



# China's Revolution in Doctrinal Affairs:

Emerging Trends in the  
Operational Art of the  
Chinese People's  
Liberation Army

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### 3. THE EVOLUTION OF CHINA'S MILITARY STRATEGY: COMPARING THE 1987 AND 1999 EDITIONS OF *ZHANLÜEXUE*

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Doctrinal reform has been one of the most important elements of the PLA's modernization drive over the past decade. Nowhere is the importance of such reform more apparent than in the transformation of China's approach to military strategy. For China's military thinkers, strategy has always been linked to planning and guiding military operations and the use of force – in general terms, how to wage war. Before 1985, the PLA planned to fight only one type of war with a specific adversary, namely a total war fought to counter a Soviet invasion. In 1985, the Central Military Commission (CMC) shifted from total war to a range of local wars with limited objectives greatly increased the scope and complexity of the planning problem that strategy aims to address. As this chapter will argue, this shift to local war required a dramatic broadening of the China's approach to military strategy to guide the use of force in a much more complicated security environment.

To demonstrate this transformation of China's approach to strategy, this chapter adopts a comparative research methodology. The essence of the analysis is a comparison of two key teaching texts, both entitled *Zhanlüexue* (*Science of Military Strategy*; 战略学), that were published in 1987 and 1999. As reference materials for senior officers, both books are authoritative statements of the PLA's military strategy at two very different periods of doctrinal evolution. The 1987 edition offers a limited approach to strategy based on People's War Under Modern Conditions, using positional and mobile warfare along with combined arms operations to counter a Soviet invasion. The 1999 volume, by contrast, outlines a broader approach to strategy based on preparing to fight a range of local wars under modern high-tech conditions (LWUMHTC) that vary in objectives, intensity and lethality.

Before proceeding several caveats are in order. First, this chapter consciously attempts to avoid 'mirror imaging' by discussing China's approach to strategy in terms of US doctrinal concepts. In US military publications, there is no book that corresponds to *Zhanlüexue*.<sup>139</sup> In this chapter, "strategy" refers to the Chinese word "*zhanlüe*" and its implications as contained in key texts. While it is important to place China's doctrinal concepts in a comparative context, this chapter offers a thorough examination of how the PLA currently defines and understands strategy as part of its military thought. Second,

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<sup>138</sup> Special thanks to Xue Litai, David Finkelstein and Iain Johnston as well as conference participants for helpful discussions on this topic.

<sup>139</sup> The closest document is probably JP 3-0, *Doctrine for Joint Operations*, but in Chinese terms this seems to be a combination of *Zhanlüexue* and *Zhanyixue*.

the discussion in this paper is strictly conceptual, examining the role of strategy in China's evolving military doctrine and the guidance that it offers for military planning. I do not discuss the fit between the requirements of this strategy and the overall operation and organizational capabilities of the PLA, a topic that has been explored previously, especially by Godwin.<sup>140</sup> Finally, this paper focuses only on conventional strategy and excludes nuclear strategy.<sup>141</sup>

This paper proceeds in six parts. The following describes in detail the books that are used for the comparative analysis and demonstrates why they are authoritative reflections of different Chinese approaches to strategy. The second section describes and defines China's basic strategic concepts to outline the Chinese framework of analysis for strategy. The third section reviews briefly the content of China's strategy in the 1987 *Zhanlüexue*. The remaining sections examine in detail the content of China's strategy in the 1999 *Zhanlüexue*, contrasting strategic guidance for general wars, local wars and peacetime military struggles.

## BACKGROUND TO THE TEXTS

The heart of the analysis in this paper is a comparison of two key PLA teaching materials on military strategy. The first book, entitled the *Science of Military Strategy* (*Zhanlüexue*; 战略学), was published in 1987 by the Academy of Military Science (AMS).<sup>142</sup> The second book, also entitled the *Science of Military Strategy* (*Zhanlüexue*; 战略学), was published in 1999 by research professors at the PLA's National Defense University (NDU).<sup>143</sup> The chief editor of the 1999 edition was Major General Wang Wenrong (王文荣), who is currently Vice President of NDU. Other members of the editorial board include Major General Ma Bao'an (马保安) and Major General Zhu Chongfeng (朱崇锋), both from the NDU's Strategic Studies Department, and Senior Colonel Ma Ping (马平), director of the NDU's Training and Education Department.

These books can be viewed as authoritative statements of China's military strategy at different points in time for three reasons. Both books have been used extensively as pedagogical teaching materials for the PLA's senior officer corp. The 1987 book, which was *neibu* (内部), was approved for distribution to all officers at the division level and

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<sup>140</sup> Paul H. B. Godwin, "Compensating for Deficiencies: Doctrinal Evolution in the People's Liberation Army, 1978-1999," in James C. Mulvenon and Andrew N. D. Yang, eds., *Seeking Truth from Facts: A Retrospective on Chinese Military Studies in the Post-Mao Era*, Santa Monica: RAND, 2001, pp. 87-114.

<sup>141</sup> The evolution of China's nuclear strategy is covered in the Chase & Medeiros chapter of this volume.

<sup>142</sup> Gao Rui, ed., *Zhanlüexue* [Science of military strategy], Beijing: AMS Press, 1987. Debate revolves around why this book, as a set of teaching materials, was published by the AMS and not NDU. Interviews suggest that this was largely a historical accident, as the NDU had only been established two years earlier, in 1985, and had not yet begun to publish its own texts.

<sup>143</sup> Wang Wenrong, ed., *Zhanlüexue* [Science of military strategy], Beijing: NDU Press, 1999.

above. The 1999 book, in draft form, was used throughout the 1990s as the core teaching text for the NDU's strategy course. In addition, these books were published in response to key changes in China's strategic orientation. The 1987 book captured the changes in China's strategic thinking after an enlarged 1985 CMC meeting, which endorsed Deng's shift from preparing for total war to preparing for local war. Drafting of the 1999 edition began in the aftermath of the 1991 Gulf War and the shift to preparing for Local Wars Under Modern High Tech Conditions. Finally, both books were "chopped" by leading units within the PLA. The 1987 book was approved by the CMC, while members of the General Staff Department (GSD) and all of the service branches participated in the drafting of the 1999 edition.

As "authoritative statements" of strategy, these books serve as representative examples of the PLA's approach to strategy during different periods of doctrinal evolution. However, as teaching texts, they do not necessarily represent the most comprehensive or complete statements of strategic thinking. As the 1987 book was published, Chinese strategists were already thinking and writing about how to fight local, high-tech wars. By 1999, Chinese strategists had already started to assess in great detail the implications of the RMA for future strategy and operations. In the analysis below, these books are viewed as baseline reflections of the PLA's understanding of military strategy as an organization and illustrations of the dominant approaches to strategy in the mid-1980s and the late 1990s, respectively.

The 2001 *Science of Military Strategy* (*Zhanlüexue*; 战略学), compiled by the Strategic Studies Department of AMS, has been excluded from this comparison. The 2001 book has a lower likelihood of representing the current approach to strategy among the PLA leadership because it has not been used as teaching materials in training courses that were designed to communicate doctrine in the organization. In addition, the AMS volume does not appear to have garnered the same high level support from within the PLA that the 1999 NDU book received, including the General Office of the GSD among others. While this volume may offer fruitful insights into future points of contention or debate among China's strategists, it may actually be less authoritative in terms of understanding the PLA's current approach to waging war. Finally, in terms of actual content, the 1999 NDU and 2001 AMS editions are actually quite similar, especially the discussion in the 2001 edition of China's strategy for LWUMHTC. Some sections of the 2001 AMS edition also appear to have been copied directly from the 1999 NDU volume.

An important companion to the 1999 NDU edition is the *Study Guide for Strategic Theory* (*Zhanlüe Lilun Xuexi Zhinan*; 战略理论学习指南), which was compiled by the same team of NDU scholars and published in 2002.<sup>144</sup> This book is apparently the NDU's response to the critique posed by the 2001 AMS edition. Substantively, it clarifies several aspects of China's current strategic thinking, especially in terms of the definition of strategy, the role of active defense and the operational arts. Other important sources on strategy include Zhang Wannian's 1999 book, *Contemporary World Military Affairs and China's National Defense* (*Dangdai Shijie Junshi Yu Zhongguo Guofang*; 当代世界

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<sup>144</sup> Ma Baoan, ed., *Zhanlüe lilun xuexi zhinan* [Strategic theory study guide], Beijing: NDU Press, 2002.

军事与中国国防), which provides a succinct summary of China's military strategy and can be viewed as relatively authoritative given the rank of its editor.<sup>145</sup>

## THE VOCABULARY OF STRATEGY

In Chinese doctrinal writings, strategy (*zhanlüe*; 战略) and military strategy (*junshi zhanlüe*; 军事战略) are used interchangeably. In most cases, Chinese writers will only use 'strategy' when they mean "military strategy."<sup>146</sup> In general terms, China's military doctrine can be divided into four levels of analysis.<sup>147</sup> Starting from the highest level of abstraction, these levels are: military thought (*junshi sixiang*; 军事思想), military strategy (*zhanlüe*; 战略), campaigns (*zhanyi*; 战役) and tactics (*zhanshu*; 战术).<sup>148</sup> As will be discussed below, one potentially fruitful way to interpret the PLA's strategic writings is to view strategy as linking military thought and campaigns by providing general guidance for the planning and direction of military operations. The PLA's 'rediscovery' of the operational level of war in the 1990s has increased the importance of studying campaigns in this schema and redefined the position of strategy when compared to previous stages of doctrinal development.<sup>149</sup>

The rest of this section examines the definition of strategy and associated concepts as described by the 1999 NDU edition of *Zhanlüexue*. By offering a detailed discussion of these concepts, this section aims to highlight the varied dimensions of China's current approach to strategy, demonstrate how the concept of strategy has broadened over the past decade and clarify what is meant when Chinese writings refer to "military strategy."

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<sup>145</sup> Zhang Wannian, *Dangdai shijie junshi yu zhongguo guofang* [Contemporary world military affairs and China's national defense], Beijing: AMS Press, 1999.

<sup>146</sup> *Zhongguo junshi baike quanshu* [Encyclopedia of China's military affairs], CD-ROM edition.

<sup>147</sup> As others have noted, China strictly speaking does not have a word for military doctrine. See the Finkelstein chapter in this volume.

<sup>148</sup> For this schema in Chinese military science publications, see Chen Haoliang, *Junshi kexue wenxian xinxi jiansuo zhinan* [Research guide for military science documents and information], Beijing: AMS Press, 2000; Dai Yifang, ed., *Junshi xue yanjiu huigui yu zhanwang* [Review and prospects for military science research], Beijing: AMS Press, 1995 (internal military circulation). Also, see David Shambaugh, *Modernizing China's Military: Progress, Problems, and Prospects*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002, pp. 58-59.

<sup>149</sup> As Godwin has demonstrated, the PLA's renewed focus on campaign-level operations began in the late 1970s with planning for countering a Soviet invasion through a combination of positional and mobile warfare. Indeed, in terms of doctrinal evolution, the 2000 *Zhanyixue* stems from these changes that began in the late 1970s. See Paul H. B. Godwin, "Changing Concepts of Doctrine, Strategy and Operations in the Chinese People's Liberation Army, 1978-1987," *The China Quarterly*, No. 112, 1987, pp. 572-590; Godwin, "Compensating for Deficiencies," pp. 87-118.

### Basic Strategic Concepts

For the NDU authors of the 1999 book, strategy is defined as “planning and guidance for the overall situation of military struggle, including planning, deploying and guiding the construction and use of military force, to reach the effective achievement of a stated political goal” (1999: 18). The scope of strategy in this definition is quite broad, including threat assessments, overall strategic goals, the main strategic direction, basic principles for conducting military struggle as well as the main means, methods and coordination of military struggle (1999: 22). The NDU authors make clear that the objective of any military struggle is always a political goal and that strategy ultimately serves such a goal. Military strategy is an important part of a nation’s overall strategy and must not be viewed as something independent from this overall strategy. Symbolizing a break with past doctrine, military strategy exists to “serve the national interest” (1999: 24).

The NDU’s definition is different from those used by previous PLA writings as well as the 2001 AMS volume. Many past Chinese doctrinal writings define strategy as “methods for planning and guiding the overall situation of war,” which limits the scope of strategy to the conduct of war and not military struggle more broadly.<sup>150</sup> While the contributors to the 2001 AMS volume offer such a definition, and vehemently stress their differences with the NDU authors, these definitional disputes today are probably more rhetorical than real.<sup>151</sup> Despite its apparently more restrictive definition, the AMS book also covers strategic activities apart from the actual prosecution of war, such as nuclear deterrence, conventional deterrence, arms control and crisis management. To further complicate matters in this debate over the definition of strategy, Zhang Wannian uses the NDU’s definition in his 1999 book.<sup>152</sup>

**Strategic thoughts** (*zhanlie sixiang*; 战略思想) serve as the foundation for Chinese writings on strategy. Strategic thoughts, which can also be translated as strategic thought or strategic concepts, are “the basic viewpoints for guiding and planning the overall situation of military struggle” (1999: 61).<sup>153</sup> Strategic thoughts refer to foundational principles and concepts of war-fighting and military struggle, but not to any specific guidelines or rules for conducting military operations. This concept of strategic thoughts is linked closely to Mao’s own military writings and his central position in modern China’s military thought. For the NDU team, two of Mao’s most important

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<sup>150</sup> *Zhongguo junshi baike quanshu*, CD-ROM edition.

<sup>151</sup> For an absolutely blistering AMS critique of the NDU definition of strategy, see Yao Youzhi and Zhao Dexi, “The Generalization, Conservation, and Development of ‘Strategy,’” *Zhongguo junshi kexue*, 30 September 2001, pp. 120-127 (FBIS: CPP20011126000199). Nevertheless, I believe that this debate represents institutional or personal differences, not substantive ones. In general terms, the content of strategy in the AMS book is quite similar to the NDU one, including the discussion of non-war components of strategy such as deterrence.

<sup>152</sup> Zhang Wannian, *Zhongguo guofang*, p. 177.

<sup>153</sup> Specifically, “指导军事斗争全局的基本观点.”

strategic ideas are Active Defense (*jiji fangyu*; 积极防御) and People's War (*renmin zhanzheng*; 人民战争), both of which were originally formulated during the civil war. Mao's other strategic ideas that are less prominent today include protracted war (*chijiuzhan*; 持久战) and guerilla warfare (*youji zhanzheng*; 游击战争) among others (1999: 74). In Western military thought, the analog of strategic ideas are the writings of strategists such as Clausewitz or Liddell Hart, whose concepts to this day remain a part of modern strategic thinking even though their implications for military operations may have changed.

At the most general level of abstraction, the NDU book describes strategy as a trinity of strategic goals, strategic guidelines and strategic methods. While this trinity parallel ends, ways and means in any generic formulation of strategy, there are some important differences as discussed below. In terms of identifying and defining any particular Chinese strategy, strategic guidelines are most important. Importantly, however, strategic thoughts and concepts strongly influences any particular set of strategic guidelines.

**Strategic goals** (*zhanlüe mudì*; 战略目的) are the “ultimate result to be achieved through the overall situation of military struggle” (1999: 39).<sup>154</sup> Strategic goals determine the ultimate political objective in any struggle, which is keyed to the national interest. In the 1995/6 Taiwan Straits crisis, for example, the strategic goal of the missile tests and exercises was to attack the forces of Taiwanese independence, an action that was linked to the political goal of maintaining national unity (1999: 40). *Strategic missions* (*zhanlüe renwu*; 战略任务) refer to the operational tasks required for achieving a strategic goal. Strategic goals and missions are the comprehensive reflection of strategic circumstances (*zhanlüe xingshi*; 战略形势), including the main features of the international strategic situation and national security requirements. In wartime, strategic goals focus on operational aspects on the battlefield, such as destroying enemy forces, and maintaining the initiative and the like. In peacetime, strategic goals emphasize safeguarding national interests, namely using military means such as deterrence to create a stable external environment for continued economic development (1999: 38-45).

**Strategic guidelines** (*zhanlüe fangzhen*; 战略方针) are the “general principles and general programs for guiding the overall situation of military struggle” (1999: 46).<sup>155</sup> Strategic guidelines stipulate how to complete a strategic mission and realize the strategic goal by identifying the key points of struggle, the main strategic directions and related strategic deployments. Strategic guidelines are the “principal part and heart of strategy” (1999: 46). Strategic guidelines perhaps are the closest analog to operational doctrine in Western strategic parlance, though only at the strategic level of war as opposed to the campaign or tactical levels, which are governed by their own guidelines. Past strategic guidelines include People's War and People's War Under Modern Conditions (1978-

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<sup>154</sup> Specifically, “在军事斗争全局上所要达成的最终结果。”

<sup>155</sup> Specifically, “指导军事斗争全局的总纲领, 总原则”

1985), while as discussed in more detail below the current strategic guideline since 1993 is Local Wars Under Modern High Tech Conditions.<sup>156</sup>

A given strategic guideline generally includes five components. The first is the identification of the strategic opponent, based on the threat to the national interest, and the operational target, based on specific military nature of the threat. The second component of a strategic guideline is the strategic direction, which refers to the focal point of struggle and the center of gravity for the use of force that will decisively shape the overall struggle as well as military deployments and war preparations. The third component is the basic points of preparations for military struggle, which refers to the type of conflict, such as total war vs. local war, nuclear war vs. conventional war. The fourth component of a strategic guideline is the basic methods of military struggle, which refers to the type of struggle such as combat operations versus deterrence, the types of strategic operations such as offense or defense, the main operational forms such as mobile warfare and the main operational types such as blockade. The fifth and final component of a strategic guideline is the guiding thought and principles for the use of military force, which refers to general operational principles to be applied in a conflict, such as whether to gain mastery by striking first or second (*xianfa zhiren*; 先发制人 vs. *houfa zhiren*; 后发制人), or whether to fight a protracted war or a quick decisive war (1999: 136-139). Determination of a strategic guideline thus identifies the organizational and operation requirements for force modernization.

**Strategic means** (*zhanlüe shouduan*; 战略手段) are “the ways and methods of using military force to achieve an objective, namely what to use to execute military struggle and how to use it” (1999: 51).<sup>157</sup> The NDU book states that both military and non-military means are covered by this definition. Due to rapid changes in military technology since WWII, states can often use non-military means to achieve strategic objectives. The authors identify four types of basic strategic means: actual combat operations, which includes military operations in general war and local war; deterrence operations, which are a primary method of military struggle for achieving strategic goals in peacetime; warning operations, which include strategic early warning, border defense struggles and internal defense; and combat readiness (training) exercises, which include force build-ups, strategic troop transfers, adjustment in deployments, military exercises, war preparedness investigations and weapons tests (1999: 146-167).

All of components of this trinity operate at both general and specific levels. The general level of strategy refers to the strategy for the country as a whole in a given historical moment, while a specific strategy refers to a particular type of conflict or situation that involves the use of force. Most of the NDU edition discusses strategy at the general level, but the definitions and concepts described above operate at both. For example, in addition to the general strategic goal of maintaining territorial integrity,

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<sup>156</sup> As You Ji has argued, China lacked a strategic guideline from 1985 to 1992 because no official ‘*fangzhen*’ had been declared

<sup>157</sup> Specifically, “为了达成战略目的而运用军事力量的方式和方法”



China's specific strategic goal during the 1962 border war with India was to create a period of peace on the Himalayan border (1999: 40). Likewise, the general and specific levels of strategy are manifested in *general strategic guidelines* (*zongzhanlüe fangzhen*; 总战略方针) and *specific strategic guidelines* (*juti zhanlüe fangzhen*; 具体战略方针), such as for a particular war zone or campaign.

### **CHINA'S CURRENT MILITARY STRATEGY: LOCAL WAR UNDER MODERN HIGH-TECH CONDITIONS**

These definitions of strategic concepts clarify descriptions and assessments of China's military strategy. Strategy itself is created through the application of strategic ideas to the prevailing strategic environment and strategic pattern. While strategic ideas endure over time, their implications for military planning and operations depend upon a specific context. China's current strategic guideline, Local Wars Under Modern High Tech Conditions, was developed through the application of the strategic idea of Active Defense to the security requirements of the post-Cold War and post-Gulf War world.<sup>158</sup> As Godwin noted almost 20 years ago, strategic ideas are constant, while guidelines and their implications vary with a given context.<sup>159</sup>

In the Chinese case, People's War and especially Active Defense have been the primary strategic ideas since 1949, informing successive generations of strategic guidelines. As General Zhang Wannian notes, Active Defense is China's "foundational strategic idea" and has served as the basis for China's successive strategic guidelines since 1949.<sup>160</sup> Put simply, Mao defined Active Defense in contrast to passive defense. While a nation may assume a strategically defensive posture, it must nevertheless use offensive means to achieve defensive ends. In the context of resisting Japan, Mao stated that "active defense could be named as offensive defense. It could also be called decisive campaign defense...which was a defense using both counterattack and attack." In

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<sup>158</sup> For descriptions of this strategic guideline, see Shambaugh, *Modernizing China's Military*, pp. 56-94; Alexander Huang, "Transformation and Refinement of Chinese Military Doctrine: Reflection and Critique on the PLA's View," in *Seeking Truth from Facts: A Retrospective on Chinese Military Studies in the Post-Mao Era*, eds., James C. Mulvenon and Andrew N. D. Yang, Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2001, pp. 131-141; Godwin, "Compensating for Deficiencies," pp. 97-118; David Finkelstein, "Commentary on Doctrine," in *Seeking Truth from Facts: A Retrospective on Chinese Military Studies in the Post-Mao Era*, eds., James C. Mulvenon and Andrew N. D. Yang, Santa Monica: RAND, 2001, pp. 119-130; Nan Li, "The PLA's Evolving Warfighting Doctrine," *The China Quarterly*, No. 146, 1996, pp. 443-463; Paul H. B. Godwin, "From Continent to Periphery: PLA Doctrine, Strategy and Capabilities Towards 2000," *The China Quarterly*, No. 146, 1996, pp. 464-487; Yao Yunzhu, "The Evolution of Military Doctrine of the PLA from 1985 to 1995," *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis*, Vol. 7, No. 2, 1995, pp. 57-80.

<sup>159</sup> Godwin succinctly made this point almost 20 years ago, but it deserves to be made and emphasized again. See Godwin, "Changing Concepts of Doctrine, Strategy and Operations," pp. 56-57.

<sup>160</sup> Zhang Wannian, *Zhongguo guofang*, p. 177. For more on Active Defense as a strategic idea, see *Zhongguo junshi baike quanshu*, CD-ROM edition. For the relationship between Active Defense and the LWUMHTC strategic guideline, see Dai Yifang, comp., *Junshi xue yanjiu*, pp. 72-73.

strategic terms, Active Defense refers to striking only after the opponent has struck first and a defensive posture. In an operational setting, Active Defense includes seizing the initiative through first-strikes to achieve such defensive goals. Zhang states that Active Defense “organically combines strategic defense with campaign battle offense...to weaken the enemy and realize strategically defensive goals through offensive operations with quickly decisive battles.”<sup>161</sup>

China’s current strategic guideline applies the insights of Active Defense to the post-Cold War and post-Gulf War security environment. According to the NDU authors, the shift to preparing to win LWUMHTC was “a strategic guideline for the new period” (1999: 276), which was established by Jiang Zemin in 1993. The 2002 defense white paper captures the relationship between the current strategic guideline and Active Defense as a strategic idea:

China implements a military strategy of active defense. Strategically, China pursues a principle featuring defensive operations, self-defense and attack only after being attacked. In response to the profound changes in the world's military field and the requirements of the national development strategy, China has formulated a military strategic guideline of active defense in the new period...based on winning local wars under modern, especially high-tech conditions.<sup>162</sup>

The details of the current strategic guideline will be discussed in more detail in subsequent sections. In general terms, they are based on the conclusion that China’s most likely threats come from small and medium-sized local conflicts, not general or total wars. In the absence of general war, China’s strategic goals are based on “protecting state sovereignty, unity, territorial integrity and security” and “a peaceful international and a favorable peripheral environment for China's socialist modernization drive.”<sup>163</sup> Moreover, because changes in technology have increased the tempo, intensity of operations in even local wars, the current strategic guideline outlines how China should prepare to deter such conflicts from arising and how to fight them if they do occur.

When describing China’s military strategy, it is important to distinguish between Active Defense as a strategic idea and LWUMHTC as a strategic guideline. Since the establishment of the PRC, Active Defense has informed every set of strategic guidelines

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<sup>161</sup> Zhang Wannian, *Zhongguo guofang*, p. 177.

<sup>162</sup> *2002 nian Zhongguo de guofang* [China’s national defense in 2002], Beijing: Guowu Yuan Xinwen Banggongting; available on <http://www.china.org.cn/ch-book/20021209/index.htm>

<sup>163</sup> *2002 nian Zhongguo de guofang*, Section 3.

and strategic orientation, from the first formulation of People's War to the present.<sup>164</sup> Indeed, all of these strategic guidelines are referred to in Chinese sources as a "strategy" of active defense, one of Mao's core tenet of strategy. The content of a strategy at a particular point in time, the key concepts for addressing the main military challenges, are contained in the guidelines that apply Active Defense and other ideas to a particular environment. Active Defense is not a strategic guideline per se. It is only a strategic idea that informs, defines and shapes the strategic guidelines in any given period of time.<sup>165</sup>

### ***Zhanlüexue, 1987***

The 1987 *Zhanlüexue* offers a narrow conceptual and operational approach to problems of strategy. The 1987 book defines strategy as "a method for guiding the overall situation of war" (1987: 1).<sup>166</sup> More specifically, strategy is "the art of using the means and force of warfare to achieve the goals of war." In practice, the book focused on addressing only one strategic problem, namely countering a Soviet invasion in the context of fighting a general war. Although this book was published two years after the seminal 1985 enlarged CMC Meeting that codified the strategic transition from total war to local war, China's approach to strategy as described in this book remained strongly influenced by People's War Under Modern Conditions, the strategic guideline before 1985.

Substantively, the principal focus of the 1987 book is how to counter an invasion, in either a general war or a local war context. The main strategic guidance chapters focus on the operational and planning problems linked to this single goal, such as "Our Country's Preparation for Wars of Countering Invasion," "Strategic Air Defense," "Strategic Defense" and "Strategic Offense." In many ways, as Finkelstein has commented, the book reads as if it is a combination of *Zhanlüexue* and a combination of *Zhanyixue*, a blending of the strategic and the operational levels of war. One of the main reasons for the strong operational focus of the 1987 volume was the singular nature of the strategic problem defined by China's leaders, namely countering an invasion. Moreover, the 1987 *Zhanlüexue* focused almost exclusively on ground forces, with little mention of naval operations and only a limited discussion of air operations in the context of strategic

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<sup>164</sup> See, for example, the brief discussion of active defense in Zhang Wannian, *Zhongguo guofang*. and Ch. 8 in Ma Baoan, ed., *Zhanlüe lilun xuexi zhinan*.

<sup>165</sup> That being said, many Chinese sources do create significant confusion on this score by referring to Active Defense as a strategic guideline. Jiang Zemin's recent work speech at the 16<sup>th</sup> Party Congress states that China's *zhanlüe fangzhen* is active defense. However, I am inclined to believe that this means that China's current strategic guidelines are based on the principles of active defense, not that they represent a strategy of active defense. All of China's post-49 strategic guidelines are usually described in this way and, by itself, the modified of active defense says little about the content of the guidelines. See Zhang Wannian's description of China's successive strategic guidelines post 1949. Zhang Wannian, *Zhongguo guofang*, pp. 176-193.

<sup>166</sup> Specifically, "指导战争全局的方略."

air defense when countering an invasion. In addition, the 1987 volume excludes discussions of conventional deterrence, crisis management or the principles for fighting local wars. Despite the 1985 strategic transformation from total to local war, the PLA's strategic thinking had only just begun to adapt to the new requirements.<sup>167</sup>

In terms of strategic guidance for general war, the book follows the basic elements of active defense in People's War Under Modern Conditions that governed China's military since the late 1970s.<sup>168</sup> The first stage is strategic defense, where the initial surprise attack by an opponent is countered by using a combination of offensive and defensive operations to blunt the force of the attack. Positional warfare was key at this stage. The second stage is strategic counter-attack, where offensive operations are used to counter-attack when the enemy's offensive has been stalled. The third and final stage is a strategic offensive once the enemy has been weakened and conditions have been created for a decisive battle to end the war. While the book includes elements of forward defense, positional warfare and combined arms operations, these were all subordinated to the one strategic problem of countering an invasion.

In sum, the 1987 *Zhanlüexue* presented a narrow approach to strategy because it focused on one type of strategic problem with one adversary. The strong operational orientation of this strategy resulted from the limited scope of the strategic problem and the singular focus on countering invasions. An internally circulated review of military science research by AMS described the 1987 edition of *Zhanlüexue* as based on outmoded assumptions concerning operational experience from World War II, the Soviet threat as it existed at the time and traditional operational tactics linked to People's War.<sup>169</sup> The AMS concluded that the book needed to be revised as part of the ninth Five-Year Plan for military science research to adapt to local wars under high technology conditions.<sup>170</sup>

## MOVING STRATEGY BEYOND OPERATIONAL DOCTRINE

In stark contrast to the 1987 *Zhanlüexue*, the 1999 NDU edition offers a much broader approach to military strategy. The NDU authors define strategy as "guiding and planning for the overall situation of military struggle," not just the "overall situation of

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<sup>167</sup> This is not to say, of course, that individual Chinese strategists were not already thinking about the implications of local war and technological changes for China's strategic thinking. However, these writings and ideas were not yet incorporated into strategic thinking.

<sup>168</sup> For detailed discussions of the People's War Under Modern Conditions strategic guideline, see Ellis Joffe, " 'People's War Under Modern Conditions': A Doctrine for Major War," *The China Quarterly*, No. 112 1987, pp. 555-571; Harlan W. Jencks, " 'People's War Under Modern Conditions': Wishful Thinking, National Suicide, or Effective Deterrent?," *The China Quarterly*, No. 98, 1984, pp. 305-319; Godwin, "Changing Concepts of Doctrine, Strategy and Operations," pp. 572-590; Godwin, "Compensating for Deficiencies," pp. 92-96.

<sup>169</sup> Dai Yifang, comp., *Junshi xue yanjiu*, p. 84.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*

war.” In particular, in accordance with the current focus on economic construction in China’s national security strategy, the NDU authors identify three different spheres of military strategy: wartime strategy, peacetime strategy and local war strategy. Individual chapters in the 1999 volume discuss how China plans to use force in each strategic sphere. In expanding the scope of strategy, the 1999 volume also includes separate chapters on naval, air and nuclear strategy.

This broadening and deepening of the PLA’s approach to military strategy resulted from sustained debate in the early to mid 1990s among China’s military strategists and thinkers. According to the mid-1990s AMS review of military science research, a consensus emerged around the expansion of the scope and direction of the concept of strategy.<sup>171</sup> The AMS review concluded that “everybody acknowledges that modern national defense strategy cannot simply consider military problems...but must consider all military and non-military factors related to national defense.”<sup>172</sup> The definition, basic content, military guidelines and military guidance of strategy were all hotly debated in the early to mid-1990s. Indeed, strategy appeared to be more contentious than other military science topics such as military thought and campaigns.<sup>173</sup> With the focus on operational concepts at the campaign-level during this same period, strategy as a topic required such debate and clarification.

**Wartime strategy** (*zhanzheng shiqi de zhanlüe*; 战争时期的战略) refers to periods of time when a state is preparing to fight or fighting a general war. Specifically, ‘wartime’ is defined as when “society as a whole deals with the condition of war, such as condition of general war” (1999: 203-4). In applied terms, wartime strategy refers to the situation that existed before the 1985 strategic transformation, when society focused on war preparations for an “early, major and nuclear war” with the Soviet Union. In the post-1985 era, wartime strategy refers to situations where China might fight a general war of counter-invasion against a notional opponent, even though the likelihood of such a conflict is viewed as being quite low. In the entire book, the NDU authors devote only one chapter to wartime strategy and they consider countering an invasion as the only type of general war that China might face.

In terms of strategic guidance for fighting general wars, the 1999 volume is quite similar to the strategy contained in the 1987 volume. This strategic guidance divides a general war of countering an invasion into three stages of strategic defense, strategic counter-attack and finally a strategic offensive for a decisive battle. The only real innovation occurs with the discussion of strategic guidance for war termination, but this appears to be a very small refinement (1999: 229-232). The main insight is that war termination should focus not just on ending the war, but also on securing strategic advantages at the same time

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<sup>171</sup> Dai Yifang, comp., *Junshi xue yanjiu*, pp. 65-67.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid.

<sup>173</sup> Dai Yifang, comp., *Junshi xue yanjiu*, pp. 43-120.

**Peacetime strategy** (*heping shiqi de zhanlüe*; 和平时期的战略), by contrast, refers to periods when the nation is not in a general state of war. The word ‘peacetime,’ however, should not be confused with the absence of future conflict, but only the low likelihood of a general war. With the 1985 strategic transformation, Chinese strategy and military planning migrated officially from preparing for total war to preparing for local war, from a societal focus on war preparations and to a focus on economic construction. Peacetime strategy includes deterrence operations and crisis management as well as local war.

**Local war strategy** (*jubu zhanzheng dazhanlüe*; 局部战争大战略) is as a special type of strategic problem that occurs during peacetime. NDU defines a local war as “a war with limited objectives in a part of an area where limited armed force is used” (1999: 271). Local wars have four characteristics: war and politics are closely linked, many aspects of the war (such as the goals and targets of attack) are limited, the outbreak of war is sudden and the operational forms are varied, which places a premium on joint operations as well as command and control. As has been discussed extensively elsewhere in other Chinese writings, high-tech local wars are characterized as being highly intense, mobile and destructive.<sup>174</sup> The NDU volume stresses the increasing role of politics and diplomacy in both complementing the prosecution of local wars and in limiting the scope of military operations of such conflicts. The types of operations in local war include blockades, amphibious assaults, counter-offensive campaigns, and precision strikes.

The broadening of the scope of strategy is only one of the many differences between the 1987 and the 1999 editions of *Zhanlüexue*. Another important difference is that the strategic idea of People’s War receives almost no attention in the 1999 *Zhanlüexue* and seems to have been largely removed from the strategic level of analysis. Indeed, given its importance in previous strategic guidelines, especially People’s War and People’s War Under Modern Conditions, its absence is striking. The NDU authors do discuss People’s War in passing as one of Mao’s important strategic ideas and later invoke it to describe how to mobilize society in a local war to boost comprehensive national power, primarily by supporting modernization efforts. Even as a one of Mao’s key strategic ideas, it is not invoked in any of the strategic guidance for strategy in local wars or in peacetime military struggles.

Likewise, socialist ideology does not play an important role in the 1999 edition. While there are perfunctory references to building socialism and the role of the CCP, none of the future potential conflict scenarios are cast in ideological terms. Class struggle is almost never mentioned. Moreover, in place of ideological terms and references, what permeates the 1999 book is grounding strategic assessments and guidance on the national interest, the correlation of forces and other non-ideological (though still loaded) terms.

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<sup>174</sup> See, for example, Yao Yunzhu, "The Evolution of Military Doctrine;" Nan Li, "The PLA's Evolving Warfighting Doctrine;" Godwin, "Compensating for Deficiencies."

In addition, the importance of first-strikes under a range of circumstances receives much more attention in the 1999 volume than in the 1987 one. While China's military strategy has always maintained an offensive component through active defense, the 1999 book places a stronger emphasis on anticipatory action in both local wars and peacetime military struggles. The 1987 edition only envisioned offensive operations towards the end of a general war.

In terms of similarities, the 'Cult of the Defensive' as described by Scobell is still alive and well.<sup>175</sup> The 1999 volume was published in May 1999, but was presumably copy-edited well before the bombing of the Chinese embassy in Yugoslavia. Nevertheless, the book perpetuates the characterization of aggressive and expansionist actions as hegemonic and defensive acts as peace-loving. Discussion of the strategic offensive or deterrence as key strategic means is always qualified by the statement that China is a peace-loving state and only uses such means in self-defense. Hegemonists, by contrast, use them for expansionist or aggressive ends.

The remaining sections of this chapter examine in detail local war strategy and peacetime strategy.

### Strategy in Local War

In contrast to general war, the relationship between strategy and campaigns changes considerably in local wars. The NDU authors stress that the advent of local war has greatly increased the strategic value of campaign operations. In large-scale wars that have a numerous campaigns, each campaign has only a limited or indirect role in the outcome of the overall war. In small and medium local wars, however, the strategic goal can be achieved through only one or two campaigns – or sometimes, one tactical operation with strategic significance. As the NDU book states, “campaigns in local wars nearly possess even strategic significance” (1999: 281). As a result, strategists must strengthen their control and guidance of campaigns and view them as an important part of strategic planning and guidance (1999: 280-282). The publication of *Zhanyixue* is probably one result of this increased focus on the importance of campaigns.<sup>176</sup>

**Local war strategy** (*jubu zhanzheng de zhanlüe*; 局部战争的战略) refers to strategic guidance for such conflicts. The NDU authors offer six principles for planning and guiding local wars:

“Prepare in many directions to flexibly respond to contingencies” (*duoshou zhunbei, linghuo yingbian*; 多手准备, 灵活应变). The varied objectives and methods of waging local war, along with the speed and intensity of modern warfare, greatly expand the scope of problems that strategy must address in local war. Important variables include the origins of conflict (e.g., border dispute), strength of the adversary, location of combat, and direction of attack (planned vs. unplanned) (1999: 283-284).

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<sup>175</sup> Andrew Scobell, *China and Strategic Culture*, Carlisle: US Army War College monograph, 2002.

<sup>176</sup> For a fascinating discussion of the internal development of campaign doctrine, see Dai Yifang, comp., *Junshi xue yanjiu*, pp. 85-102.

Through this principle, the NDU authors stress the importance of unified planning that considers all of the potential contingencies that the nation might face, not just one type of threat such as invasion. In particular, such planning emphasizes the potential role of great powers that might intervene in a local war and how a conflict should be planned or controlled to avoid their intervention, citing China's 1979 campaign against Vietnam and concerns about Soviet involvement as prime examples (1999: 284).

Moreover, the quick pace of combat in modern warfare and the short duration of many local wars place a premium on a timely and quick reaction to situations that arise, which further emphasizes the importance all-around planning. The notion of "flexible response" underscores the importance of planning and training for different types of conflicts *before* they occur to enable a swift reaction in the actual outbreak of a local war situation.<sup>177</sup> Recent local wars have demonstrated that "whoever can combine peacetime preparations with the flexible management and fast reaction to sudden incidents will quickly control the situation" (1999: 285). To achieve such a capability, the NDU authors discuss the importance of training for different types of contingencies before they occur.

"Combine the offense and defense to seize the initiative" (*fanggong jiehe, zhengqu zhudong*; 防功结合, 争取主动). One of the most important conclusions drawn by the NDU team is that the limited battlefield of high-tech local wars increases the strategic importance of offensive operations. In total wars, the decisive battle (*juezhhan*; 决战) does not occur until the third stage, when conflict moves from strategic counter-attack to a strategic offensive. In limited conflicts, the war can enter the decisive stage almost as soon as it begins, which "clearly amplifies the proportion of offensive operations in entire operations" of a local war (1999: 287). Moreover, the fluid nature of high-tech war often blurs the once clear distinction between offensive and defensive operations. In addition, in local wars, only offensive operations, the "active offensive" (*jiji de gongshi*; 积极的攻势), can seize and maintain initiative on the battlefield. In particular, the NDU authors state "active offensive operations are the main means for seizing and maintaining the initiative" (1999:287). In a word, "without offense there is no initiative...which makes it harder to control the progress and outcome of war" (1999: 287). To wit, "the strategic significance of offensive operations in seizing the initiative and achieving the goals of the war is even more prominent" in local war than in other types of war (1999: 288). China's campaigns in Korea, India and surprisingly Vietnam are cited as examples of using offensive operations to seize and maintain the initiative (1999: 288).

This call to the offensive is qualified to some degree by the nature of local war. Local wars with a component of invasion should still be met with strategic defense in line with strategic guidance for general wars. For other types of conflicts, however, the NDU authors state simply that it depends on the nature of local war, but imply that offensive operations will play a much larger role in Chinese military planning. In this approach, defense is important only to protect strategic points (*zhanlüe yaodi*; 战略要地) and resist any enemy attack, especially with long-range weapons, when executing offensive

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<sup>177</sup> For more on the idea of "flexible response," see Shambaugh, *Modernizing China's Military*.



operations. Defensive operations alone have little direct strategic value in terms of achieving the strategic objectives in local war. In organizing offensive operations in future high-tech wars, planners must have a firm goal and an intense consciousness of the initiative.

Nevertheless, the emphasis on offensive operations is within the context of fighting local war once the war begins. Whether to join the fight in the first place is a political decision that lies beyond the scope of military strategy. Offensive operations are much more likely to be employed once the political decision to fight has been made and the ability to conduct such operations is one reason why leaders may or may not choose to fight. In addition, the NDU authors stress the importance of offensive operations within a strategic orientation that remains based on ‘gaining mastery by striking second’. One subsection, for example, discusses the combination a strategic second strike with campaign and battle-level opportunities to take the offensive and subdue the enemy (1999: 293).

“Integrated operations for key point attacks” (*zhengyi zuozhan, zhongdian daji*; 整体作战, 重点打击).<sup>178</sup> In high-tech local wars, victory can only be achieved by attacking the enemy’s “war system” with systematized and integrated might. Integrated operations to conduct such campaign battles consist of developing four components of military power. *Operational strength* refers to organizing all of the services and sources of military power, such as reserves and militias, as well as types of weaponry. *Operational space* refers to organizing and integrating all dimensions of the battle space to conduct unified operations, including land, sea, air, space and the electromagnetic sphere. *Operational forms* refers to the combination of different types of operational methods and tactics. *Operational arts* (*zhanfa*; 战法) refers to combining operational strength, space and forms to achieve the greatest effect on the battlefield.

Key point attack refers to two different aspects of fighting a local war. The first is centralizing ‘crack troops and sharp weapons’ to establish superiority against an opponent. Even though local wars only involve a portion of the nation’s armed forces, the best troops should be used to achieve local superiority. The strength of these troops should be centralized and used in the main directions of an engagement. The second aspect of key point attack refers to attacking the opponent’s key targets (*zhongdian mubiao*; 重点目标), which is roughly analogous to the center of gravity.

“Strive for quick decisions, but prepare for protracted conflict” (*lizheng sujue, zhunbei chijiu*; 力争速决, 准备持久). In high-tech local wars, a quick resolution of the conflict is essential for achieving the strategic objective. The limited objectives in local war place a premium on surprise, rapid achievement of the objective and the timing of the conflict. Longer conflicts will be more susceptible to international pressure, which can frustrate achievement of the strategic objectives or even create incentives not to fight. Striving for a quick decision reflects the basic characteristics of high-tech war. The importance of speed in local war is often referred as “fighting a quick battle to force a

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<sup>178</sup> This principle is also the key guiding thought for campaign operations. Wang Houqing and Zhang Xingye, eds., *Zhanyixue* [Science of military campaigns], Beijing: NDU Press, 2000, pp. 88-100.

quick resolution” (*suzhan sujue*; 速战速决). The side that starts a local war will fully use the suddenness of the outbreak of conflict to strive for an early victory and in a limited period of time seek to achieve its strategic objectives. The increased firepower, mobility and destructiveness of high-tech war provide the material basis for achieving a quick victory.

When engaged in a local war against a stronger opponent, the NDU book describes four factors that can ensure a quick decision can be achieved. First is a moderate determination of the goal of a local war without any subsequent expansion of the war aims. Second is to stay abreast of changes on the battlefield and strive for a decisive occasion. In particular, in campaign battles, it is important to create decisive opportunities to defeat an opponent by forcing it into engagements when they have not prepared sufficiently or are not in an advantageous situation. Third is to change dynamically the correlation of forces in a specific direction by centralizing ones own forces in one direction to create local superiority and remedy the overall disparity in forces. Fourth is to organize carefully campaigns and battles to control effectively the war situation and war progress (1999:292-293) to minimize risk and maintain the initiative.

“Overall planning to win victory through coordinated efforts” (*quanmian yunchou, heli zhisheng*; 全面运筹, 合理制胜). Overall planning refers to utilizing all aspects of comprehensive national power (CNP), not just military means, to wage local war. The NDU authors specifically state that this mobilization of CNP can enable weaker states to defeat stronger ones and is one of the few instances in which the idea of People’s War is invoked. Overall planning is required because while from a military perspective the scope of local wars is limited, from the perspective of political, diplomatic and other forms of struggle the scope of local war is quite broad. In the current international environment, it has become increasingly difficult to rely only on military means to achieve the ultimate goals of local war (1999: 294-296).

In particular, this principle stresses the importance of creating an integrated system that combines the military struggle with the political struggle. Often times, specific military operations can be manipulated to achieve a narrow political goal as well as the general strategic objective. One example in the book is the initiation, pause and resumption of offensive operations in the 1962 border with India, which sought to compel India to open negotiations over the disputed areas. This section also discusses using diplomacy to building sympathy and support for China’s military operations to ensure that in local war adversaries are the subject of diplomatic and political attacks as well as military ones (1999: 296-297).

“Unified leadership, centralized command” (*tongyi lingdao, jizhong zhihui*; 统一领导, 集中指挥). This principle refers to the importance of centralizing command due to the complex nature and quick pace of high-tech local war.

### **Strategy in Peacetime**

While local war is an important strategic problem in peacetime, the NDU authors also expand the domain of strategy to include other forms of non-war methods of struggle in peacetime. *Peacetime strategy* (*heping shiqi de zhanlüe*; 和平时期的战略) is “the use of strategy in peacetime” and refers to planning and guiding the overall situation of

military struggle other than local wars. (1999: 235). Peacetime military struggles refer to using non-war methods (*feizhanzheng fangshi*; 非战争方式) or local war methods (discussed above) to achieve political or economic goals and complement political, diplomatic or economic forms of struggle. Specific objectives of peacetime strategy are assessments of the general trends of peace and development, determinations of the military threats and other threats of war facing the nation, determinations of the goals and guidelines for peacetime military struggle, planning and preparing army building and preparations for future war (1999: 236-7).

In general terms, the NDU authors stress two main functions of strategy in peacetime, both of which seek to create and maintain a favorable security environment for development. The first is preparing for war, which is similar to wartime war preparations in general but instead focuses on potential war. The second is containing war to promote long-term stability for economic development and modernization. Towards these ends, the NDU authors highlight peacetime strategic guidance in seven areas:

- Preparing for War
- Land, Water and Air Border Defense Struggle
- Deterrence and Counter-Deterrence Struggle
- Military Conflicts and Crisis Situations
- Arms Control & Disarmament Struggle
- Military Diplomacy, Military Aid, Military Trade
- Managing Sudden Internal Incidents

Needless to say, this list represents a broad expansion of the domain of strategy and demonstrates the wide scope of problems that strategy must now address. Moreover, despite the differences in definition, most of these same issues are discussed in the 2001 AMS volume.<sup>179</sup> The overall goal is to use military means to maintain an advantageous position for China, facing either military struggle or other forms of struggle in periods of time when general war is unlikely.

Of the seven, preparing for war is the most important. As discussed above, the suddenness and intensity of high-tech local war greatly increases the importance of

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<sup>179</sup> On arms control, crisis management and conflict control, see Ch. 8. On conventional deterrence, see Ch. 9. Discussion of border conflicts occurs in many chapters.

peacetime preparations. While specific detailed guidance for preparing for war is not offered in the 1999 volume, the authors emphasize the importance of linking such preparations to assessments and judgments of major world trends and the national security environment. A separate chapter focuses on army building activities in peacetime, which is the mainstay of war preparations for high-tech war (1999: 371-393).

Territorial disputes are given special attention and highlighted as a key cause of war to be managed by peacetime strategy. Moreover, these conflicts are viewed as more likely in the future due to the increasing attention that states give to national territory and maritime exploitation. The main goal in any border dispute is to establish and maintain a secure and stable environment for national development. The NDU authors note the importance of striking a balance between the promotion of the Deng's "opening and reform policy" with defense against attempts to 'steal' Chinese territory. When a conflict on the border erupts, the crux of strategic assessment is the character of the opponent, namely whether they are expansionist or peace-loving. Expansionist states must be met with a counter-attack, while conflicts with other states can be settled through negotiations. Unfortunately, the book does not state how to differentiate between expansionist and peace-loving states before a conflict occurs, but it is clear that at the moment none of China's neighbors have been labeled as hegemons, which is a political decision beyond the scope of military strategy. China's strategy for dealing with border disputes remains largely conservative.<sup>180</sup>

In addition, the 1999 volume stresses the importance of unifying land, sea and air defense to create a comprehensive system of border defense, with a special emphasis on maritime resources. Similar themes are repeated in the chapter on naval strategy, which focuses on sovereignty disputes over offshore islands and securing administration control of ocean areas (1999: 302-303), both of which provide additional evidence for the expansion of China's "strategic frontiers" or forward areas to be defended.<sup>181</sup>

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of peacetime strategy concerns the focus on deterrence, military conflicts and crisis management. Taken together, these areas indicate a much larger role for coercion in China's peacetime military strategy. The "deterrence and counter deterrence struggle," (1999: 250) is viewed as one of the most important components of peacetime military strategy. Deterrence itself is defined as "relying on one's own military strength to use methods of military pressure to make an opponent fearful or yield" (1999: 250). Importantly, "counter-deterrence" refers to confrontational actions taken to resist an opponent's deterrent actions, which expands the domain in which deterrence applies. From China's perspective, the 1962 mobilization of troops in coastal provinces and the 1995/6 military exercises were paradigmatic examples of how to conduct deterrent operations. The latter demonstrated the "resolute resolve in

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<sup>180</sup> See Mao Zhenfa, ed., *Bianfang lun* [On frontier defense], Beijing: AMS Press, 1996 (internal military circulation).

<sup>181</sup> For more on strategic frontiers, see Nan Li, "The PLA's Evolving Warfighting Doctrine," p. 450; Shambaugh, *Modernizing China's Military*, pp. 66-69.

protecting unity of the motherland and warned the forces of Taiwan independence” (1999: 252).

For the NDU authors, the art of stratagem is at the heart of successful deterrence or counter-deterrence efforts. The first important component is “creating an image of force,” which is achieved by using all means to create an advantageous posture of might against an opponent. The second component is “showing a form,” using the image of force to create fear in an opponent so that they abandon their plans. Importantly, “showing a form” can include efforts to create either certainty or uncertainty about how China might respond in a particular situation. Instruments of deterrence include public military exercises, National Day military parades and displays of new weapons in addition to more traditional threats of military action and force mobilization. The NDU authors emphasize the timing of deterrent actions, stating that the best time to use deterrence is “the period between the enemy’s strategic choice and strategic probe” (1999: 252). This suggestion is preemptive in the sense of anticipating the actions of an enemy before they occur, especially in a counter-deterrence scenario.

Effective management of military conflicts and crises is another important dimension of peacetime strategy. Military conflicts are “enemy actions of armed confrontation short of war” (1999: 254). Crisis incidents are “tense military confrontations that can create military conflicts” (1999: 254). Both are important because of the potential for escalation, which in peacetime can threaten to upset the external environment that supports economic development. In managing such events, the NDU authors stress three points. The first is correct judgment of the action behind the incident. An attack such as grabbing territory should be resisted through a self-defensive counter-attack, a strategic probe should be met with a deterrent response and accidents should be handled accordingly. The second is the importance of preventive work, including formulation of contingency plans, deployments in sensitive areas and the establishment of warning systems, which will both limit the potential for incidents to arise and aid in the correct judgment of the incident. Again, however, how to assess the character of a crisis incident and differentiate among the different forms of action is not discussed, as this presumably is a political decision. The third aspect of strategic guidance for military conflicts and crises is an emphasis on avoiding escalation and using peaceful means for resolving conflicts with neighbors. Controlling crisis escalation is especially important and underscored. The NDU authors stress that military means should only be used when political and diplomatic means have failed. During the current period of peaceful construction, a “practical and calm attitude must be adopted towards such incidents in order to ensure a secure external environment for economic development” (1999: 257-258).

Finally, the 1999 volume stresses that internal security is an important component of China’s peacetime strategy. The NDU volume refers to the “management of sudden internal incidents,” a clear reference to the PLA’s experience in the Tiananmen crackdown (1999:266). Again demonstrating the broadening of strategy, internal security is not mentioned or discussed in the 1987 volume. Strategic guidance of such events include the importance of quickly suppressing riots and armed rebellions, but emphasizing the use of psychological awe and limiting the actual use of force. The NDU authors stress the importance of limited actions and uniting the people with the government and soldiers (1999:267-270).

## CONCLUSION

In Western strategic vocabulary, China's approach to military strategy might be described as a combination of high-level operational doctrine (focused on the general principles for conducting military operations) and a national military strategy (in terms of the types of tools that can be used to counter threats to national security, including non-warfighting means such as deterrence). Whatever the characterization, in substance it is clear that scope of strategy has moved beyond a narrower operational focus on planning to counter a Soviet invasion characterized strategy in the 1980s. Current strategy not only includes how to fight general wars, but also how to fight local wars, how to prevent or contain local war from erupting and how to secure strategic goals through non-violent though risky means, such as deterrence.

In addition to demonstrating the broadening of China's approach to military strategy, this paper identifies two important implications for the future study of the PLA's military doctrine. The first is when describing China's "military strategy," it is essential to remember the difference between strategic ideas (*zhanlüe sixiang*; 战略思想) and strategic guidelines (*zhanlüe fangzhen*; 战略方针). Strategic ideas such as People's War and Active Defense are relatively stable, whose meaning and operational implications vary only when applied in different strategic contexts. Strategic guidelines outline what Western observers and analysts are seeking when trying to identify how China today plans to wage war and use military force. The essence of China's current strategy lies not in the ideas of Active Defense, but their application to Local Wars Under Modern High-Tech Conditions.

The second implication for the future study of the PLA's military doctrine is that the broadening of China's approach to strategy underscores what Finkelstein has referred to as the "rediscovery" of the operational arts and the campaign-level of war. While still "operational doctrine" in the general sense of guiding how force will be used, military strategy in the Chinese context has moved from operational planning, such as how best to repel a Soviet invasion, to operational guidance, such as what types of means and methods should be used for different problems, including war, that require the use of force. As the rest of the chapters in this volume indicate, the publication of *Zhanyixue* symbolizes the flowering of operational concepts that has occurred in planning how to wage local high-tech wars.