4-2007

The Chinese Military and the "Taiwan Issue": How China Assesses Its Security Environment

Vincent Wei-cheng Wang
University of Richmond, vwang@richmond.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://scholarship.richmond.edu/polisci-faculty-publications

Part of the Asian Studies Commons, Defense and Security Studies Commons, International Relations Commons, and the Military and Veterans Studies Commons

Recommended Citation

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Political Science at UR Scholarship Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Political Science Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of UR Scholarship Repository. For more information, please contact scholarshiprepository@richmond.edu.
The Chinese Military and the "Taiwan Issue": How China Assesses Its Security Environment

Vincent Wei-cheng Wang*

This paper sheds light on the strategic outlook of the world's largest yet understudied armed force – China's People's Liberation Army (PLA). With its sheer size, rapidly increasing capabilities, and uncertain intentions, the PLA will be the vital pillar for a militarily powerful China, and how China's military assess the country's security environment affects the viability of the country's stated development strategy of "peaceful rise." This paper argues that the so-called "Taiwan issue" importantly shapes China's foreign policy and military modernization. Although the

PLA is a party army entrusted to defend against threats to the Chinese Communist Party's rule (including territorial integrity), and publications and interviews generally indicate a pessimistic assessment inspired by realpolitik, there are diverse internal voices -- as a result of coexistence of multiple military doctrines -- on the tactics, rather than the general goals, regarding PLA's modernization and its role in a Taiwan contingency. Despite the PLA's opacity and strategic concealment, this paper seeks to provide a very modest contribution.

Key words: China, People's Liberation Army, Taiwan Issue, Cross-Strait Relations, peaceful rise

Introduction

Ever since China's present "Fourth Generation" of leadership\(^1\) consolidated its power, China has been trumpeting a new, more pragmatic, less ideological, but more effective foreign policy.\(^2\) By leveraging China's growing "soft power"\(^3\) (the most emblematic examples being


\(^3\) For the original rendition of the concept of "soft power," see Joseph Nye, Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics (New York: Public Affairs, 2004). For a Chinese academician's discussion of China's soft power, see Pang Zhongying, "China's
China’s active free trade agreement agenda with its Asian neighbors and its pursuit of energy security worldwide, China’s leaders adopted this astute strategy to achieve their stated goal of “peaceful rise” (heping jueqi) or “peaceful development” (heping fazhan) for China. The slogan of “peaceful rise” has won China praises and defused the “China threat” concerns in many capitals.

However, during the past few weeks, several demonstrations of military hard power, intentionally or unintentionally, by China has caused some decision-makers and observers to question the true intentions of China’s military development and the sincerity of China’s diplomatic charm offensive. On 29 December 2006, China unveiled its biennial Defense White Paper, which continued to justify the double-digit

---


increases in China’s military expenditure despite its stated goals of seeking “peaceful development” and a “harmonious world.”⁷ In early January this year, China unveiled its homemade advanced fighter, Jian-10, which offered a cheaper alternative to advanced Western aircraft.⁸ Then on January 11, China displayed its surprising prowess in anti-satellite (ASAT) technology by destroying one of its aging weather satellites with a medium-ranged ballistic missile – an event that shocked the world but was not confirmed by China until almost two weeks later.⁹ In light of


these recent developments, both U.S. Vice President Dick Cheney and Secretary of Defense have publicly expressed their concerns about China's rapid development of military power and lack of transparency.¹⁰

Why did China seemed to cast away its carefully nurtured new image and instead flex its military muscle? The Chinese officials understandably sought to reassure the world that China remained committed to its fundamental objectives of pursuing "peaceful development" in a "harmonious world," that these recent events ought to cause no concern, and that China's military modernization befit its rise as a world power.¹¹

Mere rhetoric amid conflicting signals is unlikely to quell speculation. Did these recent events represent isolated incidents or signal a fundamental shift? What kind of great power will China grow into? The answers to these questions will only become more apparent in the weeks or years to come. But in light of China's rapid economic growth, surprisingly advancing military capabilities, and opaque strategic intentions, a study of how China views the country's security environment—especially the "Taiwan issue," on which the Chinese military rationalizes its buildup—is critically important for the Asia-Pacific region and the world.


¹¹ Tracy Quek, "China Admits Missile Test, But Says There Is No Threat; Beijing Breaks Week-Long Silence, But Comments Fail To Mute World Criticism," The Straits Times (Singapore)(24 January 2007). Obtained from Lexis-Nexis.
This paper seeks to shed light on the strategic outlook of the world's largest yet understudied armed force — China's People's Liberation Army (PLA). With its sheer size, rapidly increasing capabilities, and uncertain intentions, the PLA will be the vital pillar for a militarily powerful China. Hence, the PLA's assessment of the country's external security environment — especially the so-called Taiwan issue, which importantly shapes China's foreign policy and military modernization — entails profound implications.

The study of Chinese military's assessment of its external security environment is unquestionably important yet intellectually challenging. First, given its sheer size alone, China's military warrants scrutiny. With over 2.3 million in size, the PLA is the world's largest armed force. According to the CIA estimates, China's military spending ($81.5 billion in 2005, up from $67.5 billion in 2004) is the world's second highest.

---


13 Central Intelligence Agency, The World Factbook, [on line]; available from http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/rankorder/2067rank.html; accessed 13 September 2005 and 16 October 2006. It should be noted that the United States' military spending as of March 2003 was $370.7 billion and in 2005 it was estimated at $518.1 billion. Official figures released by the Chinese government are substantially lower. For example, China's 2004 Defense White Paper puts China's defense spending in 2004 at $25.58 billion (or 211.7 billion in renminbi) — lower than even the U.K., Japan, and France. On 5 March 2006, a spokesperson for China's National People's Congress announced that China would increase its publicly disclosed military budget in 2006 by
China's sustained and rapid economic growth, averaging 9% per annum for the last 25 years, provides the resource base to significantly increase its military capabilities. According to China's published figures, since 1990, China's official defense budget has seen double-digit increases every year, even when adjusted for inflation.\(^{14}\)

China's substantial capabilities notwithstanding, the need to study its military's worldviews is further underscored when one considers the difficulty of ascertaining the intentions of a government whose

---

14.7 percent, to approximately $35 billion. However, U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) estimates that China's total military-related spending will amount to between $70 billion and $105 billion in 2006 – two to three times the announced budget. See Office of the Secretary of Defense, Annual Report to Congress: Military Power of the People's Republic of China 2006 (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2006), pp. 19-21; and Annual Report to Congress: The Military Power of the People's Republic of China 2005 (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2005), pp. 21-2. A 2005 RAND report puts China's defense spending at $31-38 billion in 2003 (or 1.4 to 1.7 times of its official figures) and projects China's defense spending in 2025 to be $185 billion (in 2001 dollars), or about three-fifth of the U.S. defense spending in 2003. See Keith Crane, Roger Cliff, Evan S. Medeiros, James C. Mulvenon and William H. Overholt, Modernizing China's Military: Opportunities and Constraints (Santa Monica: RAND, 2005). Opacity of the Chinese military budgeting system and wide variation of methodologies have accounted for the huge discrepancy between Chinese official figures and informed Western estimates. Determining China's actual defense-related expenditure is problematic, as China's officially disclosed figures do not include many items that are funded by different sources, such as (1) foreign weapons procurement, sales, and aid, (2) paramilitary expenses, (3) strategic forces, (4) state subsidies for the military-industrial complex, (5) military-related research and development, and (6) extra budget revenue. See Pentagon, Military Power 2006, pp. 20-21. Shen Dingli, a prominent security expert at China's Fudan University, agrees with the Pentagon's methodology and points out that the real purchasing power of China's military expenditure should be higher, because only items such as foreign weapons procurement and foreign visits by PLA officers are calculated at the official exchange rate of one U.S. dollar to eight Chinese yuan; all other items should be calculated at the "real" exchange rate at 1:4. Personal interview, Shanghai, 4 July 2006.

decision-making process is shrouded in secrecy and whose leadership is not subject to rule of law or accountable to the electorate. How the few men in China’s high command view the outside world (threats and opportunities) and themselves portend enormously important implications for regional security in Asia-Pacific and global security.

Despite the demonstrated necessity, efforts to study this powerful yet secretive institution encounter two daunting methodological challenges. The first is access. As David Shambaugh, a long-term PLA observer, points out, the top brass of PLA rarely grant interviews and discussions with “think tanks” affiliated with the PLA tend to be highly formalistic. The top generals’ public comments almost always echo or accentuate top party leaders’ statements or well-known state policies. Although the PLA has many publications, and one hopes to gain some insights through combing military thinkers’ writings, surprisingly little about the Taiwan issue or how the PLA would fare against Taiwan’s military, is written or


available to the outside.\textsuperscript{17} Outside scholars are unlikely to have access to Chinese internal publications, as sensitive information is strictly managed on a need-to-know basis.

This raises several tough questions: How do we disentangle the PLA’s worldview from those of China’s civilian leaders? Can we automatically assume that the party’s interests and preferences are also the military’s? Does the PLA have a “corporate” position that substantially but not entirely overlaps with that of the party’s? If so, can we assume that the PLA speaks with one voice, much like what the unitary rational actor would predict? Or, should we be guided by the insight of bureaucratic politics – “what you see depends on where you stand”\textsuperscript{18} – and ask if there are multiple voices within the PLA over tactics, if not over the general goal? This paper seeks to provide a very modest contribution in this regard.

The PLA as Party-Army

The PLA is not the kind of professionalized national armed force under civilian command seen in the West. It is the protector and defender of China’s party-state. Mao Zedong’s dictum that “political power grows out of the barrel of the gun” (强大ganzi li chu zhengquan) has long defined the critical role that PLA has played in the politics of the People’s Republic of China (PRC). In an assessment of the PLA’s role

\textsuperscript{17} Shambaugh, \textit{Modernizing China’s Military} and “China’s Military Views the World.” This impression was confirmed by my visits to the bookstores owned by the People’s Liberation Army and the Academy of Military Science in Beijing in July 2006.

\textsuperscript{18} For a classic on decision-making process in international relations, see Graham T. Allison, \textit{Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis} (Boston: Little, Brown, 1971).
in the Chinese communist movement and the half century of the PRC, David Shambaugh observes that "The People’s Republic of China (PRC) may not have had the opportunity to celebrate 50 years of statehood had it not been for the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) – nor, for that matter, is it likely that the PRC would have come into existence in the first place were it not for the PLA." In other words, the founding of the PRC owed much to the PLA’s military prowess and the continued rule of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) depends crucially on the PLA’s continued allegiance and support.

This symbiotic relationship makes the study of "civil-military" relationship in China intrinsically problematic. Rather than a national army that is a professional and non-partisan institution subordinated under civilian leadership, as seen in Western democracies, the PLA is a party-army; it sees itself as the guardian of the interests of the CCP. According to this view, because the PLA is a party-army, strictly speaking it does not have a purely military view on the Taiwan issue.

This unique role is not only a result of the history of the CCP and the

---


The Chinese Military and the “Taiwan Issue”:

PLA, but also enshrined legally. This is because: (1) the CCP purports to represent the interests of the state and the people; therefore (2) threats to the party are threats to the state; and because (3) the military must be under the strict control of the party; therefore (4) the military is the defender of the party’s legitimacy and enforcer of its claims.

The first article of the PRC Constitution defines the PRC as “a socialist state under the people’s democratic dictatorship led by the working class and based on the alliance of workers and peasants.”22 The first article of the CCP Constitution bestows a special status to the CCP as “the vanguard both of the Chinese working class and of the Chinese people and the Chinese nation. It is the core of leadership for the cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics and represents the development trend of China’s advanced productive forces, the orientation of China’s advanced culture and the fundamental interests of the overwhelming majority of the Chinese people.”23

According to China’s Defense White Paper, a major “strategic task” of the CCP in exercising state power is “to secure a coordinated development of national defense and the economy, and to build modernized, regularized and revolutionary armed forces to keep the country safe.” Citing the decisions made by the Fourth Plenum of the

---


CCP’s 16th National Congress and the Expanded Meeting of the CCP’s Central Military Commission in September 2004 (after which Hu Jintao replaced Jiang Zemin as Chairman of this important body and completed the protracted political transition from the Third Generation to the Fourth Generation leadership), the 2004 White Paper reiterates that China’s defense and military building must “...maintain the fundamental principle and system of absolute Party leadership over the armed forces, and take the military strategy of the new era as an overarching guideline to actively push for the national defense and military modernization.” A news supplement points out that the Defense White Paper underscores that “It is the sacred responsibility of the Chinese armed forces to stop the ‘Taiwan independence’ forces from splitting the country” and warns that “Should the Taiwan authorities go so far as to make a reckless attempt that constitutes a major incident of ‘Taiwan independence,’ the Chinese people and armed forces will resolutely and thoroughly crush it at any cost.”

And finally, according to Article 8 of the controversial Anti-Secession Law, passed 14 March 2005, China’s State Council and Central Military


The Chinese Military and the “Taiwan Issue”:

Commission shall decide on and execute “the non-peaceful means and other necessary measures” to protect China’s sovereignty and territorial integrity in the event that “the ‘Taiwan independence’ secessionist forces should act under any name or by any means to cause the fact of Taiwan’s secession from China, or that major incidents entailing Taiwan’s secession from China should occur, or that possibilities for a peaceful reunification should be completely exhausted.”

To sum up, under its grand strategy for the first two decades of the 21st century – concentrating all energy in fully developing the country into a “well-off society” (xiaokang shehui), China needs a peaceful international environment for its national development. Zheng Bijian, a former vice president of China’s party school and the brain child of the theory of “peaceful rise,” characterizes this path toward modernization as “the development path to a peaceful rise.” China thus seeks to improve its relationships with other great powers and secure stability on its peripheries. The CCP aims to shore up its tattered legitimacy, weakened by the Cultural Revolution, and perpetuate its raison d’être by promoting further economic development and by skillfully appropriating nationalism. Success in economic development helps transform nationalism, a potentially destabilizing force for the party, into a positive asset for the CCP. However, a showdown over Taiwan independence would jeopardize


both objectives. Such adverse developments affect the PLA particularly, since it is the armed forces that must repel threats to the civilian party leaders or accomplish these leaders’ goals. It is precisely the military’s special role that provides an exploratory point of departure for delineating the party’s and the military’s worldviews and for differentiating the possible multiple voices on the Taiwan issue within the PLA.

The Party-Military as Cautious Hawk?

Despite the shared agreement on national priorities and common interests between the CCP and the PLA, an interesting question remains as to whether one’s wishes automatically translate into the other’s commands. Specifically, are military leaders, due to institutional reasons and the way they have been socialized, more likely to adopt more “hawkish” foreign and security policies (FSPs) than civilian leaders? According to the “military-industrial complex” school, the military stands as the beneficiary of a large budget, and they justify their increased budget on the ground of the less-than-amicable relationships with the outside world. This theory helps shed light on the utility of “the Taiwan issue” in the calculation of the PLA leaders and in the game PLA plays in Chinese politics.

According to this view, 1996 was a milestone for the Taiwan issue. From 1979, when the U.S. and the PRC established diplomatic relations, until 1996, the Taiwan issue had been managed diplomatically. The PRC replaced its failed “military liberation” approach toward unification (e.g., unsuccessful military campaigns during the 1955 and 1958 Offshore Island Crises) with a policy of “peaceful reunification.” The new policy was largely a place holder: Despite its claim of sovereignty over Taiwan,
The Chinese Military and the "Taiwan Issue":

The PRC did not have the capability to enforce its claim. It did not have any realistic military option. But this policy allowed the PRC to relegate defense modernization as the last of Deng Xiaoping's Four Modernizations and instead focus on economic development. China's military received low priority and was a bloated, insular, and obsolescent "people's army." China's military budgets were primarily consumed by the overstuffed ranks, rather than acquisition of modern weaponry, and increases were slow. The double-digit increases in China's military spending since 1990 should be viewed in the historical perspective of the lower bases and slower growths of the 1980s.

The 1995-6 Taiwan Strait crisis remilitarized the Taiwan issue. In a provocative article serving as a lead piece for a forum on the Taiwan Strait crisis, Andrew Nathan, a political scientist at Columbia University, argued that China's war games and missile tests indicated that it sought to protect its core security interests by preventing Taiwan from becoming the "unsinkable aircraft carrier" of hostile forces in light of the increasing Taiwanese independence, emerging American containment policy, and possible Japanese rearmament. Jonathan Pollack, an expert on Asian security, argued that "the renewed military activism...has provided a focal point and direction for Chinese military planning and defense acquisitions that has been largely absent since the collapse of the Soviet Union." Jiang Zemin was reportedly criticized for being "too

---


soft” on Taiwan by some military leaders. You Ji pointed out “The PLA generals have gained by the flexing of military muscles in the Strait, through improved opportunities for higher budgetary allocations... Today, for the first time the PLA is able to act as a fairly independent pressure group.”

The PLA’s new pessimistic assessment became the rationale for the directions of its military modernization: (1) budgetary outlays were substantially increased; (2) acquisition of advanced foreign weapons (especially from the Former Soviet Union) became a priority; 33 (3) through developing indigenous arms and purchasing foreign arms, the PLA’s military modernization became driven by the twin goals of deterring Taiwan independence and dissuading international (U.S.) intervention; and (4) the PLA’s strategy was to focus on developing asymmetric warfare capabilities in certain “pockets of excellence” (e.g., ballistic missiles, information operations / information warfare, and other “assassin mace” (sha shou jian) weapons). 34 Mirroring a tendency in its foreign policy to view the world from a “Taiwan lens,” China’s military modernization after 1996 appears powerfully driven by the preparation for a Taiwan contingency. 35


33 Russia alone provided approximately 95 percent of arms sold to China in the last decade and remains China’s chief supplier of weapons and material. See Military Power 2006, p. 21 for a table of Russian sales of advanced weapons to China from 2001-2005.


35 The Pentagon’s 2006 PLA Report analyzes China’s military acquisitions and concludes that China is developing capabilities that could apply to other regional
However, an alternative perspective seems more persuasive. The dominant (though contested) wisdom among international relations scholars is that military officers tend to be more cautious than their civilian counterparts about initiating the use of force. Sobered by the experience of combat, the theory holds, soldiers are hesitant to recommend military action except under the most favorable of circumstances. The so-called Powell Doctrine, which asserts that when a nation is engaging in war, every resource and tool should be used to achieve overwhelming force against the enemy, is consistent with this view.

Following this school, one would expect PLA leaders to be more cautious than civilian leaders in resorting to force. While civilian leaders can afford to talk tough to add theatrics in foreign policy, it is the military’s level of preparedness that determines whether their civilian leaders’ demands will be acceded as credible threats or dismissed as bluffs. Andrew Scobell’s study finds that in general military leaders are less quick to resort to the use of force and that ground forces are more cautious. Alastair Iain Johnston’s study concludes that although during much of the Cold War era, the PRC was more dispute-prone than any other major power except the U.S. and that it often resorted to higher level of violence, these escalated disputes had mostly involved territorial contingencies, such as conflicts over resources or territory. So, the Taiwan issue can not fully justify PLA’s military modernization. See Military Power 2006, 1.


37 Andrew Scobell, China’s Use of Force: Beyond the Great Wall and the Long March (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003).
disputes. Otherwise, increase in China’s relative power capabilities has not led to increased war-proneness in recent years, as China gradually acquired status and prestige. 38

These scholars point out that historically China’s use of force has been conservative. It tends to use force only as a supplement to a larger political strategy and usually when the correlates are favorable, its principled rhetoric notwithstanding. The Chinese evidently took Sun Tzu’s adage to heart: “The art of war is of vital importance to the State. It is a matter of life and death, a road either to safety or to ruin.” 39

In this regard, China’s show of force in the 1996 Taiwan Strait Crisis can be seen as a form of “calculated belligerence.”

However, if “military conservatism” becomes excessive, it may cause unintended consequences, as the PLA exemplifies. Scobell perceptively observes the danger of Chinese military leaders’ “cult of defense.” A sense of insecurity was deeply rooted in history – due to China’s century of humiliation and the PLA’s history of fighting stronger enemies. It has led PLA leaders to develop a propensity to view the outside world with an excessively negative light and has led them to rationalize the use of force in self-proclaimed defensive terms. 40 Shambaugh notes that objectively China’s security environment is the best ever, yet the PLA still feels

---

40 Scobell, China’s Use of Force.
insecure subjectively and its behavior reflects paranoia.\textsuperscript{41}

This contradiction is confirmed in the 2006 Defense White Paper and various open publications. It is also confirmed by the authors’ interviews with two dozen Chinese international relations scholars and “think tank” researchers.\textsuperscript{42} On the one hand, these Chinese security elites acknowledge that (1) the likelihood of invasion against China is virtually nil, (2) that the probabilities for large-scale armed conflicts to break out along China’s borders (particularly away from the eastern seaboard) are low, and (3) that great powers for the time being prefer cooperation (on North Korea, Iran, terrorism) to confrontation. Yet, on the other hand, they see danger lurking in every bilateral relationship China has with another state and advocate for what amounts to extra margins of security – undoubtedly a manifestation of the “cult of defense,” which naturally tend to drag other states into a spiral that further accentuates China’s insecurity.

At the Shangri-la defense conference in Singapore in June 2005, U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld provided an unusually blunt assessment of the global implications of China’s effort to build a state-of-the-art arsenal. He asked, “Since no nation threatens China, one must wonder: Why this growing investment (in missile forces)?”\textsuperscript{43}

\textsuperscript{41} Shambaugh, “China’s Military View the World.” This ambivalence is confirmed in my research interviews with two dozen Chinese professors of international relations and analysts who work for Chinese “think tanks” in July 2006, and most of the open-source books procured in Beijing and Shanghai.

\textsuperscript{42} Author’s interviews with leading Chinese security analysts and scholars in Beijing and Shanghai in July 2006.

\textsuperscript{43} “Chinese Arms Threaten Asia, Rumsfeld Says; Defense Chief Questions Need For a
While China has repeatedly avowed its intentions of peace and development, its exceedingly pessimistic assessment of its security environment and its penchant for securing relative-gain advantages have triggered a regional spiral of arms race – typified by the "security dilemma" or "mirror image" theories in international relations.

To sum up, because of its unique responsibility in executing war, PLA leaders can be expected to be more cautious than their civilian counterparts on FSPs. However, their excessive conservatism, which is a combined result of a "cult of security," a strategic culture of realism, the insular background of the current top brass, and the penchant to reject transparency as a strategic asset, while extolling secrecy, has predictably led them to sound overly pessimistic and to prepare too eagerly. This recognized tendency entails deleterious implications for regional and global security.

To understand how the PLA deals with external security challenges over time, the next section trades the evolving doctrinal development of the PLA.


44 Scobell, China’s Use of Force.


46 Shambaugh points out that most of the PLA’s current top brass had served defense posts in the hinterland, rarely travel abroad, and do not speak foreign languages. In contrast, many younger officers at colonel levels and often serve as interlocutors for foreign security analysts have traveled to and studied in foreign countries. Modernizing China’s Military and “China’s Military View the World.”
From People's War to Local War Under High Tech Condition and RMA

Studies on the PLA in recent years have undergone a sea change. Whereas in the past the PLA was often dismissed as "the world's largest military museum," Western analysts in recent years have been surprised by the rapid progress the Chinese military has made.\textsuperscript{47} The advanced fighters, ASAT weapons, and information warfare (IW) are only the most recent examples that reveal the protracted evolution of the PLA’s doctrine and force structure since the "people's war" early years. Figure 1 distinguishes four stages and summarizes the changing relationship of PLA doctrinal development to force structure: (1) People’s War, (2) People’s War Under Modern Conditions, (3) Local War, and (4) Local War Under Modern High-Technology Conditions.\textsuperscript{48}

(Figure 1 about here)

People's War

In the late-1970s, the PLA, over four million strong, was structured, using the doctrine of "people's war," to defend the Chinese mainland from such threat as the Soviet Union. Recently emerging from the turbulent Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), China’s reformist leaders acknowledged the need for military modernization, but nonetheless assigned it last among the Four Modernizations. The low priority for military modernization translated directly to low defense budgets, a situation that has been a key constraint on military modernization into the late-1990s.

\textsuperscript{47} See the Pentagon's 2006 PLA Report.

The PLA’s force structure was dominated by the army and had a continental orientation. Its ground forces were organized around infantry corps, also called field armies, which generally had three infantry divisions and smaller armor, engineer, artillery, and other combat support of combat service support units. A large militia would complement main force and local force units as they “lured the enemy in deep.” Air and naval forces primarily had a defensive mission and, for the most part, operated independently of the ground forces.

**People’s War Under Modern Conditions**

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, PLA strategists began considering a doctrinal revision that was intended to defend China closer to its borders and fight the Soviets in a more mobile style of war with a combined arms and joint force. The use of nuclear weapons was also envisaged. The new doctrine became known as People’s War Under Modern Conditions.

It called for a more flexible, professional PLA, incorporating increased numbers of modern weapons into its inventory. The ground forces emphasis shifted more to tanks, self-propelled artillery, and armored personnel carriers. However, the cost of equipping enough of the force with sufficient modern weapons to fight the Soviets was prohibitive to the Chinese budget. Beginning in the 1980s, PLA infantry units began to be issued enough trucks to make them road mobile.

**Local War**

Between 1985 and 1988, the PLA personnel was reduced to three million. These reductions would permit the integration of the branches of its ground forces and its naval and air forces required to conduct modern
The Chinese Military and the “Taiwan Issue”:

warfare. In 1985, Deng Xiaoping forecast that the threat of a major war was remote. Instead, the more likely scenario would be a limited, local war on China’s periphery. The formation of small, mobile, “First” or “Rapid Reaction Units (RRUs) was a major organizational development peculiar to the Local War doctrine. Despite these dramatic changes in the military, however, defense budgets remained tight until the end of the 1980s.

The PLA suffered a blow to its prestige as a result of its role in the 1989 Tiananmen massacre. One method to boost its prestige was to increase its budget and purchase new weapons. Meanwhile, the demise of the Soviet Union provided the Chinese government an opportunity to spend some of the new money it now was willing to devote to the military for the purchase of advanced military hardware that the West had denied China since 1989. The implosion of the USSR also forced the PLA to reexamine the threat it faced.

Local War Under Modern High-Technology Conditions

The Gulf War forced a change in the attitudes of many PLA old guards, who had emphasized the role of man over weapons. The war was said to be an example of what the PLA theoreticians now called Local War Under Modern High-Technology Conditions (LWUMHTC). By the mid-1990s, LWUMHTC had become the dominant doctrine in the PLA. At the same time, some PLA strategists expanded their study of other concepts of future high-technology warfare, including IW, which became known under the rubric of RMA. Between 1997 and 2000 another half a million personnel was shed from the rank. The major focus of PLA operational planning in the late 1990s had become preparation of military
options and capabilities to ensure that Taiwan does not seek independence. The possibility that the U.S. military may become involved in the defense of Taiwan is a worst-case factor that PLA planners also must consider. Taiwan's location allows for the capabilities applicable to scenarios for LWUMHTC to be applied to it.

It should be pointed out that for the past two decades multiple doctrinal concepts have existed or been in development concurrently within the PLA. Even though the size of the PLA and the manner in which its doctrine has changed over time, elements within the force with differing structures, missions, and doctrinal orientations exist concurrently. Even today many ground force units are still best suited for People's War operations to defend the Chinese mainland. Others, such as the RRU's, have mobilized to the point that they are trained for a role in LWUMHTC. A very few units, such as missile and electronic warfare units, are also beginning to develop capabilities suitable for twenty-first century RMA warfare in addition to being integral to Local War scenarios.

IW holds special appeal to top PLA brass, which sees it as a way of bypassing all the deficiencies most PLA commanders and researchers recognize. Sometimes these are referred to as "killer" weapons or "trump cards" or "magic weapons" (shashoujian) that can overcome inherent weaknesses in the PLA to inflict surprise attacks.  

The top brass of the Chinese military appeared to be quite interested in RMA. They anchor their force and doctrinal development in a broader politico-military context: Developing a modern professional military is indispensable to China's emergence as a preeminent global great power that can rival the United States. Such imperative necessitates better understanding of this crucial force.

**Debunking the Monolithic Military**

The methodological problems identified at the outset of this paper present significant challenges for understanding the subtle yet important differences within the PLA. The conventional wisdom – and the image the Chinese present to the outside world – is that the PLA is a monolithic entity, absolutely obeying the party and unflinchingly protecting China's territory and the party's legitimacy. However, research of open-source Chinese and English materials and interviews conducted in Taiwan in July 2005 and in China in July 2006 reveal important similarities as well as interesting differences.

Admittedly, the similarities are significant. They denote China's fundamental security interests and signal China's "bottom line." Although a lack of any dissenting writing or interview may be conditionally accepted as evidence of a high degree of consensus, it may simply reveal a reflexive basic premise inculcated through repeated one-sided reinforcements. When questions about specifics (corollaries or strategies) emerge, discernible differences within the PLA can be observed. The following summarize the PLA's broad assessments of the Taiwan situation.
First, various elements of the PLA share the view that the PLA's primary mission is to maintain China's sovereignty and territorial integrity. In this context, two strands of thinking converge on the Taiwan issue. One is nationalism, and the other is realism. The nationalist strand provides Chinese policies vis-à-vis Taiwan with moral justification and is the most frequently invoked boiler-plate answer. This perspective sees the Taiwan issue as vestige of the "Century of Civilization" China suffered at the hands of the imperialist powers in the nineteenth and the twentieth century. It stridently asserts that the resolution of the Taiwan issue, regardless of what Taiwanese people may think, is China's "internal affair" and rejects any outside intervention.\(^5\)

A corollary argument is that the Taiwan issue lies at the core of China's core interests and is thus non-negotiable, because if Taiwan were permitted to separate from China, the party would lose the mandate to rule and the country will disintegrate, as Xinjiang, Tibet, and possibly Inner Mongolia would also seek to secede (despite the obvious differences between these areas under direct PRC control, and Taiwan, which the PRC simply claims but has never ruled).

These principled stances belie some glaring exceptions. Two are briefly mentioned here. As part of its effort to maintain a peaceful external environment (including stability on its peripheries) and to allay international concerns about its economic and military ascent, China has assiduously improved its relations with many of the fourteen countries that border it, by forging "strategic partnerships" with such neighboring

countries as Russia, India, and Vietnam, establishing the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), and settling long-standing boundary disputes. One analyst estimated that the total size of areas that were previously claimed by China but were formally ceded by these border delineation treaties was 340 times the size of Taiwan. Pragmatism had prevailed over principle.

The second exception is that rather than rejecting all foreign intervention, starting in 2003 China often asked the U.S. to help rein in Taiwan President Chen Shui-bian (i.e., intervention is fine as long as it advances Beijing’s agenda).

These examples show that China has proved able to show pragmatism in its FSPs, as circumstances dictate. Nevertheless, nationalism provides China with a moralistic cover for China’s real interest in Taiwan and offers raison d’être for the party and the army. It also fortifies the “defensive” overtone of PLA actions.

The more convincing reason – one less openly discussed -- for China’s intense interest in Taiwan is actually geopolitics. For the past four hundred years, the main threats to China’s security have come from China’s Eastern seaboard. Many contemporary Chinese analysts conclude that the U.S. is the main threat to China. Control of Taiwan not only eliminates the possibility of Taiwan being used as an instrument to subvert China by hostile forces, but also provides China with an

---

51 Interview with a colonel, National Defense University, Taipei, 13 July 2005.
indispensable strategic springboard for projecting its power to the Western Pacific.

The Pentagon’s 2005 report on the PRC’s military power openly questions whether China’s military modernization has exceeded the needs of just the Taiwan scenario so as to affect the status quo and pose a credible threat to other militaries in the region.\textsuperscript{53} Its 2006 PLA report concludes that the objectives of PRC’s military modernization have moved beyond the Taiwan issue, its progress has surprised U.S. defense officials, and its success has altered regional balance of power.\textsuperscript{54}

To become a preeminent regional or even global power, China must develop power-projection capabilities, such as a blue-water navy. Taiwan is a crucial link for breaking through the so-called First Island Chain and moving toward the Second Island Chain.\textsuperscript{55}

The defensive argument based on nationalism thus provides a moralistic pretext for a masked, potentially offensive rationale based on realpolitik.

Second, China’s approach toward Taiwan exemplifies its new grand strategy, which Dr. Lin Chong-pin, a former deputy defense minister of Taiwan, characterizes as “dominating the region without fighting.” Through a combined strategy of diplomatic isolation, political division, economic integration, and military coercion, Beijing seeks not to destroy

\textsuperscript{53} Pentagon, \textit{Military Power 2005}.

\textsuperscript{54} Pentagon, \textit{Military Power 2006}.

\textsuperscript{55} Interview with a scholar, Institute of International Relations, Taipei, 12 July 2005.
Taiwan but to take Taiwan intact. As Lin points out, Beijing is determined to acquire credible military capabilities as: (1) a deterrent against U.S. intervention in the Taiwan Strait, (2) as coercive instruments against Taiwanese independence, and (3) as crucial tools for seizing Taiwan largely unharmed if extra-military approaches to achieve unification fail.  

As part of the dialectic thinking prevalent among Chinese strategists, one can argue that Beijing prefers not to resort to these military options in battles, but to acquire them as a back-up to shore up the credibility of its threat of non-peaceful means.

This approach reflects long tradition in Chinese strategic thinking inspired by Sun Tzu. Sun Tzu’s *Art of War* proscribes, “The highest form of generalship is to attack the enemy’s plans. The next best is to prevent the junction of enemies’ forces. The next in order is to attack the enemy’s army in the field. And the worst policy of all is to besiege walled cities.”  

Peaceful unification thus is preferable to forceful unification, but, in a dialectic reasoning, preparation of the latter makes the former more credible. In a systematic cataloguing effort, PLA Colonel Wang Weixing

---


published an article in 2004 which summarized the 29 concrete issue involved in the ten questions related to the CCP’s five-decade policy of peaceful unification toward Taiwan. They are as follows:

1. About the method for unification:
   a. Striving toward a peaceful way of solving the Taiwan issue
   b. Not promising to renounce the use of force

2. About Taiwan’s system after unification:
   a. The mainland practices socialism; Taiwan maintains its existing system unchanged.
   b. Taiwan maintains its government structure.
   c. Taiwan continues using the New Taiwan Dollar.
   d. Taiwan forms a separate customs territory.
   e. The central government will not interfere in Taiwan’s local affairs.

3. About the control of the party, government, and military:
   a. Taiwan controls its own party, government, military, and intelligence systems.
   b. Taiwan can retain the military and the ability for self-defense.
   c. After unification, Taiwan can purchase certain weapons, but cannot threaten the mainland.

4. About fiscal and judicial independence:
   a. Judicial independence; the right of final appeals needs not go to Beijing.
   b. Taiwan can implement its own separate fiscal budget; the central government will not collect taxes from Taiwan.
c. If Taiwan local finance encounters difficulties, the central government can provide subsidies in accordance with the circumstances.

5. About external relations:
   a. Taiwan maintains the right to certain external affairs; it can sign commercial agreements with foreign corporations, maintain economic relations, issue passports and visas.
   b. Taiwan will be permitted to maintain its unofficial relationships with the U.S., Japan, and other countries.
   c. Taiwan can join those intergovernmental organizations that permit participation by regions (non-state actors).

6. About realizing cross-strait "Three Links" and other exchanges:
   a. Promote postal, business, and transport links, and academic, cultural, sports, and scientific & technological exchanges
   b. Welcome Taiwan industrialists and businessmen to invest in the motherland and open various economic enterprises

7. About the lawful rights and interests of Taiwan compatriots
   a. Guarantee Taiwan compatriots’ legitimate and lawful rights and interests on the mainland
   b. Promise to properly arrange all nationalities and all walks of life from Taiwan that desire to settle on the motherland, ensure they will not face discrimination and they can come and go as they wish.
   c. Protect the overseas legitimate and lawful rights and
interests of Taiwan compatriots

8. About cross-strait negotiations:
   a. Relax cross-strait situation and end the state of hostility between the two sides.
   b. Not mention the negotiation is between the central government and a local government
   c. Invite representative personnel from various political parties, factions, and organizations of the two sides and work toward peaceful unification
   d. Negotiations can be conducted in a step-by-step manner.
   e. Under the one-China precondition, any issue can be discussed.
   f. Grant concessions to us Chinese.

9. About participating in national governance:
   a. The central government will reserve certain seats for Taiwan people to assume leadership positions in the national government and participate in national governance.

10. About the mutual visits of the leaders from both sides:
    a. We welcome leaders of Taiwan authorities to visit the mainland in their proper capacities; we are also willing to accept invitation from the Taiwan side to visit Taiwan.\(^{58}\)

\(^{58}\) Wang Weixing, “Peaceful Unification of Taiwan is the CCP’s Consistent Goal: A Review of Our Policy of Peaceful Unification Toward Taiwan for the Past Fifty Years” (in Chinese), Liaowang xinwen zhoukan, 26 July 2004, 11-20.
Wang’s impressive list clearly illustrates, prima facie, China’s preference or even eagerness for resolving the Taiwan issue through peaceful unification. His article enumerates the “generous” benefits for Taiwan after unification, but defends the refusal to renounce the use of force: “A thorough study of history will show that any country’s task of unification is almost always accomplished through war,” according to his reading of world history.\(^59\)

While both China’s civilian and military leaders prefer incorporating Taiwan peacefully and retaining Taiwan’s physical and human resources, there are notable differences on how to achieve the unshakable goal of unification, if the strategy of peaceful unification should fail.

Chinese military writings are almost uniformly negative in their assessments on Taiwan’s political evolution.\(^60\) Prevalent are frustration that past policies toward Taiwan had not succeeded, fear that Chen Shui-bian and other politicians will accelerate steps toward Taiwan’s de jure independence, and a sense of urgency that the PLA must accelerate the final preparation for a military showdown.\(^61\) For example, Zhang Wannian, China’s most powerful military general during the Jiang era, in 2000 betrayed his frustration with the central government’s handling of the cross-strait impasse when he warned that war was certain to break out in the Taiwan Strait in the next five years. In 1999, he led more than 500 Chinese generals who signed a petition calling for tougher action against

\(^59\) Ibid, 11.

\(^60\) Interviews with a NDU colonel, Taipei, 13 July 2005, a think tank security analyst, Taipei, 12 July 2005, and impressions from my July 2006 field research in China.

\(^61\) Interview with a researcher, Institute of International Relations, Taipei, 12 July 2005.
Taiwan after Taiwan President Lee Teng-hui’s controversial description of cross-strait ties as “special state-to-state relations.” In the Chinese context, Zhang’s bravado was highly unusual.

Curiously, more Chinese analysts believe that time is on their side, as supposed to on Taiwan’s side. The clearest example of this confidence is provided by Shen Dingli at the prestigious Fudan University. Shen argues that the threat posed to the PRC by the Taiwan Independence movement will diminish as China progressively strengthens its military capabilities. The source of this confidence contrasts with their pessimistic and alarmist evaluations of political trends in Taiwan.

While most Chinese writers maintain that the PLA will have no choice but to use force against Taiwan independence and few analysts outside China question that premise, Chinese discussions reflect important divergences on a number of issues related to the forceful option. This is partly as a result of the coexistence of several schools in China’s military doctrinal development, as discussed earlier.

On the question about certainty, the “people’s war school” is more likely to care about objectives and determination and less about the

---


63 Shen Dingli, personal interview, Shanghai, 4 July 2006.

political consequences of using force. They believe the differences in intensities and approaches will ensure that PLA will eventually prevail. The willingness for the PRC to suffer the cost is simply asserted, rather than analyzed. It is not clear whether those who assert that China is willing to sacrifice its economic development for a war over Taiwan truly understand the magnitude of that scenario.

In contrast, the “revolutionary in military affairs (RMA) school” is likely to be more cautious. Adherents of RMA understand that military modernization can not be achieved through great leaps forward. Success in battles requires mechanization and informationalization. It also requires “active defense” – the ability to sustain an initial strike and survive. Interestingly, even this school, exemplified by the Second Artillery -- China’s strategic missile force, also actively seeks opportunities to wage asymmetric warfare so as to close the technology gap. Somewhat similar to the first group, open-source discussions tend to focus more on the

65 Interview with a leading think tank security analyst, Taipei, 12 July 2005.

66 For a theoretical and empirical examination of the typologies of asymmetric warfare, see Ivan Arreguin-Toft, “How the Weak Win Wars: A Theory of Asymmetric Conflict,” International Security 26, no. 1 (Summer 2001): 93-128. He distinguishes between direct approaches, which aim at dismantling an adversary’s ability to fight, and indirect approaches, which aim at destroying the adversary’s resolve to fight. He postulates that when the approaches of both the stronger and the weaker actors converge, the stronger actor is expected to win, but when their approaches diverge, the weaker actor is expected to be victorious. And his empirical findings show that over the past two centuries, the weaker parties in asymmetric conflicts have won an increasing percentage of cases (55 percent for the 1950-1998 period).
utility of offense for the weaker party, and less on China’s own vulnerabilities.\textsuperscript{67}

While almost all Chinese military writings acknowledge that one huge obstacle to PLA’s military option would be the possible U.S. intervention, there are important internal debates within the PLA on the broader issue of preparedness. Cooler heads within the PLA admit that given the stringent requirements of “annexing Taiwan without fighting” and “deterring the U.S.,”\textsuperscript{68} the PLA is not yet ready, despite the considerable progress it has obtained in recent years toward possessing what the Pentagon calls “credible” options\textsuperscript{69} to intimidate or actually attack Taiwan.\textsuperscript{69} One scholar asks rhetorically, “If they are really like what they say, ‘having completed absolutely perfect preparation’ (\textit{wanquan zhunbei}), why then are they still buying huge quantities of military hardware and why have they not launched the attack?”\textsuperscript{70}

Although many Chinese military writings have reached the gloomy conclusion that there will be inevitably a war over Taiwan, what are less clear are issues like: what follows the initial onslaught, what constitutes the end state, and more fundamentally, what constitutes military victory. Missile strikes aimed at decapitating Taiwan’s leadership and command

\textsuperscript{67} For an example of this tendency, see Vincent Wei-cheng Wang, “China’s Information Warfare Discourse: Implications for Asymmetric Conflict in the Taiwan Strait,” Issues and Studies: An International Quarterly on China, Taiwan, and East Asian Affairs, vol. 39, no. 2 (June 2003): 107-43.

\textsuperscript{68} Interview with a think tank president, Taipei, 15 July 2005.


\textsuperscript{70} Interview with a researcher, Institute of International Relations, 12 July 2005.
and control center may cause initial damage but they alone are unlikely to cause the Taiwanese to capitulate. A bloody conquest is politically infeasible, as resistance from the Taiwanese will make the island ungovernable. The bloodbath will be much more debilitating than either Taiwan’s February 28, 1947 or China’s June 4, 1989 incidents. For an army whose reputation was tarnished in the June 4, 1989 crackdown, the PLA is concerned about any detrimental long-term political fallout for its military actions.\textsuperscript{71}

There are a few courses of action Beijing can take against Taiwan: (1) persuasion and coercion, (2) limited force options, such as employing information operations, special operation forces on Taiwan, and SRBM or air strike at key military or political sites, to try to break the will of Taiwan’s leadership and population, (3) air and missile campaign, (4) blockade, and (5) amphibious invasion.\textsuperscript{72} The lower-intensity actions are most feasible from a military preparation standpoint; however, they are also the least likely to compel Taiwan to capitulate. The higher-intensity actions are more likely to cause Taiwan to surrender; however, they are also the least feasible options from the standpoints of military preparation and international politics. These escalatory actions largely correspond \textit{inversely} with Sun Tzu’s best, second best, third best, and worst military strategies, as discussed earlier.\textsuperscript{73} In a nutshell, unless Taiwan is willing to come to terms with Beijing, at the present time China does not appear to

\textsuperscript{71} Interviews with IIR scholar, Taipei, 12 July 2005; and think tank president, Taipei, 15 July 2005.


\textsuperscript{73} Sun Tzu, \textit{Art of War}, chapter three.
have good military options for solving the “Taiwan issue.”

The PLA and the Taiwan Issue in the Post-Anti-Secession Law Era

That is why China will realistically view the peaceful unification with Taiwan as a long-term goal, while focusing its short-run emphasis on preventing Taiwan’s de jure independence. The nine-word adage given by Hu Jintao at the Expanded CMC Meeting in September 2004, “zhengqu tan, zhunbei da, bupa tuo” (strive for negotiations, prepare for war, and not fear delays) sums up China’s current strategic approach vis-à-vis Taiwan, and still serves as the PLA’s wisest course of action.74

According to analysts, “striving for negotiations” means that the Hu leadership will reach out to the Taiwan populace and continue creating all possibilities for the peaceful negotiations between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait.

“Preparing for war” means completing all preparations for a military struggle; if war is unavoidable, the PLA shall safeguard the nation’s sovereignty and territorial integrity at all cost.

“Not fearing delays” means that under the precondition that Taiwan does not split from China, China seeks to cultivate a twenty-year peaceful development environment and to maintain the cross-strait status quo.75


With the passage of Anti-Secession Law, Beijing’s new strategy seems to begin to gradually show effectiveness in regaining the initiative in cross-strait development, in increasing Taiwan’s economic dependence on the mainland, and in slowing down Taiwan’s march toward de jure independence.\(^76\)

Meanwhile, the PLA will continue mixing the strategies of cangxu (concealment of weaknesses) and cangshi (concealment of strengths) to maximize its strategic advantage vis-à-vis Taiwan and the U.S. by creating deception and sowing confusion. Akin to the kongcheng ji (the empty fortress strategy) of the Thirty-Six Strategies,\(^77\) concealing weaknesses seeks to induce the enemy to overestimate one’s capabilities and thus achieve deterrence through deception. Concealing strengths seeks to induce the enemy to underestimate one’s capabilities and thus achieve compellence through surprise.

Cross-strait relations entered a new era with the passage of the Anti-Secession Law (ASL) in March 2005. However, the ASL did not alter the strategic fundamentals. In one sense, the ASL put additional pressure on the PLA to accelerate its military preparedness for dealing with the conditions, enumerated in Article Eight, which call for “non-peaceful means.” On the other hand, by more clearly hinting Beijing’s “red lines,” the ASL may slow down the momentum of Taiwan’s

---


\(^77\) An English translation of the Thirty-Six Strategies of ancient China is online at http://www.chinastrategies.com.
independence movement, and thus helps relieve the pressure on the PLA. The party and the military thus share common interests in maintaining the status quo in the Taiwan Strait.

One remaining question is the impact of PLA’s professionalization on the Taiwan issue. Will professionalization cause the PLA to gradually differentiate its purely military goals from those of the party’s? Will a professionalized PLA be more likely to see the Taiwan issue strictly from a military angle and thus become more or less hawkish? Nobody knows. But despite all the well-recognized problems in studying it, the PLA is too important to be relegated to the realm of educated guess. Many have justifiably criticized that the military-to-military engagement with the PRC has brought few results. The alternative would be an insular, secretive, and powerful military not subject to effective civilian control, taking actions based on “cult of defense” or worst-case scenarios. Limited evidence indicates that China’s military is capable of learning and making adjustments. Room for increased mutual understanding exists before a replay of EP-3 type incidents.

In this sense, changes in how the Chinese military views and deals with the country’s security environment will be a litmus test for China’s stated national objective of “peaceful rise.”
The Chinese Military and the “Taiwan Issue”:

Figure 1: China’s Evolving Military Doctrine

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Force structure</th>
<th>PW</th>
<th>PWUMC</th>
<th>LW</th>
<th>LWUMHTC</th>
<th>RMA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single service operations; field armies</td>
<td>Joint headquarters / operations; Group armies</td>
<td>Fist units, rapid reaction units</td>
<td>Smaller and fewer units; More high-tech</td>
<td>Selective pockets of excellence?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Force size</td>
<td>4 million (number = strength)</td>
<td>unchanged</td>
<td>To reduce to 3 million (for better integration)</td>
<td>To reduce to 2.5 million</td>
<td>Presumably even smaller</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main objective</td>
<td>Homeland defense</td>
<td>Defend China closer to its borders and fight mobile style of war</td>
<td>Win local wars on China’s periphery</td>
<td>Deter Taiwan from independence; deter U.S. from intervention</td>
<td>Employ IW by bypassing all the deficiencies (electromagnetic dominance)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main threat</td>
<td>USSR</td>
<td>USSR</td>
<td>Regional skirmishes</td>
<td>Taiwan U.S.</td>
<td>U.S.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main limitation</td>
<td>Budgetary constraint</td>
<td>Budgetary constraint</td>
<td>Budgetary constraint</td>
<td>Doctrine-capability gap</td>
<td>Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main catalyst</td>
<td>Modernization in the aftermath of Cultural Revolution</td>
<td>Changing threat perception</td>
<td>Changing security posture</td>
<td>The Persian Gulf War and the end of the Cold War</td>
<td>Information revolution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978-85</td>
<td>PD</td>
<td>PL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985-88</td>
<td>RD</td>
<td>PD</td>
<td>PL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988-92</td>
<td>RD</td>
<td>PD</td>
<td>PL</td>
<td>PPL</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992-</td>
<td>RD</td>
<td>PD</td>
<td>PL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Legend:

PW: People’s War  
PWUMC: People’s War Under Modern Conditions  
LW: Local War  
LWUMHTC: Local War Under Modern High-Technology Conditions  
RMA: Revolution in Military Affairs  
PD: Primary doctrine  
PL: Preliminary doctrine  
PPL: Pre-preliminary doctrine  
RL: Residual doctrine  

Source: Compiled from Blasko (2001) and Godwin (2001).