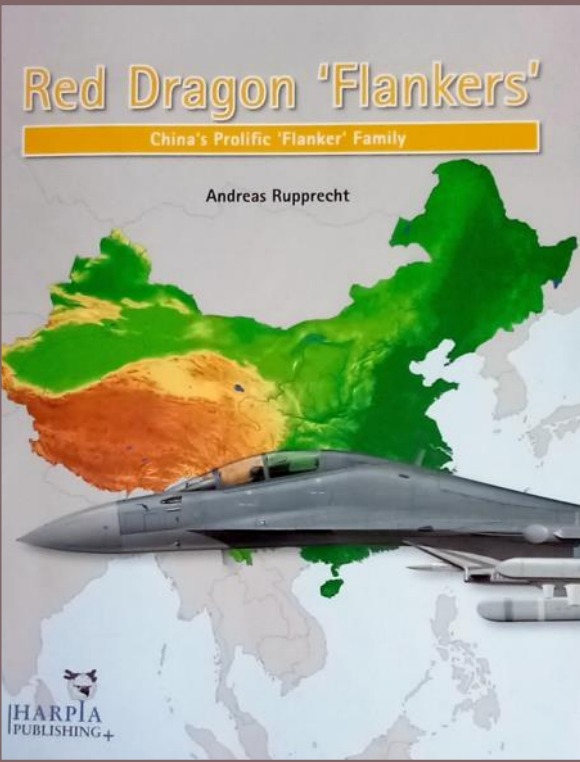


# 'Red Dragon Flankers'



This is another excellent publication, written by Andreas Rupprecht and published by Harpia, about the development of military aviation in the early 21<sup>st</sup> Century in the People's Republic of China. However, for the first time in this series of books, this volume features just a single aircraft, the Sukhoi Su-27, as well as the growing number of sub-types that have evolved since the first of the type appeared in PLAAF and PLAN service back in 1992.



Beginning with 24 Russian manufactured single and twin seat aircraft the author traces the development and introduction to service of numerous Chinese built derivatives identified as J-11s, J-15s and J-16s and these in many cases with their own further sub-types. In all some 13 different members of the "Flanker Family" are identified and examined by the author.

Despite only comprising five chapters and a single appendix, the wealth of information contained in the book's 250+ pages is prodigious. The three initial chapters are devoted to the aircraft in all its variants, both those that are land based and those that equip the carriers of the PLA Naval Air Service.



In May 2021 it was first revealed via a TV report that the PLAN Naval Aviation had deployed some J-15s to Lingshui to support the second aircraft carrier Shandong, stationed at Hainan Island. It seems this is not yet a true permanent base, but based on this image, the pilots already wear a unit badge for the new unit.  
(沉默的山羊)

Chapter 4 deals with the weapons and stores either carried by or likely to be carried by the different members of the family. The photos in this chapter maintain the high standard set throughout the book and perhaps they are of greatest interest for those of us with a modelling perspective, illustrating what can be carried and where they fit on the aircraft as well as how many might be carried. In addition, for any diorama builders, there are several excellent images of various types of pods, missiles and bombs being transported and loaded.

The final chapter covers the Flanker contribution to the order of battle of Chinese air forces in 2022, identifying bases and units in a comprehensive manner. Again, photo coverage of this aspect of the force is excellent. This chapter also includes a full and useful explanation of the complexities of the serial numbering system applied to Chinese aircraft and details how changes introduced in 2012 have progressively come into use since then.



The single appendix contains what is at first sight is a highly complex “family tree” for the Chinese Flankers, illustrating when new types evolved and from which other variants they sprang. The appendix concludes with an excellent collection of 25 port-side profiles, produced by Ugo Crisponi, illustrating examples of all the various sub-types so far identified.

Before summing up what I thought about this book, it is important finally to include a reference to the fact that the author examines some of the more controversial aspects of the Flanker’s development in the PRC; especially, were these developments illegal, as it is suggested in some quarters, or not, as is stated elsewhere? I shall not spoil a good conspiracy story by explaining his conclusions here but will certainly encourage you to go away and read it.

You may well have arrived at the impression that I have enjoyed reading this book. I did and will continue to do so but I should warn you that it is not a book to be simply picked up and read from cover to cover. It is, however, one of that rare breed of non-fiction books that is to be savoured, to be dipped into and enjoyed and to return to time and time again to discover bits and pieces you had missed previously or had forgotten about. Do that and, like me, you will come to love it!

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Highly recommended...if you hadn't guessed!! Thank you to the publishers for the copy to review, a fact which has no bearing on my appreciation of it!!

David Thomas



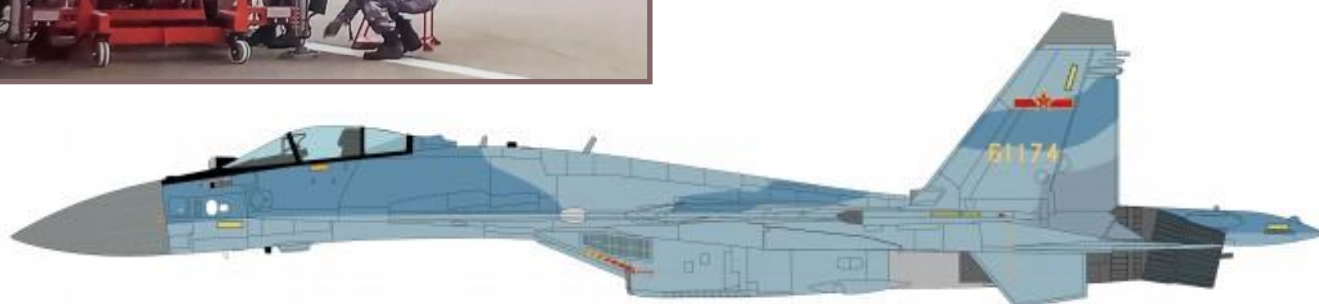
Sukhoi Su-30MCK

This is a recent Su-30MCK assigned to the 54th Air Brigade with the characteristic eagle unit badge. This updated aircraft is fitted with the new antennas and shown equipped for a SEAD mission with a YJ-91 ARM and indigenous KL700A ECM pod.

Sukhoi Su-20MCK characteristics

- Externally similar to the two-seat Su-27UBK but with taller tail fins, larger tail fins and squared-off tail fin caps
- Inflight refuelling probe installed forward of the cockpit, on the left, with the dome offset to the left
- Nose undercarriage has two wheels
- Some upgraded examples feature MAWS sensors behind the cockpit and on the tail fins. A few have also been upgraded with a different IFF blade antenna on the tail and under the radome

Artwork shows a Su-30MCK assigned to the former 18th Air Division's 54th Air Regiment, carrying a Kh-58ME ASM and APK-9 guidance pod. This is one of the few aircraft to have briefly worn a sand/tan desert camouflage and still has the original 'Odd Rods' IFF installed.





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## July 2023



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# Chinese Flankers (Book Review)

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