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**THE PEOPLE'S LIBERATION ARMY THE BOGEYMAN
IS ONLY IN YOUR MIND**

**A MONOGRAPH
BY
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ABSTRACT

THE PEOPLE'S LIBERATION ARMY, THE BOGEYMAN IS ONLY IN YOUR MIND.
by MAJ Robert S. Mikaloff, USA, 42 pages.

Current predictions indicate that the most likely military peer opponent to the United States in the next century will be the People's Liberation Army (PLA) of the People's Republic of China (PRC). These predictions stem from areas of mutual interest but divergent objectives, the demise of the Soviet Union, and the emasculation of the Soviet Armed Forces.

American anxiety concerning a potentially hostile and militarily powerful China emanates from a view of China narrowly focused on points of tension between the United States and the PRC. This perspective of Sino-American relations is exacerbated by efforts taken by the PRC to modernize the PLA into a force capable of projecting power regionally. Fears of renewed Chinese power translate to anxiety about future capabilities and missions of the People's Liberation Army (PLA). Recent changes in the organization and composition of the PLA foster concerns in the United States of hostile intentions on the part of the Chinese government. The fear centers on reforms of the PLA emphasizing quality rather than quantity. The movement toward a more competent military is interpreted as hostile intent. The perception of hostile intent marks China as a potential adversary of the United States for influence in Asia.

Anxiety among American political and military leaders ignores key realities regarding the current situation facing the PLA. Although striving to reach at least parity with modern western armies, the PLA is faced with several issues that detract from that pursuit. These distractions include internal and external security concerns and the need to modernize equipment, organization, and training methods.

The PLA is faced with external security threats along the western frontier, internal security problems, and the comparatively poor state of equipment and training in the PLA. These problems effectively prevent the PRC from pursuing even regional hegemony.

Considering the problems confronting the PLA the threat to the United States is not as ominous as many believe. Conversely the number of similar interests and potential threats shared by the United States and the PRC show a level of commonality that can lead to increased cooperation in the future. These common concerns include the production and trafficking of drugs, a potential nuclear arms race between India and Pakistan, stability on the Korean peninsula and the economic stability of Asia.

Although current predictions publicize that the U.S. Armed Forces and the PLA will become peer opponents early in the next century conditions exist that may cause the opposite to become true. Based on economic and security interests in Asia the U.S. Armed Forces and the PLA may become partners in the near to mid-term.

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INTRODUCTION

Current predictions indicate that the most likely military peer opponent to the United States in the next century will be the People's Liberation Army (PLA) of the People's Republic of China (PRC). These predictions stem from areas of mutual interest but divergent objectives, the demise of the U.S.S.R. , and the emasculation of the U.S.S.R. Armed Forces.

Being one of the last communist powers imparts on China all the negative judgments formerly reserved for the U.S.S.R. As a consequence current relations between the United States and China are tainted with the stigma imposed by the moniker of Chinese Communism, human rights violations and indiscriminate arms sales.

Coupled with the negative attributes is the growing economic power of the PRC. During the 15-year period from 1980 to 1995 the Chinese economy quadrupled.¹ Between 1978 and 1995 the Gross Domestic Product of the PRC grew at rates between just under seven percent to almost nine percent.² The Chinese economy continues to grow at a high rate. China has the potential to use economics as an effective instrument of national power.

American anxiety concerning a potentially hostile and militarily powerful China emanates from a view of China narrowly focused on points of tension between the United States and the PRC. This perspective of Sino-American relations is exacerbated by efforts taken by the PRC to modernize the PLA into a force capable of projecting power regionally. Fears of renewed Chinese power translate to anxiety about future capabilities and missions of the PLA. Recent changes in the organization and composition of the PLA foster concerns in the United States of hostile intentions on the part of the Chinese government. The fear centers on reforms

of the PLA emphasizing quality rather than quantity. The movement toward a more competent military is interpreted as hostile intent. The perception of hostile intent marks China as a potential adversary of the United States for influence in Asia.

Military leaders in China reinforced this perception in the United States through publications citing the U.S. push for advanced technology weapons and command and control (C2) systems as a critical and exploitable vulnerability. The tone of the writings postulates ways to defeat an armed force equipped and reliant on advanced weapons and C2 systems such as the United States.³

A review of conditions in the region, within the PRC and in the PLA indicate that although the Chinese military is modernizing, the number of potential crises and problems facing the PRC mitigate against the threat of the PRC seriously challenging the United States for hegemony in Asia. In addition to domestic and regional problems, PRC efforts to modernize the PLA are hampered by deficits in the industrial and technology base, organizational and training problems in the PLA, and the highly political environment in which the PLA developed and functioned from its beginnings in 1927 until the present.

Anxiety among American political and military leaders ignores key realities regarding the current situation facing the PLA. Although striving to reach at least parity with modern western armies, the PLA is faced with several issues that detract from that pursuit. These distractions include internal and external security concerns and the need to modernize equipment, organization, and training methods.

The PLA is faced with external security threats along the western frontier, internal security problems, and the comparatively poor state of equipment and training in the PLA. These problems effectively prevent the PRC from pursuing even regional hegemony.

Considering the problems confronting the PLA the threat to the United States is not as ominous as many believe. Conversely the number of similar interests and potential threats

shared by the United States and the PRC show a level of commonality that can lead to increased cooperation in the future. These common concerns include the production and trafficking of drugs, a potential nuclear arms race between India and Pakistan, stability on the Korean peninsula and the economic stability of Asia.

Although current predictions publicize that the U.S. Armed Forces and the PLA will become peer opponents early in the next century conditions exist that may cause the opposite to become true. Based on economic and security interests in Asia the U.S. Armed Forces and the PLA may become partners in the near to mid term.

EVOLUTION OF THE PEOPLE'S LIBERATION ARMY

The Beginnings of the PLA

In defining any future hostile intent by the PLA against the U.S. it is useful to understand the character and development of the PLA. The nature of an armed force, its tactics, organization, and strategy are heavily influenced by the history of the state it serves. With more than four thousand years of history to draw on, China has a wealth of military legacies. The advent of modern industrial age warfare saw the Chinese suffer defeat at the hands of western industrialized armies and the Japanese.⁴ The result is that although the modern PLA still draws on the rich Chinese military history, its current character is largely a function of events since the birth of the CCP and the early beginnings of the PLA during the Chinese Civil War.⁵

The PLA grew out of the temporary union of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and The Nationalist Party or Guomindang, (GMD) in 1924.⁶ The CCP sought the union under the advice of the Communist International (COMINTERN). The failure of CCP attempts to initiate a U.S.S.R. style revolution among the Chinese proletariat led the CCP to seek broader based support for its movement. A method used was a union between the CCP and the GMD.

The common bond between the CCP and the GMD was Chinese nationalism and the desire to unite China. Union with the GMD provided the CCP a link with an organization with a global reputation. In addition, the GMD was known throughout China as an organization focused on Chinese nationalism.⁷

The cooperation between the GMD and the CCP led to the creation of the Whampoa Military Academy and the Peasant Movement Training Institute.⁸ Because of its desire to gain broad-based support among the peasants the efforts and attention of the CCP focused on the Peasant Movement Training Institute. The Peasant Movement Training Institute provided the CCP a greater opportunity to make contact with large masses of people than was possible through the military academy.

The GMD focused most of its efforts in the military academy.⁹ The GMD looked to conduct conventional military operations against the warlords controlling the Chinese countryside. The Whampoa Military Academy provided them one of the means to pursue this conventional confrontation.

For a short time the relationship between the GMD and the CCP worked.¹⁰ The CCP benefited from the GMD reputation as a force for Chinese nationalism. The GMD profited from U.S.S.R. aid to the CCP and the organizational improvements recommended by U.S.S.R. and COMINTERN advisors. This relationship failed over time.

The inevitable break between the GMD and the CCP occurred in 1927.¹¹ In the cities of Shanghai and Wuhan right wing elements of the GMD slaughtered CCP members.¹² Elements of the CCP leadership, including Mao Zedong, learned that the GMD leadership was unable to protect the CCP from the more radical right wing elements of the GMD. These attacks forced the CCP to move its limited forces away from the major urban areas to seek shelter.

In 1927, Mao led some CCP forces into the Jinggang Mountains of Jiangxi province. In this remote area of eastern China Mao affiliated himself with an older CCP commander named Zhu De.¹³ During Mao's sojourn in Jiangxi, the province was organized into a collective and the CCP under the guidance of Mao and Zhu recruited and trained a revolutionary army, The Red Army, which is the earliest predecessor of the PLA.

The leadership of the Jiangxi Soviet knew that their recruits were not of high quality and could not match the firepower of the GMD.¹⁴ The new army made up for these inadequacies through high levels of esprit and effective ideological indoctrination. The formation and training of this revolutionary army initiated one of the first major disagreements between Mao and the U.S.S.R.

The U.S.S.R. advocated a conventional approach to confronting the GMD. The conventional force on force tactics and doctrine recommended by U.S.S.R. advisors were completely unsuitable for use by this peasant army. Mao developed a new doctrine for his new army. The methods developed by Mao advocated the use of guerrilla style tactics and avoided any direct confrontation the GMD forces.¹⁵ In formulating his tactics Mao borrowed heavily from Chinese history and military theory. He made significant use of the teachings of Sun Tzu. Despite Mao's relative success in organizing and training a military force, Mao did not yet represent the real power of the CCP.

During this period the leadership of the CCP still resided in Shanghai. Due to attacks by the GMD these leaders were forced to move their headquarters to Ruijin, in the southeast.¹⁶ Upon their arrival the CCP leadership displaced Mao and with him the guerrilla tactics he had developed for the peasant revolutionary army. The fledgling Red Army returned to more conventional tactics.

Chiang Kai-Shek and the GMD conducted a series of campaigns of annihilation against the Red Army.¹⁷ Abandoning Mao's guerrilla tactics fated the Red Army to defeat when confronted with a more conventionally trained and equipped army. The Red Army was defeated and this precipitated The Long March.¹⁸

Following the defeat inflicted on the fledgling Red Army in the southeast the CCP sought refuge in the north central area near Yan'an, China.¹⁹ This movement is known as The Long March.²⁰ The Red Army was reduced to a small-bedraggled force barely capable of

sustaining itself much less moving with any surety against the GMD. During these difficult times for the CCP, Mao was able to assert himself and solidify his leadership of the CCP.²¹

World War II and The Civil War

The Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931 initiated a sequence of events that effectively saved the CCP and the Red Army.²² After The Long March the CCP found itself in north central China building a new geographical base for the CCP. 1935 found the CCP in Shensi province in the northwest. Nationalist troops were positioned at Sian to engage the CCP but preferred to fight the Japanese invaders.²³ In 1936 these troops captured Chiang Kai-Shek and convinced him of the value of a Second United Front, uniting the GMD and CCP to fight the Japanese.

Both the GMD and the CCP realized that in order to defeat the Japanese invaders all Chinese must unite. Confronting the Japanese invader required a united front using the combined strength of the CCP and the GMD.²⁴

The war years (1937-1945) saw the GMD lose support while the CCP gained followers. The causes of this were the actions of the two forces when dealing with Chinese peasants.²⁵ The two factions, the GMD and CCP differed greatly in their attitude about and treatment of Chinese non-combatants. The GMD or Nationalist Chinese forces paid little regard to the needs of the peasants. Disrespect and mistreatment of civilians was common. The actions of CCP forces were exactly the opposite.

The military forces of the CCP consistently worked to attract support among villagers. Mao established strict guidelines for the conduct of his troops when dealing with civilians. The CCP forces that moved into the Yan'an province numbered approximately 10,000 to 25,000. At

the end of the Second World War the CCP numbered almost three million followers and they controlled nineteen base areas that contained over 100 million inhabitants.²⁶

The Second United Front unraveled in 1941.²⁷ CCP forces achieved success in gaining control of the Yangtze region. This expansion brought retaliation from Nationalist forces. In January 1941 several thousand CCP troops of the Fourth Route Army were ambushed and killed by the GMD. The end of the Second United Front meant that GMD and CCP forces not only faced Japanese forces but also each other.

After the Japanese capitulation in 1945 the GMD and CCP were able to focus their efforts against each other. The United States assisted the GMD as a force confronting the spread of communism. As a result GMD maintained a qualitative edge over The Red Army now known as the People's Liberation Army (PLA).²⁸

The GMD sought a conventional engagement by attacking the communist stronghold and capital of Yan'an. The CCP, knowing its inability to directly confront GMD forces, abandoned the city and returned to the guerrilla strategy and tactics developed by Mao during the Jiangxi Soviet and the Long March.²⁹

The civil war continued from 1946 until 1949. During those years the GMD continued to alienate the Chinese people. The CCP, more specifically the PLA, continued to engender good will and support among the people they encountered. These efforts proved so successful that in 1947, after only two years, the CCP was numerically superior to the GMD and able to confront the GMD in conventional military operations.³⁰ By 1949 the GMD was effectively defeated.

The People's Republic of China

On October 1, 1949 Mao proclaimed the birth of the People's Republic of China.³¹ The GMD retreated to the island of Formosa (Taiwan) and re-established the Republic of China (ROC). Immediately after Mao's proclamation of the birth of the PRC, the PLA quickly took action to consolidate control over all of Mainland China.³² Pockets of GMD support were reduced both on the mainland and on many small coastal islands. This consolidation effort was shortly interrupted by the start of the Korean Conflict.

In June 1950, the North Korean attack into South Korea focused Chinese attentions on their common border with the Korean Peninsula.³³ China, through the Indian ambassador, informed the United States of Chinese concerns over movement of UN forces north of the 38th parallel. Upon movement of UN forces north toward the Yalu River, Mao readied a corps of "Chinese People's Volunteers."³⁴ From late October 1950 until the armistice in 1953 Chinese troops fought U.S. troops to a stalemate on the Korean Peninsula.

During the formative period between the establishment of the PRC and the end of the Korean Conflict, the CCP organized the new China. One of the principal tools used to unite and stabilize the new state was the PLA.³⁵ The PLA was held in high regard and trusted by the leaders of the CCP. Most of the leaders of the new PRC spent the years prior to 1949 as active members of the PLA. They regarded the PLA as an important instrument of international and internal security.

As a result of the importance placed on the military, the PLA was given equal status to the State Council, which has the highest level of authority in the government. The government had no ability to direct the actions of the PLA. The PLA was controlled through the Military Affairs Commission, an arm of the CCP. This reflected the primary mission of the PLA, which was protection of the party rather than the government.

The years 1953 to 1958 found the PLA stepping away from its peasant beginnings and attempting to forge a modern force equipped and trained with U.S.S.R. assistance. The PLA faced modern armies equipped with relatively modern weapons during the Korean conflict. Although the PLA earned grudging respect from United Nations forces during the Korean conflict, the price of approximately one million killed was quite high.³⁶ The judgment of Mao and the CCP leadership was that in order for the PRC to take its rightful place in the global community the PRC required a professional, modern, competent and modern military force.

From 1950 the PLA received significant investment, advice, and aid from the U.S.S.R. in trying to build a new modern military. This movement stalled at the initiation of Mao's Great Leap Forward.³⁷

The Great Leap

The 1958 Great Leap Forward was an attempt by Mao to bypass the normal course of economic development.³⁸ Mao wanted to accelerate China's recovery after years of civil war and war with the Japanese. Mao's strategy depended on organizing rural peasants to better utilize their latent productive capacity. The peasants were to increase their productivity without taking any resources from the central government or urban centers.³⁹ In order to facilitate his Great Leap the human resources of the entire state would be required. This included the PLA.

In formulating the strategy for the Great Leap one of the recommendations was a severe cut in military expenditures. Modernization came to a standstill, as did funds to conduct training and education.⁴⁰ The focus of the PLA on becoming a modern and professional force was also abandoned. The PLA reached back to its peasant guerrilla beginnings.

During The Great Leap the role of the PLA in Chinese society expanded greatly. The PLA was relied upon to assist in economic and infrastructure building as well as maintaining the

stability and unity of the state.⁴¹ The involvement of the PLA included participation in business and agricultural activities including ownership of production and agricultural facilities.

The Great Leap did not bring about the huge advances in productivity envisioned by Mao. In fact the Great Leap left the PRC in a state of economic chaos.⁴² The debacle of the Great Leap left Mao and the state struggling to contend with economic and social tragedy in the rural areas.

A result of the turmoil and famine in rural China was a challenge to Mao's leadership from inside the CCP.⁴³ Mao withstood this challenge partly through the loyalty of the PLA. The challenge led Mao to rely more heavily on the PLA to institute and enforce his policies in the PRC. The PLA became increasingly politically active with military officers serving at all levels of administration throughout the PRC.

The head of the PLA, Lin Biao, became increasingly powerful as the role of the PLA grew. He worked to create a force that was more modern and technically competent. This renewed focus on the quality of the PLA did not diminish the traditional priority of political and ideological reliability. Through his leadership the PLA became a model of ideological reliability for Mao to hold up for emulation by the populace.⁴⁴

One of the unintended consequences of the Great Leap Forward was the Sino-Soviet split.⁴⁵ Mao had been very complimentary of the advances in socialism and technology gained by the U.S.S.R. Mao proclaimed the launch of Sputnik as a clear indication of the superiority of eastern socialist countries over the western democracies. Despite these gushing compliments, Khrushchev denigrated the value of the Great Leap Forward.⁴⁶ By 1963, Khrushchev's denigration of the Chinese program in concert with a series of conflicts between U.S.S.R. and PRC leadership cemented an antagonistic relationship.⁴⁷

The first event was the claim by Mao that the PRC, through the commune system, would reach true communism earlier than the U.S.S.R.⁴⁸ This claim of greater socialist purity angered

Khrushchev. The second event leading to the split was a PRC plan to shell Quemoy Island in 1958.⁴⁹ This island was occupied by Nationalist Chinese troops. Mao saw this as a purely internal action between the PRC and a breakaway territory. Due to the pattern of alliances at work Khrushchev saw in this action a potential for a super power confrontation.

The alliance system at work included a mutual defense pact between the PRC and the U.S.S.R. Likewise the Republic of China and the United States were tied by treaty.⁵⁰ Khrushchev read any direct attack by the PRC on ROC possessions as a confrontation between all treaty parties thereby bringing the United States into the situation.

One of the final incidents leading to the breakup between the PRC and the U.S.S.R. was the failure of the U.S.S.R. to support the PRC during the Taiwan Straits crisis.⁵¹ The relationship was further damaged when the U.S.S.R. reneged on a promise to provide the PRC with an atomic weapon.⁵² This started a sequence of ideological debates and insults between the U.S.S.R. and the PRC that led Khrushchev to pull all U.S.S.R. technicians from the PRC.

The impact of the Sino-U.S.S.R. split was to forestall PLA hopes for early force modernization. A major source of technological expertise, equipment and training resources dried up.⁵³ This forced the PLA to look toward self-sufficiency in equipping and training the force.

The next great event in Chinese society that proved formative to the PLA was the Cultural Revolution of 1966 through 1969.⁵⁴ Mao's intent was to cleanse the PRC of negative tendencies and ideological weaknesses that he believed had developed since the birth of the state in 1949. In particular he wanted to purge self-serving bureaucracies, redistribute wealth, secure his successor, and expose Chinese youth to a revolutionary experience.

The role of the PLA during the Cultural Revolution was to stand back and let the revolution proceed. Before initiating the revolution Mao secured the allegiance of Lin Biao and the military.⁵⁵ The instrument of Mao's revolution was the Red Guard. The Red Guard was

composed of students who answered Mao's call to do away with the old-line leadership, bureaucracy, and capitalist influences within the society.

1966 through 1969, was a time of intense civil violence with the Red Guard running through Chinese society destroying and murdering with impunity.⁵⁶ In 1969, Mao gave the PLA the order to reestablish order in the cities and move the Red Guard to the hinterlands.⁵⁷ Being the only government organ that Mao felt confidence in, the PLA effectively took over administrative control of all facets of Chinese society including schools and hospitals.

The political upheaval present during the Cultural Revolution worked to define succession and provide for a different leadership in the CCP. The ideological power of the CCP resided in the "Gang of Four."⁵⁸ This group was closely linked to Mao and regarded itself collectively as the heir apparent to Mao. Although favored to succeed Mao after his death the Gang of Four did not have administrative control of the party or the state.

The second faction at work striving to gain control was Zhou En-lai and his adherents. Zhou worked to mitigate the purges of the party initiated by Mao. One of the disaffected lieutenants rehabilitated was Deng Xiao-Ping.⁵⁹

Deng was one of the principal targets for removal during the Cultural Revolution. Despite this Zhou relied on Deng. This reliance was based on Deng's knowledge and familiarity with the workings of the party. In addition, Deng was well connected with the leadership of the P.L.A. At the Fourth Party Congress in 1975 Deng was made First Vice Premier, the number three man behind Mao and Zhou.⁶⁰ After Mao's death in 1976, Deng successfully maneuvered for leadership of the CCP.

During the political turmoil after the Cultural Revolution a critical event brought the United States and the PRC back into direct contact and built an unlikely partnership against the expanding influence of the U.S.S.R.

1972 brought the Nixon rapprochement and the opening of relations between the United States and the PRC.⁶¹ This initiated the “Strategic Triad” composed of the U.S., U.S.S.R. and the PRC. The warming of relations between the United States and the PRC effectively changed the balance of power in East Asia. Deng’s leadership in the CCP continued the warming of relations between the U.S. and the PRC.

After his assumption of leadership in 1976, Deng instigated a number of reforms that focused on bringing China into closer contact with other nations. The reforms taken by Deng concerning the PLA were efforts to streamline and modernize the force.⁶² The most visible change in the PLA was a force reduction. Deng reduced the size of the PLA by one million troops in 1985.⁶³ In addition to losing numbers, the PLA power in the party was reduced. Many of the old leaders of the PLA who had spent their early years struggling alongside Mao to establish the PLA moved aside.⁶⁴ The new generation took up their posts with less influence in the party. The military moved to a position of greater subordination to the party.

During the formative years of the PRC the PLA played a critical role in the survival and development of the new state.⁶⁵ Political leaders from Mao to Deng relied heavily on the PLA for protection from external and internal threats. The power of the PLA in Chinese politics was enormous and was often decisive in determining the future of the state.

The bulk of PLA operations during the history of the PRC were dedicated strictly to the defense of Chinese sovereign territory and maintenance of the unity and internal stability of the country.⁶⁶ Recent developments in Chinese military thought portend a change in PLA. The Chinese military is moving from a focus on internal defense and support to domestic political activities to a more professional armed force capable of projecting power regionally.

CHINESE DEFENSE POLICY AND THE PLA

Significant sources of concern about a potentially militant and hostile PRC are the writings from defense organizations within China. These documents discuss how to defeat a technologically advanced army and note some weaknesses from an over reliance on technology.⁶⁷ At first glance the studies done within the PLA on how to defeat a high tech military indicate that the PLA is training against a standard of parity with the U.S. armed forces. Use of the United States as a benchmark can lead to the judgment that PLA and PRC leaders anticipate a future-armed conflict with the United States. A closer examination of the content of the White Paper and the actions and status of the PLA serve to dispel fears of a future U.S./PRC conflict.

The Chinese State Council White Paper on National Defense states that China pursues a purely defensive strategy.⁶⁸ The further development of China as a socialist state requires an extended period of regional and global peace. As a result the PRC seeks first to defuse potential conflicts through peaceful means.⁶⁹

The future development of China into a much stronger nation will not change this outlook. The Chinese assert that their history and culture are those of a peace-loving nation. As a result the Chinese philosophy for dealing with other states is one of mutual respect. Based on the stated defense policy emphasizing a defensive strategy the White Paper outlines five basic premises upon which they organize and train the PLA.⁷⁰

The first premise is the consolidation of national defense under more centralized control.⁷¹ This is a reaction to the decentralized control and training of units throughout the

PRC. Through consolidating control and training the PRC hopes the PLA will be better able to defend state sovereignty, national unity, and internal and external security.

The PRC declares, as it has since 1975, that its first priority is economic development⁷². A state requires an adequate defense to allow for economic development but in order to build a strong national defense a strong and viable economy is needed. The development of a nation's economy and military are complementary pursuits and can only be successful if done in tandem.

The stated strategy of the PRC is completely defensive.⁷³ The PRC will only strike after another state initiates the conflict. The main element of the PLA response to aggression against the PRC continues to be a people's war involving the whole population.⁷⁴ The strategy of people's war, is however, modified somewhat by the requirements and conditions of the modern battlefield. The modern battlefield and high technology conditions require additional competencies among the military that were not previously necessary.

While focusing on a strong economy and the maintenance of the concept of people's war, the PRC is streamlining the PLA. The intent is to build a modern military organization with Chinese characteristics. The PLA ground forces are shrinking while the relative quality is to be improved. To improve the quality of the force the PLA desires to increase the level of technology used in weapons systems and training.⁷⁵

The PLA is pursuing a systematized process of modernization in training and equipment. Despite the increased tempo of preparation for modern battle, the PLA states that one of its primary goals is to reduce tensions through a policy of engagement with other military forces.⁷⁶ The purpose is to decrease suspicion and increase cooperation between the PLA and the military forces of other nations.

Defense Spending

The PRC is well aware of the connection between the health of the economy and the ability to build and maintain a modern military organization. Consequently, the PRC effort to modernize its military is secondary to efforts to improve the economy. The expenditures made by the PRC in arms and equipment represent only a modest increase in defense budgets.⁷⁷ By 1995, the defense budget increased by three hundred percent over expenditures in the 1980's. However, there are several factors that cast doubt on the accuracy of this figure.

These are raw figures that do not account for inflation. Inflation in the PRC reached 25% in the late 1980's and early 1990's. Based on this rate the PLA budget barely kept pace in real terms.⁷⁸ Several factors call into question the accuracy of this assessment. These include the types of items covered in the official PLA budget and the generation of additional income through PLA sponsored industries.⁷⁹

A significant portion of the research and development (R&D) budget for defense related items do not appear in the PLA budget.⁸⁰ These items include the categories of space, nuclear weapons and delivery platforms, R&D conducted by non-PLA facilities, funding for local militia, and the People's Armed Police (PAP).

The PRC is expected to continue increasing the defense budget over the next several years. Given hidden investments in R&D and other programs doubling the rate of increase could value the PLA budget to as high as U.S. \$50 billion⁸¹. This amount seems modest given the size of the PRC and the geographic area the PLA is responsible to defend. Consequently, the most accurate measure of PLA modernization is accomplished through monitoring equipment acquisitions rather than published defense budgets.

The Modern PLA

The modern PLA ground forces are composed of over two million soldiers.⁸² The Army is organized into seven military regions and 24 integrated group armies. These armies are roughly analogous to a U.S. Army Corps. The seven military regions are further divided into 28 military districts and three garrison commands.

The chain of command for the PLA ground forces run from the Central Military Commission to the General Staff.⁸³ Directly subordinate to the General Staff are the Military Regions and the Group Armies. Strategic Forces, the PLA Navy and Air Force are directly subordinate to the Central Military Commission and not subject to direction by the General Staff. The PLA is a conscript force with the terms of national service lasting 36 months. The strategic forces are a separate force and terms of service with these organizations are for 48 months.⁸⁴

The organization of each field army varies according to military region or district. Commanders of these field armies are not necessarily chosen for professional competence. Often they are chosen based on contacts with senior party leaders or political reliability.⁸⁵ The structure of PLA ground force units evolved through the decade of the 90's. Previously, PLA ground formations were separate infantry and armored divisions plus supporting arms.⁸⁶ The PLA is moving toward a more all-arms concept with ground units. This reflects the slow movement from a peasant army toward a more modern and professional force.

Training

The PRC announced two major changes in how the PLA will fight today and in the future. These changes mark a departure from previous concepts of warfare used by the PLA and cause a ripple effect through the force involving not only equipment, but also training and organization.

The PRC claims the PLA is purely a defensive force.⁸⁷ Defense of the territory of the PRC is still the main objective of the PLA although the concept of how to prosecute the defense is changed. Previously, the PLA defended through trading space to gain time and allow any invader to present vulnerabilities for exploitation. The change in strategy now includes preemptive offensive actions to defend sovereign Chinese territory.⁸⁸ Any war involving China will be instigated by another power. China reserves the right to respond to any provocation that threatens Chinese territory with offensive military operations.

The second major change in Chinese military training is the perceived need to fight a local war under high technology conditions. The PLA seeks to increase the level of technological sophistication in weapons and C2.⁸⁹ The impact of high technology weapons became readily apparent to the PLA during and after the Persian Gulf War. Iraq, a state with a large army and a major purchaser of Chinese equipment, suffered a rapid defeat at the hands of technologically superior western armies.⁹⁰ With this in mind the PLA is struggling with exactly what these changes mean for doctrine and modernization.

Prior to 1990, PLA training was haphazard at best. Since the birth of the PRC in 1949 ground forces conducted training for new recruits based on the needs of the military district or region the unit was stationed in.⁹¹ There was little standardization in training across the force. The training requirements for new recruits involved only competency in the use of the recruit's

individual weapon, mainly a rifle. Air and naval force training was more standardized, but during the years prior to 1990 these two branches merely supported the ground forces.⁹²

The desire to include high technology weapons in the PLA arsenal requires longer and more sophisticated training procedures. Competence with high technology weapons and C2 systems requires a level of education and training far above that available through on-the job training in units.

In 1990 the General Staff Department (GSD), the organization responsible for training, created a General Training Program.⁹³ The General Training Program established a standardized list of training priorities for PLA units. The initial training reform program was reevaluated in light of events during the Persian Gulf War. The original guidance issued in 1990 was replaced by new guidance in 1995. This new guidance was based in part of analysis of the Gulf War.⁹⁴

Much of this training standardization is experimental.⁹⁵ Various commands tried different techniques and training programs. The results of this training were reviewed and analyzed. Based on the success or failure of the training program it was systematized and disseminated for general use.

The focus of much of the training reform is on combined arms and joint operations. The organization of PLA ground forces demands that combined arms or joint training exercises are large-scale exercises generally accomplished at division or higher.⁹⁶ The general scenario initially involves training at small units. Each training exercise increases the level of complexity and size of the unit being trained. Large collective training exercises involving combined or joint arms represent the culmination of a unit's training program.

In addition to combined arms field training exercises, the PLA is attempting to utilize simulations to assist in training. The use of simulations precludes the need for large, costly collective field training to exercise joint and combined arms.⁹⁷ The instruction consists of staff training exercises using simulation to evaluate staff planning and execution.

Even with the new emphasis on standardized training and combined arms, the PLA ground forces continue to emphasize the human dimension over the materiel and technical. This emphasis on man over machine hearkens back to the peasant army/guerrilla warfare of the early PLA. An important element in the emphasis on man over machine continues to be political indoctrination and ideological purity in the force.⁹⁸

Equipment Modernization

The PRC emphasis on an active defense and limited power projection bounds the amount of funds available for equipment modernization for ground forces. The bulk of the funds marked for equipment modernization are budgeted against naval and air force requirements.⁹⁹ This emphasis on air and naval forces is undertaken despite the relative sizes and historical subordinate roles of the naval and air forces relative to PLA ground forces.

PLA force modernization is focused on gaining parity with western forces.¹⁰⁰ For major ground items such as tanks and armored personnel carriers the principal shortfall is not on the weapons system itself but on peripheral systems that enhance the utility and lethality of the system. These peripheral items include fire control and target acquisition systems.¹⁰¹ The technology required to gain this parity often does not exist inside the PRC. Equipment such as image intensifiers and thermal imagers are items that must be acquired from sources outside the PRC.

In addition, the PLA Army is moving toward modernizing equipment used for command and control of the force. As with most systems in the army the communications systems of the PLA are mainly legacy systems in use for better than twenty years.¹⁰² The modernization efforts in the PLA air and naval forces seek to gain PLA a limited strategic capability and the ability to support forces in regional power projection.¹⁰³ These improvements in the capabilities of naval

and air forces support the PRC strategy of an active defense. More than equipment modernization is needed to support an active defense. To support the active defense requires a major change in the roles of the air and naval forces.

PLA Air Forces (PLAAF) traditionally act in a role subordinate to ground forces.¹⁰⁴ This is changing with the PLA seeking to gain an ability to project power regionally. Acquisitions include Su-27 aircraft from Russia and the modernization of the current air fleet to accept in flight refueling. The acquisition of the Su-27 provides the PLA a limited capability to strike regionally. The Su-27 is currently the only fighter aircraft in the PLA air fleet capable of striking throughout the region.¹⁰⁵ To complement the striking power of a limited number of Su-27 aircraft the PLA is pursuing the capability to conduct in-flight refueling. The current standard production fighters are the J7 and J8.¹⁰⁶ The Chinese are working on producing variants of both platforms that can refuel in flight from a modified Il-76 transport aircraft.

Changes in naval strategy moves the PLA Navy (PLAN) from a strictly littoral force to a regional blue water navy. Where previously the PLAN focused on protecting port facilities the new strategy requires the capability to strike anywhere in the region.¹⁰⁷ To facilitate this new strategy the PLA is acquiring new submarine and surface combatants. The submarine force is centered around the diesel powered Ming and Song class submarines.¹⁰⁸ Both classes are currently produced in limited numbers. In addition, to submarines produced in the PRC the PLA acquired four Kilo class submarines from Russia with more hulls on order.

Surface combatant acquisitions are highlighted by the Luhu class destroyer and the Jiangwei class frigate.¹⁰⁹ The surface vessels are equipped with advanced anti ship missiles and surface-to-surface missiles. The latest anti-ship missile is the C-801 featuring fully active radar guidance and sea skimming capability. The surface-to-surface missiles are the M9 and M11, which can deliver conventional, chemical or nuclear payloads to a distance of 350 and 180 miles respectively.

The Future

The Four Modernizations policy of the 1970's gave priority to developing agriculture, industry, science and technology and lastly defense.¹¹⁰ The areas have developed to the extent that the PRC can now focus some additional energy on defense modernization. To accomplish a fundamental shift from a low-tech mass army to a stream lined highly technical army the PLA must accomplish several tasks. The primary task is the restructuring of defense industry in the PRC. Currently the industry supporting PLA programs is a legacy of the early years of the PRC.¹¹¹ The factories are dispersed and capable of only limited production.¹¹² Modernization and consolidation of heavy industry is fundamental to providing modern weapons and equipment to the PLA.

The PLA R&D efforts are modest with respect to the stated priority of providing the PLA with technologically advanced weapons. The R&D budget accounts for only three percent of the total PLA budget. Given the hidden investments not accounted for in the PLA budget, the R&D efforts are still inadequate and will require acquisition of much of the technology from sources outside the PRC.

Future materiel acquisition priorities emphasize the PLA naval and air forces. Modernization efforts in the ground forces focus largely on organizational and training issues. Materiel acquisition to support the ability to project power regionally include aircraft, in flight refueling systems for aircraft, and naval vessels equipped with advanced anti-air and anti-submarine warfare capabilities.¹¹³

Included among major PLA Air Force acquisitions include a next generation fighter aircraft. The PLA hopes to cooperate with Israel in producing the J10, which may be a variant of

the Lavi¹¹⁴ Other potential candidates for the next PLA fighter aircraft are licensed production Russian Su-27 or MiG-31 aircraft.

The PLA modernization effort amounts to a large-scale organizational change.¹¹⁵ To effect this change the PLA must overcome PLA tradition, modernize equipment, doctrine, and training.¹¹⁶ This organizational change is in competition with several impediments. These changes must be accomplished despite the emphasis on economic vice military modernization. In addition to the impediment of PLA modernization being secondary to economic development several regional and internal security concerns serve as distracters in the modernization plan. These concerns divert forces, resources and time from any efforts toward widespread force modernization.

The cumulative effect of all these impediments is to delay force modernization across the force. As a result the PLA will be forced to achieve a high-low mix of units that are equipped, trained, and ready and those that lag behind. That phenomenon is happening currently with the establishment of “Fist” units.¹¹⁷ Fist units are generally battalion-sized units that have gone through more rigorous training and are considered elite among PLA forces.

This serves to illustrate the incremental approach taken to modernize the PLA. An incremental approach provides some advanced capabilities in niche technologies and weapons systems but still does not render the PLA a modern force capable of true regional hegemony.

REGIONAL AND INTERNAL SECURITY CONCERNS

External Security

The PRC faces several regional and internal tensions, which serve to distract from its efforts to modernize. The PRC at various times in history had been in conflict with nearly all of its neighbors. External security concerns are focused on the Spratly Island issue in the South China Sea, Japan-U.S. defense cooperation, India, Pakistan, and Taiwan. PRC relations with Vietnam and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea are strained.¹¹⁸

Internal struggles concern mainly ethnic minorities and a growing narcotics industry. Although small in scale when compared the population of the PRC these two issues divert time, money and people away from the PLA.

The PRC and Vietnam are unlikely to face each other in conflict due to the focus on economic development in both countries. The major cause of conflict is the Spratly Islands. Both nations claim the Spratly Islands and have engaged in combat operations as a result. In 1988 People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) warships engaged Vietnamese warships off Fiery Cross Reef (Yongshu) in the Spratly Islands resulting in 72 Vietnamese casualties.¹¹⁹ In the event of conflict the PRC would enjoy a numerical and equipment advantage over Vietnam. Vietnam's antiquated air and ground forces do not compare favorably with the P.L.A.¹²⁰

The Spratly Islands represent a continuing point of tension in East Asia. The Spratlys are comprised of approximately one hundred islands and coral reefs in the South China Sea.¹²¹ In February 1992, China passed a law claiming ownership of contested islands in the Spratlys.

These same islands are claimed by the PRC, Taiwan, Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia and Brunei.

The PLA is readily able to seize the Spratlys barring any intervention by the United States or a coalition of Southeast Asian countries. Modernization efforts in the PLA provide the capability to seize the Islands. However, the potential for this action is tempered by the economic and military cost of the operation.¹²²

There are significant gains to be made through controlling the Spratlys. Potential reserves of oil increase the desire to control the islands. The question is accessibility. Reported oil reserves may be difficult to exploit due to the geology and deep-water conditions in the area.¹²³

The PLA is able to seize the islands, but not without significant cost. PLA naval vessels operating far from ports will be vulnerable to attack by countries equipped with more modern western weapons including F16 and Exocet missiles.¹²⁴ The only PLA fighter aircraft capable of supporting operations in the Spratlys is the Su-27. The Asian countries principally at risk in the event of a PRC move to seize the Spratlys are the Philippines and Vietnam. Although both countries enjoy the benefit of proximity, their armed forces also possess antiquated military equipment and are quantitatively and qualitatively no match for the PLA.

The situation in Northeast Asia presents significant challenges for any PLA military operation. The PRC possesses a significant numerical advantage over both Japan and South Korea. However, both countries are in possession of modern weapons systems qualitatively superior to anything in the PLA inventory.

Chinese relations with Japan are filled with contradictions. China still remembers the cruelty exercised by Japan during the Second World War.¹²⁵ Instances such as the Japanese atrocities in Nanking are still fresh in Chinese national memory. These memories are tempered

by increasing economic ties between the two nations. Japan has made significant investments in China.

Relations between the Japanese Self-Defense Forces (JASDF) and the PLA are colored by the continuing close relationship between the United States and Japan. China sees the relationship as American meddling in Asian affairs.¹²⁶ The proposal to create a theater missile defense system for Japan and Korea is seen by the PRC as a destabilizing effort. In addition, the PRC is wary of a growing nationalism in Japan and the increasing capabilities of Japanese forces.¹²⁷ Japan, with a modern naval force and significant air capabilities is more than a match for any PLA expeditionary force.

Relations between the Republic of Korea (ROK) and the PRC have warmed. In the late 1970's South Korea maintained unofficial trade ties with the PRC with most of the commerce going through Hong Kong.¹²⁸ The value of this trade was \$19 million in 1979. This figure jumped to just over three billion U.S. dollars in 1988. Official ties began on the 24th of August 1992.¹²⁹

South Korea faces a significant land threat to its north and has logically focused on building capable ground forces. Even so the South Koreans invested in modern frigates and corvettes carrying harpoons missiles and the addition of the type 209 submarine to the South Korean navy presents a credible deterrent to any PLA movement into Korea from the sea.¹³⁰

The military relationship between the ROK and the PRC is evolving. The PRC is making a concerted effort to participate in efforts to reduce tensions on the Korean peninsula. The latest negotiations, the "Four Party Talks" recently convened between the U.S., ROK, DPRK and the PRC.¹³¹ The talks have made little headway except for agreements on administrative guidelines.

From a western perspective the Taiwan Strait represents the greatest potential flashpoint. The 1998 White Paper on national defense states unequivocally that Taiwan is an integral part of

the PRC.¹³² China still looks to the reunification of Taiwan with the PRC. Although the preference is for a peaceful reunification, the PRC does not rule out the use of force in reunification with Taiwan. This reunification admits of the potential requirement for Taiwan to maintain its current economic system. In dealing with the issue of Taiwan the PRC claims it will accept the current Taiwanese system under the “One China Two Systems” policy.

The PRC policy that Taiwan is an integral part of China also presents the position that interference in PRC/Taiwan relations is meddling in the internal issues of the PRC. The 1998 White Paper chastises those nations that sell arms or support the continuing existence of Taiwan as a separate entity from the PRC.¹³³

The military balance between the Republic of China and the PRC show that the Republic of China has a qualitative edge.¹³⁴ The ROC is equipped with western, principally U.S., weapons and receives some military training from western nations. The PRC obviously has the benefit of numbers. Through sheer weight of numbers the PRC could seize the island nation at the cost of heavy casualties and economic retribution from the west.

A recent controversy in ROC/PRC relations involves the PRC missile tests in 1995 and 1996.¹³⁵ These tests prompted a U.S. response in the form of two carrier battle groups moving to the area. Subsequent to this confrontation the United States started a drive to provide a theater missile defense capability to the ROC.¹³⁶ This system is linked to the proposals for Japan and South Korea.

The PRC response was extremely negative. The inclusion of the ROC in any theater missile defense (TMD) plan is seen as destabilizing for the region. More significantly, the PRC view of Taiwan as a breakaway province causes PRC officials to view providing TMD to the ROC as the U.S. arming rebels with advanced weapons.

China is intimately concerned about the potential for a nuclear arms race on the Asian Sub-continent. The two nations involved are Pakistan and India.¹³⁷ China’s relationship with

Pakistan has lasted for more than twenty years. The relationship developed because of China's border skirmishes and Pakistan's conflicts with India.

PRC military assistance to Pakistan includes the transfer of conventional military equipment, technology and reported transfer of ballistic missile technology. Starting in the late 1980's through 1995 the PRC transferred components and technology associated with tactical ballistic missiles.¹³⁸ Reports from the Defense Intelligence Agency indicate that the PRC was responsible for Pakistan's development of a new 900-mile range missile. Provision of this technology is in violation of the 29 nation Missile Technology Control Regime.¹³⁹

China's relationship with India is at times openly belligerent.¹⁴⁰ The genesis of the current problem reaches back to British India and the establishment of the McMahon Line between India and Tibet in 1914. The British annexed sections of the Himalayan border region, principally in Tibet. China never agreed to the border. The border is a continuing source of conflict. The two nations have regularly exchanged artillery fire along the disputed border region.

The demise of the U.S.S.R. created the Central Asian Republics of Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.¹⁴¹ Each of these new states shares a border with China. The relations between the PRC and the new republics along its western frontier vary between the three. The PRC and Kazakstan entered into an agreement to build a pipeline from western Kazakstan to the Xinjiang region of China. This pipeline connects China to oilfields in Kazakstan with estimated oil reserves of two and one half billion barrels. This agreement between Kazakstan and the PRC solidifies a deal actively sought by U.S. oil giants AMOCO and Texaco.¹⁴²

This agreement between the PRC and Kazakstan brings significant benefit to both states. The cash strapped Kazak government gets cash it desperately needs. The PRC paid a bonus up front equal to U.S. \$370 million and will receive a projected investment of U.S. \$4.3 billion.¹⁴³

The PRC gains three significant benefits from the Kazak oil agreement. China was once self sufficient in oil production. In recent years China became an importer of oil. Access to the Kazak oil fields reduces PRC reliance on imported oil. A second benefit is the financial gain to be made from exploiting the Kazak oil reserves. Finally, the PRC received assurances from the Kazak government that Kazakstan will support PRC measures against Uighur separatists operating along the Kazak/China border.¹⁴⁴

The PRC's relationships with the new Central Asian Republics are dominated by fears of the migration of Islamic groups into China's western frontiers. China is primarily concerned with developments in Kazakstan and Tajikistan.¹⁴⁵ In both nations China perceives a threat from Uighur groups and the potential for their movement into the Xinjiang province to attempt to establish an independent homeland.

The PRC relationship with Tajikistan, focuses on the danger of Islamic migration into China's western provinces. Tajikistan is suffering from internal unrest and a border conflict with Afghanistan. The PRC is concerned that Islamic separatists will move into China's Xinjiang Province.

Kyrgyzstan is the weakest of the new Central Asian republics. To maintain stability along the Kyrgyzstan/PRC border the PRC is actively pursuing improved economic relations. There are currently no major conflicts between the two nations.

Internal Security

Ethnic minorities represent in excess of eight percent of the population in the PRC. However, they inhabit between 50 and 60 percent of the land.¹⁴⁶ These ethnic groups are often scattered in areas far distant from Beijing and the economic and political centers of the country.

Despite the remoteness of their location they represent a significant challenge to the unity and stability of the PRC.

From the beginnings of the state, the PRC struggled with the issue of ethnic minorities. The early days of the CCP through the decade of the 1920s saw mixed results in relations with ethnic minorities.¹⁴⁷ At first consideration the CCP leaned toward the U.S.S.R. method of trying to assimilate ethnic minorities. In some cases the CCP worked well with ethnic minorities as in the case of the Zhuang.¹⁴⁸ Two of the earliest soviets gained their vitality from the Zhuang. This is in contrast to relations with Tibet, which were poor or even hostile from the beginnings of the CCP.

The Japanese invasion gave clear evidence to the CCP of the need to gain the support of all ethnic minorities. Early on in its quest to gain support the CCP decided on recognition of ethnic minorities in China. In 1931, the constitution of Jiangxi Soviet granted ethnic groups the right to secede.¹⁴⁹

Despite these efforts the history of relations between the CCP and ethnic minorities remains strained. Efforts to resolve past discrimination have produced mixed results. The Chinese Constitution of 1982 guarantees the right to freedom of religion, but the evaluation of the validity of any religious practice is still a subjective evaluation made by provincial cadres.¹⁵⁰ Many of the traditional practices among some smaller ethnic groups are considered obscene and thus forbidden by local cadres.

Chinese economic prosperity brought with the potential of dividing the country against itself.¹⁵¹ In February 1997, Uighur guerrilla units initiated a terrorism campaign against the central government. Police broke up a religious gathering near the Kazak border. The subsequent attacks by the Uighurs killed or injured hundreds. During the 1997 uprising the Uighurs were able to mass as many as 15,000 armed men in general uprisings against the central government.

Narcotics

China is reaping an unintended consequence of its phenomenal economic growth and increased openness during the last twenty years. Segments of the population are turning to narcotics for recreational use or in some cases serious addiction. The rise in narcotics smuggling and abuse is consuming significant financial and manpower assets and has become a major concern for the PRC.

Resulting from China's close proximity to the Golden Triangle and its position on the Pacific Rim, China is one of the most convenient transshipment points for narcotics to the west. China shares a 2000-kilometer border with the largest producer of heroin, Myanmar (Burma).¹⁵² Drug traffickers from other nations, such as Vietnam and Laos also use the Chinese route. Chinese police report that they have found only a few drug laboratories or processing facilities.

The growth of the Chinese economy and social changes in the PRC brought about an increase in domestic drug abuse. Reports from China indicate that almost 70% of the counties and towns have some incidence of drug abuse.¹⁵³ Two of the most commonly abused substances are heroin and opium. These drugs make their way to China through the southwestern frontier from Myanmar and the Golden Triangle.

Heroin from the Golden Triangle transits China in quantities which U.S. experts believe significantly affect the United States. Chinese officials note that more than 90 percent of the heroin that flows through China comes from Myanmar.¹⁵⁴ China's border with Myanmar is judged to be China's friendliest. Due to continued warm relations with Myanmar, the Chinese actively seek closer economic ties. As a result the border is fairly porous and it is the main entry point for the vast majority of drugs entering China.

The Chinese government requested Burmese support in efforts to try and limit the drug smuggling and has pledged Chinese support for the effort. Part of the Chinese support is an effort to get Burmese farmers to switch crops from drug cultivation to more conventional crops.¹⁵⁵ Not all drugs used in or smuggled out of China are produced externally. There is a small opium production capability in China and roughly ten percent of the opium seized is grown domestically.¹⁵⁶ This domestic production is primarily for domestic consumption.

Evidence suggests that official Chinese estimates of the number of drug addicts are seriously underestimated. China claims the number to approximately 520,000.¹⁵⁷ This number is based on official reports of those individuals that seek treatment. China does admit that not all drug addicts seek treatment so their figure may be low.

To combat rising drug abuse China declared a nation wide anti-drug campaign in 1997. The campaign focused on law enforcement vigilance and led to a fourfold increase in opium heroin and precursor seizures over 1996.¹⁵⁸ China's drug enforcement policy is coordinated through 18 separate government agencies collectively called National Narcotics Control Commission (NNCC). The NNCC formulates policy and coordinates the PRC efforts with other national and international agencies.

The Ministry of Public Security or the national police forces handles the law enforcement.¹⁵⁹ To aid in drug enforcement the central government increased its counternarcotic budget by approximately twelve percent. In addition each province also contributes funds to the counternarcotics effort. The province hardest hit by narcotics traffic is Yunnan.¹⁶⁰ Yunnan province contributed 10 million RMB or about 1.25 million U.S.D for drug control programs

The largest drug seizure by PRC law enforcement occurred in Guangdong Province. In 1996 police seized 600 kilograms of heroin.¹⁶¹ While there have been no such large seizures since, there have been increases in total drug seizures. China finds itself in a position similar to the United States. Combating the abuse of drugs domestically is diverting assets to external

mission. These external missions are focused on stemming the flow of narcotics into China, mainly from Myanmar. Like the United States, the PRC is spending more each year to curtail the flow of drugs into the country as well as treat addicts within Chinese society. The United States shares the Chinese narcotics problem. Much of the narcotics making its way through China are destined for North America. Both nations suffer from the egregious damage narcotics inflict on society and can find common cause in fighting narcotics trafficking.

The United States military commits significant resources to drug interdiction efforts in the Western Hemisphere.¹⁶² Over time the military contribution to drug interdiction provided methods for surveillance and intelligence. Sharing the expertise gained in the American drug interdiction experience with the PRC would benefit both nations. This type of military to military contact can serve to reduce tensions between the nations and help stem the flow of narcotics from Asia to the United States.

U.S. POLICY AND COMMON AREAS OF CONCERN

A cornerstone of U.S. foreign policy is the idea of global engagement.¹⁶³ In order to mitigate or prevent conflict the U.S. seeks to maintain a continuous dialogue with all nations, including the PRC. In reference to engagement with the PRC the U.S. strives to maintain a managed program of official contacts with the PRC while reserving the right to express opposition to PRC policies that violate U.S. values and beliefs.

The military component of the U.S. engagement policy is the Commander-in-Chief of Pacific Command's (CINCPAC) Theater Engagement Plan.¹⁶⁴ The Pacific Command (PACOM) Plan outlines the general strategic context of the PACOM Area of Responsibility (AOR). The PACOM AOR covers 43 nations on the Pacific Rim including China.¹⁶⁵ PACOM strives to promote security and stability throughout the region. The tools available to PACOM include security assistance multilateral and bilateral and military to military contacts, exercises and training programs.¹⁶⁶

Areas of concern for CINPAC include several that are intimately involved with China and the PLA.¹⁶⁷ These include the Korean Peninsula, Taiwan, territorial disputes including the South China Sea, and drug trafficking. CINCPAC acknowledges the growing economic and military strength of the PRC. However this growth does not represent a direct threat to the United States but it may present a problem in the future. To assist in mitigating increasing power of the PRC in the region the PACOM pursues a policy of engagement with the PLA.¹⁶⁸ This engagement takes the form of military to military contacts through. In addition to mil to mil contacts, the United States also cooperates with the PRC in counternarcotic efforts. These do

not take place in the context of PLA/U.S. Armed Forces contacts but do assist in increasing contact between the two nations and lessening distrust and suspicion.

To cope with the increase in drug abuse China declared a nation wide anti-drug campaign in 1997.¹⁶⁹ The campaign resulted in greater law enforcement vigilance and led to a fourfold increase in seizures of opium, heroin, and precursor chemicals over 1996.

Part of the PRC counternarcotic effort is closer cooperation with U.S. law enforcement agencies. This cooperation included the transfer of a Burmese national to U.S. custody to stand trial for drug trafficking, establishment of reciprocal drug enforcement offices in each other's capital's, and the establishment of a direct e-mail link with the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) to facilitate the exchange of information on drug cases.¹⁷⁰

The United States and China are also in discussions about a mutual assistance agreement with the U.S. Customs Service. In a joint statement at the October 1999 Presidential Summit, China agreed to establish a Joint Liaison Group with the U.S. for law enforcement cooperation in specific areas, including narcotics trafficking, and to begin consultations aimed at concluding a mutual legal assistance agreement.¹⁷¹

U.S. drug policy seeks active engagement with PRC law enforcement authorities. The emphasis is currently on the exchange of information on the international and regional implications of Asian narcotics traffic. The aim is to increase our mutual interdiction capability through the sharing of information.

PRC/U.S. drug cooperation improved greatly during 1997. One of the most visible signs was the transfer of the Burmese drug fugitive Li Chia-cheng, from his place of detention Yunnan Province, to the United States to stand trial. During the October 1997 summit meeting the Presidents of the PRC and the U.S. agreed to open reciprocal drug officers in each other's capitals. ¹⁷²Summit between Presidents Clinton and Jiang Zemin, the United States and China agreed to open reciprocal drug enforcement offices in each other's capitals. This should further

enhance information sharing and law enforcement cooperation between the two countries. China has also agreed to establish a real-time e-mail link with Washington to exchange information more rapidly on drug trafficking and traffickers.

The contact between the U.S. and PRC extends beyond policy makers to working level law enforcement officials. The Chinese continue to participate in international or DEA funded training and seminars.¹⁷³ This included two DEA seminars on the control of chemicals used as precursors. China has also sent law enforcement officials to the United States to participate in airport interdiction training programs. A significant exchange of information exists between working level law enforcement officials concerning drug trafficking cases.

CONCLUSION

The PLA represents a powerful force on the Asian continent. The future of the PLA certainly involves improvements in the quality of weapons, training and doctrine. Although the leadership of the PRC seeks to establish a more modern force the actual ability of the PLA to pose a significant threat to the United States in the next 20 years is doubtful. The deficit in training, organization and doctrine that must be closed between the PRC and the U.S. is formidable. The problems faced by the PLA ground forces are significant and numerous enough to deny the PLA parity with the United States Military as a global force.

The first hindrance faced by the PLA is the manner that the force is recruited. The general-purpose ground forces are 36-month conscripts. The 36-month cycle means that one third of the force leaves service each year. Another third is going through entry-level training. Only a third can be considered trained. Despite the large numbers available to the PLA ground forces only one third can be considered trained at any one time.

A second training problem hindering the emergence of the PLA as a peer to the United States Armed Forces is training standardization. PLA training is moving toward standardization. Although moving toward standardization this effort is only 5 years old. The majority of those 5 years were spent experimenting with training methods and doctrine.

The attempts at standardizing training are still experimental. The process of experimentation served to delay standardized training across the force. Rather than use one unit as a testbed, various units were tasked with experimenting with different training methods and doctrine. In effect the very process used to bring about standardized training only contributed to

the problem through various units experimenting with different training techniques and doctrine. Tactics, techniques and procedures for training like units are not standard across the force.

For the ground forces, combined arms training is in its infancy due to the structure of divisional units. The cost of true combined arms training for the Army is almost prohibitive since this requires at least a division level exercise. Air and naval forces training is progressing, but is still somewhat unsophisticated. The PLA Air Forces still operates under a rigid C2 system allowing little flexibility. The same is true of naval forces.

The state of PLA Army equipment modernization further limits the ability of the PLA to challenge the U.S. outside the Asian continent. The PLA is currently fifteen to twenty years behind modern western forces in the quality of weapons and equipment. The current focus of the PRC is on precision strike weapons for its naval and air forces.

Exacerbating problems with force modernization the PLA experiences problems in assimilating the technology involved with modern weapons. Moving to a more highly technical military force brings the additional training and educational requirements. In order for the PLA to accept the technology and use it across the force requires that recruits arrive in the PLA with an acceptable level of education. This is not always the case.

Training recruits to operate more highly technical weapons systems demands significant modifications to traditional training methods in the PLA. The PLA is pursuing standardized training and doctrine but these efforts are currently focused on gaining a baseline of proficiency in basic skill then escalating to all arms operations. The inclusion of training with more modern weapons while trying to establish a baseline level of training across the force can only serve to complicate and extend the process.

The historic mission of the PLA is to ensure the integrity of PRC borders and the unity of its population. This expands the mission of the PLA forces beyond just defense of the borders to internal security. This dual mission complicates the mission of the PLA ground forces.

Despite the robust Peoples Armed Police, the PLA must be able to respond to internal strife as during the Tian An Men Square incident.

The potential for internal strife in a country struggling with economic growth while maintaining a highly centralized government is very high. This coupled with the problems associated with ethnic minorities on China's western frontier increase the likelihood of internal unrest. The PLA is required to maintain the capability to control unrest.

China's population is viewed by the west as fairly homogenous. The truth is that China is composed of approximately 50 plus groups other than Han Chinese. These groups vary greatly in religious and social custom, virtually all of which are in contravention of those beliefs espoused by the central government. At times tensions between these minority groups and the central government have spawned separatist groups.

Most of these groups reside in China's frontiers and are linked to states that border the PRC. This leads to concerns about borders and sovereignty. These concerns lead to commitment of PLA forces along the frontiers to maintain stability and protect the sovereign territory of the PRC.

Part of the final equation is addressing the issue of China training and equipping to confront a force dependent on highly technical weapons and C2 systems. This regimen of training and equipping leads to the belief that the PRC is anticipating a confrontation with the United States. Consideration of this situation illumines a different reason for using the United States Armed Forces as a benchmark against which to train, organize and equip.

Picking a benchmark against which to measure itself, it only makes sense for the PRC to use what is arguably the most capable power projection military in the world. To pick a lesser capable force would doom the PRC to mediocrity at best. Using those nations with whom the PRC shares a border would produce the same result.

The PLA is going through an evolution. It is evolving from a strictly peasant army to a force that has relevance in the Asian security environment. At some point in the future the PLA may become a force in global affairs but this future state is delayed through a series of situations and impediments

The future of the PLA is a continuation of modernizing and streamlining the force. The movement toward a more technologically competent force with a standardized training system will take time. The history and culture of the PLA is that of a peasant mass army. The modern force desired by the PRC is radically different than a peasant mass force. Overcoming the deficit in training, equipment and the peasant army culture will be a slow process.

Based on the need for the PLA to focus on internal stability and external threats the ability to modernize will be slowed through the tempo of PLA operations. The missions of maintaining internal stability and protection against external threat distract the PLA from a broad-based modernization program. Simply stated, the units will not be available to train and re-equip because they are committed to an operation.

The PLA is currently modernizing and improving itself. The quality and nature of the force will evolve in the next century. The pace of this evolution will be slow. The quality of training and equipment is improving at a slow and measured pace. Over time the PLA will become a military force that must be counted in regional and global affairs. The time frame is not the immediate or even mid term future.

The nature of the relationship between the armed forces of the United States and China is undefined. There exist certain situations, which can lead to cooperation between the two armed forces. These include cooperation in interdicting drug trafficking from the Golden triangle through China, the reunification of the Koreas and the peaceful reunification of the PRC and the ROC.

Cooperation between the PRC and the U.S. in interdicting drug trafficking from the Golden Triangle currently exists among law enforcement officials. The United States is leveraging certain military capabilities, such as surveillance, to enhance drug interdiction in the Western Hemisphere. Using these same military capabilities in a cooperative effort with the PLA serves the interest of both countries. This type of operation provides the mil-to-mil contact that is a keystone the CINCPAC Theater Engagement Plan. In addition, it serves to reduce the flow of drugs from Asia to the United States.

The Four Party Talks are a new effort between the U.S., PRC, DPRK, and ROK to lessen tension on the Korean Peninsula. If these talks or some other unforeseen event brings about the peaceful reunification of the Korean Peninsula, it is a safe assumption that the U.S. and the PRC would be called upon to monitor or broker the reunification.

A final common point of tension that may lead to the requirement for the U.S. military and the PLA to work together is the reunification of the two Chinas. The U.S. military, as an element of a defacto guarantee of Taiwanese autonomy, may be required to assist in any future reunification. Although currently a very unlikely scenario, the U.S. military would need to work with the PLA to maintain stability both in Taiwan and the region.

The future relationship between the U.S. military and the PLA is not currently defined. The PLA will not be a peer opponent of the U.S. Armed Forces in the first quarter of the next century. The first quarter of the 21st century will see a slow continuation of PLA modernization and PLA rhetoric about reaching peer status with the U.S. The United States Armed Forces, given continued modernization, is not threatened by the PLA. Only through stagnation and neglect of our forces will the PLA become a serious challenge.

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