, engaging in extensive military-industrial cooperation and establishing an open, "globalization"-based weapons development and production system are increasingly becoming strategic choices for countries worldwide to enhance their capabilities in weapons development and production. However, the heightened volatility of the current global situation has led to increased unpredictability in military-industrial cooperation or component imports. Therefore, while considering the current military needs, it is essential to also strategize for the future, aiming to achieve the indigenization of critical technologies and components. Both China and Russia are major world powers, and engaging in extensive military-industrial cooperation with other countries is a practical necessity for the development of weapons and equipment. However, both countries still lag behind Western countries in certain areas of military technology (such as semiconductors and other high-tech fields). Excessive reliance on military-industrial cooperation could compromise the autonomy of weapons and equipment development. Therefore, learning from China's "Peace Pearl Program" can provide new ideas for the independent development of the military industry of the two countries.

References

- 1) Christopher F. Chyba. U.S. Military-Support Equipment Sales to the People's Republic of China. *Asian Survey*, 1981, 21(4):469.
- 2) Edward Ross. U.S.-China Military Relations. A Presentation to the Heritage Foundation. *Asian Studies Center Seminar on United States – China Relations*, January 28, 1986:6.
- 3) Jim Mann. China Cancels U.S. Deal for Modernizing F-8 Jet : Military Shelving the \$550-million program signals an important break in the two nations' strategic ties[N/OL]., *Los Angeles Times*, 1990-3-15.
- 4) Zhang Fuyuan, Li Yuqiu." On Military Cooperation and Weapons and Equipment Development." *National Defense Science and Technology* 31.04(2010):45-49.