
8. THE PLA'S EVOLVING CAMPAIGN DOCTRINE AND STRATEGIES

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China's military planners like to claim that in *overall* terms, the PLA is technologically inferior if compared with its potential adversaries. Such inferiority will continue in the foreseeable future, even though the People's Liberation Army (PLA) has made some progress in modernizing its weaponry in recent years. On the other hand, the strategic principles of the PLA have undergone a major shift since the mid-1980s. Eschewing the traditional emphasis on "victory through inferiority over superiority (*yilue shengyou*)," one new principle stresses "victory through superiority over inferiority (*yiyue shenglu*)."² The contradiction between the technological inferiority of the PLA and the requirement of the PLA to achieve superiority over potential adversaries begs an important question: What are the PLA's strategies that may turn PLA absolute inferiority to local and temporary superiority?

Traditionally, on the premise of a major invasion of China by a technologically superior adversary such as one of the superpowers, the PLA would compensate for its technological inferiority with its abundance in space, manpower and time. The vast, familiar territory of China, coupled with a protracted, manpower-intensive people's war of tactical dispersion, mobility, harassment, and attrition, would eventually gain China sufficient time. This in turn would allow China to gradually weaken the overextended invading forces, identify their weaknesses, reconstitute domestic military forces, and finally win the war through more decisive, strategic offensives.

The decline and final end of the Cold War, however, have denied the PLA the opportunity to fight a protracted, manpower-based total war with deep depth. This is because the prospects for massive foreign invasion and total conquest of China have largely diminished. On the other hand, local, limited wars involving national unification and disputes over maritime and land territories are assumed to be more likely to take place. Unlike total war, however, these local wars presumably are shorter in duration, fought in remote border regions or on the high seas, most of which are sparsely populated and have less depth for maneuverability. Such wars

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²Hu Guangzheng *et al.*, *Yingxiangdao ershiyi shiji de zhengming* (*Contention Affecting the 21st Century*), Beijing: Liberation Army Press, 1989, p. 113.

also usually require technology-based forces and arms capable of forward deployment. These in turn make it difficult to accommodate a drawn-out, mass mobilization-oriented, heartland-based total war. Finally, potential adversaries in these local wars may not be as powerful as either of the two superpowers during the Cold War.³ All these have somewhat reduced the relevance of the PLA's old comparative advantage in space, manpower and time to PLA's war planning. Also, the two-decade-long defense modernization has produced some "pockets of technological excellence" within a generally backward PLA. As a result, a range of new strategies has been articulated for turning the absolute PLA inferiority to local and temporary superiority under the new doctrine of "local war under high-tech conditions." This essay investigates these strategies.

The study is significant for both empirical and policy reasons. Empirically, some recent studies have mentioned the new strategic principles, but since they focus on illustrating the major differences between the old and the new, they fall short of fleshing out the specific components of these new principles.⁴ This essay intends to fill this void by examining a body of PLA literature that has emerged following the PLA war games over the Taiwan Strait in early 1996. More important, since the PLA is becoming increasingly involved in China's security policy process, an in-depth examination and interpretation of the PLA's new campaign doctrine and strategies may help to gain a better understanding of the nature and direction of China's security posture, which may have significant policy implications for Asian security.

This essay shows how China's military planners have articulated the doctrine of war zone campaign (WZC, or *zhanqu zhanyi*) as a major type of local war that may enhance local and temporary PLA superiority. It then shows how they have fleshed out three major campaign strategies that may enhance the probability of such superiority. The strategies include "elite forces and sharp arms" (*jingbing liqi*), "gaining initiative by striking first" (*xianji zhidi*), and "fighting a quick battle to force a quick resolution" (*suzhan sujue*).

Three caveats are in order. First, this study is more concerned with the theoretical dimension of the PLA's war planning than the extent to which theory translates into reality. Theory may or may not become reality. What is important is that China's military planners now believe that China's defense modernization will be more theory-driven than situation-driven, and they give some good reasons. First, they believe that the PLA's relinquishment of the smothering tasks of large-scale domestic class struggle and preparing for an external total war since 1985 provides an element of breathing space. Such a space provides an opportunity for PLA planners to think systematically about the most likely kind of security threat that China may face, and the optimal strategies to cope with such a threat. This in turn may lead to more efficient use of scarce resources for defense modernization. Also, arming the still technologically backward forces with advanced theory may quicken the formation of combat effectiveness once the advanced arms are available. Indeed, the prospect for

³See Nan Li, "The PLA's Evolving Warfighting Doctrine, Strategy and Tactics, 1985-95: A Chinese Perspective," *China Quarterly*, No. 146, June 1996, pp. 445-448, 451-453.

⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 443-463; Paul Godwin, "From Continent to Periphery," pp. 464-487.

such arms to be available to the PLA is not that bleak, as the defense budget grows in proportion with economic growth. Furthermore, a technologically advanced military that lags behind in theory may mean higher costs in war, as the French and the British militaries discovered during the early phase of World War II. Finally, simply because the PLA is technologically inferior, conceptual innovation is all the more indispensable to compensate for such inferiority if the PLA intends to fight and win wars in the future.⁵ All these reasons are sound enough to justify this study, if we are serious about understanding the nature and direction of China's security posture.

Second, this study examines the PLA's "hard-kill" strategies. "Soft-kill" types, or the so-called asymmetrical strategies such as cyber warfare, are not the central concern here, except where they are articulated and integrated into the overall PLA campaign strategies. While there has been extensive discussion of concepts associated with the revolution in military affairs (RMA) in recent PLA literature, how to operationalize these concepts to PLA conditions is still being debated. This topic deserves separate analysis.⁶

Moreover, this study relies heavily on materials whose circulation is confined to the PLA (*junnei faxing*). Because they are limited to a smaller group involved with actual military planning, they should deal with genuine policy issues. They therefore are deemed more credible and less propagandistic compared with materials that cater to general Chinese and foreign readers. The official bias of such literature, however, will be counterbalanced by author's critical concluding evaluation. The essay's first four sections discuss the concept of WZC and three campaign strategies. The conclusion summarizes the findings and evaluates the practical implications of these doctrines and strategies.

WAR ZONE CAMPAIGN

Since the 1985 "strategic transition" of the PLA from preparing for "early, total, and nuclear" war to local and limited war, there have been debates on what type of local war the PLA should be prepared to fight.⁷ The 1991 Gulf War and the 1996 Taiwan Straits crisis have apparently convinced the PLA planners that a likely war scenario for which the PLA should be prepared to deter or fight is a medium-sized local war comparable to a PLA WZC. "In terms of scale and nature, possible future local wars that involve large-scale sea-crossing and amphibious landing operations, counter-

⁵Major General Zhang Yuqing, "Zhai 'gaojisu tianjianxia jubu zhanzheng zhanyi lilun yantao hui' kaimushi shang de jianghua" (Speech at the Opening Ceremony of the 'Symposium on the Theory of Campaign in Local War under High-tech Conditions'); Lt. General Hu Changfa, "Zhai 'gaojisu tiaojianxia jubu zhanzheng zhanyi lilun yantao hui' jiesu shi de jianghua" (Speech at the Conclusion of the 'Symposium on the Theory of Campaign in Local War Under High-tech Conditions'); Senior Colonel Chen Youyuan, "Junshi jisu geming yu zhanyi lilun de fazhan" (Military Technological Revolution and the Development of Campaign Theory), all in NDU (National Defense University) Scientific Research Department and Campaign Research and Teaching Section (eds.), *Gaojishu tiaojianxia zhanyi lilun yanjiu (Research on the Theory of Campaign under High-tech Conditions)*, Beijing: National Defense University Press, 1997, pp. 2, 14–15, 21–22. See also Hu, *Contention Affecting the 21st Century*, pp. 202–204.

⁶For the most recent analysis of the PLA's information warfare strategies, see the chapter by James Mulvenon in this volume.

⁷Hu, *Contention Affecting the 21st Century*, pp. 173–177.

offensive operations in the border regions, and repelling local foreign invasion all belong to this category.”⁸ If WZC is a primary mode of operations that may shape PLA war planning, the central issues that need to be addressed become: What are the defining characteristics of WZC? How can such campaigns increase the chances to turn PLA absolute inferiority to local and temporary superiority?

Defining Characteristics

Several major features have been advanced to define WZCs. First, the WZC is an intermediate campaign mode between combined arms group army (CAGA) campaign, CAGA group (*jituanjun qun*) campaign, and war zone front (*zhanqu fangxiang*) campaign on the one hand, and a major or total war involving more than one war zone, and partial or total national mobilization on the other. Unlike the former three types of campaign where the ground forces dominate and other service branches play only a supportive role, a WZC is a *joint service* campaign where each service conducts relatively independent subcampaigns (*zhi zhanyi*). Since a war zone usually has one strategic direction, several campaign fronts, and multidimensional space, subcampaigns may include electronic warfare operations, conventional strategic and campaign missile operations, air operations, sea operations, and front army or CAGA operations. Therefore, unlike CAGA-level campaigns that emphasize ground forces, the WZC gives equal weight to all four services (ground, navy, air, and conventional strategic missile forces) in the war zone, which may be reinforced through the national supreme command by forces outside the war zone. They “have a system of unity between military region [MR, which encompasses several adjacent provinces] and war zone. [This means that] the peacetime MR becomes a WZ during the war time . . . and has jurisdiction over the ground, navy, and air forces within it.” Generally speaking, a WZC “is the total sum of several service-based subcampaigns, while a CAGA-level campaign is the total sum of ground battles.”⁹

Furthermore, a WZC may last from several weeks to several months and involve several phases. Even though “the trend is toward shorter duration, it is still longer than CAGA, CAGA group and war zone front campaigns.” On the other hand, unlike a major war where a single campaign may affect but not directly decide the strategic outcome, a WZC is limited and local in the sense that its outcome directly determines whether national strategic objective is realized. Since WZC itself constitutes local war

⁸Senior Colonel Huang Bin, “*Shenhua zhanqu zhanyi yanjiu de jidian sikao*” (Several Reflections on Deepening Research on War Zone Campaign), in NDU Scientific Research Department, *Research on the Theory of Campaign*, p. 43.

⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 43, 45; Yu Shusheng *et al.* (eds.), *Lun lianhe zhanyi* (*On Joint Campaign*), Beijing: National Defense University, 1997, p. 16; Xu Guoxin *et al.* (eds.), *Zhanqu zhanyi houqin baozhang* (*Logistics Support for War Zone Campaign*), Beijing: National Defense University, 1997, p. 2; Major General Yu Chenghai, “*Dui zhanqu lianhe zuozhan zhihui konzhi wenti de jidian renshi*” (Several Understandings Regarding the Question of Command and Control Concerning War Zone Joint Operations), in NDU Scientific Research Department and Force Command Research and Teaching Section (eds.), *Gaojishu tiaojianxia zuozhan zhihui yanjiu* (*Research on the Command of Operations under High-tech Conditions*), Beijing: National Defense University, 1997, pp. 20–21.

but not an element in a larger war, the “campaign objective overlaps war objective.”¹⁰

Finally, a WZC is conducted by the unified, joint service command at the war zone level under the guidance of the national supreme command. Also, some such campaigns may be carried out under the threat and deterrence of nuclear, chemical and biological warfare. Moreover, since the political stake of such campaign is high, both sides may utilize their best forces, high-tech arms and advanced C4I, leading to fierce battlespace competition that fuses defense with offense.¹¹

Advantages of WZC

How then can WZC help to transform the absolute PLA inferiority into local and temporary superiority? First, a CAGA-level campaign is too short in time, too limited in scope, and too dominated by regular ground forces to give full play to the PLA’s newly developed “pockets of excellence,” particularly in naval, air, conventional strategic missile, rapid reaction, and special operations capabilities. On the other hand, total war may overwhelm and diminish the relevance of these “pockets of excellence,” since the technologically superior superpower(s) is likely to employ its most advanced weapons simultaneously on all fronts and throughout the war process, thus dwarfing PLA’s “pockets of excellence.” Compared to a CAGA-level campaign, however, a WZC is sufficiently big and long for the PLA to concentrate its “pockets of excellence” to a local and temporary situation to reverse its absolute inferiority. On the other hand, a WZC is more limited and shorter than a total war, because the PLA is more likely to deal with an adversary that is much less powerful than a superpower in such a campaign, as long as *the powerful adversary (qiangdi*, referring to the superpower) is denied sufficient reasons to intervene, or is deterred from doing so. In this way, the WZC may work to the advantage of the PLA.¹²

Moreover, unlike CAGA-level campaigns that have limited space, the joint service campaign associated with the multidimensional space and deeper depth of a war zone “allows sufficient leeway for asymmetrical strikes (*buduideng daji*) through flexible assembling of diverse means and innovative combination of versatile styles.” The joint service campaign may provide the conditions for the PLA to “use its strength against enemy’s weakness (*yiqiang jiruo*),” and avoid matching PLA’s weakness with the enemy’s strength. It, for instance, may lead to situations where “we can use our air power to strike enemy ground and naval targets, use our ground forces to deal with enemy air and naval operations, use our navy to fight enemy ground forces, and use our combat forces to strike enemy non-combat aspects such as C4I and logistics.” If “it is inevitable that we fight a service-matching war of symmetry with the enemy, it is still necessary that in comparative capabilities we

¹⁰Huang Bin, “Several Reflections,” pp. 44, 45; Yu, *On Joint Campaign*, p. 16; Xu, *Logistics Support*, p. 2.

¹¹Huang Bin, “Several Reflections,” pp. 43, 45.

¹²Colonel Yu Guohua, “*Shilun wojun lianhe zhanyi ying zunxun de jige jiben yuanzhe*” (An Exploratory Comment on Several Basic Principles That the Joint Campaign of Our Army Should Follow), in NDU Scientific Research Department, *Research on the Theory of Campaign*, pp. 96–97.

constitute superiority at the sub-campaign and battle levels.”¹³ This articulation of the WZC illustrates conditions that may increase the chances for the PLA to achieve a measure of local and temporary superiority. But for the probability of such chances to be enhanced, more concrete strategies have to be systematically articulated.

ELITE FORCES AND SHARP ARMS

One new PLA campaign strategy is “elite forces and sharp arms (EFSA).” Several major reasons have been advanced to justify EFSA. First, unlike total war, the limited nature of local war makes it possible to achieve local and temporary superiority through the concentrated use of EFSA. According to one PLA author, “after many years of army building, we have acquired a certain number of high-tech elite forces and sharp arms, and they are capable of competing with a powerful enemy.” Finally, operations in areas close to the homeland provide the favorable base, logistics, and battlefield conditions for utilizing EFSA.¹⁴ If the PLA is endowed with the necessary “material conditions” (the PLA expression for “pockets of excellence”), the key question to be addressed is: how does the PLA optimize the use of such forces and arms to achieve local and temporary superiority? The answer to the question lies in the PLA articulation of several major concepts associated with *deployment*, *coordination* and *command*.

Deployment (*bushu*)

On deployment, a new concept is *transregional support operations* (TRSO, or *kuaqu zhiyuan zuozhan*), which refers to deploying the best forces and arms from other MRs to reinforce the war zone where local war may occur. Several rationales have been proposed for TRSO. One is that it enhances political and diplomatic initiatives. Rather than sustained forward deployment of a large number of forces in the disputed area as during the Cold War, TRSO focuses on developing rapid reaction units (RRU) and capabilities in the rear while maintaining a moderate level of forwardly deployed forces. This in turn reduces tension in the disputed area. On the other hand, the highly mobile and effective RRU constitutes “indirect forward presence” (*jianjie qianyan cunzai*). This itself may contribute to local and temporary superiority in psychological terms, which may help to deter provocation, thus preventing escalation.¹⁵

Also, TRSO provides a strong incentive for military modernization, since it stresses technology-based mobility and effectiveness. In the longer run, this enhances PLA

¹³*Ibid.*

¹⁴Major General Zheng Shenxia (PLAAF), “*Lianhe zhanyi kongjun yunyong ying zhaozhong bawo de jige wenti*” (Several Questions That Should Be Emphatically Addressed in Applying Air Force in Joint Campaign); Major General Liu Yinchao, “*Gaojishu tiaojianxia jidongzhan zhanyi de jige wenti*” (Several Questions on Mobile Warfare Campaign under High-tech Conditions), both in NDU Scientific Research Department, *Research on the Theory of Campaign*, pp. 102, 321.

¹⁵General Liu Jinsong, “*Guanyu shishi zhiyuan zuozhan de jige wenti*” (Several Questions on Implementing Support Operations), in NDU Scientific Research Department, *Research on the Theory of Campaign*, pp. 32–33.

overall superiority. Moreover, the development of infrastructure in the civilian sector and the progress that has been made in PLA reconnaissance and force projection capabilities all facilitate material conditions for TRSO. Furthermore, unlike the Cold War, the lack of clear and imminent danger from different directions simultaneously allows for TRSO of short duration and concentrated direction with reduced risk of escalating tension on other fronts. But more important, there are many potential flash points (*redian*) along China's long and complex land and maritime borders. On the other hand, "our forces are sparsely deployed . . . if tension escalates into conflict, particularly if a local war of medium or bigger size breaks out, forces and arms of one war zone may not be enough." This is particularly so since "our equipment is still relatively backward and our comprehensive operational capabilities are still rather weak." All these render TRSO indispensable for the PLA to achieve local and temporary superiority.¹⁶

While TRSO deals with concentration of EFSA at the strategic level, how to deploy EFSA at the campaign and battle levels is crucial to whether local and temporary superiority can be achieved. While concentrated use of forces and arms has always been a PLA warfighting principle, it is now being reinterpreted to adapt to new conditions. A central new condition is that "on the high-tech battlefield, annihilating enemy vital forces and arms can no longer be achieved by simply adding numbers of forces, planes, tanks, and artillery pieces." This is because rapid advances in arms, surveillance and communications technology lead to longer range, higher mobility, more stealth, faster speed, higher lethality of arms, and a more transparent battlefield. If "we concentrate a large number of forces and numerous average arms in a designated area, it may not only lead to waste but also cause huge losses."¹⁷ Therefore, several major principles on deployment have been formulated that may contribute to local and temporary superiority.

First, rather than average forces and arms, it is necessary to use carefully selected forces and arms. The selection may be based on unified and comprehensive planning, to constitute "comprehensive strike effects" (*zhonghe daji gongneng*). This planning is based on careful analysis of the nature, types, and number of targets, to determine the nature, types, and quantity of strike arms. The old practice of "using single service, one type of arms to strike all types of targets" may be replaced by "selecting different types of arms to strike different types of targets."¹⁸

Within this general selection of forces and arms, however, a flexible "component assembly" (*bankuai goujian zhuhe*) method may be applied to the combination of forces and arms. At a crucial place and moment, for instance, it may be necessary for the "trans-organizational system" (*kua jianzhi*) and "supra-normal" (*chaochang*) reinforcement of key categories such as electronic warfare, air assault/defense,

¹⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 33–34; Major General Zhang Qihong, "Guanyu dongyuan he zhuzhi difang liliang baozhang zhanyi juntuan jidong went" (The Question of Mobilizing and Organizing Civilian Strength to Support Mobility of Campaign Forces), in NDU Scientific Research Department, *Research on the Theory of Campaign*, pp. 351–352.

¹⁷Yang Yi, *Gaojishu tiaojianxia zuozhan fangshi, fangfa yanjiu yu sikao* (Research and Reflection on the Styles and Methods of Operations under High-tech Conditions), Beijing: Military Sciences Press, 1997, p. 97.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, p. 98.

precision-guided munitions, and attacking forces to be implemented. The objective is the optimal use of forces and arms so that “sufficient munitions, arms, and forces—neither too little nor too much—are used to destroy selected targets in the shortest possible time.”¹⁹

Moreover, instead of the old practice of concentrating forces and arms in a point area, the new principle requires “dispersed deployment” (*sushan bushu*) of forces and arms to deny the enemy a clear “window of vulnerability” that may trigger an effective preemptive strike. This in turn may increase the chances of survival, the basic condition leading to local and temporary superiority. The degree of dispersion may be determined by the shooting or operational range and degree of mobility of the forces and arms. This dispersion, on the other hand, is accompanied by *concentration of effects*. This means that the destructive effects of these forces and arms may be concentrated on primary direction, right timing, major targets and key nodes. Once objectives are realized, both forces and arms may swiftly change position through high mobility. The purpose, again, is to constitute local and temporary superiority based on minimizing casualties caused by enemy strikes and swiftly destroying enemy targets.²⁰

Coordination (*xietong*)

EFSA are largely associated with the technology-intensive services such as the Navy, Air Force, and the Second Artillery (China’s strategic missile force). Also, as discussed earlier, future local war is more likely to be a joint force-based WZC than a ground-force-dominated CAGA-level campaign. Traditionally, in CAGA-level campaigns, technology-intensive services play only a supportive role. Therefore, the central challenge facing a CAGA campaign is coordination among ground-based functional arms such as infantry, armor, artillery and engineering (hence combined arms, or

¹⁹ *Ibid.*; Yu Guohua, “An Exploratory Comment,” pp. 94–95; Liu Yinchao, “Several Questions,” pp. 321–322; Lt. Colonel Wang Wei *et al.*, “*Gaojisu tiaojianxia jubu zhanzheng zhanyi zhidao de jige wenti*” (Several Questions on Directing Campaign in Local War under High-tech Conditions); Lt. General Zheng Baoshen (PLAAF), “*Lukong lianhe zhanyi yuanzhe qiantan*” (An Elementary Investigation of Principles regarding Land-Air Joint Campaign); Major Li Bo *et al.*, “*Shilun zhanyi zhanfa de duikang xing ji duikang xingshi*” (An Exploratory Comment on the Confrontational Nature and Style of the Fighting Methods in Campaign); Nanjing MR Command Department, “*Denglu zhanyi de tedian yu yaoqiu*” (Characteristics and Requirements regarding Amphibious Landing Campaign); Major Yu Guangxuan, “*Denglu zhanyi zhidao de jige wenti*” (Several Questions on Directing Amphibious Landing Campaign); Vice Admiral Yang Yushu, “*Shilun lianhe denglu zhanyi zhong duoqu he baochi zhihaiquan wenti*” (An Exploratory Comment on the Question of Capturing and Sustaining Sea Superiority in Joint Amphibious Landing Campaign); Vice Admiral Wang Yongguo, “*Haishang fengsuo zuozhan wenti tantao*” (An Investigation of the Question of Sea Denial Operations); Senior Colonel Sun Xiaohe *et al.*, “*Shilun denglu zhanyi zhong huolizhan de zhuzhi yu xietiao*” (An Exploratory Comment on Organizing and Coordinating Fire Power Support in Amphibious Landing Campaign); Lt. General Fu Binyao, “*Bianjing diqu fanji zhanyi zhidao de jige wenti*” (Several Questions on Directing Counter-offensive Campaign in Border Region); Major General Peng Cuifeng, “*Lianhe zhanyi juntuan bianjing fanji zuozhan chutan*” (A Preliminary Investigation of Border Counter-offensive Operations by Joint Campaign Forces); Major General Wang Guiqin, “*Qiantan gaojishu tiaojianxia jubu zhanzheng zhanyi zhong de fei zhenggui zuozhan*” (An Elementary Discussion of Non-Regular operations in Campaign in Local War under High-tech Conditions), all in NDU Scientific Research Department, *Research on the Theory of Campaign*, pp. 60–61, 89–90, 137, 155, 159–160, 191, 196, 221, 271–272, 275–276, 428–429.

²⁰ Yang, *Research and Reflections*, p. 98; Liu Yinchao, “Several Questions,” p. 322.

hecheng), even though the role of other services in such a campaign has become an increasingly important subject for investigation.

A joint (*lianhe*) service campaign, however, is where each service branch plays the leading role in each of several relatively autonomous subcampaigns in separate time and (sometimes) space. In such a campaign, it is possible for the Air Force to conduct an air subcampaign where the ground forces, Navy electronic warfare and special operations elements, and long-range surface-surface missile forces play a supportive role. Similarly, the Navy may become the dominant player in a sea denial and crossing campaign where the air and ground forces play a supportive role. As a result, rather than the traditional dominant role of ground forces and a subordinate and dependent role for others in a CAGA-level campaign, the relationship among all service branches is now defined by *equality (pingdeng)* and *partnership (huoban)* in the joint service campaign.²¹ On the one hand, this development may contribute to local and temporary superiority if effective interservice coordination leads to complementarity of interservice effects toward fulfilling the campaign's goals. But poor coordination may also mean interservice friction and internal attrition, or diversion of energy and resources, thus causing waste and even defeat. Therefore, how to coordinate joint-service campaigns becomes another crucial issue that determines whether the PLA may achieve local and temporary superiority.

Several principles for coordinating joint campaigns have been advanced. One is that it is now necessary to cultivate the consciousness of "equality" and "partnership" among commanders and the rank and file of all services. This, in the long run, may contribute to equality-based interservice cooperation and reduce the chances for interservice bickering and friction, especially conflicts caused by a sense of superiority by some services and inferiority by others.²² Moreover, macro-level coordination, such as clarifying and explaining campaign goals and the relationship between goals, specific targets, and tasks assigned to each service, are deemed crucial in providing a common understanding and purpose to which diverse service-based operations can contribute.²³

Also, unlike CAGA-level campaigns, where coordination has always favored ground forces, the new principle requires coordination to be centered around whichever service conducts the separate subcampaigns. "For ground operations, the ground forces commander coordinates and controls air force elements, paratroopers, and navy marines that participate in such operations. For naval operations, the naval fleet or base commander coordinates and controls all the elements. The air campaign forces commander coordinates and controls air, air defense, and air shipment operations." This should "lead to a heightened sense of responsibility and

²¹ Yu Guohua, "An Exploratory Comment," p. 94; Yang Yushu, "An Exploratory Comment," p. 191; Senior Colonel Xue Yanxu, "*Gaojishu tiaojianxia lianhe zhanyi xietong chutan*" (A Preliminary Investigation of Coordination regarding Joint Campaign under High-tech Conditions), in NDU Scientific Research Department, *Research on the Theory of Campaign*, pp. 72–73.

²² Xue Yanxu, "A Preliminary Investigation," p. 75; Zheng Shenxia, "Several Questions," p. 108.

²³ Xue Yanxu, "A Preliminary Investigation," pp. 73–74.

initiatives by service commanding officers.” This in turn may reduce interservice friction, which again may contribute to local and temporary superiority.²⁴

Other crucial joint operations requiring careful coordination have also been specified. These include the timing and manner of transition from one phase of the campaign to another (such as from electronic and air subcampaign, to sea-denial and crossing operations, then to amphibious landing and ground operations) to minimize confusion or neglect associated with such transitions, and coordination between positions of various services to reduce internal chaos and friendly-fire casualties. Furthermore, coordination in stratagem, such as outflanking troop movements to divert enemy forces to secondary fronts, is also deemed crucial for determining whether local and temporary superiority may be achieved on the primary front.²⁵ Finally, several coordination modes have been specified, including strike zone-based, target-based, and timing-based coordination.²⁶

On how to coordinate, one major method of interservice coordination is mutual dispatch (*shuangxiang paichu*) of service representatives to establish air-land, air-sea, or sea-land operations. These groups inform each other of timing, methods, requirements and targets of operations, and formulate and implement coordinating plans.²⁷ But the most important coordinating mechanism at the higher level is the newly conceived joint force command.

Command (*zhihu*)

The traditional MR commanding organs are ground-force-dominated, since they reflect the ground force nature of the CAGA or war zone front campaigns. Such domination may cause interservice friction and attrition if it is applied to the joint campaign where all services are equal partners. Also, the lack of professional and technical experience of some MR commanding officers in non-ground force services may not contribute to an optimal combination of various service components, the basic condition for achieving local and temporary superiority. Finally, in operations (but not in administrative matters), non-ground force service forces stationed in an MR do not answer to the MR commanding officers, but rather to service

²⁴Yu, *On Joint Campaign*, pp. 136–137.

²⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 137–138, 139–140; Xue Yanxu, “A Preliminary Investigation,” p. 76; Yu Guohua, “An Exploratory Comment,” p. 98.

²⁶Strike zone-based coordination means establishing two adjacent strike zones: a tactical depth zone where firepower can be coordinated among ground forces artillery, attack helicopters, and air force attack aircraft, as well as a campaign depth zone where coordination is conducted among ground forces campaign/tactical missiles, air force fighter-bombers and attack aircraft, and Second Artillery conventional missiles. Target-based coordination means that firepower is coordinated around two types of targets. Air firepower, for instance, may be responsible for targets that are mobile and easier to detect, and have weaker air defense, while ground firepower deals with targets that are hidden and fixed, and have stronger air defense. Timing-based coordination refers to ordering the sequence of strikes. Between ground and air, for instance, ground strikes will go first. Among mobile targets of varying speed, the most mobile and threatening targets will be dealt with first. See Senior Colonel Cui Changqi *et al.*, “*Lushang jidong zhanyi lianhe huoli zhiyuan wenti chutan*” (A Preliminary Investigation of the Question of Joint Fire Power Support in Ground Mobile Campaign), in NDU Scientific Research Department, *Research on the Theory of Campaign*, p. 340.

²⁷*Ibid.*, p. 339; Yu, *On Joint Campaign*, p. 109.

headquarters in Beijing. This means that for MR headquarters to have operational commanding power (*zuozhan zhihui quan*) over service forces, a complex procedure such as “war zone command—supreme command—service command—war zone service command—war zone the service forces” has to be dealt with.²⁸ This certainly impedes the swift assembling of joint forces, a basic condition for realizing local and temporary superiority.

The potential configurations of the WZC joint command attempt to tackle these problems. One conception proposes “introducing a system where command, political, and logistics departments of the joint campaign are established under the campaign commanding officers.” This concept is practical since it requires only slight modification of the current MR three-department system by adding service-based personnel to these departments. The drawback of such a system, however, is obvious. “By giving equal weight to the three departments, it fails to demonstrate the leading role of the command department. It may also bloat the joint campaign commanding organs.”²⁹

As an alternative, a new concept has been advanced. Using the existing MR command department as the foundation, the joint command may consist of intelligence, decision control, communications and electronic warfare, and fire control and coordination components. Also, rather than the ground force domination as in the old MR headquarters, this command may be truly joint, with a higher proportion of both commanding and staff officers from non-ground force services. It is even possible that “the joint forces commander and chief of staff come from services other than the ground forces.” Under usual circumstances, however, the commanders of WZ Air Force, Navy, and Second Artillery forces serve as the deputy commanding officers of the joint command. Moreover, the *decision control component* may be composed of staff teams headed by a deputy chief of staff from all service commands. This component assists decisionmaking by the joint force commander, formulates joint service operations plans, and conducts interservice coordination. Other components may also be multiservice-based rather than single-service dominated. But most important, this command may be relegated the operational commanding power over all service commands and forces within the war zone.³⁰ By expanding representation of services in the joint command proportional to their role in the joint campaign, it may alleviate interservice friction. This expansion also provides the necessary expertise that may optimize assembling of joint forces. Also, as the joint command gains complete operational control of service commands and forces within the war zone, swiftly organizing the joint forces

²⁸Yu, *On Joint Campaign*, p. 105.

²⁹Senior Colonel Wang Jianghuai, “*Dui wojun lianhe zhanyi zhihui tizhi wenti de tantao*” (An Exploration into the Question of the Joint Campaign Command System of Our Army), in NDU Scientific Research Department, *Research on the Theory of Campaign*, p. 130.

³⁰*Ibid.*; Yu, *On Joint Campaign*, pp. 99–101, 105, 108. Major General Liu Chaoming, “*Lun gaojishu tiaojianxia zhanyi silingbu gongzuo gaige*” (On Reforming the Command Department Work in Campaign under High-tech Conditions), in NDU Scientific Research Department, *Research on the Theory of Campaign*, p. 435. Wang Jianghuai, however, proposes to separate communications from electronic warfare and add a special operations component. He also suggests the establishment of a reserve (*yubei*) command and a rear-area (*houfang*) command.

becomes possible. All these may increase the chances for achieving a measure of local and temporary superiority.

Besides command structure, the degree of (de)centralization of command is another central issue that is intensively scrutinized. In joint operations, expansion of the battlespace, the new equal relationship among services, and the increasing technical complexity in both arms and specialization of personnel may cause centrifugal tendencies. This in turn requires a stronger measure of centralized command to organize and channel the otherwise disparate elements, energy and attention to the campaign goal. Also, unified control is necessary to optimally manage and use intelligence, diverse weapon platforms, electronic warfare capabilities, and radio frequencies.³¹

Sometimes, however, “joint force commanders not only issue specific tasks to each service command and forces, but also specify concrete steps, methods and means to accomplish these tasks, and discretely change the timing and methods of implementing these tasks chosen by the service commanders.” This excessive centralization may impede the achievement of local and temporary superiority in several ways. It may restrict local initiatives and foster a mentality of dependence, and cause delay due to requirement for frequent and detailed vertical debriefing, incurring higher cost for loss of opportunities. It also increases the workload of the higher joint command, lengthens campaign preparation, and may create a situation where one small error at the top causes big losses on the battlefield. Also, its heavy reliance on communications may mean loss of control if the communications network is severely damaged.³²

Also, the autonomous, service-based nature of subcampaigns and rapidly shifting situations on the battlefield due to intensified competition caused by the application of high-tech weapons may all require a higher degree of decentralization and local initiatives for reducing cost and maximizing gains. On the other hand, excessive decentralization may have its own price. The lack of updated knowledge about campaign progress by the joint command may mean weaker coordination and adjustment, which may even lead to loss of control of the whole campaign.³³ Therefore, the extent to which, when, and how to centralize or decentralize are crucial issues that determine whether local and temporary superiority may be realized. As a result, several principles have been formulated to guide command in joint campaigns.

The extent of centralized command is deemed crucial in determining and deciding the general goal, scale, and time of the campaign, as well as the objectives, tasks, timing, and space of operations for each service force. It is also indispensable in arbitrating and mediating the relationship between the general campaign goal and subcampaign tasks, the transition from one subcampaign to another, coordination

³¹Zheng Baoshen, “An Elementary Investigation,” p. 88; Yu Guohua, “An Exploratory Comment,” p. 99; Yang Yushu, “An Exploratory Comment,” p. 192; Yang, *Research and Reflection*, pp. 132–133.

³² Yu, *On Joint Campaign*, p. 114.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 115; Yu Guohua, “An Exploratory Comment,” p. 99.

between services within a subcampaign, and in adjusting the strategic direction of the campaign. Other than these key areas, “decentralized command and service autonomy are desirable, particularly in intraservice matters regarding manner of deployment and specific methods for implementing subcampaigns.”³⁴

In timing, centralized command is absolutely necessary in the planning and preparation phase prior to the campaign. Central intervention is also necessary for strategic direction and the use of key arms and forces that may have imminent and important impact on the campaign outcome. “To avoid loss of opportunities and ensure rapid response at key moments, it is even necessary to conduct ‘bypassing-level command’ (*‘yueji zhihui’*),” allowing the campaign commander to be “squad leader.” But otherwise, decentralized command is desirable “after a campaign is initiated, during the normal progress of the campaign, and at the secondary fronts.”³⁵

In execution, unity may be achieved between centralized control and service-based initiatives. Accountability, for instance, may be established between the joint command and service commands through “target control and management.” This means that the joint command clarifies and assigns targets to services, and treats and monitors the extent of target appropriation as the central criteria in determining the degree of success for each service-based subcampaign. “As for how subcampaign targets are realized,” however, “it is up to service commanders to determine. The joint command should not interfere.”³⁶ All these principles, again, may help to reduce internal confusion, friction, and attrition, thus increasing the probability of local and temporary superiority.

GAINING INITIATIVE BY STRIKING FIRST

Whether local and temporary initiative (*zhudong quan*) can be achieved on the battlefield is another central variable in determining whether superiority can be realized. On this issue, the new principle of *Gaining Initiative by Striking First (GISF)* has been introduced for several reasons. First, the increasing precision and lethality of high-tech weapons of modern war means unprecedented destructiveness. Rather than gaining initiative, the side that “strikes only after the enemy has struck” (*houfa zhiren*) may lose momentum and face the prospect of decisive defeat. For similar reasons, the premise of a clear line between offense and defense which underlies the notion of first and second strike may become less relevant, since opposing sides on the modern battlefield shift and disperse their forces frequently to reduce casualties and create opportunities for preemption (*xianzhi*), the basic conditions leading to

³⁴Zheng Baoshen, “An Elementary Investigation,” pp. 88–89; Yu Guohua, “An Exploratory Comment,” p. 100; Yu Guangxuan, “Several Questions,” p. 160; Yu, *On Joint Campaign*, p. 115.

³⁵Yu Guohua, “An Exploratory Comment,” p. 100; Yu Guangxuan, “Several Questions,” p. 161; Yu, *On Joint Campaign*, pp. 115–116; Lt. Colonel Fu Binzhong, “*Lianhe zuozhan tigao zhengti weili wenti chutan*” (A Preliminary Investigation of the Question on Enhancing the Comprehensive Power of Joint Operations), in NDU Scientific Research Department, *Research on the Theory of Campaign*, p. 185; Yang, *Research and Reflections*, p. 133.

³⁶Yu Guohua, “An Exploratory Comment,” p. 100; Yu, *On Joint Campaign*, pp. 115–116.

local and temporary initiative and superiority. Also, by causing substantial losses to enemy forces and arms through a first strike, an unfavorable balance of forces and arms may be reversed and chances for local and temporary superiority are enhanced. Finally, in some future local wars, “our adversary is on the defensive, and in a passive and reactive (*beidong yingfu*) position.” This may create a situation where “we not only have the initiative to launch the campaign . . . but also the initiative to choose the transition between phases of the campaign, and the primary direction, location, and pace of the campaign.”³⁷ But since first strike does not automatically ensure local and temporary initiative and superiority, the central question is: how to create conditions that enhance the chance of success for the first strike? The answer to this question lies in the examination of two key issues: the element of surprise, and initiation and initial battle of the campaign.

Element of Surprise

First strikes may not lead to local and temporary initiative and superiority if the adversary is well prepared and anticipates the strike. Therefore, whether an element of surprise (*turanxing*) can be achieved so that the enemy can be caught unprepared by the first strike is of crucial significance. Since the basic conditions of *turanxing* are transparency of enemy intentions and capabilities to the PLA on the one hand, and successful concealment of the PLA’s intentions and capabilities to the enemy on the other, how to realize these two conditions becomes the central focus of the examination.

For the first condition, to become familiar with the warfighting doctrine and styles, command and organization, and weapons systems of potential adversaries at the strategic level requires long-term, systematic, and institutionalized study and analysis of the target military. At the campaign preparation level, however, it is necessary to extensively acquire and *affirm* intelligence on and continuously monitor enemy movements, weapons, and targets through secured and effective reconnaissance means such as spy satellites, surveillance ships and planes, ground monitoring radar and radios, and human intelligence.³⁸

For the second condition, it is recognized that rapid advances in reconnaissance technology lead to real-time, multispatial, multidirectional, and more effective surveillance. Therefore, the traditional practice of “covering objects with tree twigs and bed sheets” is no longer effective in concealing PLA campaign preparation. On the other hand, there were many cases of successful concealment through nontechnological means on both sides during the 1991 Gulf War, and they all helped to achieve local and temporary superiority through reducing losses and maximizing gains. Also, campaigns may be fought close to the familiar environment of the

³⁷Hu, *Contention Affecting the 21st Century*, p. 112; Yang Yushu, “An Exploratory Comment,” p. 188.

³⁸Zheng Shenxia, “Several Questions,” p. 107; Nanjing MR Command Department, “Characteristics and Requirements,” p. 153; Sun Xiaohe, “An Exploratory Comment,” p. 224; Hu Changfa, “Speech at the Conclusion,” p. 13; Major General Zhou Wenbi, “*Dui Gaoyuan diqu bianjing zhanyi de sikao*” (Reflection on Border Campaign on High Plateau), in NDU Scientific Research Department, *Research on the Theory of Campaign*, pp. 289–290.

homeland, which may increase the chances of successful concealment. Therefore, several major methods of concealment have been formulated. First, it is necessary to create a situation of “internal intensity and external relaxation” (“*neijin waisong*”). This means that while war preparation is intensified within the war zone, political and diplomatic measures may be employed to conceal strategic intentions, to dispel the atmosphere of war preparation, and thereby reduce enemy vigilance. Such measures may also gain time for war preparation, thus improving the odds of local and temporary initiative through first strike.³⁹

Besides disinformation campaigns, other methods that may cause enemy misjudgment include “concealing the real” (*yinzhen*), “demonstrating the false” (*shijia*), “blending the real with the false, and the illusory with the substantial” (*zhenjia jiaozhi, xushi bingju*), and electronic measures during the campaign preparation. “Concealing the real” means hiding real forces and arms through campaign camouflage capable of stealth effects such as ambivalent color (*michai*), distorted form (*bianxing*), sound reduction (*xiaosheng*), and defilading (*zheyan*). “Demonstrating the false” refers to installing dummy planes, ships, tanks, vehicles, artillery pieces, missiles and other arms, and using reserve and militia units to conduct false deployment in directions where no operations are planned.⁴⁰

“Blending the real and the substantial with false and illusory” means first of all mixing the real and substantial forces and arms with false and illusory ones. Second, since China’s land and maritime borders are wide in direction and complex in geography, and they have numerous islands, harbors, towns and cities, and well-developed infrastructure in some regions, they also provide the conditions for meshing forces and arms with civilian facilities (*yujun yumin*). Both may increase the difficulty for the enemy to differentiate the real from the false. Moreover, night darkness, bad weather, and difficult terrain may provide favorable concealment conditions for campaign preparation and initiation. An asymmetry of transparency favors daytime, normal weather, and smooth landscape in spite of advances in surveillance technologies. Furthermore, times of relaxation provide favorable opportunities for the first strike to achieve surprise. Finally, electronic measures may be employed to conceal campaign preparation and initiation. These measures may include electronic interference or jamming to disrupt enemy surveillance, electronic flanking movements (*dianzhi yangdong*), deception (through transforming a multifighter formation into an electronic signature of one civilian plane, or one electronic warfare plane into a large attacking formation) to mislead the enemy, and

³⁹Wang Wei, “Several Questions,” p. 59; Fu Binzhong, “A Preliminary Investigation,” pp. 181–182; Nanjing MR Command Department, “Characteristics and Requirements,” p. 153.

⁴⁰Yang, *Research and Reflection*, pp. 86–87; Nanjing MR Command Department, “Characteristics and Requirements,” p. 153; Liu Yinchao, “Several Questions,” p. 323; Major General Zheng Shouzeng, “*Shilun jituanjun bianjing diqu jidong fanji zuozhan de zhanyi jidong*” (An Exploratory Comment on Group Army Campaign Mobility in Mobile Counter-Offensive Operations in Border Region); Major General Zhang Xianglin, “*Binhai shandi jingong zuozhan yuanzhe*” (Principles for Offensive Operations in Maritime Mountainous Region); Major General Yuan Xinhua, “*Yilu zhihai, yidi zhikong*” (Use Land to Control the Sea, Use Ground to Control the Air), all in NDU Scientific Research Department, *Research on the Theory of Campaign*, pp. 295, 381, 385.

electronic silence during campaign initiation.⁴¹ All these measures may confuse the adversary about the timing, place, scale, nature, and direction of the campaign initiation. This in turn enhances the probability of surprise, a basic condition to catch the enemy unprepared through first strike, thus achieving local and temporary initiative and superiority.

Initiation and Initial Battle

PLA planners may claim in public that “active defense (AD)” is a central principle that guides its initiation of military operations. But the PLA’s internal writings have yet to demonstrate a serious concern for the contradiction between AD and first strike. On the contrary, the PLA interpretation of the principle is flexible to the extent that Gaining Initiative by Striking First (GISF) becomes a central component of AD. For example, one account stresses that “at the time when we are to restore islands and territories now occupied by the enemy, after adopting political and diplomatic initiatives that have failed to produce results and being faced with enemy aggression, we are forced to initiate offensive operations. At the strategic level, this belongs to the realm of ‘active defense’ . . . It is not only unscientific in theory but also lands us in a vulnerable position (*beidong diwei*) in practice if we separate GISF from AD, or establish a dichotomy between the former and the latter.”⁴² But for local initiative and superiority to be realized through preemption at the campaign level, the element of surprise, optimal timing, and proportion of forces devoted to the initial battle must become the central focus of attention.

According to PLA planners, the “window of opportunity,” or the optimal timing for a first strike, is the brief period between the failure of political and diplomatic initiatives at the strategic level and the constitution of enemy comprehensive strike capabilities through completed deployment. “In the circumstance of enemy loss at the strategic level campaign commanders should grasp the favorable opportunity when the enemy’s campaign deployment is still incomplete, launch a preemptive offensive within the scope permitted by the strategic objective, throw enemy campaign deployment into confusion, and force the enemy to fight us under the conditions of insufficient preparation and unfavorable posture.”⁴³

⁴¹Yang, *Research and Reflection*, p. 89–90; Nanjing MR Command Department, “Characteristics and Requirements,” p. 153; Zheng Shouzeng, “An Exploratory Comment,” p. 295; Liu Yinchao, “Several Questions,” p. 324; Zhang Xianglin, “Principles for Offensive Operations,” p. 381; Yuan *Xinhua*, “Use Land,” p. 385; Lt. General Qiao Qincheng (PLAAF), “*Kongjun zhai lianhe zhanyi zhong de yunyong*” (Use of Air Force in Joint Campaign); Major Chao Kuofa (PLAAF), “*Denglu zhanyi zhong kongjun zuozhan yunyong de jige wenti*” (Several Questions on Air Force Operations in Amphibious Landing Campaign); Major General Wen Yuzhu, “*Gaojishu tiaojianxia yanhai diqu zhanyi zuozhan de zhanchang jianshe*” (Battlefield Construction in Coastal Regions For Campaign Operations Under High-tech Conditions), in NDU Scientific Research Department, *Research on the Theory of Campaign*, pp. 112, 116, 147–148.

⁴²Hu, *Contention Affecting the 21st Century*, p. 113.

⁴³Wang Wei, “Several Questions,” p. 60. See also Major General Zhang Erwang, “*Lianhe zhanyi zhong changgui daodan budui zuozhan yunyong de jige wenti*” (Several Questions on the Use of Conventional Missile Forces in Joint Campaign), Colonel Wang Xiaodong *et al.*, “*Daodan budui zhai jingong zhanyi zhong de yunyong wenti*” (The Question of Using missile forces in Offensive Campaign), both in NDU Scientific Research Department, *Research on the Theory of Campaign*, pp. 228, 234.

Once the campaign is initiated, the outcome of the first battle is deemed crucial in determining whether local initiative is realized. Therefore, it is necessary to “throw a powerful and superior initial strike force (*shoutu bingli*) into the initial battle.” For the air force, for instance, “as high as 80% of the campaign air force should be used in the initial battle in coordination with surface-surface missiles, ship artillery, ground force aviation, electronic warfare, and special operations capabilities.” The objective is “temporary suppression of enemy capabilities” by striking key targets that are “relatively vulnerable but crucial in constituting enemy comprehensive operational capabilities.” A substantial initial strike force is necessary because it increases the chances of expanding the positive effects of initial strike. “Under high-tech conditions, local and temporary superiority achieved through initial battle can be easily and quickly lost . . . it is therefore necessary to engage in resolute, active and continuous offensive to deny enemy breathing space.”⁴⁴

FIGHTING A QUICK BATTLE TO FORCE A QUICK RESOLUTION

While GISF is associated with the beginning of the campaign, “quick battle and quick resolution” (QBQR) deals with its prosecution and conclusion. Several reasons are offered to explain why QBQR is more desirable than the old notion of protracted war. First, border wars are not fought for total conquest of a country but rather for disputed territories in a confined area. It is therefore necessary to contain the conflict, and “swiftly smash enemy occupation or diplomatic blackmail, and achieve a final resolution at one stroke (*ycixing jieju*).” Also, “some border regions are remote, have bad and limited roads and harsh natural environment. The material basis in these regions for war is very weak.” As a result, “arms may be negatively affected by harsh conditions, and it is difficult to organize logistics to sustain the war effort for long.” Moreover, the high speed, precision, and lethality of high-tech weapons may quicken the war process. But the high cost of high-tech weapons also means that war can be too costly if it is allowed to drag on or escalate. Also, prolonging the war may not only mean higher expense to sustain the war, but also severely damage the civilian infrastructure, thereby negatively affecting the national economy. Finally, simply because the PLA is inferior in technology, it is all the more necessary for it to fully exploit the local and temporary superiority it could achieve through preemption to resolve the war in its favor in the shortest possible time. If the war is allowed to become protracted to the extent that the temporarily suppressed enemy regains its superiority, the PLA may face the prospect of being defeated.⁴⁵ If QBQR is both desirable and necessary, the central question is: how will the PLA

⁴⁴Wang Wei, “Several Questions,” p. 60; Zheng Shenxia, “Several Questions,” p. 103; Qiao Qingcheng, “Use of Air Force,” p. 112; Chao Kuofa, “Several Questions,” pp. 115–116; Liu Yinchao, “Several Questions,” p. 322; Major General Ma Diansheng, “*Guanyu Kongjiang zhanyi de jige wenti*” (Several Questions regarding Airborne Campaign); Major General Gui Quanzhi, “*Gaohan shandi bianjing fanji zuozhan de zhidao yu zhanfa*” (Guiding Principles and Fighting Methods Regarding Counter-Offensive Campaign on High and Cold Plateau), both in NDU Scientific Research Department, *Research on the Theory of Campaign*, pp. 250–251, 307–308.

⁴⁵Fu Binyao, “Several Questions,” pp. 267–268; Yang, *Research and Reflection*, p. 93; Major General Zhu Wenquan, “*Shandi jingong zhanyi de jige wenti*” (Several Questions regarding Offensive Campaign in Mountainous Region), in NDU Scientific Research Department, *Research on Theory of Campaign*, p. 363.

realize QBQR in its favor? The answer to this question is associated with the articulation of two key concepts: mobility (*jidong*) and offensive operations (*jingong zuozhan*).

Mobility

Because of the highly destructive nature of high-tech weapons, static positional defense may not lead to temporary and local superiority, the basic condition to achieve QBQR in PLA's favor, but may instead increase the chances for the PLA to be quickly defeated. Therefore, continuous, dynamic offensives through high mobility are now deemed absolutely necessary. Successful mobility may contribute to local superiority for several reasons. It may reduce inferiority through swiftly deploying superior forces and arms at crucial times and places. It may reduce one's own vulnerability by denying the enemy fixed targets. It also generates initiative and momentum through shifting and separating enemy forces, confusing the enemy about intentions, and thus creating opportunities to annihilate separated enemy forces by taking advantage of a favorable time and place of one's choosing.⁴⁶

While movement warfare (*yundong zhan*) has always been an important element of the PLA's fighting style, it is now recognized that the means of mobility have changed. Modern mobile warfare (*jidong zhan*), for instance, involves motorized transport, air, and rail, while the old warfare relied on nonmechanized transport. Even though the latter may reduce losses because it provides smaller targets that are easier to conceal through camouflage and in difficult terrain and night conditions, it is too slow, and therefore is no longer applicable to the mobility of PLA campaign forces. While faster, however, mobile warfare is more dependent on good roads, rails, and sometimes complex and cumbersome logistics; it is noisier; and it offers more visible profiles to the enemy. Also, reconnaissance technology has developed to the extent that it is now possible to identify subtle signs of mobility using detection of light, heat, magnetic, and acoustic waves. The marriage of technology-based reconnaissance of the battlespace with long-range, precision-guided munitions from the air may neutralize the central objective of PLA mobility: reducing one's own losses and creating local and temporary momentum through preemption at unexpected times, places and directions and with unexpected intensity and styles.⁴⁷ It is clear that whether local information and air superiority can be achieved may determine whether mobility leads to local and temporary initiative, so that QBQR can be realized in PLA's favor.

For information superiority, the concept of "counter-reconnaissance" (*fanzhencha*) is advanced. This concept deals primarily with the "intelligence" aspect of the enemy

⁴⁶Hu Changfa, "Speech at the Conclusion," p. 8; Zheng Baoshen, "An Elementary Investigation," p. 90; Peng Cuifeng, "Preliminary Investigation," p. 275; Senior Colonel Zhan Xuexi, "*Xiandai zhanyi tedian*" (Characteristics of Modern Campaign), Lt. General Han Reijie (PLAAF), "*Zhanyi jidong zhong de kozhong shusong wenti*" (The Question of Air Transportation in Campaign Mobility), both in NDU Scientific Research Department, *Research on the Theory of Campaign*, pp. 53-54, 344; Yang, *Research and Reflection*, p. 73.

⁴⁷Yang, *Research and Reflection*, pp. 84-85.

C4I and intends to neutralize enemy “eyes,” “ears,” and “noses” through centrally organized, comprehensive, integrated countermeasures. Most of the measures that may help to gain an “element of surprise” in campaign initiation (as discussed earlier) are also applicable to concealed mobility. These include disseminating disinformation, camouflage and concealment, electronic interference and deception, applying anti-photoelectric, anti-infrared, anti-radar, anti-sonar, and other stealth technology to arms, introducing weight-reduction technology to arms, and exploiting favorable natural and social conditions. More proactive countermeasures are also specified, including developing and deploying anti-surveillance satellite measures; damaging enemy ground and air surveillance radars, and unmanned drones; monitoring radios and other major sensors; and strikes by long-range missiles, attack airplanes, ship artillery, and special forces; and employing laser, kinetic energy (*dongneng*), and particle beam (*lizhi shu*) weapons during early operations (*xianqi zuozhan*). Finally, the security and effectiveness of the PLA’s own “eyes,” “ears,” and “noses” may be enhanced through both preventive and protective measures.⁴⁸

For threats to mobility from the air, it is acknowledged that the traditional close air raid may be replaced by the over-the-horizon (*chao shiju*) surface-to-surface and air-launched missiles and smart bombs as the dominant threat, and the launching platforms may stand-off beyond the scope and reach of the PLA campaign air defense network. On the other hand, stealthy tactical aircraft and attack helicopters mean that close air attack may still be necessary to strike tactical targets.⁴⁹ Therefore, achieving local and temporary air superiority may depend on comprehensive planning and integrated air defense measures.

It is, for instance, necessary to establish one or several inter-connected “mobility corridors” (*jidong zoulang*) or a “local security umbrella” (*diyu anquan shan*) at the locality and time when campaign forces are to move. Such an umbrella is sustained by several major measures. One is using surface-to-surface missiles, bombers, and other long-range arms to strike and destroy as many enemy stand-off platforms as possible in early operations. This is then supplemented by Air Force interceptors, as well as mobile and fixed long-range SAMs and large-caliber AAA batteries deployed adjacent to the mobility zone. In the meantime, mobile air defense units equipped with portable SAMs and mobile small-caliber AAA batteries deal with attack helicopters and other close-in flying targets. Such an umbrella may be connected with the strategic air defense for early warning and early interception. Furthermore, the umbrella may be reinforced by continuous electronic measures to reduce or confuse the enemy’s awareness and enhance its transparency to the PLA. The survivability of the air defense forces themselves needs to be enhanced through mobility and concealment. Finally, forces and arms mobility must not be conducted under daylight conditions without surveillance and air superiority.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 86–88.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 88–89, Major Gong Qing, “*Lianhe zhanyi zhong fangkong liliang zhengti shiyong wenti tantao*” (An Investigation of the Question Regarding Comprehensive Use of Air Defense Forces in Joint Campaign), NDU Scientific Research Department, *Research on the Theory of Campaign*, p. 263.

In addition to surveillance and air threats, several major modes of mobility may enhance deception or reduce exposure and casualty, thus improving the odds of local and temporary initiatives. These include exterior-line mobility (ELM, or *waixian jidong*), interior-line mobility (ILM, or *neixian jidong*), and leap-forward mobility (LFM, *yuejinshi jidong*).

ELM refers to mobility outside but close to the exterior flank of the enemy's deployment. It is usually conducted when enemy deployment is relatively concentrated, the battlefield is large in scope, and time is sufficient. Since the purpose of ELM is to create momentum (*zhaoshi*) that may shift enemy forces and create favorable fighting opportunities (*zhanji*) and vulnerable targets, it may not have to be always concealed. Small-scale mobility may divert attention from large-scale mobility (*xiaodong yan dadong*), or a posture of encircling and capturing key targets or positions may intend to trigger enemy reinforcement, thus creating opportunities for annihilating enemy vital forces through mobility.⁵¹

Unlike ELM, ILM is mobility through gaps between forces within the enemy's deployment. ILM is conducted when favorable opportunities have been created with concrete targets. Finally, LFM means that forces are dispersed and organized into smaller, more agile tactical units that take many routes (*xiaoqun duolu*), and move swiftly from one point to the next simultaneously and in darkness. It is assumed that LFM may lead to lower force density, less exposure time, and shortened length of mobile columns, which in turn may enhance both survivability and speed of mobility.⁵² All these modes may be employed in a combined way or separately, depending on how they contribute to local and temporary initiatives under specific circumstances. The central objective of mobility, however, is to create favorable conditions for offensive operations, the crucial step leading to QBQR in PLA's favor.

Offensive Operations

Surprise attack (SA, or *xiji*) is defined as the central mode of PLA offensive operations. "Information offensive" (*xinxi jingong*) is a new mode of PLA offensive operations. Three major types of SA have been explicated, including firepower SA (*huoli xiji*), ambush SA (*fujixing xiji*), and mobile SA (*jidong xiji*).

Firepower SA is "a new type of SA for the PLA," and is based on the concentrated effects of conventional strategic, campaign, or tactical missiles; bombers or attack aircraft; and campaign or tactical artillery. It can also be solely based on missile or air firepower. The attack can be sudden, concentrated, and brief, or continuous within a limited period of time. The advantage of firepower SA is that it is less restricted by distance, easy to organize and command, and easy to control. It is, however, limited since it cannot capture territories, positions, and materials. Because of this, it may be primarily conducted at the strategic and campaign levels for objectives such as battlefield denial, cutting off sea and air transportation, striking political and

⁵¹Yang, *Research and Reflection*, p. 90; Wang Yongguo, "An Investigation," p. 195.

⁵²Yang, *Research and Reflection*, pp. 90–91; Liu Yinchao, "Several Questions," p. 324.

economic targets, and destroying military targets. For similar reasons, it is more desirable to use missiles than aircraft to avoid the complex preparation for gaining conditional air superiority, and more desirable to be sudden, concentrated, and brief than continuous to achieve QBQR.⁵³

The purpose of ambush SA, however, is to deal with mobile enemy forces. Through concealed predeployment of forces close to the zone where possible enemy operations may be conducted, comprehensive capabilities based on air-land firepower, force mobility and assault are applied suddenly to enemy forces entering the zone. While ambush has always been a PLA fighting method, there are several major differences between the new and the old. First, since enemy mobility may be swift using multiple routes and many tactical groupings, the new ambush zone will be reasonably large so that ambush forces may have sufficient space to move and choose favorable positions while having better chances of avoiding detection. Also, unlike the old ambush where forces are deployed very close to the strike zone, the mobile ambush forces will maintain an optimal distance from the strike zone to conceal intentions, and close in swiftly through a “sudden, fierce” assault on the enemy forces that enter the strike zone. Moreover, unlike the old single-service-based ambush, the new ambush combines air-land firepower with ground forces assault. Finally, to ensure local superiority, rigorous preventive measures will be implemented against enemy mobility, air raid, and other counter-ambush measures.⁵⁴

Mobile SA attracts the most attention. Unlike a firepower SA or ambush SA, the purpose of a mobile SA is to fight “temporarily stationed enemy forces and a hastily constituted enemy defense.” The essence of a mobile SA is “suddenly annihilating (*jianmie*) the enemy through concealed and swift mobility,” so that QBQR in PLA’s favor can be realized.⁵⁵ Specifically, three types of mobile SAs have been articulated, including continuous assault (*lianxu tuji*), deep strike (*zhongshen gongji*), and vertical strike (*liti gongji*, or three-dimensional strike).

Continuous assault is meant to be directed against temporarily stationed enemy forces. The central premise is that since the enemy forces and arms are precise, lethal, fast, and responsive, PLA forces may exploit the brief opportunity when the temporarily stationed enemy forces are unprepared or not fully prepared. In this circumstance, PLA forces may launch a multi-direction, multi-route, multi-echelon, continuous assault on key enemy positions at both the *front* and in the *depth* of enemy deployment. First, several frontal and deep operational groupings (*zhengmian zuozhan qun* and *zhongshen zuozhan qun*) may be organized. Each grouping is capable of air-land operations, and consists of several echelons (*tidui*) that may conduct continuous assault alternately. Continuous assault may begin with “sudden, heavy, and brief firepower assault” on key targets, such the enemy C4I, and against missile, plane, and artillery platforms “to reduce enemy coordination and fire

⁵³Yang, *Research and Reflection*, pp. 78, 95; Zhang Erwang, “Several Questions,” p. 230.

⁵⁴Yang, *Research and Reflection*, pp. 95–96.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, p. 96.

power.” This is to be immediately followed by simultaneous assault by all operational groupings to cut apart (*fenge*) enemy forces; to prevent coordination between enemy firepower support, counter-attack forces, and divided enemy forces; and to encircle (*baowei*) each slice of enemy forces. At the same time, deep operational groupings may strive to intertwine with (*jiaozhi*) enemy depth forces to reduce enemy superiority in long-range firepower support and mobile reinforcing forces, and to give full play to PLA’s advantages in close combat. To prevent the divided enemy forces from either being diverted (*zhuanyi*, the PLA euphemism for relief from encirclement) or being consolidated, thus running the risks of fighting a battle of routing (*jikuizhan*) or a battle of attrition (*xiaohaozhan*) rather than an ideal battle of annihilation (*jianmiezhhan*), all groupings must conduct assault continuously to preclude breathing space for the enemy, and to achieve QBQR in PLA’s favor at one stroke.⁵⁶

Deep strike is directed mainly against fortified enemy defenses. Its underlying premise is that since enemy defenses are more likely to be mobile than fixed in order to reduce losses caused by the adversary’s preemption, its firepower support system, main counter-attack forces, and reserve forces (*yubeidui*, referring to regular backup forces but not the reserves) are likely to be deployed in the close depth (*qian zongshen*) of defense. They are also likely to be connected with C4I that coordinates firepower, force mobility, and counter-attack, which are likely to be deployed in the deep depth (*quan zongshen*) of defense. They generally constitute the “belly” that is crucial to successful defense. On the other hand, this “belly” may be soft since various components may be loosely connected and secured. As a result, it may provide a window of vulnerability for deep strike. Still, “it is not realistic for our army to conduct the kind of simultaneous deep strike as conducted by Western armies, since in overall terms, we will remain inferior in high technology for a long time.” On the other hand, “it is absolutely necessary to conduct deep strike. The focus of our deep strike, however, is on decomposing enemy defense, restricting enemy mobility in firepower support, forces, and electronic capabilities, weakening and sabotaging enemy comprehensive defense capabilities, and creating conditions for annihilating enemy forces separately.”⁵⁷

Specifically, deep strike forces may be composed of a carefully selected armor-based assault component, a raid and sabotage component, and sometimes an airborne and heliborne component. Each component is to be capable of ground and air defense and well armed with instruments and techniques of destroying or sabotaging various types of enemy targets. While taking into consideration alternative plans in the face of possible enemy interception, blocking, or delay through air-land firepower strike, mobile obstacles, and charges (*chongji*) by enemy counter-deep strike forces, PLA deep strike forces may either force their entry into the enemy’s defense perimeter with the firepower support of air, missile, artillery and frontal attacking forces, or infiltrate through darkness, bad weather, and favorable terrain. Once reaching their targets, a swift, fierce, and coordinated attack is to be launched, aimed at destroying

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 98–99.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 99–100.

the crucial parts of the enemy's C4I system, weapons platforms, and backup forces in the shortest time possible. Depending on circumstances, strikes can be concentrated on one target system after another, or dispersed against several separate systems simultaneously.⁵⁸ The central objective is to weaken and paralyze the enemy's comprehensive defense capabilities, so that QBQR in PLA's favor may be hastened.

Vertical strike may be applied in both continuous assault and deep strike, or conducted independently. Its basic premise is that since enemy defenses have become more effective, the traditional PLA practice of "using the ground to control the air" may also be supplemented by vertical strike, making offensive operations more effective. But since "the PLA aviation elements are still rather limited in both quantity and quality, it is not possible to wage vertical strike throughout the whole process of offensive operations." Therefore, vertical strike is to be applied to key directions, at key times, and against key targets in order to enhance local and temporary superiority. The basic elements of vertical strike include:

- dropping paratroopers into the enemy campaign and tactical depth to attack enemy forces;
- using transportation planes and helicopters to ship deep strike forces into the enemy's defensive depth for striking predetermined targets, and for outflanking (*yuhui*), encircling, and cutting apart enemy forces;
- landing forces in the enemy's rear to surround (*hewei*) and encircle enemy forces;
- using helicopters to transport forces to favorable positions, to block and fight incoming enemy reinforcing units, thus ensuring complete annihilation of encircled enemy forces;
- using attack helicopters to provide support for outflanking, encircling, penetrating, and cutting up enemy forces;
- using concealed helicopter shipments of special forces to raid vital enemy targets; and
- using fighters to deny airspace over encircled enemy forces, and using attack planes and bombers to provide airborne fire support for attacking ground forces.⁵⁹

Application of vertical strike may be concealed and sudden, though only under local air superiority. Vertical strike may be assembled in such a way that it is highly streamlined, capable of independent operations, and well equipped with anti-

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 100–101; Zhu Wenquan, "Several Questions," pp. 364–365; Major General Ding Shouyue, "Lun gaojishu tiaojianxia jituanjun chengshi jingong zhanyi zhanfa" (A Comment on the Fighting Methods of the Group Army in Urban Offensive Campaign under High-tech Conditions), in NDU Scientific Research Department, *Research on the Theory of Campaign*, p. 394.

⁵⁹Yang, *Research and Reflection*, p. 101; Ma Diansheng, "Several Questions," p. 252; Zhu Wenquan, "Several Questions," p. 364; Ding Shouyue, "A Comment," p. 394.

air/anti-tank capabilities and electronic warfare capabilities that can sabotage and suppress enemy communications and fire control systems. Furthermore, it may be used in such a way that it coordinates well with ground fire support and attacking forces. Finally, technical and operational maintenance needs to be strictly organized. The basic purpose of vertical strike is to create conditions for QBQR to be realized in PLA's favor.⁶⁰

Finally, the notion of an "information offensive," particularly relating to the communications and computer aspects of C4I, have been explicated under two underlying premises. One is that sensor-based information is transmitted to command and control through channels such as communications satellites, laser-based communications facilities, and wired or wireless radios and televisions. Also, information is analyzed, processed, stored, and disseminated to commanders for decisions and weapons platform control through digitally-linked computer networks.⁶¹ Therefore, neutralizing or destroying communications channels and computers through a combination of "soft" and "hard" means may cause severe disruption and even disintegration of enemy decisionmaking and coordination, the basis for enemy comprehensive fighting capabilities.

Several methods have been proposed for an information offensive. On the soft side, if enemy communications are immune to monitoring, various types of electronic interference may be applied to disrupt transmissions. Similarly, "special computer reconnaissance equipment" may be used to collect "weak electromagnetic signals from enemy operating computers" that may be translated into legible information. Otherwise, the method of "touching the vital point" (*dianxue*, a derivative from the martial arts mythology of paralyzing or killing a person by touching a vital point of the body) may be applied. For example, "computer virus assault" to damage the software of enemy computers, hacking into an enemy computer network to acquire vital information, or hacking into enemy computers to replace real information with disinformation. Moreover, microwave "bombs" (referring to electronic magnetic pulse, or EMP) may be used to burn the circuits and other vital parts of enemy computers. Finally, power supplies may be sabotaged to paralyze enemy C4I.⁶²

But since "soft kill" methods "can only temporarily paralyze the enemy information systems," "hard kill" methods are indispensable in "fundamentally destroying the whole system." This requires reconnaissance satellites, ground and air surveillance radar and radios, and other means to systematically and continuously collect and analyze information on the status and position of enemy information facilities and equipment. This lays the foundation for employing missiles, attack planes, ground/ship artillery, laser and kinetic energy weapons, and special forces to conduct precision strikes against or sabotage of enemy C4I. In the meantime, an

⁶⁰ Yang, *Research and Reflection*, p. 102.

⁶¹ Senior Colonel Wang Jun *et al.*, "Xinxizhan zhanyi qianjian" (An Elementary Perspective on Information Warfare Campaign), in NDU Scientific Research Department, *Research on the Theory of Campaign*, p. 455.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 455-456; Major General Jia Fukun, "Xinxizhan—weilai zhanzheng de zhongyao zuozhan fangshi" (Information Warfare—An Important Operational Style of Future War), in NDU Scientific Research Department, *Research on the Theory of Campaign*, p. 443.

information offensive may be accompanied by measures to enhance protection and security of the PLA's C4I, particularly in reinforcing its anti-interference (to ensure smooth and secure flow of communications), anti-virus (to ensure normal functioning of computers), and anti-destruction (through enhancing mobility or hardening bunkers) capabilities.⁶³ The paralysis of enemy C4I and the survival of the PLA's C4I may greatly enhance PLA local and temporary superiority, thus contributing to a QBQR in PLA's favor.

CONCLUSION

This essay has outlined new campaign doctrine and strategies that may enhance the chances for the PLA to turn its absolute technological inferiority to local and temporary superiority. The newly articulated notion of *WZC*, for instance, may contribute to such superiority, since it may enable the PLA to fully exploit its new joint forces-based "pockets of technological excellence." Such "excellence," however, may be either underutilized or overwhelmed in the other two major types of war: the CAGA-level campaign and total war. Similarly, the chances of such superiority may be better if the joint forces-based *EFSA* can be optimally deployed, commanded, and coordinated, so that casualties can be reduced and internal friction and attrition minimized on the one hand, and positive, interservice complementarity for common goals may be enhanced on the other. Moreover, the odds of such superiority may be improved by a strategy of *GISF*, if such a strike catches the enemy by surprise with optimal timing and optimal use of initial strike forces and arms. Finally, the chances for the PLA's local and temporary superiority may be enhanced by successful mobility, based on conditional information superiority, air superiority, and surprise attacks that may divide and disintegrate enemy coordination.

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What then are the likely implications of the new doctrine and strategies for China's security posture? Through a reading of this essay, one may easily conclude that the PLA has adopted a more forward-deployment-based, offensive posture. Such a conclusion may need to be qualified in two major ways. First, by adopting a military mission-focused offensive doctrine, such discourse may serve a domestic political purpose: to call for reducing the PLA's nonmilitary departments and functions, such as intervention in politics and business, and demand more military budget from the civilian leadership. For instance, Senior Colonel Wang Jianghuai's article on the joint forces command, which was first published in *Guofang daxue xuebao (NDU Journal)* and later summarized in the *Liberation Army Daily*, openly criticized the political departments and the nonmilitary aspects of the logistics departments for contributing to the bloating of the PLA command structure.

It is now apparent that those who advocate more focused military professionalism have won half of their political battle: they have convinced the top PLA and civilian

⁶³Jia, "Information Warfare," p. 447; Wang, "An Elementary Perspective," p. 456.

leadership to ban the PLA's business activities, to increase the defense budget, and to downsize the PLA so that more money can be saved for improving its quality. On the other hand, they have not been successful in separating the PLA from the party. The recent State Council Defense White Paper has reiterated the party's absolute leadership over the PLA and the need to maintain political departments within the PLA.⁶⁴ If articulation of a more offensive doctrine and strategies is part of a domestic political agenda that seeks to create an apolitical national army (*guojun*),⁶⁵ then one should not expect its implementation anytime soon.

Second, some major points made by PLA's planners in this essay may reflect wishful thinking and may not be realizable. An important external condition that may enhance the chances of a successful WZC without escalation, for instance, is the absence of intervention by a "powerful" third party, or the absence of a second front if or when the campaign takes place. But the PLA may not have direct influence or control over either of these two conditions. Also, newly conceived joint services operations may require more fundamental reinvention of the current PLA command structure. Such reinvention may require establishing a genuine *state-based* Ministry of National Defense that absorbs all the functions that are essential but not immediately related to military operations. This in turn may enable the introduction of a streamlined, relatively autonomous joint forces coordinating mechanism and command system that can be highly focused on joint operational matters. This is not likely to happen in the short run, since it may mean the demise of the current nonjoint, highly administrative system of four general departments answering to a *party-based* central military commission. Both vested interests and habit may work against such change.

Third, in spite of all measures to increase the enemy's transparency to the PLA and to reduce the PLA's visibility to the enemy, successfully concealing a WZC-sized force for a preemptive strike that may catch the enemy by surprise is an immensely difficult deed to accomplish. Finally, quick battle and quick resolution in PLA's favor may not be easy to achieve in border wars over disputed territories. China fought a border war against Vietnam in 1979. The war may have ended quickly, but the outcome was apparently not in PLA's favor, and the border skirmishes continued even after the war ended. This happened largely because the Vietnamese used a "People's War" strategy against the PLA, thus triggering a security dilemma in the border region. Indeed, recent PLA writings on campaign doctrine and strategies do not contain alternative plans if or when the PLA cannot gain the initiative by striking first or if quick battle and quick resolution become difficult to obtain.

⁶⁴See *China Daily*, July 28, 1998.

⁶⁵For adopting an offensive ideology to promote the military's institutional interests in the domestic political arena, see Jack Snyder, *The Ideology of the Offensive*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984; and Barry Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984.

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In spite of these qualifications, the new campaign doctrine and strategies deserve serious attention and further analysis for several major reasons. First, major weapons systems that are being acquired or developed by the PLA, including guided missile destroyers and improved IRBMs and ICBMs, may be intended to deter “powerful” third party intervention by making the cost unacceptably high. Nuclear and missile technology transfer and improved IRBMs may also be designed to deflect and deter pressure for a possible second front. To conclude that the PLA has little influence over the external environment that may enhance or reduce the chances of a successful WZC may be premature.

Furthermore, if articulation of a new doctrine serves a domestic political purpose, it may also translate into genuine policy programs, especially if civilian leadership is successfully persuaded by the PLA about the benefits of the offensive doctrine and the domestic political struggle is resolved in PLA’s favor. Also, the current PLA four-department system may not be so detrimental to successful joint services operations. It is, for instance, possible to simulate and practice a more streamlined wartime joint forces command structure separately. In the meantime, the current four-department system may continue to function for the purpose of peacetime PLA administration.

The conventional wisdom that the Party’s political control may decimate military professionalism is also inconclusive. Recent history has shown that one-party authoritarianism sometimes produces effective militaries. A new book by the MIT/Harvard historian Loren R. Graham, *What Have We Learned about Science and Technology from the Russian Experience?*, shows that science and technology flourished during the most repressive years of the Soviet period. This happened largely because scientists were bestowed with abundant research money and privileges, they tended to be intensely loyal to the homeland, and they were focused on their work to escape the horrible social reality around them.⁶⁶ By the same logic, it is plausible that as long as the PLA remains loyal to a party that still makes most important decisions, and a tacit agreement is reached for both not to meddle too much in each other’s affairs, the PLA in return may gain more resources for its institutional, professional, and technological development.

Furthermore, the emerging irredentist nationalism in a rapidly modernizing China may provide a latent motivation for defense modernization. Among China’s irredentist claims, Taiwan probably provides a focus upon which the otherwise disparate resources and energies in an increasingly commercial society may be brought to bear. Taiwan is neither an overly easy nor a totally insurmountable objective to achieve. It is sufficiently “Chinese” but separate enough to justify the irredentist claim. It is located in the center of China’s maritime-oriented economic development and security design, and may need to be overcome if it becomes an obstacle in realizing this design. All these factors may provide the PLA with a perfect rationale to request and acquire sufficient resources, and an ideal incentive to optimize the use of these resources. This may in turn transform the PLA from a labor-

⁶⁶Cited in *Washington Post*, August 12, 1998, p. A21.

intensive, ground-force-dominated, defense-oriented force to a technological, joint operations-based, and forward deployment-oriented military.

Moreover, it is certainly true that a glaring gap has existed between theory and practice in PLA's past. This explains why many (including this author) argue that some major points articulated by PLA planners in this essay may not become reality. But it is also plausible that after the substantial technocratic development of the PLA for the past 20 or so years, the old Maoist-ideology-based factional bickering has been declining. This means that the old factional balancing behavior, which usually causes policy paralysis (hence the gap between theory and reality), may be gradually supplanted by more conciliatory, bandwagoning behavior. Tentative evidence shows that the gap between theory and practice may be somewhat narrowed as central policy capacity is being enhanced. The relative success of the 1985–1987 PLA reorganization, for instance, contrasted sharply with the abortion of the 1975 PLA downsizing, when Deng and his followers were severely criticized by the Maoist faction as “reversing the verdict of the Cultural Revolution.” One may argue that the post-1985 PLA business activities provide a counter example. But such activities had occurred with the full consent of top leaders such as Deng and Zhao Ziyang. Therefore, there is little reason to believe that the recent central decision to ban such activities would fail, particularly if the top leadership has promised to compensate for ban-related financial shortfalls with defense budget increases.⁶⁷

Similarly, a careful reading of this essay may show that the PLA theorists are sufficiently sophisticated to discuss *conditions* that may lead to certain desirable outcomes. This means that if these conditions (concealment of intentions and capabilities, for instance) cannot be met, certain desirable outcomes (e.g., catching the enemy by surprise) may not be realizable. Therefore, certain actions (e.g., preemptive strike) should not be taken, since the cost may be too high. This implies that discussions of alternative plans do exist, but may not be easily accessible, perhaps because they are protected by higher levels of classification. More careful analysis may be necessary. Indeed, one runs the risk of self-denial if one discards the new PLA doctrines and strategies as simplistic, chest-beating bravado and propaganda.

Finally, while the PLA may be cautious enough not to threaten or fight wars unless the benefit is perceived to be high, the cost low, and the prospect of winning good, it does sometimes take a hawkish position within China's foreign policy establishment. It has become almost routine for the PLA to confront the more dovish Ministry of Foreign Affairs on issues such as missile technology transfer, the Nansha (Spratly) Islands crisis in the late 1980s, and, most recently, Taiwan.⁶⁸ As shown in this essay, the PLA openly demands diplomatic deception for achieving military objectives. In the end, the inter-departmental conflict is arbitrated by the top party leadership. What is disturbing is that on many of these issues, the Party's arbitration has favored

⁶⁷For the promise made by Hu Jingtao, a member of the Politburo Standing Committee, see *Qiao Bao (The China Press)*, July 29, 1998.

⁶⁸What matters here is the dominant institutional pattern. This, however, does not exclude the possibility that a minority of doves exists on the military side, as does a minority of hawks on the State Council side.

the PLA. If domestic civilian control of the military has a tendency to be compromised by collusion between the Party and the PLA, some type of external control may be inevitably necessary in the future, particularly when the PLA becomes stronger and more assertive. For this reason, further analysis of the PLA's intentions and capabilities may be highly desirable.