

The Air Staff College Research Memo

### **3. Defining the Relationship between China’s “Three Wars” and its Air Power “Three Wars” Case Study**

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#### Abstract

This paper introduces the 2003 China People’s Liberation Army political ordinance defining the “Three Wars” and performing a case study on how it relates to their airpower.

#### Main Points

##### **1. Entire Nation will grapple with the Three Wars**

The Three Wars concept originally comes from SunTzu’s writings against war and yielding to your opponent. Furthermore, the realization that Mao Zedong’s leadership had caused damage to not only the military, but to the entire country, led them to advocate for a nationwide policy.

##### **2. The Significance of the Three Wars**

The Three Wars are intended to distract the Chinese population from the domestic problems that are piling up, and to bring world attention to China’s increased capabilities.

##### **3. The Truth of the Three Wars**

Since the Chinese Head of State called for the Three Wars in his strategic message, there have been many activities supporting the strategy. There has been news coverage of new weapons and of military activities, of the Prime Minister’s visit to Yasukuni Shrine and raising historical problems. They have

laid territorial claim to the Senkaku Islands other territories. In addition, in terms of Airpower, they have also established an Air Defense Identification Zone, an act which can be tied to the Three Wars strategy.

### **1. What are the Three Wars<sup>1</sup>?**

The Three Wars were adopted in 2003 by the Communist Party of China (hereinafter referred to as the Communist Party) Central Committee<sup>2</sup> and Military Commission of the Central Committee of Party (hereinafter referred to as Central Military Commission), and were entered into the China Peoples' Liberation Army Political Ordinance<sup>3</sup>, mentioning that the Three Wars are Public Opinion Warfare, Psychological Warfare and Legal Warfare, and that they include collapse operation<sup>4</sup>, anti-psychological and anti-betrayal<sup>5</sup> operation, and military judicial and legal duty operation ("collapse operation" means organization-disintegrating activity, "anti-psychological operation" means countermeasure against psychological attack, "anti-betrayal operation" means countermeasure against secret betrayal maneuvering activity of entering into the interior of opponents, "legal duty operation" means affairs concerning laws). The Three Wars are each very similar to each other, with such a close relationship that it is not possible to establish clear divisions between the three of them. For example, Public Opinion Warfare offers effective domestic and foreign public opinions to Psychological Warfare and Legal Warfare. Legal Warfare provides legal authority to Public Opinion Warfare and Psychological Warfare. The Three Wars aim to weaken the enemy by using propaganda, a special strength of China, and can be considered a part of their asymmetric warfare. The following are the three definitions for the three wars.

#### **(1) Public Opinion Warfare**

This refers to the buildup of morale inside of the country, inspiring the army and providing it with a fighting spirit, while aiming to decrease the morale of the enemy. The media and information resources, such as newspapers, books, radio, television, the Internet and electronic mail, are all considered operational tools. Some commonly used tactics are "emphatic blow"(which affects enemy leaders decisions) and "information control" (spreading advantageous

information and limiting unfavorable information).

## (2) Psychological Warfare

The goal of this warfare is to crush the will of the enemy to resist. Propaganda is disseminated over the TV, Internet, print media etc. Regular tactics include intimidation through military exercises, strategic posturing, and displaying advanced weaponry. All of these tactics are intended to mislead the enemy, through deception, as to their true intent and to affect the enemies decision making. As the leaders and people are affected by this tactic, it will spread to the commanders and leaders of the military. Also included in this warfare is “psychological prevention.” This will protect the morale of their army through encouragement, counseling and other measures to reduce the psychological warfare activities of the enemy.

## (3) Legal Warfare

The object of this warfare is to permit the friendly use of force and to secure the legitimacy of operation, while uncovering the enemy’s illegal use of force. Furthermore, this warfare aims to prevent the interference of third parties in a conflict, and to place the enemy into a passive posture. This warfare is considered an auxiliary strategy to military operations.

Incidentally we presume, since the Three Wars was adopted by Central Committee which supervises politics and economics of the Communist Party, it was decided that not only the military but all the nation would execute the Three Wars. The following are the examples whose executors are other than the military.

Example #1: December 2013, the Foreign Ministry exposed Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s visit to the Yasukuni Shrine to international criticism. (Public Opinion Warfare)

Example #2: September 2010, a Chinese fishing boat violated Japanese territorial waters. The fishing vessel hit a patrol vessel of the Japanese Coast Guard, who then arrested and detained the captain for violating territorial waters. This action was monitored by fishery vessels. Several hundred people were involved in large-scale anti-Japanese demonstrations and China banned the export of rare earth minerals to Japan. (Public Opinion Warfare,

Psychological Warfare)

Example #3: November 2013, the Hainan Fisheries Act was implemented as a modification to the "Fishing Regulations" placing the Hainan area under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of the Agriculture, legally banning Vietnamese fishing boats from the waters in the area. (Legal Warfare)

Example #4: March 2010, the People's Republic of China State Council enforced an maritime island protection law to protect China's maritime interests by creating Marine Administrative Departments.

## **2. Significance of the Three Wars**

Although we have stated that the Three Wars have been promoted throughout all state activities in the previous section, we will now show the significance of the Three Wars in this section.

### **(1) Significance in Domestic Affairs**

The legitimacy<sup>6</sup> of the Communist Party is based upon their ability to improve living standards and achieve international standing through economic development<sup>7</sup>, but there is a possibility they will lose support from the people if they are not able to achieve those goals. Therefore, the Communist Party will use its resources to maintain economic development by securing markets and transportation routes while preventing criticism of its actions, both domestically and internationally. The securing of islands in the South China Sea is for just such a purpose. The activities of the government in the East China Sea are another good example of how they seek to achieve their ends.

Currently, in order to maintain their legitimacy, the Communist Party is facing several challenges. There is economic inequality, environmental destruction, party and government official corruption, and multiple other problems which have led in 2005 to 87,000 anti-government riots, reaching 180,000 in 2010.<sup>8</sup> Corruption among Communist Party members has been recognized as a serious crisis by the party itself, and in the 18th Communist Party Congress in 2012, it stated that corruption occurs at the highest level as well as the low-

est level, and pledged to crack down on corruption. These corruption investigations also included the highest ranking official to ever be caught, Zhou Yongkang, the head of the Politburo Standing Committee<sup>9</sup>. There have also been reports that the Uighur anti-government movement has also conducted many anti-government activities,<sup>10</sup> and the Communist Party has had to budget for increased security<sup>11</sup> in those areas to maintain their control, a cost that is not factored into their published military budgets.

## (2) Significance in International and Security Affairs

### A. Relationship with the World

Since Deng Xiaoping the foreign policy of China has been focused on economic development (“wait for opportunity, hide our ability”<sup>12</sup>). However, since Hu Jintao came to power in 2009, they have shifted their focus to promoting their national sovereignty and security, though phrased as necessary in order to protect their continued development. These change is beginning to have an impact abroad. As an example, China has begun building Confucius Institutes throughout the world in order to garner support by accepting foreign students.<sup>13</sup> We believe this is an important part of the Three Wars, specifically Public Opinion Warfare and Psychological Warfare.

### B. Relationship with the United States

In June 2013, during a visit to the United States, President Xi Jinping said, “The Pacific Ocean is big enough for the United States and China to share.”<sup>14</sup> From this statement I believe we can see how China views the current relationship, how they believe they are a great power, and how they seek to eliminate US influence in Asia. However, though they have become the second largest economy in the world, in terms of military and diplomatic clout, China does not yet have the influence of the United States and it is not a peer-to-peer relationship. Therefore, they plan to use an Anti-Access/Area Denial strategy, using advanced electronic and cyber warfare, ballistic and cruise missiles, advanced air defense systems and other such tools, to create an asymmetric capability against the United States. They are also seeking to rapidly develop a full-spectrum capability. However, they are not yet able to

match the United States capabilities, and therefore the Three Wars have become an important element in the relationship. For example, they have lobbied US politicians to prevent specific policies, hired prominent think tanks to speak as an advocate for China, and rated networks of researchers and foreign students at several universities.<sup>15</sup> There can be viewed as part of all three of the Three Wars: Public Opinion, Psychological, and Legal.

### (3) Other Significant Aspects - "Revival of the Political Commissar"

China's commissars perform the same function as those that were in the former Soviet Union's Revolutionary Army. The political commissar's<sup>16</sup> institutionalized role was to prevent rebellion or other anti-party activities within the military. However, once the Communist Party, under the "Three Represents"<sup>17</sup> theory, began changing from a class party to a national political party, the loyalty of the military to the Communist Party began to show signs of decline. Thus the ability of the political commissar to keep an eye on internal military affairs became harsher. I believe they will utilize the political commissar again, giving them a new mission to act as an agent of the Three Wars.

It should be noted though, that before the Three Wars was instituted, the political commissar was in charge of propaganda,<sup>18</sup> psychological warfare and legal affairs.

## 3. Three Wars Case Studies (Strategic Messaging)

In this section we will provide case studies of how the Three Wars were used in Chinese strategic messaging.

### (1) President Xi Jinping's Keynote Speech<sup>19</sup> at the Asia Mutual Confidence-Building Measures Conference (May 2014)

President Xi Jinping stated in his keynote speech that "Asian problems must be handled by Asian people, and Asian security must be provided by Asian people."

It is believed this was a direct appeal to the nationalist spirit of the participating countries,<sup>20</sup> trying to build an order focused on Asia (Public Opinion Warfare), establishing a framework to build upon in the future (Legal War-

fare), and to eliminate any US influence from the Asian region.

(2) President Xi Jinping referred<sup>21</sup> to the “Heaven on Earth, Offensive and Defensive Air Force”. (April 2014)

During a visit to the troops, President Xi Jinping announced the creation of “Heaven on Earth, a combined mighty offensive and defensive Air Force” (representing an integrated air and space force with a well-rounded balance of attack and defensive capabilities). Although this was the first time that the Chinese president mentioned this, the timing was suspect. It was done just one month after the announcement of the “2014 Quadrennial Defense Review” of the US Department of Defense. Thus, even while the US was announcing its rebalancing of the military, though it is expected that the US will face challenges in rebalancing the military due to financial restrictions, China demonstrates its clear intention to improve its air and space power. We believe the intent was to enhance China's image by demonstrating their military capabilities were the same as the US, and that they would not acquiesce to the US (psychological warfare). This is also believed to be done in order to inspire patriotism in China's citizens (Public Opinion Warfare).

#### **4. Three Wars Case Studies (A2/AD)**

This section contains examples<sup>22</sup> of how China uses the Three Wars in relation to its A2/AD strategy.

(1) Public Opinion Warfare

China has been using the state mass media to wage Public Opinion Warfare: 1) to confuse the issue of who has been disrupting regional stability and 2) to instill a sense of fear in the United States and its allies of Chinese retaliation. This is used in both offensively and defensively when discussing: 1) nuclear and military force modernization, particularly as related to new weapons, 2) its economic power, and 3) warning against any infringement on its core interests, China's historical “humiliation” over the last few hundred years.

(2) Psychological Warfare

China wages Psychological Warfare against military personnel and civilians,

from the lowest ranking soldier to the highest levels of decision-making, and seeks to influence their decision making. In the United States, its allies and aligned countries, they seek to build the perception that: 1) US victory cannot be expected, and 2) due to the strength of the Chinese military it is better if your country is not complicit in US activities. Public discussion of the DF-21D anti-ship ballistic missile, especially as an effective measure against US aircraft carriers, during the military exercises "Mission Action – 2013" was intended to intimidate Taiwan.

### (3) Legal Warfare

An example of Legal Warfare is how China has used its own interpretation of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Seas for its own purposes. Though military activities are not specifically regulated in the law, China has been using its interpretation to bar other nation's military forces from the area. For example, in March 2009, the Chinese Navy used government and fishing vessels to interfere with a US Navy survey ship. In addition, China argues that since the United States has not signed the treaty, that: 1) the United States has forfeited any right to talk about the legal issues, and 2) the legal legitimacy of the US intervention in the issue. Furthermore, China will use Legal Warfare not only to determine what is legally legitimate, but will also use legal means to support the use of military force. Their goal is to delay US military operations by confusing US commanders about the legality of force.

## **5. Three Warfare Case Studies (Chinese Military Activities in the East China Sea)**

Recent Chinese military activities in the East China Sea (as related to air power) are shown in the table below. This delineates the activities and how they relate to the Three Warfares.



Table: Recent Chinese Military Activities in the East China Sea

Case	Target	Objective	Means *	Classification of Three Warfares
1 Establishment of Air Defense Identification Zone November 2013	Domestic	Spiritual inspiration to homeland people	Information control (spreading advantageous information)	Public Opinion Warfare
	Foreign	Eliminating enemy aircraft from Air Defense Identification Zone	Emphatic strike (affecting enemy leaders decision)	Public Opinion Warfare
			Public relations (change of enemy thinking by media)	Psychological Warfare
			Ensuring legitimacy	Legal Warfare
2 Territorial air space violation, etc. - First violation by Y-12 December 2012 - UAV Flight near Senkaku Islands September 2013 - Near miss by China Force aircraft May 2014	Domestic	Spiritual inspiration to homeland people	Information control (spreading advantageous information)	Public Opinion Warfare
	Foreign	Giving an artificial impression internationally that Senkaku Islands are at issue	Emphatic strike (affecting enemy leaders decision)	Public Opinion Warfare
			Threat(military exercise,etc.) Public relations (change of enemy thinking by media)	Psychological Warfare
			Ensuring legitimacy	Legal Warfare
3 Introduction of new weapons, etc. -Reaching initial operation stage of antiship ballistic missile (US senior official) December 2010 -First stealth fighter flight J-20: January 2011 J-31: October 2012 -Possession of aircraft carrier September 2012 -First stealth unmanned aggressor flight November 2013	Domestic	Spiritual inspiration to homeland people	Information control (spreading advantageous information)	Public Opinion Warfare
	Foreign	Breaking enemy nation's resistance intention against China by Force modernization	Information control (spreading advantageous information)	Public Opinion Warfare
			Threat (displaying advanced weapons) Public relations (change of enemy thinking by media)	Psychological Warfare

\* Refer to "1 What are Three Warfares?" for means.

## 6. Summary

Thinking about the Three Warfares, they are based on a way of waging asymmetric warfare, without military forces, to create favorable conditions and provide China freedom of action. It is also said that they are consistent with the spirit of Sun Tzu's teachings. The next step in our study is to narrow the subject down to just Airpower, and focus on policy recommendations for the JASDF. The detailed content will be as follows:

- (1) Analyze the related documents, regarding the systematic (organization, point of dispatch) procedure of the Three Warfares in China and the change in roles of the Three Warfares before and after the Central Commission's adoption (2003).
- (2) Analyze how the US military see the Three Warfares and how they are trying to cope with the warfares, focusing on the US military doctrine.
- (3) Analyze more the cases concerning airpower from the viewpoint of Psychological, Public Opinion and Legal Warfares, and organize them theoretically.
- (4) After that, propose matters to cope with as JASDF and devise measures to adopt as JASDF.

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Footnotes

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- 1 防衛省防衛研究所編『中国安全保障レポート』防衛省防衛研究所、2011, p.10.
- 2 the leadership conference of the Communist Party of China
- 3 fundamental regulations of political maneuvering in the military, showing roles and duties of each class political department, each class political committee member, etc., strengthening political maneuver, Communist Party's absolute leadership against the military and so on. 天児慧ほか編『現代中国辞典』岩波書店、1999, p.582.
- 4 Defeating opponents without using force is considered as the best thing in China from Sun-tzu's No Fight Winning to Mao Zedong's Collapse Warfare. Executing Collapse Warfare with Three Warfares is shown in China's People's Liberation Army Political Maneuvering Regulations.
- 5 “策反” means the military activity of penetrating enemy's territory and agitating for uprising or submission.
- 6 the reason to hold the reins of government. Being selected by an election is the principle of orthodoxy in democratic countries.
- 7 高原明生「中国の台頭とその近隣外交—日本外交への示唆」RIETI Discussion Paper Series 09-J-012、経済産業研究所ウェブサイト、June, 2009. Accessed on September 5, 2014 <http://www.rieti.go.jp/jp/publications/dp/09j012.pdf>; 松田康博「Domestic political factors that restrict China's external action」防衛研究所ウェブサイト、February 1, 2007, accessed on September 9, 2014 [http://www.nids.go.jp/event/symposium/pdf/2006/j2006\\_07.pdf](http://www.nids.go.jp/event/symposium/pdf/2006/j2006_07.pdf); スーザン・L・シャーク著、徳川家広訳『中国 危うい超大国』NHK 出版、2008, p.120.
- 8 中国研究所『中国年鑑 2009』中国研究所、2009；中国研究所『中国年鑑 2012』中国研究所、2012.  
180 thousand cases per year is equal to a little less than 500 cases per day.
- 9 「Finally subverted “Big Tiger”」北京週報日本語版、August 4, 201, accessed on September 5, 2014 [http://japanese.beijingreview.com.cn/zz/txt/2014-08/04/content\\_632903.htm](http://japanese.beijingreview.com.cn/zz/txt/2014-08/04/content_632903.htm).
- 10 There is also a report that CCTV distributed 9-page “Security Guidebook” to the nation in order to cope with frequent terrorism. It is considered that terrorism has begun to cast a dark shadow over people's daily life. 「How to protect ourselves from terrorist attack」=中国中央テレビが国民向けに「安全ガイド」発表—米華字メディア」レコードチャイナ、May 25, 2014, accessed on May 30, 2014. <http://www.recordchina.co.jp/group.php?groupid=88590>.
- 11 「China's expense for maintenance of public order exceeds national defense budget according to the draft budget for 2013」日経新聞電子版、March 6, 2013, accessed on June 20, 2014. [http://www.nikkei.com/article/DGXNASGM0505M\\_V00C13A3FF2000/](http://www.nikkei.com/article/DGXNASGM0505M_V00C13A3FF2000/).

- 12 Deng Xiaoping's diplomatic policy was presented in 24 Chinese characters, which means "Observe calmly, consolidate your position, cope with the situation composedly, refrain from being a leader, and do what you should do."
- 13 Central Committee of communist Party enforced "National Mid- and Long-Term Educational Reform/Development Plan Outline (2010-2020)" in July 2010. They will accept 500 thousand foreign students by 2020. The outline includes the aim of "training a large quantity of foreign students who are familiar with China, friendly and having great capabilities. The total numbers of Confucius Institute/Confucius Classroom are 322/369, including 81/31 in Asia and 21/5 in Africa. The purpose of both facilities is dispatching information about Chinese language and Chinese culture.黒田千晴「中国の留学生政策—人材資源強国を目指して—」『ウェブマガジン『留学交流』』April Issue, 2011, Vol.1、独立行政法人日本学生支援機構ウェブサイト、accessed on September 9, 2014.  
<http://www.jasso.go.jp/about/documents/chiharukuroda.pdf>.  
<http://www.jasso.go.jp/about/documents/chiharukuroda.pdf>.
- 14 "Chairman Xi Jinping said, "The Pacific Ocean has an enough expanse to share between US and China." Minister of Foreign Affairs criticized China's Pacific strategy, "He openly says they'll halve it." msn 産経ニュース、April 21, 2014, accessed on September 11, 2014.  
<http://sankei.jp.msn.com/politics/news/140421/plc14042113520011-n1.htm>.
- 15 「Guard against China's "Anti-Japanese" and "Criticism toward Japan" propaganda. "China blames Japan by national press," analyzed by Ministry of Foreign Affairs」 msn 産経ニュース、November 5, 2013, accessed on September 11, 2014,  
<http://sankei.jp.msn.com/politics/news/131105/plc13110519270019-n1.htm>; 「Jiji-koron Korean lobbyists and comfort woman issue」 NHK ウェブサイト、April 23, 2014, accessed on September 11, 2014, <http://www.nhk.or.jp/kaisetsu-blog/100/186202.html>; 「The number of foreign students to US universities exceeded 800 thousand, largest-ever. Chinese students enormously increased.」ロイター電子版、November 12, 2013, accessed on September 11, 2014,  
<http://jp.reuters.com/article/jpchina/idJPTYE9AB00620131112>;  
「China research is in fashion among US think tanks, Risk of losing Japan-US relation analysts」 WEDGE Infinity、March 15, 2012, accessed on September 10, 2014,  
<http://wedge.ismedia.jp/articles/-/1742>; 飯塚恵子「Sell "Senkaku Islands" to foreign countries」中央公論 February Issue, 2014, accessed on September 11, 2014,  
[http://www.chuokoron.jp/2014/01/post\\_222\\_2.html](http://www.chuokoron.jp/2014/01/post_222_2.html); 「Institute of Japan Studies, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Japan-US-China Trilateral Symposium Report for sustainable Japan-US-China relation」東京財団ウェブサイト、September 30, 2011, accessed on September 11,

- 2014,  
<http://www.tkfd.or.jp/research/project/sub1.php?id=361>.
- 16 A system for making the military obey the Communist Party. One kind of Chinese military officers. There are military officer, logistic officer, armament officer and technical officer except political officer. Two people of a military leader and a political officer take the command of each-level unit. We call it a dual command. An order does not come into force without a signature of the political officer. An each-level unit has a party commission which decides important things. The military leader and the political officer have equivalent authority in a unit. But the political officer is superior in a party commission. Absolute leadership of the Communist Party is guaranteed against the military in this respect. Political officers have small knowledge about military affairs, but they have the right of personnel management. So, some officers turn their hand to bribery in promotion. An example is Xu Caihou, former vice-chairman of Military Commission of the Central Committee of Party (Army political officer, General), who was deprived of his party membership on 30 June, 2014. The dual command system is also questionable in today's war that has fast operation.茅原郁生「中国における党軍関係」『外交』Vol.4、December, 2010.
- 17 The Communist Party declared in 2002 that the party itself represents the three of “Development of advanced productivity, Progress of advanced culture, and Fundamental profit for the most extensive common people.毛里和子『現代中国政治』名古屋大学出版会、2012、p.100.
- 18 齋藤良「中国の三戦（輿論戦、心理戦、法律戦）と台湾の反三戦」『陸戦研究』June, 2010；竹田純一『人民解放軍』ビジネス社、2008、pp.113-127.
- 19 池内恵「アジア相互信頼醸成措置会議（CICA）の上海宣言と大東亜共同宣言（1943）を比べたら」BLOGOS、May 25, 2014, Accessed on June 27, 2014 <http://blogos.com/article/87166/?p=1>.
- 20 The participating nations of the conference are as follows. Member countries(26) : Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Israel, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Pakistan, Palestine, Qatar, South Korea, Russia, Tajikistan, Thailand, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan, Vietnam；Observing countries (7) : Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Philippine, Sri Lanka, Ukraine, USA；Observing organizations (4) : UN, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Arab League, Turkic Council (composed of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkey where Turkish is spoken.) Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA) Homepage, accessed on September 11, 2014,  
<http://www.s-cica.org/page.php?lang=1>.
- 21 “Chinese president urges stronger air force,” Xinhuanet, April 14, 2014, accessed on April 22, 2014.  
[http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2014-04/14/c\\_133261588.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2014-04/14/c_133261588.htm).

- 22 Dean Cheng, "The U.S. Integrated Approach to Counter China's Anti-Access/ Area Denial Strategy," *Backgrounder*, No.2927, July 9, 2014.accessed on August 18, 2014, <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2014/07/the-us-needs-an-integrated-approach-to-counter-chinas-anti-accessarea-denial-strategy>.