
Defense Report

AUSA



Third World Combat Capabilities— Another Aspect of the Threat To Peace

For decades the arms race controversy has centered on the relative military might of the armies of the United States and NATO compared with those of the USSR and the Warsaw Pact. It has been relatively easy to overlook the development of a significant land warfare capability underway in a number of countries not formally aligned with either major alliance.

For example three of the largest armies in the world are situated in Asia, led by China with 2.3 million active army troops, 9,000 main battle tanks and some 14,500 field artillery pieces. India has 1.2 million men in the army, backed by 3,150 tanks and 2,200 artillery weapons. The 1.1 million man Vietnamese army has at least 1,600 tanks and 1,300 field artillery weapons. The two other sizable standing armies in Asia are those of North Korea, (750,000 troops, 3,000 tanks, 3,900 artillery), and Pakistan (450,000 men, 1,600 tanks, 600 artillery).

One of the most dangerous flash points in today's world—the Middle-East—is host to several large concentrations of ground combat forces. The 955,000-man Iraqi Army, with its 5,000 tanks and 3,500 field artillery pieces leads in numbers. It is closely followed by Syria's 300,000 men, 4,050 tanks and 2,500 artillery weapons and Iran's Army of 305,000, 1,000 tanks, 1,000 artillery pieces.

In North Africa, the armies of Egypt, Algeria and Libya each presents an imposing array of combat power. The Egyptians keep a 320,000 man active army with 2,550 tanks and 1,260 artillery weapons. Algeria's 120,000 soldiers have 900 tanks and 500 artillery pieces, while the smaller (55,000) Libyan Army has 3,000 tanks and 1,180 artillery weapons.

This litany of ground-war capabilities gives ample proof that the arms race is not the exclusive milieu of the superpowers and their closest allies. It also tells us that, while we must do all in our power to seek peaceful settlements of political differences, the time to beat our own swords into plowshares is not yet at hand.