

Treble Spyglass, Treble Spear: China's "Three Warfares"

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THE NATIONAL POWER of the People's Republic of China has steadily grown over the past decades. The size of its economy and the capability of its military are the primary drivers of its comprehensive national strength. A neorealist correlation of forces analysis would emphasize this view, taking into account China's sustained over 7% annual GDP growth and the profound and prominent qualitative and quantitative improvements in the People's Liberation Army (PLA). In the area of military security, modernization of PLA hardware has granted its personnel the capability to—with proper training and force integration—carry out effective joint operations. However, beyond the technical nature of system capabilities, approaches in key areas can influence strategic competition in time of peace or war by increasing deterrent force, and granting the actor increased freedom of action.

In 2003, the Chinese Communist Party (CPC) Central Committee and the Central Military Commission (CMC) approved the concept of "Three Warfares" (*san zhong zhanfa*).¹ The PLA's operational guidance document, Regulation on the Political Work, stipulates "a reinforcement of political work in terms of media warfare, psychological warfare, and legal warfare." 100 Case Studies for each type of the triple warfare published by the PLA in January 2005 serves as a corroborating supplement to the document.¹

In 2008, the findings of the U.S. Department of State's (DOS) International Security Advisory Board report, headed by former Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, went public. Among other recommendations, the authors of the document maintained that "it is essential that the U.S. better understand and effectively respond to China's comprehensive approach to strategic rivalry, as reflected in its official concept of Three Warfares. If not countered, Beijing [...] can precondition key areas of strategic competition in its favor."ⁱⁱ

Furthermore, the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) in its 2009 Annual Report on the Military Power of the People's Republic of China noted the development of the PLA concept and further observed, "the concept of the 'Three Warfares' is being developed for use in conjunction with other military and non-military operations."ⁱⁱⁱ Even while uncertain of its ramifications, the DOD and DOS are clearly concerned about the concerted military and non-military operations guided by Three Warfares.

The question remains though, does the Three Warfares concept apply to the strategic, operational, or tactical level of warfare? This paper will define the

¹ The Central Military Commission (CMC) is responsible for issuing directives for operational guidance.

concept's triad of elements, illustrate their possible implications, demonstrate how they relate to other aspects of China's military posture, and judge their significance.

“Determinedly developing doctrine”

Before addressing Three Warfares, a brief survey of PLA doctrinal changes, terminology, and difficulties in analyzing this concept will be important for a comprehensive analysis. Evolutionary developments in PLA guiding theory have emphasized joint operations, active defense, and anti-access measures. These measures not only aim to guarantee success on the field of battle, but also aim to raise the cost of conflict in terms of both casualties and commensurate political resolve in Taiwan, the U.S., and third-party basing states such as Japan and South Korea.

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Information warfare has assumed a central role in Chinese military writings over the past decade. Since December 2004, the phrase ‘informatized war’ has largely replaced the phrase ‘local war under high-technology conditions’ in Chinese military strategy writings.^{iv} Achieving information superiority is seen as the precondition for achieving and maintaining battlefield supremacy. “The conduct of information warfare also greatly emphasizes the concept of ‘gaining mastery by striking first.’”^v In fact, some Chinese writings suggest that successful information operations require striking first electronically or kinetically. Thus, it appears that Chairman Mao's principle of “accepting the first blow” (*houfa zhiren*) has been replaced with “gaining the initiative by striking first” (*xianfa zhiren*).^{vi}

Apart from their authoritative issuance by the CMC, major reforms in the PLA also receive a political imprimatur by the Academy of Military Science. The support of the Academy of Military Science emphasizes the ideological correctness of the transition to a conventional first-strike posture.^{vii} Interestingly, while the PLA has shifted its definition of first strike, it denies that this redefinition represents an ideological fissure. In the Science of Military Strategy, the Academy of Military Science maintains that the definition of an enemy strike is not limited to conventional, kinetic military operations.^{viii} Rather, an enemy “strike” may also be defined in political terms (for instance a “strike” may imply a political violation of Chinese territory, such as a maritime intrusion or interference in internal affairs such as Taiwan). Thus, China claims it can conduct a “first strike” using information operations or even kinetic effects in response to supposed, real “first strike” executed by their opponent's government when it conducts a politically threatening maneuver. Pragmatically, China also perceives a preemptive approach as a necessary first step to preventing the aggregation of enemy forces near China. Chinese

commentators posit that one key lesson of the Persian Gulf War is the absolute necessity of barring the U.S. from gradually preparing the battlefield and developing its long logistics lines.

Apart from maintaining a level of ideological continuity, this policy provides a level of strategic ambiguity to China by granting it increased deterrent capacity. However, this ambiguous policy also provides possibilities for serious miscalculation by states.^{ix} The 2001 edition of the Science of Military Strategy first promoted ‘war control and containment’ and demonstrated confidence in escalation management, consistent with perceived success in past operations.^x Three Warfares now augments this body of writings.

Three, Three Warfares?

When evaluating this nascent concept—little-understood in the West, and possibly still-developing in China—one must exercise caution and a healthy conservatism before developing conclusions. Analysis of Western reactions to Unrestricted Warfare provides a didactic warning.^{xi} Published in 1999 and then republished outside China after 9/11 as a purported plan to destroy America, Unrestricted Warfare, a book independently written by military officers, explores elements of future warfare and possible PLA approaches. However, some foreign observers grossly misinterpreted this work, conflating hypothetical responses to scenarios with official plans, and even mistakenly labeling it Chinese “doctrine.” In fact, studies of the past decade have concluded that the PLA does not have a word for “doctrine” as used in the West or the USSR/Russia. When referring to doctrine in foreign texts, it instead uses the term “operational theory.”^{xii}

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PLA expert James Mulvenon half-jests, “we must unswervingly demand terminological precision!” Only through common, relatively precise definitions of Chinese terms can Western analysts monitoring the PLA, proceed past semantic problems to engage substantive ones. Accordingly, the PLA’s operational hierarchy of combat consists of three major levels: “war (*zhanzheng*); campaigns (*zhanyi*); and battles (*zhandou*), each of which is informed, respectively, by a distinct level of operational guidance—namely strategy (*zhanlüe*); campaign methods (*zhanyi fangfa*; usually contracted as *zhanfa*) and tactics (*zhanhu*).”^{xiii}

In this manner, “Local Wars under Modern High-tech Conditions” is not a “doctrine,” but a contingency, which is informed by the strategy of informatization. Likewise, Three Warfares (*sanzhong zhanfa*) can be identified primarily as a campaign method with secondary, mostly strategic but also tactical, applications.

Preliminary research of Three Warfares further demonstrates the need for terminological precision. Over the past several years, the CPC and CMC have each

lauded two *other* “three warfares.” Re-releasing the “Selected Works of Chen Yi in the Military”, the “three warfares” (*sanzhong zhanfa*) of mobility warfare, guerrilla warfare, and positional warfare have been extolled as elements of warfare which should be studied and learned.^{xiv} Another similar concept of “three wars” has also been prevalent. The CMC has argued that the United States has a “three wars” analytical construct: military operations are conducted after determining “whether to fight,” “where to fight,” and “how to fight.”^{xv} Clearly, many opportunities for both terminological and substantive confusion exist.

Psychological Warfare

The Department of Defense defines psychological warfare as that which “seeks to undermine an enemy’s ability to conduct combat operations through psychological operations aimed at deterring, shocking, and demoralizing enemy military personnel and supporting civilian populations.”^{xvi} Jomini’s “Paradox of Trinity” provides a theoretical basis for analyzing the definition.^{xvii} In the “Paradox of Trinity,” the people supply emotional commitment, the government supplies a rational calculus, and the military puts both together by conceiving strategy which connects means and ends. Psychological warfare aims to—in concert with the other two “Warfares”—destroy or damage either a particular element of the trinity or the linkages between them.

Psychological warfare requires both technical capabilities and political willingness. Technical capabilities include modern electronic media devices and a strong military capable of inflicting sudden, shocking strikes. With regard to political willingness, the aggressor or initiating state’s force must be credible against adversaries in its combat capability, and its leaders must credibly display the intention and willingness to employ or escalate the employment of force. Lastly, the potential enemy must perceive the state’s force as capable and understand the leadership’s willingness to use it.^{xviii}

Conventional deterrence, as part of psychological warfare, would not only involve military components but also involve political, economic, and diplomatic components. Retired U.S. Army LTC Dennis Blasko expounds: “Political signals may be sent through (1) public or private diplomacy at international organizations, such as the United Nations, and/or directly to other governments or persons; (2) the use of the Chinese and foreign media in official statements or “opinion pieces” written by influential persons; (3) non-military actions, such as restrictions on travel or trade; or (4) by using military demonstrations, exercises, deployments, or tests, which do not involve the use of deadly force.

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The PLA’s propaganda system is likely to be involved in the transmission of messages through capabilities developed by the political officer system in “three wars” training.^{xix} Three Wars combat patterns include “publicity campaigns using the modern electronic media to mobilize the Chinese population and demoralize the enemy; traditional use of propaganda leaflets and loudspeakers on the battlefield to encourage defections or surrender; and the education of Chinese forces to minimize civilian casualties, to avoid collateral damage to cultural treasures, and to respect the laws of war, as in treatment of prisoners and non-combatants.”^{xx 2}

Although recently popularized as part of Three Warfares, psychological warfare is not new to the PLA, or classical China more broadly. Psychological warfare (*xinlizhan*) is deeply rooted in Chinese strategy. Psychological operations are normally aimed at the adversary’s morale (*shiqi*), and employ television, radio broadcasts, leaflets, or calculated military operations to influence the enemy.^{xxi} However, the new Psychological Warfare appears to aim for a high degree of precision to achieve nonlinear effects. Psychological operations would aid in the targeting of critical nodes (*guanjie*), “single points that could paralyze an entire system.”^{xxii} Specifically, the enemy’s motivation and willingness to wage war could be targeted, by eliminating opposing leadership, diminishing international support, undercutting military capabilities, affecting the economy, or sowing domestic political dissent.

Target Taiwan

Taiwan, or the Republic of China (ROC) to be more precise, is the primary target of PLA Psychological Warfare. Currently, President Ma Ying-jeou is pursuing a policy of rapprochement with the People’s Republic of China (PRC). His policies have decreased the short-term likelihood of armed conflict in the Straits.



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Chinese efforts seek to instill doubt and dissension in Taiwanese ranks

However, critics simultaneously contend that he may be weakening the mission of the ROC military. Thus, he could face the challenge of maintaining a credible defense force and a credible commitment to use it if necessary.

Chinese writings posit that during peacetime, psychological operations seek to “reveal and exploit” divisions in the enemy’s domestic political establishment or alliance system and cast doubt on the enemy’s value concepts (*jiazhi gainian*).^{xxiii} In 1997, the Chinese General Staff Department and General Political Department “reportedly formed a special unit to examine methodologies to spark a ‘soldiers movement’ (*bingyun*) to sap gradually the morale of ROC’s armed forces and reduce confidence of the Taiwanese people in its military.” More recently, PLA journals alleged that

² In addition to supporting Chinese psychological and legal warfare claims, education of Chinese forces in the laws of war also engenders respectable norms of competition.

during the pro-independence overtures of the Chen Shui-bian administration, “officers and men [in the Taiwanese ranks] were in ideological chaos, shaken in their faith and confused about ‘just who and what they are fighting for.’”^{xxiv} While the current administration may conform to traditional military views of the identity of the Republic of China (i.e., the ROC is China, not an independent Taiwan), the military correlation of forces continues to grow in the PLA’s favor and greater integration may cast doubts on the need for their mission.

President Ma’s presiding over the graduation ceremony for the ROC’s five military schools in July 2008 demonstrated his awareness of the situation and his desire to instill confidence in the armed forces. His speech to the cadets included the following lines:

“Some of you may wonder whether China is our friend or foe. What you should do is to help us build a strong military force and be prepared for war. Only by being prepared for war can we prevent it. Taiwan will not seek war, but we will not avoid or fear wars, either.”^{xxv}

Taiwan’s first Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR), issued in March of 2009 by the Ministry of National Defense, identified the “three-front war” by China—legal, media, and psychological warfare as a threat to the defense of the country. Furthermore, in planning its “Hard ROC” defense strategy, the QDR called for “realizing an all-out (general civilian mobilization) defense” as an important measure for preventing war. Such actions aim to bolster the perceived weak or shallow morale of Taiwanese citizens. Overall, the Ma administration has developed nuanced communications in seeking to improve relations with the PRC while also improving the ROC’s defenses.

The PLA is evaluating and debating coercive strategies, which would be part of Psychological Warfare to take advantage of weakened morale and unity of the ROC’s military and government. Through psychological warfare tactics including the electronic transmission of media, undercutting dialogue with elements of the ROC government, etc., the PLA aims to seize and maintain the political initiative before and during military campaigns. Independent of the method of the campaign (likely aircraft and missile strikes),^{xxvi} PRC observers posit that the ROC will, after a 48-hour psychological and limited military campaign, not only agree to initiate unification talks, but acquiesce to PRC terms.^{xxvii} Most PLA writings focus on the coercive strategy of denial, through the threat of an overwhelming barrage of guided ballistic missiles. By forcing Taiwan’s political leadership to lose confidence in their military’s ability to defend tolerably the regime’s survival or the people’s safety, they will capitulate. Whether or not such a scenario would materialize holds broad implications not only for Taiwan, but for intervening states as well—the U.S. in particular. If Taiwan swiftly loses political confidence and capitulates to Chinese

demands, then U.S. forces sent to signal U.S. commitment to stability in the region or actively stop Chinese coercion would arrive too late to assist in the defense of the island. Clearly, the PLA views Psychological Warfare as an essential element of its operational level of warfare, employing it in concert with other Warfares and using the expectations of success created through it to guide the development of plans to achieve strategic effects.

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Media Warfare

As part of the Three Warfares, Media Warfare is “aimed at influencing domestic and international public opinion to build public and international support for China’s military actions and to dissuade an adversary from pursuing policies perceived to be adverse to China’s interests.”^{xxviii} The wide scope of activities which fall under this purview range from “guiding” opinion to blocking content to active repression of those who circumvent the system. Overall, PLA planners seek to control domestic information access to guide public opinion, and thus present an ‘united front’ among the intelligentsia, common citizens, and the CCP. Media warfare is also essential for reinforcing actions of Psychological and Legal Warfares. Renowned Chinese propaganda scholar Anne-Marie Brady opens her seminal work on China’s propaganda efforts by sharing the sentiment of a mid-ranking propaganda official, “Propaganda work is spiritual work and the propagandists are like priests guiding their flock.”^{xxix} In this manner, propagandists are responsible for structuring the symbolic environment through communication processes in such a way that citizens will be more likely to accept that state’s political order as legitimate.^{xxx} Since China has abandoned pure Communist ideology, propaganda now plays a central role in legitimizing the CCP’s rule.

Extensive controls on the structure and dissemination of media exist, even in cases when journalists publish articles that would supposedly bolster national esteem. If articles are not approved by the State Press and Publications Administration (SPPA), the newspapers and their authors are subject to penalties. On April 14 2009, newspapers *Qingdao Zaobao* and *Huaxi Dushi Bao*, which both reprinted a story on Chinese warships’ escort mission in Somalia’s waters, were accused of creating “seriously unfavorable social consequences for the reputation of the country and the Chinese Navy.”^{xxxi} While censors provided no concrete reason, the SSPA likely felt the articles portrayed the Chinese maritime mission as aggressive and unilateralist. Currently, the combination of media blocking, mass censorship, and the guiding of opinion on forums (BBS) and media outlets help to present a strong

One-China. Currently, the Ministry of the Information Industry controls the Internet, by blocking and filtering content, while the Ministry of State Security (China's CIA) and the Ministry of Public Security (China's FBI) police Internet bulletin boards, blogs, and e-mail.^{xxxii}

Over the past few decades, China has adopted more sophisticated Media Warfare methodologies. In particular, China has incorporated many methods of mass persuasion from the Western world, including political public relations, incorporating the theories of mass communication, and individual and group psychology.^{xxxiii}

Foreign Media Warfare efforts have also become more sophisticated. In 1967, during the Cultural Revolution, Zhou Enlai (the PRC's first Foreign Minister and Premier) told propaganda workers not to "take what was intended for domestic readers and force it on people abroad. You're not using your heads. [...] Study your audience, stick to principle, and at the same time get results.

The characteristics (of foreign and domestic

The design of the new Central Chinese Television (CCTV) headquarters reflects China's new obsession with the media

BusinessWeek



propaganda) are different."^{xxxiv} Despite the entreaties, foreign propaganda had limited effect. During the Deng/Jiang era, the slogan to express a pragmatic approach to foreign diplomacy propaganda was to "use foreigners as a bridge" (*yiqiao weiqiao*).^{xxxv} In March of 1990, the CCP's Central Committee Propaganda Group was revived (after being closed down in 1988) to focus on improving China's image abroad. In 1991, the Office of Foreign Propaganda/State Council Information Office was established, making the Office of Foreign Propaganda a separate unit from the Central Committee Propaganda Group. Beijing has employed foreigners to promote China, bringing in "prominent persons" from abroad to support the Party line on CCTV, or having foreign experts write pieces for media such as China Daily, which accord with government censors.^{xxxvi} Another technique known as "borrowing foreign newspapers" (*jieyong haiwai baokang*) involves hosting foreign journalists, taking them to approved sites, and providing them with material.

Chinese propaganda offices also aim to conduct "thought work" on foreign journalists and elites. This is done through the traditional method of "building [positive] feeling" in the individual."^{xxxvii} Lastly, several foreign public relations firms actively lobby for, and provide advice to the Chinese government. Such firms notably assisted Beijing in presenting China's 2008 Beijing Olympics bid to the International Olympic Committee as an opportunity to improve human rights.

The most important lobbyists for China and target audience of foreign propaganda are likely Overseas Chinese, people of Chinese ancestry who are not living in the

PRC or ROC. Overall, China aims to create ideational power that has “wellsprings in a nation’s culture, political values, and external policies.”^{xxxviii} As China’s cultural-economic status rises, China will seem increasingly attractive to citizens of the world in general and Overseas Chinese in particular. With Overseas Chinese, China seeks to leverage its notion of a transnational culture. Transnational culture, the idea of a common ethnic Chinese people, supports public diplomacy and espionage operations throughout the world in ethnic Chinese communities, university campuses, and cultural centers such as the Confucius Institutes.

Flying past the West’s Information Wall

In the 1990’s, rising numbers of Chinese citizens were illegally accessing foreign satellite feeds, often because they found outside media content more entertaining than basic CCTV channels. The rising number of Chinese citizens watching STAR-TV (Satellite Television for the Asian Region) during the 1990’s prompted three effective responses. First, the government co-opted some of STAR-TV’s programming by seizing control of Phoenix News and associated Phoenix channels. Once incorporated, Phoenix Television, splashy and nationalistic, was highly believable to Chinese viewers because it sounded nothing at all like old-style propaganda.^{xxxix} Second, Chinese officials developed a cable television system to resolve the dilemma caused by citizens accessing satellite feed. However, this has taken time to develop and the centralized nature of the cable system precludes easy access to rural areas. Lastly, the government has sought to develop an alternative cultural vision outside the Western model through cultural media subsidization and by leveraging China’s robust space program. As standards of living in China rise, and Chinese cultural media gains traction, these efforts will improve. Chinese media, featuring Chinese pop stars and actors, is increasingly attractive, and Chinese are thus losing interest in expending effort to access foreign media content.

Moreover, China is establishing the infrastructure for a global mass communication system that will fly past the “information domination” of the West. China resents the perceived U.S. and Western global media monopoly. As stated by the People’s Daily, the U.S. not only possesses the world’s largest political and military hegemony, but also has the biggest media and cultural hegemony. The ‘soft strength’ of Western news media far surpasses its economic ‘hard strength.’^{xi}

The Chinese space program forms an essential aspect of PRC efforts to increase its information dissemination. In 1992, the satellite TV channel CCTV-4 was established to target Overseas Chinese viewers. In 2000, the new CCTV-9 was set to target foreigners in China and English-speaking countries. In 2002, CCTV-9 became a 24-hour news channel, and in 2004 it began broadcasting in Spanish and French. In February 2005, CCTV’s “Great Wall TV Package” became available throughout Asia.^{xli} Furthermore, a comprehensive satellite communications system will enable an operational national and international satellite television and mass

communication capability by 2010. Critical for national security capabilities, China is planning to establish a global, 30 satellite Beidou GPS constellation by 2015.^{xlii}

Media Warfare, Nationalism, and Salami Tactics

Regime legitimacy in China rests on burgeoning economic growth and nationalism. Media sources cater to the nationalistic desires of the people, but also whet their desires with rich programming content. CCTV-7, the military and agriculture-focused television channel, occasionally provides especially inflammatory content that presents highly biased accounts of security situations throughout the world. The television show, “New Observations on Defense,” (*fangwu xin guancha*) provides a vivid case study of nationalistic Media Warfare at work. The series of exquisitely-produced episodes (complete with heroic orchestral music, high-quality video footage, and computer graphics) highlights the relatively great military strength of rival states, interviews PLA officers or Chinese professors who portray the rival state’s intentions as at best anodyne or outright aggressive, and shows the progress of the PLA in facing this threat. Episodes include, “‘Aegis’ warships to patrol the Japanese archipelago?” and “U.S. plans huge expansion of Guam against whom?”^{xliii xliiv} The episode on Guam notes the U.S. will invest \$15 billion for “hugely increasing” military capabilities in Guam. It notes that Guam, compared to Hawaii or the Continental U.S., is close to China and “hot spots” such as Japan, South Korea, the Taiwan Strait, the Philippines and Indonesia, and will act as the “tip of the spear” by supporting force projection to the Pacific Rim. Moreover, it implies that Guam is more in the Asian sphere than the U.S. Noting the capability of the U.S. to launch forces into Asia and the apparent use of an alliance structure to oppose China, the episode asks, “what will control America’s appetite in Asia?” Episodes such as these fuel domestic nationalism and convey the sense that Guam, an essential component of U.S. stability in the region, is not truly an American territory. This is consistent with reducing U.S. targets’ value for the Chinese population, U.S. elites and domestic population, and foreign countries’ elites and population.

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In his book, The Three Faces of Chinese Power, David Lampton recalls conversations with Foreign Ministry diplomats in which they speak of their on-line interactions with nationalistic citizens who allege the Ministry does not represent China’s interests forcefully

enough.^{xlv} Due to this sentiment, the Foreign Ministry argues it must play two-level games with domestic citizens and foreign governments. While the claim is likely true to a large degree, the possibility also exists that exaggerating the influence of

such nationalist movements or fueling them provides a form of positive “self-binding” for China in negotiations. In this manner, stoked nationalism could precondition negotiations in China’s favor, allowing Chinese officials to argue in negotiations with the U.S. or other states that they cannot fulfill obligations or requests or that their regime survival might be at stake.

Media Warfare, Transparency, and Deception

Public outcry after the SARS outbreak and cover-up accelerated trends towards limited transparency and prompted the central leadership to present a more open model of government at the agency level.^{xlvi} A system of spokesmen in party and government agencies at various levels, to be supervised by the State Council's Information Office, was implemented on May 1, 2008, with the National Regulations on Government Information Opening.

Then, on May 18, 2008, the PLA gave, for the first time, a public press briefing at the Chinese Ministry of Defense.^{xlvii} Senior Colonel Hu Changming, the PLA's first spokesman, provided details of the military's much-lauded role in rescue and relief efforts in the aftermath of the tragic May 12 Sichuan earthquake. China's openness to foreign disaster relief was interpreted by the Colonel as a sign of China's increasing self-confidence. The PLA routinely sends “significant media teams to cover the efforts and inform the population of the PLA's, PAP's, and militia's work in non-traditional security missions.”^{xlviii} These missions include winter storm relief efforts in early 2008, Sichuan earthquake relief efforts May-Sept/Oct. 2008, Olympic support activities, the Navy's anti-piracy mission off Somalia, and most recently the naval review at Qingdao. The international naval review, in celebration of the 60th anniversary of the founding of the PLA Navy on April 23rd, was an effort to liberalize the PLA's public relations image to the world. It not only demonstrated Chinese prestige to its own citizens, but was highly

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oriented toward foreign consumption by portraying a strong, friendly, and transparent force. Other efforts included the launching of an official PLA English website in 2003 titled “China Military Online.” Revamped in 2008, it now features a series of regularly updated news articles, fact sheets, photographs, and videos. It claims to offer a “window on Chinese armed forces” and

to demonstrate how China's military is "open and transparent."^{xlix}

Despite these overtures the PLA fundamentally lacks transparency or openness, systematically underreporting both the cost and allocation of its budget. Moreover, Media Warfare operations seek to stress the supposedly nascent state of PLA capabilities and publicly deny capabilities such as cyber-espionage. This practice of deception concords with Media Warfare's aim of influencing foreign actors' perceptions of the PLA. Whether such a policy of deception will change with greater Chinese confidence in PLA capabilities remains to be seen.

Legal Warfare

Legal warfare "uses international and domestic laws to gain international support and manage possible political repercussions of China's military actions."^{li} In particular, legal war seeks to legitimize Chinese policies while sometimes undercutting the authority or justification of enemy reactions. Legal Warfare is not necessarily revisionist to the legal system itself; instead, it may aim to gradually set a new precedent or a *fait accompli* situation backed by legal authority. When used with the other two Warfares and military and non-military operations, it achieves maximum effects.

In general, China solely conducts external security operations under the mandate of U.N. resolutions.^{li} This was evidenced when China waited for U.N. Security Council Resolution 1851 before sending maritime forces December 26, 2008 to combat pirates. Similarly, China only participates in U.N.-sanctioned peacekeeping operations. Even in foreign policy trouble spots for China, such as Sudan, China's peacekeeping presence is backed by a U.N. mandate. This is consistent with the long-standing PRC position on noninterference in the internal affairs of other countries.

China has used the concept of Legal Warfare in territorial disputes in the South China Sea. The coordinated efforts of legal experts and maritime forces aim to "shape international opinion and interpretation of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea away from long-accepted norms of freedom of navigation and territorial limits toward increased sovereign authority out to the 200 nautical mile Exclusive Economic Zone, the airspace above it, and possibly outer space."^{liii} Over the past decade, military confrontations between the U.S. and China have exhibited strong international law components, with China justifying their position in the context of or lack of international law. Incidents include the March 4-8, 2009 harassment of U.S. SURTASS vessels (USNS Impeccable and USNS Victorious), 2006 and 2007 Chinese testing of directed energy and kinetic anti-satellite systems, and the April 1, 2001 collision of a Chinese J-8 with a U.S. EP-3E. In the future, Chinese Legal Warfare could provide advantages in areas such as treaties regulating or abolishing the emplacement of weapons in space, or the fielding of anti-satellite systems. Overall, Chinese interpretation of the U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea

emphasizes that it strengthens stated sovereignty and denies unauthorized access to foreign militaries.

Another visible area of Chinese employment of a Legal Warfare paradigm is Chinese protests of perceived Japanese cultural insensitivity. Chinese observers cited the historical importance of the war crime tribunals carried out by the International Military Tribunal for the Far East in their opposition to visits to the Yasukuni Shrine by Prime Minister Koizumi. They further emphasize the Tribunal's findings when condemning history textbooks that deny the Tokyo Trial's authority and other "strange things." Chinese jurists, and in turn the media, portray this as a campaign to ignore the "atrocities and conspiracies executed by the leaders of the Empire of Japan" that impinged on peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region.^{liii}

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Additionally, legal warfare has been used to support economic coercion, urging foreign companies against investing in certain Taiwanese companies with the threat of losing business in the PRC. Furthermore, longstanding efforts to portray the U.S. as not an Asian power incorporate legal elements through the fostering of mechanisms and apparatuses that solely involve ASEAN+3 states (Association of Southeast Asian States plus China, Russia, and Korea).^{liv} In short, through specific policies and the advocacy of general architectures, legal warfare seeks to legitimize Chinese actions while delegitimizing adversaries’ actions.

Anti-Secession Law: a combined case study

On the 8th of March 2005 the National People's Congress passed the Anti-Secession Law (ASL), which stipulated: "If possibilities for a peaceful reunification should be completely exhausted, the state shall employ non-peaceful means and other necessary measures to protect China's sovereignty and territorial integrity." The law served three functions. First, it was seen as a deterrent act against Taiwanese "splittists." Second, it domestically strengthened and justified the role of the security apparatus. Third, the law provided a legal, self-binding foundation for the Chinese position on the problem of the Strait. Similar to the manner in which U.S. diplomats cite the Taiwan Relations Act and the autonomy of members of the U.S. Congress in making pronouncements and passing legislation, Chinese leaders can now fall back to the ASL to justify their actions during negotiations. David Huang, member of the Mainland Affairs Council, which highly protested the law, identified five stages of China's Three Warfares in the ASL:

1. Setting agenda and repeating messages (media)
2. Creating pressures on the government (psychological)
3. Undermining the government's public authority (legal)

4. Generating the “chilling effect” by rewarding cooperators and punishing defectors (psychological)
5. Denying Taiwan’s sovereign status by isolating it (legal)

As the case demonstrates, Three Warfares achieves ideal effects through the combined application of the Three Warfares’ elements, skillful statesmanship, and a credible military force. These long-term efforts by China are viewed by the Chinese leadership as a slow but sure strategy for achieving reunification with Taiwan. Commensurately, Three Warfares must be viewed through the paradigm of Chinese perception of past successes with brinkmanship and pedagogical conflicts such as the Sino-Indian War and Sino-Vietnamese War. This perception reinforces the appeal of a structured, methodical strategy that can achieve specific, almost scientific effects. Hence, Chinese leaders must avoid overconfidence and possible miscalculation in assessing their agent capabilities.

“For to win one hundred victories in one hundred battles is not the acme of skill. To subdue the enemy without fighting is the acme of skill.” -Sun Tzu

Prospects for Three Warfares

Three Warfares (*sanzhong zhanfa*) can be primarily identified as a campaign method with secondary, mostly strategic but also tactical, applications. By itself, it is unlikely to achieve significant strategic goals. Indeed, Three Warfares will probably not “subdue the enemy without fighting.” However, the combined employment of Three Warfares with credible PLA forces as part of established operational guidance is likely to achieve significant nonlinear effects. Integrated not only into military campaigns, but China’s larger strategy regarding other applications of power, its relevance will likely continue to grow.

Coordinated Three Warfares efforts aim to dexterously support China’s position in regard to Asian security issues, while undercutting those of adversaries. The dedication of Three Warfares’ methods against the ROC constitutes the focal point of the method, incorporating psychological, media, and legal warfare to support a long-term pacific, but if necessary swift and bellicose, reunification. The increasing relevance of Three Warfares merits continued attention by Western analysts seeking to understand how China will aim to shape, approach, and succeed in various situations. As both a guiding paradigm and operational method, the unity of effort brought about by Three Warfares will further PLA analysis of conditions and questions regarding the use of force.

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