

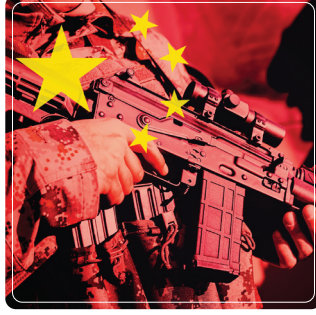
CHINA'S EVOLVING MILITARY DOCTRINE AFTER THE COLD WAR

BEKİR İLHAN

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ABSTRACT

This analysis examines China's conventional military doctrine and its evolution after the Cold War.

This study examines China's conventional military doctrine and its evolution after the Cold War. If its current economic rise continues, China's strategic posture and approach to war will be one of the key variables of international politics. To make sense of China's current foreign policy stance and potential future behavior regarding war, the following questions need to be answered: What military means, if necessary, would China employ in case of a war? Where is a military threat to China likely to come from? What are the strategically important battle spaces for China? How does China plan to use military means in those domains?

Military doctrines stand as reliable and useful sources to answer these questions. Regarding China's military doctrine, this study proposes two interrelated arguments. First, as its power has increased, the evolution of China's military doctrine proves that China has adopted a more assertive and active stance on issues and regions. The Chinese military's doctrinal innovation keeps up with China's diversifying interests and growing capacity. Second, though China is a major power in North and Southeast Asia, the time is not yet ripe for it to be a global military power that can project its military capability beyond the nearby seas. China's most recent military doctrines are designed to deal with local challenges. This implies that the Chinese military still does not feel that the country is likely to fight a global maritime or territorial war in the near future.

INTRODUCTION

This study examines China's conventional military doctrine and its evolution after the Cold War. Military doctrines are significant for the quality of international political life since they provide some degree of information about intentions and capabilities of states in the system. If its current economic rise continues, China's strategic posture and approach to war will be one of the key variables of international politics. To make sense of China's current foreign policy stance¹ and potential future behavior regarding war, the following questions need to be answered: What

military means, if necessary, would China employ in case of a war? Where is a military threat to China likely to come from? What are the strategically important battle spaces for China? How does China plan to use military means in those domains? Apart from the civilian and military elites' discourses, military doctrines stand as reliable and useful sources to answer these questions since these elites may have incentives to manipulate international and domestic audiences and propagate their policies.

This study proposes two interrelated arguments. First, as its power has increased, the evolution of China's military doctrine proves that China has adopted a more assertive and active stance on issues and regions. China adopted defensive military doctrines that envisaged total war during the Cold War. This trend has started to change as China has become more powerful since the end of the Cold War. The Chinese military's doctrinal innovation keeps up with China's diversifying interests and growing capacity. In the imagination of the Chinese military, the central theater of war has significantly moved from China's mainland (i.e. territorial domain) to China's periphery (more emphasis on the maritime domain). Since the end of the Cold War, China has also abandoned its decades-old total war doctrine by embracing a limited war doctrine, which is more suitable for its new political aims. Second, though China is a major power in North and Southeast Asia, the time is not yet ripe for it to be a global military power that can project its military capability beyond its nearby seas. China's most recent military doctrines are designed to deal with local challenges. The names of these doctrines reflect its concerns about local wars as well. This implies that China does not have global strategic interests to defend through war. China continues to expand and promote its

1. For studies on China's current and future foreign policy see Avery Goldstein, "An Emerging China's Emerging Grand Strategy: A Neo-Bismarckian Turn", *International Relations Theory and the Asia-Pacific* (2003): 57-106; Alastair Iain Johnston, "Is China a Status Quo Power?" *International Security*, vol. 27, no. 4, (2003): 5-56; Jeffrey W. Legro, "What China Will Want: The Future Intentions of a Rising Power", *Perspectives on Politics*, vol. 5, no. 3, (2007): 515-534; Aaron L. Friedberg, "The Future of US-China Relations: Is Conflict Inevitable?" *International Security*, vol. 30, no. 2, (2005): 7-45.

economic interests globally. However, the Chinese military still does not feel that China will be involved in a global maritime or territorial war, contrary to what many studies suggest under the concept of the “China threat.” A clear implication of this is that when its interests in Africa, for example, are at stake, it is less likely that China will militarily challenge the United States. Since the Chinese military has not developed a suitable doctrine, such a military confrontation would be strategically futile for China.

It is also important to note that this study does not examine the potential implications of a conflict between China and the United States. Such a conflict would likely involve nuclear weapons, which are out of the scope of this study. The extent to which China's conventional and nuclear doctrines are coupled should be discussed in a broader study, as it is important to understand under what conditions China will resort to nuclear weapons in a potential conflict.²

The study proceeds as follows: The next section outlines the concept of military doctrine and its key features. The following section introduces some basics about the Chinese military and its organizational structure. The subsequent sections examine the evolution of China's military doctrine from the Cold War onward. The concluding section summarizes the analysis.

MILITARY DOCTRINE

A military doctrine is a sub-component of grand strategy. A grand strategy is a state's theory about how it best ensures security for itself.³

Military doctrine is essentially about integrating military means to the political ends at the grand strategic level. For a broader definition, Owen Cote Jr. describes military doctrine as a “set of tools, people, and beliefs about how to employ them in battle that the major organizational elements of the military develop as a guide to fighting wars.”⁴ Barry Posen, on the other hand, notes that two questions are important about military doctrine: What means shall be employed? How shall they be employed?⁵ A military doctrine is a state's response to these questions. In short, a military doctrine is a state's theory about how to fight wars.

The formulation of a military doctrine could be thought of as a two-level process. States first assess the international environment in order to have an idea about how threats and opportunities are distributed in the system. For example, states evaluate geographic factors, state-of-the-art military technology, rising and declining powers, and the military capabilities of their neighbors. After such an assessment, states turn back to see how their military organizations look like. At this point, they analyze what is necessary and possible for their militaries.⁶ After this process, states formulate their military doctrines. However, this does not necessarily imply that states implement this process formally and even deliberately. The formulation of military doctrines is sometimes a result of an informal process. Moreover, states usually do not publish their military doctrines. Thus, military exercises, available field manuals, and force structure are important sources for analyzing military doctrine.

2. For a study on China's nuclear doctrine see Fiona S. Cunningham and M. Taylor Fravel, “Assuring Assured Retaliation: China's Nuclear Posture and US-China Strategic Stability”, *International Security*, vol. 40, no. 2, (2015): 7-50.

3. Barry Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, (Cornell University Press, Ithaca: 1984), p. 13.

4. Owen Cote Jr., *The Politics of Innovative Military Doctrine*, PhD diss., Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1996, p. 7.

5. Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, p. 13.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 14.

Military doctrine could be divided into subgroups with respect to different characteristics and aspects. This study follows Posen's categorization of military doctrine. Accordingly, one can group military doctrine into three categories: offensive doctrines, defensive doctrines, and deterrent doctrines. Offensive doctrines aim to disarm an adversary. Defensive doctrines seek to deny an adversary. Deterrent doctrines aim to punish an adversary.⁷

States may change their military doctrines. This is called military innovation. Although there are various, even contradictory, definitions of innovative military doctrines, Adam Grissom argues that there is a "tacit" consensus in the literature.⁸ Accordingly, this consensus has three dimensions. First, military innovations change the manner in which military organizations function in the field. Second, military innovations are significant in scope and impact. Third, military innovations are expected to increase military effectiveness.⁹

As mentioned above, military doctrine may affect the stability of international politics as it provides information –if not perfect– about the intentions and, more importantly, the capabilities of states. Based on their natures (i.e. defensive, offensive, and deterrent), different types of military doctrines cause varying implications for international politics. Offensive military doctrines may cause instability by evoking the fear of attack.¹⁰ For example, before the First World War, the major European powers had adopted offensive military doctrines.¹¹ Defensive mili-

tary doctrines, on the other hand, are thought to decrease the level of fear among powers since such doctrines have a placatory effect on security dilemma.¹² Deterrent doctrines are designed to persuade an adversary not to dare to attack. Such doctrines are believed to contribute to international stability among great powers.

The following sections analyze China's military power and its evolving conventional military doctrine. As a great power, China's military doctrine is expected to affect international security, and Northeast and Southeast Asian security as well. The next section outlines the organizational structure and the capabilities of China's military.

CHINA'S MILITARY: THE PEOPLE'S LIBERATION ARMY

The People's Liberation Army (PLA) is China's armed forces and possesses the monopoly of violence. It consists of Army, Navy, Air Force, Rocket Force (Second Artillery Corps), Strategic Support Force, and Reserve Force. Unlike modern militaries, the PLA is officially affiliated with the Communist Party of China and not the Chinese Ministry of Defense. The military reports to the party's Central Military Commission. The PLA has the world's largest land force. Despite its relative superiority in numbers, the PLA lacks some major capabilities compared to peer militaries. To close this gap, China has been modernizing its military and trying to build a strong military force for decades.

According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute's (SIPRI) report published in 2019, China's estimated military expend-

7. Ibid.

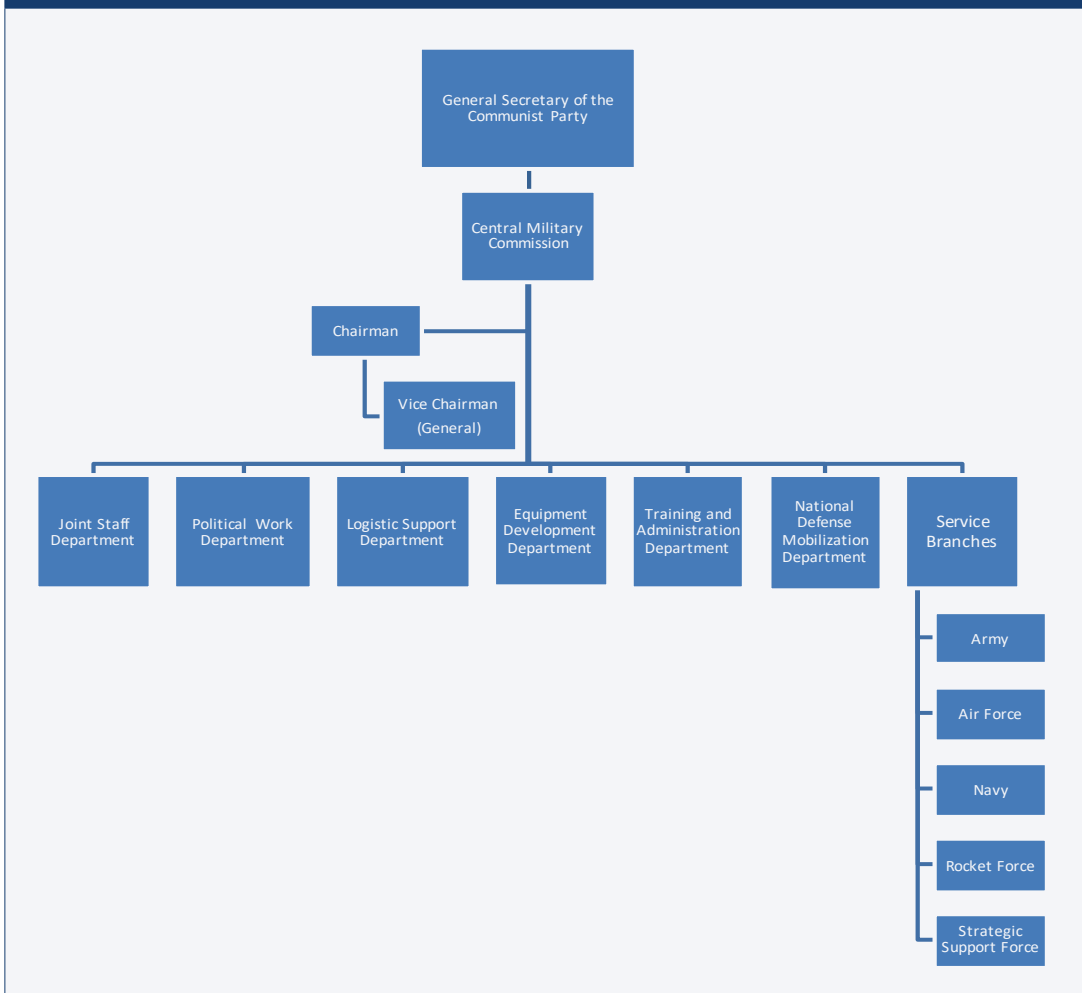
8. Adam Grissom, "The Future of Military Innovation Studies", *Journal of Strategic Studies*, vol. 29, no. 5, (2006): 907.

9. Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, p. 13.

10. Elizabeth Kier, "Culture and Military Doctrine: France between the Wars", *International Security*, vol. 19, no. 4, (1995): 65-93.

11. See Stephen van Evera, "The Cult of the Offensive and the Origins of the First World War", *International Security*, vol. 9, no. 1, (1984): 58-107.

12. See Robert Jervis, "Cooperation under the Security Dilemma", *World Politics*, vol. 30, no. 2, (1978): 167-214.

FIGURE 1. THE PLA'S ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Commander-in-Chief: General Secretary of the Communist Party of China

Ministry of National Defense: Reports to State Council

Central Military Commission: A party organ to which the PLA reports.

diture was \$250 billion in 2018 while the U.S. military budget was \$649 billion.¹³ However, military spending alone is not a sufficient indicator to measure a country's military potential. To compare states' rough military capacity with each other, manpower and weapon systems allow for a healthier assessment. The tables below show the PLA's manpower and capabilities.

13. SIPRI Yearbook 2019 Summary, June 2019, https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2019-06/yb19_summary_eng.pdf, (Accessed: December 5, 2019).

TABLE 1. THE PLA'S MANPOWER

Active Personnel	2,035,000
Ground Forces	975,000
Navy	240,000
Air Force	395,000
Strategic Missile Forces	100,000
Strategic Support Force	175,000
Other	150,000
Reserve	510,000

Source: International Institute for Strategic Studies, The Military Balance 2018, February 2018.

TABLE 2. THE PLA'S CAPABILITIES

Intercontinental ballistic missiles (nuclear)	70
Bomber aircraft	162
Armored infantry fighting vehicles	3,860
Main battle tanks	6,740
Artillery	13,420
Attack/guided missile submarines	57
Aircraft carriers	1
Cruisers, destroyers, and frigates	82
Principal amphibious ships	4
Tactical aircraft	1,966
Attack helicopters	246
Satellites	77

Source: International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 2018*, February 2018.

Although the PLA underwent military modernization to some degree between the 1950s and 1980s, its ongoing overarching modernization is built upon the concept of Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) which goes back to the 1990s. RMA is an approach predicting that military affairs will increasingly rely on combined usage of advanced technology and communications infrastructures, such as information technology and precision strike.¹⁴ In accordance with this concept, China, like many other major players, is pursuing a more qualified and technology-based military modernization program. In this regard, the Gulf War in 1991 was the key development that pushed China to undergo a major modernization in the 1990s.¹⁵ The military operation of the U.S.-led coalition that defeated the Iraqi military in a short time was a shocking development for the then-Chinese military elite who observed

14. On the RMA debate see Stephen Biddle, "Victory Misunderstood: What the Gulf War Tells Us about the Future of Conflict", *International Security*, vol. 21, no. 2, (1996): 139-179; Thomas G. Mahnken and Barry D. Watts, "What the Gulf War Can (and Cannot) Tell Us about the Future of Warfare", *International Security*, vol. 22, no. 2, (1997): 151-162.

15. M. Taylor Fravel, "The Evolution of China's Military Strategy: Comparing the 1987 and 1999 Editions of Zhanlue Xue", *The Revolution in Doctrinal Affairs: Emerging Trends in the Operational Art of the Chinese People's Liberation Army*, (2002): 79-100.

the technological and information superiority of the United States military.

Until then, the PLA had relied on the numerical superiority of its land forces. Accordingly, China's military doctrines had been designed for countering a territorial occupation in which the PLA would exploit its numerical superiority in close combat over a foreign force invading the Chinese mainland. After the Gulf War, China started to shrink the size of its land force to a certain extent and devote more resources to building a more professional, technologically well-equipped, and well-trained army.

Another key development that pushed China to modernize its military was the political status of Taiwan. During the Taiwan Strait Crisis in 1997, China failed to deter the U.S. involvement in the crisis. After that, China started to develop anti-ship missiles to deal better with potential U.S. aircraft attack groups. According to recent Pentagon reports, China continues to develop advanced medium-range conventional ballistic missiles, long-range anti-attack and anti-ship navigation missiles called anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) capabilities in military science, and anti-satellite and aggressive cyber capabilities.¹⁶

CHINA'S EVOLVING CONVENTIONAL MILITARY DOCTRINE

From its founding in 1949 to 1993, China adopted seven military doctrines. The doctrines that were adopted before 1993 envisioned a "people's war" concept following Mao's thoughts on war. To put it differently, people's war was the

16. *Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2019*, *US Department of Defense Report*, https://media.defense.gov/2019/may/02/2002127082/-1/-1/1/2019_china_military_power_report.pdf, (Accessed: November 25, 2019).

TABLE 3. CHINA'S MILITARY DOCTRINES (1956-2014)

Year	Name/Motto	Doctrine	Warfare
1956	Defending the Motherland	Defense	Total War
1960	Resist in the North, Open in the South	Defense	Total War
1964	Luring the Enemy in Deep	Defense	Total War
1977	Active Defense-Luring the Enemy in Deep	Defense	Total War
1980	People's War under Modern Conditions/Active Defense	Defense	Total War
1988	Dealing with Local Wars and Military Conflict	Defense	Limited War
1993	Winning Local Wars under High-Technology Conditions	Offense	Limited War
2004	Winning Local Wars under Informationized Conditions	Offense	Limited War
2014	Winning Informationized Local Wars	Offense	Limited War

Source: The year and name/motto columns are adopted from Taylor Fravel, "Shifts in Warfare and Party Unity: Explaining China's Changes in Military Strategy", *International Security*, vol. 42, no. 3, (2018): 37-83.

orthodox doctrine of the Chinese military during the Mao era.¹⁷ People's war had a protracted total war understanding, which is based on sacrificing human force and gaining as much time as possible. It conceived of three phases of war: strategic defense, strategic stalemate, and strategic counter-offense.¹⁸ Moreover, a people's war would be "fought with a triadic force composed of the main forces (the regular forces), the local forces and the guerrilla forces."¹⁹

During the late Cold War period, the Chinese military underwent two major innovations. First, China adopted the "People's War under Modern Conditions Doctrine" in 1980. The doctrine adopted in 1993 represents the second major innovation for the Chinese military. The 1980 doctrine was a significant departure from the previous doctrines despite retaining the label of "people's war." The essence of people's war is defeating the enemy in an attrition war by drawing enemy forces into interior China.²⁰ On the other

hand, the 1980 doctrine, namely the people's war under modern conditions/active defense, envisioned a defensive fight through positional layers close to the border and conceived more offensive operations than the previous doctrines.

In 1993, China adopted a military doctrine called "Winning Local Wars under High-Technology Conditions." Compared to previous military doctrines, the new doctrine was a radical departure given its offensive nature. As the previous doctrines were based on countering a mainland invasion, the new doctrine adopted in 1993 envisioned a war that China would fight in its periphery under modern conditions. The doctrine was offensive as it held "the first strike" to take advantage of adversary forces. Thus, it was not reactive like the previous doctrines, but an active warfighting doctrine.

THE 1993 DOCTRINE: WINNING LOCAL WARS UNDER HIGH-TECHNOLOGY CONDITIONS

The 1993 doctrine was the second major innovation of the Chinese military after the 1980 doctrine. The 1993 doctrine did not only differ significantly from the 1980 doctrine, but also from all previous doctrines adopted by the Chi-

17. Y. Yunzhu, "The Evolution of Military Doctrine of the Chinese PLA from 1985 to 1995", *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis*, vol. 7, no. 2, (1995): 73.

18. Ibid., p. 58.

19. Ibid., p. 74.

20. N. Li, "The PLA's Evolving Warfighting Doctrine, Strategy, and Tactics, 1985-1995: A Chinese Perspective", *The China Quarterly*, 146, (1996): 443-463.

nese military. When we look at the key features of the doctrine, we see that the new doctrine included the concepts of “strategic frontier”, “strategic deterrence”, “victory through elite troops” (*jingbing zhisheng*), “gaining initiative by striking first” (*xianfa zhireri*), “victory over inferiority through superiority” (*yiyou shenglie*), and “fighting a quick battle to force a quick resolution” (*suzhan sujue*).²¹

The doctrine was a radical departure from the previous people’s war concept of the Chinese military in several ways. First, as opposed to the lengthy temporal understanding of the people’s war doctrine, it envisioned a “quick” war rather than the annihilation of the enemy in a war of attrition. Second, it emphasized strength over weakness. The people’s war doctrine was based on the fact that the Chinese would have been the inferior side in a war against the invader. Third, the doctrine highlighted the importance of striking first instead of the people’s war concept of “striking after the enemy has struck.” Fourth, it emphasized strategic deterrence, which is based on nuclear retaliation.²² Finally, the doctrine underlined the role of elite troops instead of the “human sea” understanding of Mao’s people’s war.

Moreover, the adoption of “joint operations” as the main form of operation was one of the key aspects of the 1993 doctrine. In the previous doctrines, the main forms of operation ranged from positional defense to mobile and guerrilla warfare. Joint operations require the involvement of three service branches under a centralized command and control structure in the battlefield. Such operations further require the establishment of new organization-

al bodies, causing a change in hierarchy. Previously, the PLA had valued the role of the land forces, as prior military doctrines were mostly based on ground warfare. The concept of joint operations, on the other hand, highlights the role of air force and navy as well. So, the new doctrine redefined the relationship between the three services.

Further, the focus on limited wars on the periphery was a central change for the Chinese military. As mentioned above, China’s war planning was based on countering a territorial invasion by a great power. The 1993 doctrine abandoned this vision. With this doctrine, China adopted a theory of victory not only in its territory but also in its periphery. The doctrine also was a message that China can invoke military conflict with its neighbors in case of a crisis.

THE 2004 DOCTRINE: WINNING LOCAL WARS UNDER INFORMATIONIZED CONDITIONS

In 2004, China adopted a new military doctrine called “Winning Local Wars under Informatized Conditions.” This doctrinal change, however, was not a radical departure from the predecessor 1993 doctrine. The doctrine introduces the concept of “informatization” replacing the phrase “high-technological conditions.”²³ Informatization basically refers to the coordination of the armed services conducting joint operations. While the 1993 doctrine introduced the concept of joint operations, the 2004 doctrine emphasized the coordinated information flow between services conducting joint operations. To conduct such operations, the doctrine instructed the Chinese military to invest in developing command, control, communications,

21. Li, “The PLA’s Evolving Warfighting Doctrine, Strategy and Tactics, 1985–1995”, p. 445.

22. Since this study does not address China’s nuclear strategy, this point is not relevant to the analysis.

23. M. Taylor Favel, *Active Defense: China’s Military Strategy since 1949*, (Princeton University Press, Princeton: 2019), pp. 218–219.

TABLE 4. OPERATION TYPES

Joint Operations
• Joint blockade
• Landing
• Anti-air raid
Army Operations
• Mobile warfare
• Mountain offensive
• Positional offensive
• Counterterrorist stability operations
Navy Operations
• Destruction of enemy surface naval formations
• Interdiction of naval lines of communication
• Offensives against coral islands and reefs
• Protection of naval lines of communication
• Defense of navy bases
Air Force Operations
• Air offensive
• Airborne
• Air defense

Source: Zhang Yuliang ed., [Campaign Studies/The Science of Campaigns], (National Defense University Press, Beijing: 2006), in *Preparing and Training for the Full Spectrum of Military Challenges*, RAND Corporation Report, 2009, https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2009/RAND_MG836.pdf, [Accessed: December 5, 2019].

computers, and intelligence surveillance and reconnaissance (C4ISR) technologies.²⁴

In that sense, the 2004 doctrine was just an adjustment aimed at increasing the operational efficiency of the PLA, and was not a major change that required the abolition of existing organizational structures and forms of operations. Put differently, the doctrine aimed to guide the military's adaptation to the concept of system of systems warfare with the advent of RMA.

Similar to the 1993 doctrine, the 2004 doctrine also envisaged a local war in China's periph-

ery. The identified types of military campaigns were island assault, island blockade, and border area counterattack campaigns.²⁵ The focus on "island" as the theater of operations reflects China's political and strategic concerns about Taiwan. The doctrine was offensive in the sense that it envisaged a conventional Chinese assault on an island, likely Taiwan.

The authoritative but unofficial publication *The Science of Campaigns*, which was published by the PLA's National Defense University in 2006, identifies the conventional military operations that the PLA could conduct. Table 4 shows operation types for each service.

THE 2014 DOCTRINE: WINNING INFORMATIONIZED LOCAL WARS

China's most recent military doctrine called "Winning Informationized Local Wars" was adopted in 2014. The new doctrine is an "active defense" doctrine. China's strategic guideline, released in 2015, describes it as "adherence to the principles of defense, self-defense and post-emptive strike; and adherence to the stance that 'We will not attack unless we are attacked, but we will surely counterattack if attacked.'"²⁶ While defensive in strategic posture, the new doctrine highlights the role of offensive missions at tactical and operational levels.

The 2014 doctrine does not represent a major departure from its predecessors—the 2004 and 1993 doctrines—as it emphasizes the role of flexibility, mobility, integrated joint operations, information dominance, and pre-

24. Joe McReynolds and James Mulvenon, "The Role of Informatization in the People's Liberation Army under Hu Jintao," in Roy Kamphausen, David Lai, and Travis Tanner, eds., *Assessing the People's Liberation Army in the Hu Jintao Era* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, Army War College, 2014).

25. Fravel, *Active Defense*, pp. 219-220.

26. *Strategic Guideline of Active Defense*, Ministry of National Defense of the People's Republic of China, May 26, 2015, http://eng.mod.gov.cn/Database/WhitePapers/2015-05/26/content_4586711.htm, (Accessed: December 1, 2019).

cision strikes.²⁷ Similar to the 2004 doctrine, it is designed to provide new improvements and adjustments to China's 1993 doctrine. The strategic direction has also remained the Southeast–Taiwan—²⁸ implying that China is preparing for a potential conflict over Taiwan involving the United States.

The doctrine further underscores the PLA's commitment to war prevention and crisis management. The strategic guideline emphasizes this objective as follows:

A holistic approach will be taken to balance war preparation and war prevention, rights protection and stability maintenance, deterrence and warfighting, and operations in wartime and employment of military forces in peacetime. They will lay stress on farsighted planning and management to create a favorable posture, comprehensively manage crises, and resolutely deter and win wars.²⁹

The doctrine also sets tasks for the PLA to prepare for conducting what is called “military operations other than war (MOOTW).” The strategic guideline describes MOOTW as “emergency rescue and disaster relief, counterterrorism and stability maintenance, rights and interests protection, guard duty, international peacekeeping, and international humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR).”³⁰ The Chinese military distinguishes MOOTW from what it calls “preparation for military struggle (PMS)” endeavors. MOOTWs are expected to increase the PLA's operational experience in peacetime by engaging in overseas operations.

The concept of MOOTW proves China's long-term efforts to build capacity for conducting operations that are far abroad and overseas. Currently, the 2014 doctrine holds an assertive and self-dependent stance for China's near maritime and territorial interests. When it comes to China's overseas interests, the doctrine has a less ambitious stance as the strategic guideline underlines “international security cooperation” to maintain such interests.³¹ This shows that China is still preparing for building the capacity to conduct overseas military operations. Besides increasing the number of weapon systems, China is also developing the quality of its naval weapon systems by investing in both domestic and foreign systems. However, China's top priority remains preparing for local wars that would be fought in its periphery. In the upcoming decades, as China's power projection capacity increases, we can expect that the PLA will develop military doctrines for fighting wars in regions other than Southeast Asia.

Naval capacity is crucial for an aspiring state to project its power. While the largest naval power in its region, China is still far from having a full-fledged blue-water navy. Graphic 1 shows China's increasing naval capacity since 2005. The graph contains the aggregate number of the following weapon systems for each year: ballistic missile submarines, nuclear-powered attack submarines, diesel attack submarines, aircraft carriers, destroyers, frigates, corvettes, missile-armed coastal patrol craft, amphibious ships (tank landing ships [LSTs], transport dock ships [LPDs], and medium landing ships [LSMs]).

27. Ibid.

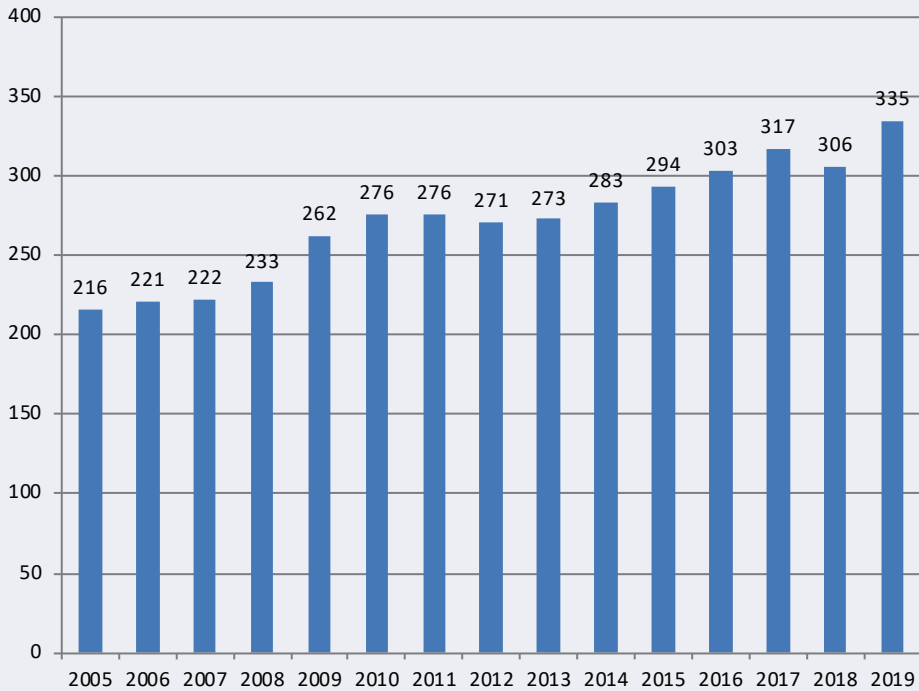
28. Fravel, *Shifts in Warfare and Party Unity: Explaining China's Changes in Military Strategy*, pp. 80–82.

29. Ibid.

30. *Preparation for Military Struggle*, Ministry of National Defense of the People's Republic of China, May 26, 2015, http://eng.mod.gov.cn/Database/WhitePapers/2015-05/26/content_4586711.htm, (Accessed: December 1, 2019).

31. *Strategic Guideline of Active Defense*, Ministry of National Defense of the People's Republic of China, May 26, 2015, http://eng.mod.gov.cn/Database/WhitePapers/2015-05/26/content_4586711.htm, (Accessed: December 1, 2019).

GRAPHIC 1. CHINA'S NAVAL CAPACITY (2005-2019)



Source: *China Naval Modernization: Implications for U.S. Navy Capabilities - Background and Issues for Congress*, Congressional Research Service Report, September 24, 2019.

CONCLUSION

This study has shown that as its power increases, China's military doctrine has evolved in line with the expansion of its political goals at international and regional levels. China's military doctrine has evolved from a sheer defensive stance envisaging a total war to a more offensive stance envisaging limited war in the periphery.

China's military innovation is often both a response to the changing international environment and a function of its increasing power. Accordingly, with the decline of the Soviet Union and the concomitant reform process initiated by Deng Xiaoping, China found a strategic opportunity to modernize its military. This brought its first major innovation during the late Cold War period: the 1980 doctrine. However, China's most

radical military innovation came in 1993. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the Gulf War pushed the Chinese elites to change the military doctrine of the time. The technological superiority of the U.S. military in the Gulf War forced China to modernize its military into a more technology- and information-reliant organization. The subsequent military doctrinal changes (i.e. the 2004 and 2014 doctrines) did not present major changes compared to the 1993 doctrine. The three doctrines adopted after the Cold War show that China is still far from conducting global operations, but is focused on a local war - one that involves Taiwan and probably the United States. The content of the recent doctrines also suggests that China is increasingly preparing for winning local wars by conducting offensive operations.

CHINA'S EVOLVING MILITARY DOCTRINE AFTER THE COLD WAR

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SETA | ANALYSIS

This study examines China's conventional military doctrine and its evolution after the Cold War. If its current economic rise continues, China's strategic posture and approach to war will be one of the key variables of international politics. To make sense of China's current foreign policy stance and potential future behavior regarding war, the following questions need to be answered: What military means, if necessary, would China employ in case of a war? Where is a military threat to China likely to come from? What are the strategically important battle spaces for China? How does China plan to use military means in those domains?

Military doctrines stand as reliable and useful sources to answer these questions. Regarding China's military doctrine, this study proposes two interrelated arguments. First, as its power has increased, the evolution of China's military doctrine proves that China has adopted a more assertive and active stance on issues and regions. The Chinese military's doctrinal innovation keeps up with China's diversifying interests and growing capacity. Second, though China is a major power in North and Southeast Asia, the time is not yet ripe for it to be a global military power that can project its military capability beyond the nearby seas. China's most recent military doctrines are designed to deal with local challenges. This implies that the Chinese military still does not feel that the country is likely to fight a global maritime or territorial war in the near future.

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