

People's Liberation Army Doctrine and Political-Military Integration in China's National Strategies

A Monograph

by

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Abstract

People's Liberation Army Doctrine and Political-Military Integration in China's National Strategies, by Maj Brian L Willis, USAF, 40 pages.

This monograph explores the role of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) in broader People's Republic of China (PRC) strategies. It examines the PLA's organizational and theoretical integration with political leadership, and how this integration shapes PLA doctrine. It argues that at the conceptual level, China's national strategies are highly integrated. As China's military means more deeply integrate with other national means and political ends under Xi Jinping's holistic approach to national security, PLA doctrine will evolve in significant ways. Some of these trends, such as the employment of the PLA to support global governance and development interests, and increased political centralization, are well under way. Other trends, such as a growing emphasis on the offense, will accelerate as political centralization solidifies and China perceives its period of strategic opportunity coming to a close. Understanding how China's holistic approach to national security will continue to shape PLA doctrine is especially significant for the US, as fundamental aspects of Beijing's approach may challenge bilateral stability, conflict avoidance, and crisis management.

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Acronyms

CMC	Central Military Commission
CPC	Communist Party of China
DOD	Department of Defense
DWP	Defense White Paper
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
NSC	National Security Committee
PAPF	People's Armed Police Force
PLA	People's Liberation Army
PLAAF	People's Liberation Army Air Force
PLAN	People's Liberation Army Navy
PRC	People's Republic of China
SMS	Science of Military Strategy

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Introduction

Achieving the great renewal of the Chinese nation has become the dream of the Chinese people in modern times. This great dream we have is to make our country strong. To the military, the dream is to make our forces strong. To achieve these aims we must strive both to enrich the country and build a strong national defense and powerful military.

— Xi Jinping, Guangzhou Military Command Headquarters, 2012

The close integration of military means with a state's overall political objectives is a fundamental characteristic of an effective national strategy. Military means that are tightly integrated with a state's political objectives ensure military forces are subordinate to and supportive of policy. In the words of Carl von Clausewitz, the integration of political ends with military means ensures the "political aim remains the first consideration" of military action. This allows policy to "permeate" and have "a continuous influence" on military operations.¹ The integration of military means with political objectives also ensures military actions act in concert with other instruments of national power to achieve political aims. Military means that are not integrated with political objectives work against a state's security and fail to provide statesmen with the appropriate tools to advance national objectives.²

The integration of military means with political ends is the central focus of recent extensive political and military reforms within the People's Republic of China (PRC). Various high-level initiatives, including People's Liberation Army (PLA) structural reforms, the anti-corruption campaign, the 2015 National Security Law, and the creation of a National Security Commission are designed to integrate military means with political ends. At the same time, these initiatives seek to more tightly knit China's military with all other national means to achieve national objectives. Foremost among these objectives are development and national security.

¹ Carl Von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Robert Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 87.

² Barry Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine: France, Britain, and Germany between the World Wars* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984), 16.

The integration of military means with all other national means to strengthen development and national security is the central focus of Xi Jinping’s ‘holistic’ (*zongti*) approach to national security. Introduced by Xi in 2014, the holistic approach to national security denotes China’s increasingly comprehensive and top-level (*dingceng*) approach to both internal and external security.³ Viewing national security as encompassing numerous major policy fields, the holistic approach categorizes national security in eleven key task areas (see Figure 1).⁴ Through an understanding of this holistic conceptualization of national security, this monograph examines the degree of integration of China’s military means with other national means and political ends within PRC national strategies, and how this integration will shape PLA doctrine.

PRC Holistic Approach to National Security		
1. Political	5. Cultural	9. Ecology
2. Homeland	6. Social	10. Resource
3. Military	7. Science & Tech	11. Nuclear
4. Economic	8. Information	

Figure 1. PRC Holistic Approach to National Security Task Areas (Created by author)

In this monograph, the term “doctrine” follows Posen’s broad use of the term in *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, which answers: “What military means shall be employed? and How shall they be employed?”⁵ While this usage aligns with the US Department of Defense (DOD) definition—“fundamental principles that guide the employment of military forces in coordinated action toward a common objective,”—it is a more general usage than referring to principles that

³ “习近平：坚持总体国家安全观 走中国特色国家安全道路-高层动态,” [Xi Jinping: Adhere to the Overall National Security Concept and Follow the National Security Road with Chinese Characteristics] *Xinhua*, April 4, 2014, accessed August 15, 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2014-04/15/c_1110253910.htm.

⁴ History and Literature Research Institute of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, *习近平：关于总体国家安全观论述摘编* [Xi Jinping: On the Holistic Approach to National Security] (Beijing: Central Committee Literature Press, 2018), 4.

⁵ Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 13.

guide the design of military campaigns or the conduct of military operations.⁶ In using the term doctrine, it should be recognized that the PLA does not conceive of the term in the same way as Western observers.⁷ Its usage here is similar to a recent definition of “military strategy” by China’s Academy of Military Science in the non-official but highly influential 2013 *Science of Military Strategy* (SMS), which defines “military strategy” as the “guiding principles (*fangzhen*) and stratagems (*celüe*) for planning and guiding overall construction and employment of military power for war and national defense.”⁸ In this paper, the term doctrine focuses on how military forces are designed to be employed to further national objectives.

At the conceptual level, PRC national strategies, including grand strategy, security strategy, and military strategy, are highly integrated. Under Xi’s holistic approach, military and other national means will grow increasingly integrated with political ends, both conceptually and operationally. This increased integration will influence PLA doctrine in significant ways, including: 1) a growing emphasis on the employment of the PLA to support a broad range of global governance and development interests; 2) deepened political centralization; and 3) increased emphasis on the offense. To be sure, PLA doctrine already inherently entails a high degree of political centralization and emphasizes broad support to political, economic, and social interests. Yet the growing prominence of the holistic approach highlights Beijing’s view that the current level of integration is insufficient. Though Xi’s holistic approach is not the genesis of these trends, growing integration between political ends and military means under this approach will accelerate and expand these trends.

⁶ US Department of Defense (DOD), DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2018), 125.

⁷ M. Taylor Fravel, “China’s Changing Approach to Military Strategy: The SMS from 2001 and 2013,” in Joe McReynolds, ed., *China’s Evolving Military Strategy* (Washington, DC: The Jamestown Foundation, 2017), 45.

⁸ Sun Zhaoli, *战略学* [*Science of Military Strategy*] (Beijing: Academy of Military Sciences Press, 2013), 4.

To analyze the growing integration of China's military means with other national means and political ends, this monograph outlines the contours of PRC grand strategy, national security strategy, and military strategy as articulated in authoritative PRC documents. Through a qualitative review of PRC laws, government white papers, authoritative media, and senior leader statements, the linkages between military means and political ends at the conceptual level becomes discernably clear. While the ultimate effectiveness of Xi's attempt to more tightly knit military means with political ends at the practical level remains to be seen, efforts to bolster this integration can be seen in China's Arctic policy, its approach to manage regional instability, and efforts to further military-civilian fusion (*junmin ronghe*) in dual-use industries. This monograph also draws on prominent theories of International Relations, specifically balance of power theory and organization theory, to gain insight into how increased political-military integration and China's view of its security environment will influence PLA doctrine.

Understanding the degree of integration of China's military with national means and political ends is critical in anticipating how China will employ its armed forces domestically, regionally, and globally to support expanding national and foreign policy objectives.⁹ As PLA activities extend beyond traditional areas of operation, understanding PLA actions within the context of China's overall political objectives is critical as states may view China's activities as a challenge to their interests. This understanding is especially significant for the United States. As US-Sino relations are increasingly viewed by both sides as a strategic rivalry defined by competition, bilateral relations appear to have entered a "new era." A clear understanding of how China intends to employ its military means to pursue political ends, and how this will influence PLA doctrine, is critical to bilateral stability, conflict avoidance and management, and US strategy development.

⁹ The PRC designates armed forces as the PLA, the People's Armed Police Force, and militia units.

Grand Strategy and Political-Military Integration

The integration of military and other national means with political ends occurs within a state's grand strategy. This monograph uses a recent definition of the term by Brooks, Ikenberry, and Wohlforth who define grand strategy as "a set of ideas for deploying a nation's resources to achieve its interests over the long run."¹⁰ This definition offers several advantages in analyzing PRC grand strategy. Primarily, it speaks to the long-term view held by China's leaders. This view is epitomized in China's "centenary goals" and illustrated by some analysts who describe China's strategy to become a global superpower as a "hundred-year marathon."¹¹ Additionally, this definition structures strategy within the familiar ends, ways, means construct articulated by Lykke and familiar to DOD audiences.¹²

This binning of strategy into ends, ways, and means facilitates a methodical analysis of strategy. As argued by Yarger, Lykke's model allows for the clear articulation and objective evaluation of a strategy, allowing it to be evaluated for "suitability, feasibility, and acceptability."¹³ Posen adds "effectiveness" to this list, which he argues is "highly dependent on the extent to which the ends and means are related to one another."¹⁴ Likewise, Gaddis identifies this ends-means connection as the cornerstone of an effective strategy, arguing that "no strategy can be effective if it fails to match means with ends."¹⁵ By identifying the ends, ways, and means

¹⁰ Stephen G. Brooks, G. John Ikenberry, and William C. Wohlforth, "Don't Come Home, America: The Case Against Retrenchment," *International Security* 37, no. 3 (Winter 2012): 11; the author would like to thank Dan Tobin for his observation on the benefits of the use of this definition of analyzing PRC grand strategy.

¹¹ Michael Pillsbury, *The Hundred-Year Marathon: China's Secret Strategy to Replace America as the Global Superpower* (New York: Griffin, 2016).

¹² Arthur Lykke, "Defining Military Strategy," *Military Review* (May 1989): 2-8; the author would like to thank Dan Tobin for this observation on the benefits of the use of this definition of grand strategy.

¹³ Harry R. Yarger, "Towards a Theory of Strategy: Art Lykke and the U.S. Army War College Strategy Model," in J. Boone Bartholomees, Jr., ed., *U.S. Army War College Guide to National Security Issues*, vol 1., 3rd ed. (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, Army War College, 2008), 47.

¹⁴ Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 25.

¹⁵ John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategy of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of Postwar American National Security Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 23.

of a state's strategy, one is able to systematically evaluate the suitability of the state's military strategy and doctrine within its grand strategy, and ultimately the effectiveness of the strategy itself.

Yet analyzing PRC grand strategy through a Western model is not without risks. Chinese strategists do not consistently use an ends-ways-means framework to describe strategy. Jullien describes a more traditional Chinese approach to strategy as a continuous reevaluation of forces and conditions within a situation, and through constant exploitation of these factors, allowing a situation "to evolve in a way that the effects result progressively of their own accord and cannot be avoided."¹⁶ The use of Brook's definition of grand strategy, which emphasizes the role of ideas, rather than prescriptive ways and plans, is designed to help bridge this gap. This usage also more closely relates to how PRC leaders conceptualize strategic *ways*. Despite the dangers of forcing Chinese conceptions of grand strategy into a Western model, the benefits in aiding Western observers understand PRC strategy outweigh the risks.

Another benefit of Lykke's construct is a clear depiction of how military means integrate with other national means to achieve political ends. Posen refers to the "knitting-together" of political ends and military means as "political-military integration" and identifies multiple factors that contribute to how tightly ends and means are knit together. Posen identifies organization theory and balance of power theory as explanatory in the most significant of these factors. Posen asserts that during periods of relative international calm, organization theory suggests military doctrines tend to be offensive, stagnant, and "poorly integrated with the political elements of a state's grand strategy." Yet as statesmen and soldiers perceive growing threats to national security and likelihood of conflict, balance of power theory has greater utility in predicting variations within a state's military doctrine. While balance of power theory does not predict a prescriptive

¹⁶ François Jullien, *A Treatise on Efficacy: Between Western and Chinese Thinking*, trans. Janet Lloyd (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004), 38.

military doctrine, as each state's doctrine is dependent upon their unique assessment of political, economic, geographic, and technical challenges and opportunities in an anarchic international system, Posen asserts that balancing behavior will occur as "threats appear greater, or war appears more probable." A key characteristic of balancing includes greater civilian attention to military matters, resulting in closer political-military integration.¹⁷

To an extent, PRC military doctrine is a reflection of the dialectic between organization theory and balance of power theory and a continually evolving assessment of the strategic environment. China's weighty government bureaucracy, which informs PRC national security decision making, gives strong play to the dominant tendencies of organization theory, such as conformity, uncertainly avoidance, and desire for autonomy.¹⁸ In contrast, China's assessment that the strategic environment is increasingly characterized by competition and potential for conflict, indicating its *period of strategic opportunity* is coming to a close, gives strong play to balance of power theory and its accompanying balancing behavior. Accordingly, increased political attention to military affairs is likely to result in tighter political-military integration and greater influence on PLA doctrine.

The concept of the period of strategic opportunity is critical in understanding PRC political-military integration and the evolution of PLA doctrine. Initially specified in Jiang Zemin's report to the Sixteenth Party Congress in 2002, this period identifies the first two decades of the twenty-first century as a period of "important strategic opportunities" in which

¹⁷ Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 25-59; political-military integration is used in this paper in similar terms to Posen's. This usage is not to be confused with "civil-military integration," (*junmin jiehe*) a frequently used Chinese term of art to describe efforts to encourage cooperation between civilian and military resources to develop dual-use technologies.

¹⁸Yun Sun, "Chinese National Security Decision-Making: Processes and Challenges," Brookings Institution Center For Northeast Asian Policy Studies, May 6, 2013, accessed July 15, 2018, <https://www.brookings.edu/research/chinese-national-security-decision-making-processes-and-challenges/>; Graham T. Allison and Philip Zelikow, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*, 2nd ed. (New York: Longman, 1999).

conditions for rapid development are generally favorable for China.¹⁹ Within this period, China anticipates making great progress towards modernization and strategic objectives. Publicly, leaders frequently assert this period remains open.²⁰ However, within China, the view appears much less sanguine, as strategists argue a “more and more severe” international environment challenges its period of strategic opportunity.²¹ Deteriorating US-China relations has prompted debate within China as to whether the term “period of strategic opportunity” (*zhanlue jiyu qi*) should be downgraded to “period of historic opportunity” (*lishi jiyu qi*) to reflect the increasingly challenging international situation.²²

China’s assessment of the continued viability of the period of strategic opportunity plays a significant role in PRC grand strategy and the evolution of PLA doctrine. Xi’s focus on a holistic approach to national security, which recognizes that the more effective use of all instruments of national power is required to achieve political objectives in an increasingly challenging environment, is indicative that Beijing perceives this period is coming to a close. It also indicates Beijing assesses rising potential for conflict. In line with Posen’s analysis, balance of power theory, rather than organization theory, will grow in influence over PLA doctrine,

¹⁹ Jiang Zemin, “Report at the 16th National Congress of the Communist Party of China,” November 17, 2002, accessed October 3, 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2002-11/18/content_633685.htm.

²⁰ Xi Jinping, “Secure a Decisive Victory in Building a Moderately Prosperous Society in All Respects and Strive for the Great Success of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era,” *Xinhua*, October 18, 2017, accessed July 10, 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/download/Xi_Jinping's_report_at_19th_CPC_National_Congress.

²¹ Yuan Peng, “中国战略机遇期并未终结” [China's Strategic Opportunity Period Has Not Ended] *People's Daily Overseas Edition*, July 20, 2012, accessed October 2, 2018, http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrbhwb/html/2012-07/30/content_1089480.htm; for a more detailed discussion on the condition of China’s period of strategic opportunity, see: Timothy R. Heath, “Xi’s Bold Foreign Policy Agenda: Beijing’s Pursuit of Global Influence and the Growing Risk of Sino-U.S. Rivalry,” *Jamestown* (March 19, 2015), accessed October 3, 2018, <https://jamestown.org/program/xis-bold-foreign-policy-agenda-beijings-pursuit-of-global-influence-and-the-growing-risk-of-sino-u-s-rivalry/>.

²² Evan S. Medeiros, “China Reacts: Assessing Beijing's Response to Trump's New China Strategy,” *China Leadership Monitor* 59 (Spring 2019), accessed March 3, 2019, <https://www.prcleader.org>; Cui Liru, “China’s Period of Historic Opportunities,” *China-US Focus* (February 1, 2018), accessed April 10, 2019, <https://www.chinausfocus.com/foreign-policy/chinas-period-of-historic-opportunities>.

including the knitting-together of military means and political ends. China's ability to integrate national means with political ends under its holistic approach to national security will in large part determine the efficacy of its grand strategy, as well as the means and ways it employs to achieve national objectives.

China's View of the Security Environment

Underlying PRC grand strategy and its approach to national security is a continuously evolving assessment of the security environment. In line with their public statements that assert the period of strategic opportunity remains open, PRC leaders describe the global balance of power as becoming "increasingly equitable" and identify "peace, development, cooperation, and mutual benefit" as the "irresistible tide of the times." China's 2015 Defense White Paper (DWP), entitled *China's Military Strategy*, assesses that for the foreseeable future, the international situation will remain relatively peaceful. Yet officials are quick to highlight the many threats to national security. Official assessments stress China is facing "multiple and complex" security threats, including threats to its core interests.²³

China uses the term 'core interests' primarily in diplomatic contexts to signal vital national interests in which there can be no acquiescence. These interests are frequently grouped in three broad categories: sovereignty, security, and development.²⁴ China's 2011 White Paper, entitled *China's Peaceful Development*, provides the most authoritative listing of China's core interests, namely state sovereignty, national security, territorial integrity, national reunification, its political system, social stability, and the basic safeguards for ensuring sustainable economic

²³ Xi Jinping, *The Governance of China*, vol. 2 (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press Co. Ltd, 2017), 74; People's Republic of China, *China's Military Strategy* (Beijing: State Council Information Office of the PRC, May 2015), accessed 10 July 2018, http://english.gov.cn/archive/white_paper/2015/05/27/content_281475115610833.htm.

²⁴ Hu Jintao, "Hold High the Great Banner of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics and Strive for New Victories in Building a Moderately Prosperous Society," *Xinhua*, October 15, 2007, accessed November 13, 2018, <http://www.china.org.cn/english/congress/229611.htm>.

and social development.²⁵ Beijing perceives its ability to safeguard these core interests and the fields encompassed within the holistic approach as critical to national rejuvenation. Consistent with its holistic approach, Beijing views these interests, and threats to these interests, along broad political, social, economic, ecological, and military lines.

Foremost, China views significant internal and external threats to its political and social stability. Internally, these threats include the “three evil forces” of terrorism, extremism, and separatism that seek to disrupt domestic stability and split away the restive provinces of Xinjiang and Tibet, as well as the “rogue province” of Taiwan.²⁶ This also includes “anti-China” forces who seek to instigate color revolutions to weaken the Communist Party of China (CPC). To Beijing, this includes “the West,” who it believes will never fully accept China’s authoritarian party-state as a legitimate form of government. This perceived historical ideological struggle with the West is a deep-seated belief tracing back to Mao and the founding of the CPC, who viewed “the West” as “seeking to overturn its socialist system via ‘peaceful evolution.’”²⁷ This political struggle against “the West” and internal forces seeking to disrupt China’s political and social stability forms a principle lens through which China views internal and external security.

China’s holistic view of the security environment also extends to the economic sphere, which it views as directly tied to political and social domestic stability. After three decades of export and investment driven growth, China views its economic prospects growing ever more challenging. Since the days of sustained above ten percent average annual Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rates of the 1990s and 2000s, China’s economy has entered a self-described “new normal” stage of moderate growth, with GDP growth rates declining to 7.8% in

²⁵ People’s Republic of China, *China’s Peaceful Development*, (Beijing: State Council Information Office of the PRC, September 2011), accessed November 12, 2018, http://english.gov.cn/archive/white_paper/2014/09/09/content_28147498628464.htm.

²⁶ People’s Republic of China, *China’s Military Strategy*.

²⁷ Daniel Tobin, “World Class: The Logic of China’s Strategy and Global Military Ambitions,” chapter in forthcoming book to be published by National Bureau of Asian Research.

2012 and 6.9% in 2017.²⁸ To sustain economic growth, which many analysts view as the ultimate arbiter of CPC legitimacy, Beijing must implement difficult economic policies, including advanced manufacturing, services, and economic restructuring to emphasize domestic consumption.²⁹ UN sanctions against North Korea and recent US tariffs amplify these challenges to economic growth, as well as highlight their implications to national security.

Beijing views the rapid shift of global strategic and economic centers of gravity towards the Asia-Pacific as bringing competition and conflict closer to its doorstep. Specifically, the 2015 DWP highlights enhanced US military regional presence and alliances, Japanese constitutional revision, challenges to maritime claims in the South and East China Sea, and Korean Peninsula instability as contributing to regional instability.³⁰ Beyond its periphery, PRC leaders recognize national interests are vulnerable to global security threats, such as terrorism, piracy, and natural disasters. Climate change is similarly viewed as a non-traditional security threat that threatens China's global economic interests and exacerbates domestic environmental challenges.³¹ In addition to growing political, social, economic, and ecological challenges, Beijing views a broad range of traditional and non-traditional security threats to domestic, regional, and global interests.

Intensifying these threats are advances in science and technology. This includes threats in the space and cyber domains, which Chinese leaders refer to as the “new commanding heights in strategic competition.” Threats also include emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence

²⁸ The World Bank, “GDP Growth,” accessed November 8, 2018, <https://data.worldbank.org/>.

²⁹ World Economic Forum, “Chinese Premier Li Keqiang’s Speech from #AMNC18,” September 20, 2018, accessed November 9, 2018, <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2018/09/chinese-premier-li-keqiang-s-speech-at-amnc-2018/>; Timothy R. Heath, *The ‘Holistic Security Concept’: The Securitization of Policy and Increasing Risk of Militarized Crisis* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, June 27, 2015), accessed August 15, 2018, <https://www.rand.org/blog/2015/06/the-holistic-security-concept-the-securitization.html>.

³⁰ People’s Republic of China, *China’s Military Strategy*.

³¹ Wilson VornDick, “Why Climate Change Could Be China’s Biggest Security Threat,” *The Diplomat* (August 14, 2015), accessed November 10, 2018, <https://thediplomat.com/2015/08/why-climate-change-could-be-chinas-biggest-security-threat/>; for a comprehensive look at China’s growing environmental crisis and its implications for the country’s development and security, see Elizabeth Economy, *The River Runs Black: The Environmental Challenge to China’s Future*, 2nd ed. (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 2010).

and unmanned weapon systems, which pose “new and severe challenges” to security.”³² These threats are part of the impetus driving the “Made in China 2025” initiative and military-civilian fusion. In addition to fueling economic growth and transforming China into a global high-tech manufacturing power, these initiatives are motivated by a desire to reduce dependency on foreign technology in national security-related fields. Recent trade disputes with the US have only reinforced Beijing’s instincts for technological autarky.³³ Within China’s holistic view of national security, threats arising from technological advances, particularly in the space and cyber domains, are tightly connected to political, social, economic, and military security.

While PRC leaders publicly affirm the period of strategic opportunity remains open, they describe the evolving security environment as characterized by growing competition and potential for conflict. China views significant internal and external threats to national security that cross political, social, economic, military, ecological, and technological fields. These threats not only challenge PRC domestic stability, but also global developmental and security interests. This view of expanding global interests in a challenging security environment is a fundamental driver of China’s holistic approach to national security and its emphasis on political-military integration.

PRC Grand Strategy

China’s assessment of a challenging domestic, regional, and global security environment lays the foundation of its grand strategy. That China has a grand strategy is a topic long debated both inside and outside China. Indeed, Luttwak argues that “very few states that participate in international politics have a thought-out grand strategy of their own.”³⁴ Along these lines, Wang

³² People’s Republic of China, *China’s Military Strategy*; Zhou Xin and Choi Chi-yuk, “Develop and Control: Xi Jinping Urges China to Use Artificial Intelligence in Race for Tech Future,” *South China Morning Post*, October 31, 2018, accessed November 10, 2018, <https://www.scmp.com/economy/china-economy/article/2171102/develop-and-control-xi-jinping-urges-china-use-artificial#comments>.

³³ Anna Fifield, “China’s Xi Promotes ‘Self-Reliance’ as Next Economic Era,” *The Washington Post*, November 2, 2018, accessed November 10, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/as-china-settles-in-for-trade-war-leader-xi-emphasizesself-reliance/2018/11/01/.

³⁴ Edward Luttwak, *Strategy: The Logic of War and Peace* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1987), 178.

Jisi, President of the Institute of International and Strategic Studies at Peking University, argued in 2011 that grand strategy in China “is a field still to be plowed” and Beijing “has yet to disclose any document that comprehensively expounds the country’s strategic goals and the ways to achieve them.”³⁵ Yet in recent years, China’s explication of strategic ends and ways is progressively clear. This has prompted analysts such as Heath to argue China does in fact possess a functional equivalent of a grand strategy, and its contents can be discerned from accessible public documents. While the PRC does not openly publish a single document entitled “Grand Strategy,” a close examination of various high-level, authoritative government and party documents, such as the State and Party Constitutions, Party Congress Work Reports, governmental White Papers, and senior leader speeches, reveals strategic guidance (*zhanlue zhidao*) that provides the contours of a grand strategy.³⁶ Within this strategy, the links between military and other national means to achieve political ends are clearly seen.

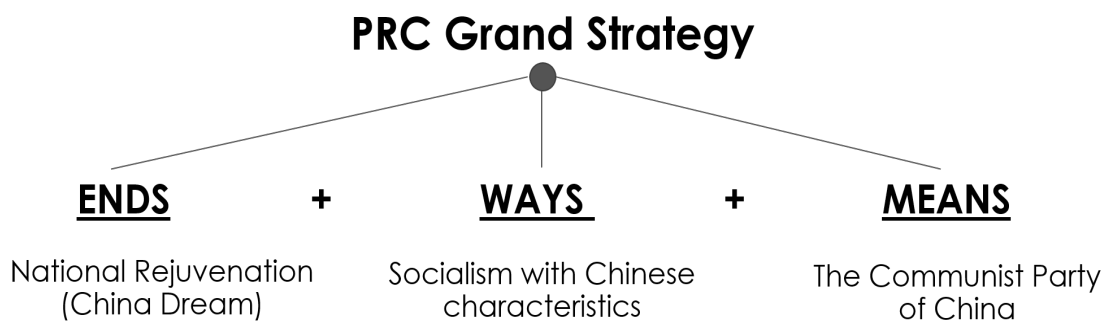


Figure 2. PRC Grand Strategy. (Created by author)

ENDS: The China Dream of National Rejuvenation

China’s overall desired end state is to achieve the great rejuvenation (*weida fuxing*) of the Chinese nation. Beginning with the First Opium War in 1839 and persisting through China’s

³⁵ Wang Jisi, “China’s Search for a Grand Strategy,” *Foreign Affairs* 90, no. 2 (March 2011): 68-79; Steg Stenslie, “Questioning the Reality of China’s Grand Strategy,” *China: An International Journal* 12, no. 2 (August 2014): 161-178.

³⁶ For an excellent discussion on the discernment of PRC national strategy through understanding CPC strategic guidance in authoritative national and party documents, see: Timothy R. Heath, “What Does China Want? Discerning the PRC’s National Strategy,” *Asian Security* 8, no. 1 (January 2012): 54–72.

century of humiliation, PRC leaders describe China as being “plunged into the darkness of domestic turmoil and foreign aggression” that disrupted traditional Chinese society and the natural Confucian order of Asia. PRC leaders describe rejuvenation as a restoration of China to its rightful position as a great and powerful nation. Xi refers to rejuvenation as the “the greatest dream of the Chinese people” that earlier revolutionaries have long pursued.³⁷ By linking his China Dream to Mao and Deng, Xi seeks support in his bid for centralized control at the expense of CPC collective leadership, a move he believes is necessary to achieve the CPC’s “founding” mission in an increasingly hostile environment.

To achieve rejuvenation, Beijing has established two centenary goals to coincide with the one hundred year anniversaries of the founding of the CPC (1921) and the PRC (1949). The first goal is to build a moderately prosperous society in all respects. PRC leaders have previously specified this goal as doubling 2010 GDP and per capita income levels by 2020.³⁸ According to current International Monetary Fund estimates, China is on track to exceed this goal.³⁹ The second goal is to build a modern socialist country that is “prosperous, strong, democratic, culturally advanced, and harmonious” by 2049.⁴⁰ In April 2018, China’s ambassador to Canada described this goal as “basically achieving modernization” and asserted China is on track to reach this goal by 2035, fifteen years ahead of schedule.⁴¹

In line with its core interests, leaders frequently discuss reunification in connection with rejuvenation. Xi’s assertion of the importance of “full reunification” to rejuvenation includes not

³⁷ Xi, “Secure a Decisive Victory”; Xi Jinping, *The Governance of China*, vol. 1 (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press Co. Ltd, 2014), 41; Xi, *The Governance of China*, vol. 2, 14.

³⁸ Xi, *The Governance of China*, vol. 1, 19.

³⁹ International Monetary Fund, “Gross Domestic Product per Capita (China),” accessed November 1, 2018, <https://www.imf.org/>.

⁴⁰ People’s Republic of China, *China’s Military Strategy*; Xi, *The Governance of China*, vol. 2, 15.

⁴¹ Lu Shaye, “To Understand China and the Communist Party of China through the 19th CPC National Congress,” April 4, 2018, accessed October 30, 2018, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjb_663304/zwjg_665342/zwbdt_665378/t1547924.shtml.

only lasting stability in Hong Kong and Macao, which returned to China in 1997 and 1999 respectively, but also eventual reunification with Taiwan.⁴² While Taiwan reunification is most frequently discussed under the principles of “peaceful reunification” and “one country, two systems,” Beijing has not renounced its right to use force, or “non-peaceful means,” should “possibilities for a peaceful reunification...be completely exhausted.”⁴³ Beyond reunification with lost territory, Beijing frequently asserts its resolve to thwart any attempt to challenge China’s territorial integrity.⁴⁴

In addition to reunification, the shifting of the global balance of power and global governance systems in China’s favor is tightly connected with rejuvenation. Beijing views the existing global governance system as inadequate, and views the transformation of these structures into a “fairer, more equitable, and more rational” system as essential to assuring external conditions are favorable for rejuvenation. Xi has actively called on China to “improve its ability to participate in global governance,” particularly its ability to set the rules and agenda in emerging fields such as the internet, polar regions, deep sea, and space. Underlying these calls to rebalance the current global governance structure is Beijing’s assessment of the international balance of power. Beijing judges any transformation to the current structure must originate from shifts in this balance. Calls to make China “prosperous, strong, democratic, culturally advanced, and harmonious” revolve around shifting the global balance of power in China’s favor, which strengthens its ability to influence global governance. Recent initiatives to establish new economic, diplomatic, and security structures, such as the Belt and Road Initiative, the Asian

⁴² Xi, “Secure a Decisive Victory.”

⁴³ Anti-Secession Law of the People's Republic of China (March 15, 2005), accessed November 16, 2018, <http://www.china-embassy.org/eng/zt/999999999/t187406.htm>.

⁴⁴ Xi, “Secure a Decisive Victory”; People’s Republic of China, *China’s Military Strategy*.

Infrastructure Investment Bank, and calls for a new model of international relations, are efforts to strengthen the balance of power in China's favor and achieve rejuvenation.⁴⁵

Beijing also perceives the shifting of the balance of power towards China as necessitating the restructure of the regional security order. Beijing views the current order, which it sees as dominated by America's San Francisco System of alliances, as unacceptable. In its place, Beijing has proposed a new regional security cooperation architecture that is based on the principles of "common, comprehensive, cooperative, and sustainable security." This architecture rejects "Cold War-inspired" military alliances, which Beijing views as targeted against itself. A weakening of US alliances will lead to what Beijing hopes is a relegation of the US to a less prominent role in regional security and a greater role for itself.⁴⁶

China's desire to return to a position of strength within Asia and play a commanding role in global governance lies at the core of rejuvenation. This includes regional predominance, deference from neighbors, and respect from other great powers. This also includes full reunification, and the assurance that China's territorial sovereignty will never again be violated. Within Lykke's model, China's dream of national rejuvenation forms the *ends* to which all national *means* and *ways* are marshalled towards achieving.

WAYS: Socialism with Chinese Characteristics

As rejuvenation marks the *ends* of PRC grand strategy, socialism with Chinese characteristics marks the *ways*.⁴⁷ Lykke defines ways as the strategic concept that describes how

⁴⁵ Xi, *The Governance of China*, vol. 2, 479-490.

⁴⁶ Xi, *The Governance of China*, vol. 1, 360-396; *China's Policies on Asia-Pacific Security Cooperation* (Beijing: State Council Information Office of the PRC, January 2017), accessed November 2, 2018, http://english.gov.cn/archive/white_paper/2017/01/11/content_281475539078636.htm.

⁴⁷ PRC leaders frequently reference the theory of socialism with Chinese characters as the adaptation of Marxism to the specific conditions of China. Socialism with Chinese characteristics is best viewed as a living system of scientific socialist theory to which successive CPC leaders make their trademark contributions to adapt socialism to evolving conditions of China. Socialism with Chinese characteristics today incorporates the guiding principles of Mao Zedong Thought, Deng Xiaoping Theory, the Three Represents (Jiang Zemin), the Scientific Outlook on Development (Hu Jintao), and most recently

to accomplish identified ends.⁴⁸ This definition encompasses how Beijing views the broad role of socialism with Chinese characteristics. However, in China's conception of strategy, ways should not be seen as a prescriptive sequence of operations designed to achieve an end, but as a constant interaction with interconnected actors and opposing forces within an evolving system.

Accordingly, PRC leaders frequently refer to Chinese socialism as the “path, theory, system, and culture” that leads to rejuvenation.⁴⁹ In his first speech to the Politburo as General Secretary in 2012, Xi stated, “Only socialism can save China, and only Chinese socialism can lead our country to development...Only by upholding socialism with Chinese characteristics can we...realize a moderately prosperous society...and turn China into a prosperous, democratic, culturally advanced, and harmonious modern socialist country.”⁵⁰ Xi's view of the indispensable role socialism plays in rejuvenation is consistent with previous CPC leaders, including Mao.⁵¹

A central concept of socialism with Chinese characteristics is the principle contradiction facing society. According to Mao, the principle contradiction “determines or influences the existence and development of other contradictions.” Once the principle contradiction is grasped, “all problems can be readily solved.”⁵² As identified by Xi at the Nineteenth Party Congress and now enshrined in the PRC Constitution, this principle contradiction is the “contradiction between unbalanced and inadequate development and the people's ever-growing needs for a better life.”⁵³

Xi Jinping Thought. For a detailed analysis of Marxism throughout PRC history, see: A. James Gregor, *Marxism and the Making of China: A Doctrinal History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

⁴⁸ Yarger, “Towards a Theory of Strategy” in Bartholomees, *U.S. Army War College Guide to National Security Issues*, 47.

⁴⁹ Xi, *The Governance of China*, vol. 2, 36; Xi, “Secure a Decisive Victory.”

⁵⁰ Xi, *The Governance of China*, vol. 1, 7.

⁵¹ For an excellent discussion on the historical linkage of socialism with Chinese characteristics and rejuvenation, see: Daniel Tobin, “World Class: The Logic of China's Strategy and Global Military Ambitions,” chapter in forthcoming book to be published by National Bureau of Asian Research.

⁵² Mao Zedong, *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung*, vol. 1 (New York: Pergamon Press, 1965), 331-347.

⁵³ Xi, “Secure a Decisive Victory”; Xi's identification of unbalanced and unequal development as a challenge to society is not unique to China. In his speech in January 2017 at the World Economic Forum,

As described by Xi, China's growing economic prosperity has increased demands for democracy, rule of law, security, and a better environment. In terms of China's centenary goals, the challenges that will arise from the accomplishment of the first goal must be resolved by the accomplishment of the second.

To meet the demands posed by this contradiction, Xi has urged the CPC to "devote great energy" to address the imbalances and inadequacies of development and the "ever-growing economic, political, cultural, social, and ecological needs" of the Chinese people. The *five-sphere integrated plan*, the "overall plan" to build Chinese socialism, seeks to coordinate development in these five areas (economic, political, cultural, social, and ecological). This plan works in conjunction with the *four-pronged comprehensive strategy*, which Xi describes as the "overall strategy" to build Chinese socialism.⁵⁴ Through building socialism with Chinese characteristics, CPC leaders seek to manage the principle contradiction facing society, further balance and integrate development, and achieve rejuvenation.

By design, the five fields encompassed within the *five-sphere integrated plan* overlap with the eleven task areas of the holistic approach to national security. Just as Xi views the principle contradiction resulting from unbalanced and inadequate development along economic, political, cultural, social, and ecological lines, the holistic approach to national security aims to incorporate these areas with the more traditional security fields of military, homeland defense, nuclear, information, resource, and technology. Through this holistic approach, leaders aim to further comprehensive development, which Beijing views as tightly interconnected with security.⁵⁵ Increased and balanced development, economically and along each of these lines, is

Xi identified uneven global development and income inequality as the "biggest challenge facing the world today." See: Xi, *The Governance of China*, vol. 2, 523.

⁵⁴ Xi, "Secure a Decisive Victory;" Xi, *The Governance of China*, vol. 2, 47.

⁵⁵ Xi, *The Governance of China*, vol. 1, 393.

essential to achieving security goals and effectively managing the principle contradiction facing Chinese society.



Figure 3. Predominant National Strategies to Build Chinese Socialism. (Created by author)

Beijing asserts that only through properly managing this principle contradiction can China advance towards rejuvenation. This contradiction is the primary theme underlying each of China's national strategies and policies aimed at achieving rejuvenation, including China's governance strategy, development strategy, and national security strategy. As stated by Xi, "Realizing our great dream demands a great struggle. It is in the movement of contradictions that a society advances; where there is contradiction there is struggle."⁵⁶ As the prescribed *path, theory, system, and culture* to manage this contradiction, socialism with Chinese characteristics is China's *ways* to achieve national rejuvenation.

⁵⁶ Xi, "Secure a Decisive Victory."

MEANS: The Communist Party of China

Within Lykke's construct, means explain the resources used to apply a strategy's ways. These means can be either tangible (e.g. forces, people, equipment, money) or intangible (e.g. will, courage, or intellect.)⁵⁷ Under China's Marxist-Leninist system, means extend to all national resources that contribute to rejuvenation, with the Party exercising "overall leadership over all areas of endeavor in every part of the country." More than just the head who exercises control over political, economic, cultural, and social resources, the CPC views itself as a means that connects national resources to strategic ways. Accordingly, the PRC and CPC Constitutions identify CPC leadership as the "greatest strength" and the "defining feature" of socialism with Chinese characteristics."⁵⁸ Moreover, Chinese leaders proclaim the "prosperous and strong" China of today "would not exist without the CPC." As a result, leaders assert that only through the Party's leading role can China advance socialism and achieve national rejuvenation.⁵⁹

CPC control of all national means necessary to achieve rejuvenation is clearly seen in CPC control of the PLA. As a party army, ultimate PLA loyalty is to the CPC, rather than the state. Senior PLA officers are foremost CPC members, and political commissars (*zhengwei*) sit alongside commanders to ensure political discipline and Party decisions are enforced.⁶⁰ Xi frequently reminds military members that loyalty and obedience to the Party is the military's "core duty" and "central" to national survival.⁶¹ Moreover, senior leaders have repeatedly

⁵⁷ Yarger, "Towards a Theory of Strategy" in Bartholomees, *U.S. Army War College Guide to National Security Issues*, 47.

⁵⁸ CPC Constitution, General Program; PRC Constitution, art. 36; Xi, "Secure a Decisive Victory."

⁵⁹ Xi, *The Governance of China*, vol. 2, 18.

⁶⁰ Kenneth Allen, Brian Chao, and Ryan Kinsella, "China's Military Political Commissar System in Comparative Perspective," *Jamestown* 13, no. 5 (March 4, 2013), accessed October 30, 2018, <https://jamestown.org/program/chinas-military-political-commissar-system-in-comparative-perspective/>.

⁶¹ Xi, *The Governance of China*, vol. 1, 238-240.

cautioned against the “nationalization of the armed forces” (*guojiahua*).⁶² Linking military means to national ways, Xi refers to CPC control of the military as “a defining feature of Chinese socialism and a major source of political strength to the Party and the state.”⁶³

In addition to CPC control of the PLA, a host of recently enacted national laws and policies is strengthening Party control over national means. This trend is seen in the 2016 Foreign Non-Governmental Organization Law, 2016 Cyber Security Law, and growing religious restrictions.⁶⁴ The CPC’s upgrade of the Financial and Economic Affairs, Cybersecurity, Reforms, and Foreign Affairs Leading Groups in 2017 also indicates the assertion of greater Party control over these fields.⁶⁵ Each of these efforts strengthen Party control of national means to achieve political ends. Xi’s holistic approach to national security is designed to strengthen this control and more effectively integrate and leverage all national means, including the military, to achieve rejuvenation.

⁶² Fan Changlong, “范长龙：为建设一支听党指挥能打胜仗作风优良的人民军队而奋斗,” [Struggle to Build a People’s Army that Can Listen to the Party’s Command and Win the Battle,] *Qiushi* (August 1, 2013), accessed November 1, 2018, <http://cpc.people.com.cn/n/2013/0801/c64094-22404760.html>.

⁶³ Xi, *The Governance of China*, vol. 2, 452.

⁶⁴ People’s Republic of China, 中华人民共和国境外非政府组织境内活动管理法 [Law on the Administration of Domestic Activities of Non-Governmental Organizations Outside the PRC] (Beijing: State Council Information Office of the PRC, April 29, 2016), accessed October 30, 2018, http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2016-04/29/content_5069003.htm; People’s Republic of China, 中华人民共和国网络安全法 [Cybersecurity Law of the People’s Republic of China] (Beijing: State Council Information Office of the PRC, November 7, 2016), accessed October 30, 2018, http://www.npc.gov.cn/npc/xinwen/2016-11/07/content_2001605.htm; for recent discussion on Beijing’s “guiding” (*dao*) of religion and its connection to larger governance objectives, see: Jessica Batke, “PRC Religious Policy: Serving the Gods of the CCP,” *China Leadership Monitor* 52 (Winter 2017), accessed November 1, 2018, <https://www.hoover.org/research/prc-religious-policy-serving-gods-ccp>.

⁶⁵ “China Unveils Bold Overhaul to Tighten Communist Party Control,” *South China Morning Post*, March 21, 2018, accessed October 31, 2018, <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/policies-politics/article/2138291/china-unveils-bold-overhaul-tighten-communist-party>.

PRC National Security Strategy

Nested within the ends, ways, and means of China's grand strategy are numerous overlapping and inter-related sub-strategies. As noted in Figure 3, prominent strategies within PRC grand strategy include its governance strategy (*four-pronged comprehensive strategy*), development strategy (*five-sphere integrated plan*), and national security strategy (*holistic approach*). Viewing development as the "foundation of security" and modernizing governance as the "overall goal of deepening reform in every field," Beijing views national security as tightly intertwined with these two fields.⁶⁶ Accordingly, all national resources, especially the military, are viewed as means to be employed towards security, development, and governance objectives to achieve rejuvenation. Within this strategic system, the integration of the military and national means to strengthen national security takes place within China's national security strategy.

A formalized national security strategy is a recent development in China. Prior to 2013, the CPC Central Committee set security-related policy objectives and then directed ministries and bureaucracies to develop and implement these policies.⁶⁷ These policy objectives were encapsulated in conceptual frameworks, such as the "New Security Concept" established under Jiang Zemin in 1997 and the "Comprehensive Security Concept" established under Hu Jintao in the 2000s.⁶⁸ Heath describes these concepts as mostly policy ideals that "provided little concrete guidance for implementation."⁶⁹ Furthermore, the implementation process, as described by Yun, was often hampered by diffuse decision making authorities, lack of a core national security coordination team, and narrow agency interests.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ Xi, *The Governance of China*, vol. 1, 393; Xi, "Secure a Decisive Victory."

⁶⁷ Timothy R. Heath, "An Overview of China's National Military Strategy," in Joe McReynolds, ed., *China's Evolving Military Strategy*, (Washington, DC: The Jamestown Foundation, 2017), 13.

⁶⁸ David M. Finkelstein, "China's 'New Concept of Security,'" in Stephen J. Flanagan and Michael E. Marti, eds. *The People's Liberation Army and China in Transition*, (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2003), 197-210.

⁶⁹ Heath, "The 'Holistic Security Concept.'"

⁷⁰ Yun, "Chinese National Security Decision-Making."

Under Xi, national security policy development and implementation is gaining structure. In November 2013, the CPC Central Committee established a national security commission (NSC) (*guojia anquan weiyuanhui*) charged with “deciding and coordinating national security efforts.” In January 2015, the Central Committee adopted a “national security strategy guideline.” The National Security Law of the PRC, adopted in July 2015, formalized the requirement of a national security strategy, mandating “national security efforts shall have an overall plan for internal and external security, homeland and populace security, traditional and non-traditional security, and personal and collective security.”⁷¹

Though the details of China’s national security strategy have not been publicly released, its contours can be identified through China’s National Security Law, Party Congress Reports, Defense White Papers, and an understanding of the strategy’s holistic approach guiding concept. The strategy’s framework can be seen in China’s 2015 National Security Law, which defines national security as “the relative absence of international or domestic threats to the state’s power to govern, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity, the welfare of the people, sustainable economic and social development, and other major national interests, and the ability to ensure a continued state of security.” Article 3 of the National Security Law incorporates cultural security in this definition, with Article 8 emphasizing the requirement to coordinate national security with “economic and social development.”⁷² This broad conceptualization of national security, which includes international and domestic security, territorial and economic security, as well as social and cultural security, highlights the distinction in China’s view of ‘national security’ compared to traditional US conceptions of the term. Whereas American analysts often view national security

⁷¹ People’s Republic of China, National Security Law of the People’s Republic of China (2015), art. 5, accessed September 3, 2018, http://eng.mod.gov.cn/publications/2017-03/03/content_4774229.htm; Miah Song, “China’s Leadership Warns of Unprecedented National Security Risks,” *Xinhua*, January 23, 2015, accessed October 2, 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2015-01/23/c_133942451.htm.

⁷² People’s Republic of China, National Security Law of the People’s Republic of China (2015).

as externally focused on foreign relations and threats to security and economic interests, China views national security with much broader connotations.⁷³

This broad view of national security forms the impetus for Xi's holistic approach to national security. Xi initially proposed the holistic approach concept at the first meeting of the newly formed NSC on April 15, 2014. At the meeting, Xi stated China "must adhere to the holistic national security concept, with the security of the people as its aim, political security as its foundation, economic security as its base, military, cultural and social security as the guarantee, and with the promotion of international security as its backing, embark on a national security path with Chinese characteristics." Under this holistic approach, major policy fields are integrated with national security through eleven task areas (see Figure 1). This conceptualization of security as encompassing all policy fields as interdependent and inseparable marks a profound shift in PRC security policy.⁷⁴

China's creation of the NSC seeks to provide the organizational framework to implement this holistic approach and integrate national means to political ends. At the NSC's first meeting in 2014, Xi described the organization's purpose as to "better adapt to the new situation and new tasks facing China's national security, establish a centralized, unified, efficient and authoritative national security system, and strengthen leadership over national security work."⁷⁵ Despite the NSC's extensive reach across broad policy fields, details about its structure, membership, and agenda are relatively unknown. Indeed, the NSC has appeared in state media coverage only twice,

⁷³ For example, the *US DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* defines national security as "a collective term encompassing both national defense and foreign relations of the United States with the purpose of gaining: a. A military or defense advantage over any foreign nation or group of nations; b. A favorable foreign relations position; or c. A defense posture capable of successfully resisting hostile or destructive action from within or without, overt or covert." US DOD, *DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2018), 125.

⁷⁴ History and Literature Research Institute of the CPC Central Committee, [*On the Holistic Approach*] 4-5; People's Republic of China, *China's Military Strategy*; Heath, "The Holistic Security Concept."

⁷⁵ History and Literature Research Institute of the CPC Central Committee, [*On the Holistic Approach*] 4-5.

once in 2014 shortly after its inception and again in April 2018.⁷⁶ The dearth of reporting prior to April 2018 led some analysts to question whether the NSC was still operational.⁷⁷ At the NSC's April 2018 meeting, Xi confirmed the Commission's relevance, stating the NSC "has firmly grabbed the upper hand in maintaining national security...solved many problems that had long remained unsolved, and achieved tasks that had long remained undone."⁷⁸ Whether Xi's praise of the NSC is mere political rhetoric or recognition of the NSC's true efficacy remains to be seen. However, Beijing's intent to more closely integrate national means with political ends through a structured framework is clear.

China's holistic approach to national security is seen in its approach to managing regional instability arising from issues such as overlapping claims in the South China Sea (SCS). As described in its 2017 White Paper entitled *China's Policies on Asia-Pacific Security Cooperation*, Beijing views economic cooperation and development as the primary solution to these complex and contentious issues involving sovereignty and territorial integrity. As a major trading partner of every country in the region, the focus on economic benefits and risks works in Beijing's favor. The integration of economic and military means under a holistic approach allows Beijing to better coordinate the economic and military tools of national power to induce restraint and deference from states with competing claims and interests. In terms of governance, China's stated approach to regional security emphasizes institutional "rule-setting" and the building of partnerships and

⁷⁶ "Xi Stresses National Security Education," *Xinhua*, April 14, 2016, accessed September 5, 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2016-04/14/c_135279444.htm; "Xi Jinping Claims Progress on National Security in Meeting of Secretive Commission," *South China Morning Post*, April 20, 2018, accessed October 31, 2018, <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/policies-politics/article/2142505/xi-jinping-claims-progress-national-security-meeting>.

⁷⁷ Joel Wuthnow, "Chinas-Much-Heralded-National-Security-Council-Has-Disappeared," *Foreign Policy* (June 30, 2016), accessed July 20, 2018, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2016/06/30/chinas-much-heralded-national-security-council-has-disappeared-nsc-xi-jinping/>.

⁷⁸ Jun Mai, "Xi Jinping Claims Progress on National Security in Meeting of Secretive Commission," *South China Morning Post*, April 20, 2018, accessed October 20, 2018, <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/policies-politics/article/2142505/xi-jinping-claims-progress-national-security-meeting>.

multilateral mechanisms to “strengthen the political foundation” for regional peace and security. China also emphasizes the ecological benefits of its actions in the SCS, as well as the shared benefits of developing underwater resources.⁷⁹ For Beijing, recently reduced tensions in the SCS is validation of its close integration of political, economic, and military means under its holistic approach.

China’s pursuit of governance, developmental, and security interests in the Arctic is also a manifestation of its holistic approach. China’s January 2018 White Paper, entitled *China’s Arctic Policy*, describes a combination of international governance, economic and resource development, environmental, and security interests driving China’s approach. In terms of governance, the White Paper asserts China’s interests in “building and maintaining a just, reasonable, and well-organized Arctic governance system.” China’s economic and resource interests are encompassed in its designs for a “Polar Silk Road,” which seeks to develop Arctic shipping routes and accelerate the exploration and exploitation of oil, gas, and mineral resources. In terms of security, China’s approach emphasizes maritime navigation and commerce security, as well as addressing traditional and non-traditional security threats through multi-lateral mechanisms.⁸⁰

China couches its global military activities in terms of fulfilling its international responsibilities as a great power and its obligations to advance global governance and development. Beijing’s description of its establishment of its first overseas military logistics

⁷⁹ State Oceanic Administration, People’s Republic of China, *南沙岛礁扩建工程不会对海洋生态环境造成破坏* [Spratly Island Expansion Project Will Not Cause Damage to Marine Ecological Environment], State Oceanic Administration of the People’s Republic of China (June 18, 2015), accessed November 12, 2018, http://www.soa.gov.cn/xw/hyyw_90/201506/t20150618_38598.html; People’s Republic of China Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Hong Lei’s Regular Press Conference on May 6, 2015*, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, accessed November 12, 2018, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/xwfw_665399/s2510_665401/t1361284.shtml; People’s Republic of China, *China’s Policies on Asia-Pacific Security Cooperation*.

⁸⁰ People’s Republic of China, *China’s Arctic Policy* (Beijing: State Council Information Office of the PRC, January 2018), accessed November 12, 2018, http://english.gov.cn/archive/white_paper/2018/01/26/content_281476026660336.htm.

facility in Djibouti in 2017 demonstrates this narrative. China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs describes the facility's purpose as to "better implement our international responsibility and obligations of escort and humanitarian assistance [as well as] be a boost to local economic and social development, enabling China to make even bigger contributions to maintaining peace and stability in Africa and the world."⁸¹ For Beijing, an increased shouldering of international responsibilities to contribute to global stability translates into greater say in global governance and strengthening the balance of power in China's favor. Within China's holistic approach, governance, development, and security interests are tightly intertwined and further knit military and other national means to political ends.

A critical component of China's national security strategy that seeks to strengthen the integration of military and other national means is military-civilian fusion (*junmin ronghe*). As described by Xi, military-civilian fusion is China's "long-term endeavor to coordinate economic development with national defense." This concept has grown under successive leaders from primarily defense-focused technologies to include broad coordination across a wide array of economic sectors. Continuing this trend, Xi upgraded the concept to a "national strategy" in 2014. Within PRC grand strategy, military-civilian fusion bolsters initiatives to reduce reliance on high-tech foreign goods. Military-civilian fusion emphasizes developing "strategic, cutting-edge, and disruptive technologies" in burgeoning dual-purpose fields, such as space, cyber, biology, energy, and the ocean economy. Under his holistic approach, Xi sees greater coordination of national means through military-civilian fusion as critical to national defense as well as social and economic development.⁸²

⁸¹ PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Hua Chunying's Regular Press Conference on May 31, 2018*, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, accessed November 12, 2018, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/xwfw_665399/s2510_665401/t1361284.shtml.

⁸² Xi, *The Governance of China*, vol. 2, 448; Daniel Alderman, "An Introduction to China's Strategic Military-Civilian Fusion," in Joe McReynolds, ed., *China's Evolving Military Strategy*, (Washington, DC: The Jamestown Foundation, 2017), 397-414; Lorand Laskai, "Civil-Military Fusion and the PLA's Pursuit of Dominance in Emerging Technologies," *Jamestown* 18, no. 6 (April 9, 2018),

Overall, the holistic approach to national security and creation of the NSC aim to align security policy with China's developmental and governance interests under challenging conditions. As China's economy matures and its period of strategic opportunity comes to a close, sustaining high levels of economic growth will become increasingly challenging, requiring tighter integration of all national means to achieve developmental interests. Considering Beijing's heightened sense of ideological competition with the democratic West and its long-held belief that its reform and opening up would place greater stress on its political system, economic interests are tightly connected to Beijing's international and domestic governance concerns.⁸³ Developmental and governance interests are the driving impetus for Xi's holistic approach, indicating Beijing's perception that its current challenges rise to the level of national security concerns.

Under this holistic approach, developmental and governance concerns will drive increased political-military integration and further integration of the military with other national means. This integration, as well as adverse perceptions of the security environment, will profoundly shape PRC defense strategy and PLA doctrine. Though some of these trends are not new, including a number that predate Xi's rise to power, the increased knitting together of military means with political ends will accelerate these trends, driving significant changes in how China employs its armed forces.

PRC Military Strategy and Doctrine

China's grand strategy and national security strategy provide the framework for its military strategy and defines the military's role within these strategies. As Beijing describes rejuvenation as making China a "strong, powerful" nation, they define rejuvenation to the

accessed November 10, 2018, <https://jamestown.org/program/civil-military-fusion-and-the-plas-pursuit-of-dominance-in-emerging-technologies/>.

⁸³ Daniel Tobin, "World Class: The Logic of China's Strategy and Global Military Ambitions," chapter in forthcoming book to be published by National Bureau of Asian Research.

military as making its “forces strong” and becoming a military “commensurate with China’s international status.”⁸⁴ Beijing sees the military playing a vital role in rejuvenation, as Xi has urged the PLA to “not forget that it was the heroic people’s military that lifted the Chinese nation out of misery and liberated the Chinese people.”⁸⁵

The military’s role in rejuvenation is embodied in the PLA’s four “historic missions.” Introduced by Hu Jintao in 2004, the historic missions connect the PLA to China’s global developmental and governance interests. These missions include:

1. Resolutely uphold the leadership of the CPC and the socialist system with Chinese characteristics
2. Safeguard China’s sovereignty, security, and development interests
3. Safeguard the important period of strategic opportunity for China’s development
4. Maintain regional and world peace⁸⁶

To reinforce the military’s role in rejuvenation, the 2015 DWP introduced a fifth mission that specifically links the military’s role to rejuvenation and the two centenary goals.

5. Provide a strong guarantee for completing the building of a moderately prosperous society in all respects and achieving the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation⁸⁷

The PLA’s expanding role under Xi’s holistic approach is a natural extension of Hu’s historic missions. The White Paper identifies national security challenges expanding in time, space, and scope, requiring China to “uphold a holistic view of national security, balance internal and external security, homeland and citizen security, traditional and non-traditional security, subsistence and development security, and China’s own security and the common security of the world.”⁸⁸ These diverse security requirements require the military to support and integrate with other national means to accomplish broad governance and developmental objectives.

⁸⁴ Xi, *The Governance of China*, vol. 1, 442; Xi, *The Governance of China*, vol. 2, 243; People’s Republic of China, *China’s Military Strategy*.

⁸⁵ Xi, *The Governance of China*, vol. 2, 452.

⁸⁶ People’s Republic of China, *China’s Military Strategy*.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

Foremost among these requirements is the military's role as guarantor of China's political security. To ensure the military's focus on this role, Xi emphasizes political education as the "first priority" in strengthening the armed forces, describing political work as "part and parcel of combat capability."⁸⁹ Beijing's concerns for political security is seen in domestic security spending, which outpaced external security spending by 20% in 2017.⁹⁰ The PLA shares these domestic security tasks with the People's Armed Police Force (PAPF).⁹¹ Through the five-sphere integrated plan, these tasks are directly linked to economic development."⁹² PLA support to development can be seen in activities ranging from anti-piracy patrols in the Gulf of Aden to recent transits near the Arctic. In its support to political, social, and economic objectives, the armed forces link PRC governance, developmental, and security strategies.

Expanding PLA involvement in governance and development tasks requires close coordination with other instruments of national power. The 2015 DWP highlights this requirement, urging the armed forces "to persevere in close coordination of political, military, economic and diplomatic work" in order to "cope with comprehensive security threats." China's assessment that future security threats will encompass not just traditional military threats, but economic, political, social, and cultural threats, in which "traditional and non-traditional security threats are interwoven," is a primary impetus for the creation of the NSC and holistic approach.⁹³ Confronting these comprehensive security threats requires tighter political-military integration. This integration will significantly influence PLA doctrine.

⁸⁹ Xi, *The Governance of China*, vol. 1, 238; Xi, *The Governance of China*, vol. 2, 438-9.

⁹⁰ Josh Chin, "China Spends More on Domestic Security as Xi's Powers Grow," *Wall Street Journal*, March 6, 2018, accessed August 25, 2018, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/china-spends-more-on-domestic-security-as-xis-powers>.

⁹¹ People's Republic of China, Law of the People's Republic of China on the People's Armed Police Force (2009), accessed November 12, 2018, http://eng.mod.gov.cn/publications/2017-03/03/content_4774221.htm.

⁹² People's Republic of China, National Security Law of the People's Republic of China (2015), art. 17, accessed September 3, 2018, http://eng.mod.gov.cn/publications/2017-03/03/content_4774229.htm.

⁹³ People's Republic of China, *China's Military Strategy*.

At the broadest levels, PLA doctrine is centered on two key concepts: 1) active defense (*jiji fangyu*), and 2) the requirement to win “informatized local wars” (*xinxihua jubu zhanzheng*).⁹⁴ Active defense is the “strategic concept” (*zhanlue sixiang*) within China’s overall “defensive” defense policy that serves as the basic viewpoint guiding military strategy.⁹⁵ Though the concept has undergone important evolutions since the founding of the PRC, its basic conception is rooted in Mao’s dictum “we will not attack unless we are attacked; but we will surely counterattack if attacked.”⁹⁶ Despite the basic defensive nature of the concept, current interpretations stress the “active” and offensive elements of the concept. The 2015 DWP describes active defense as “the essence” of “CPC military strategic thought” and emphasizes “the unity of strategic defense and operational and tactical offense.”⁹⁷ The 2013 SMS further elaborates the concept, describing active defense as “offensive defense” and depicting offense and defense as “increasingly integrated” with only a vague distinction between the two. According to the SMS, active defense also encompasses offensive military actions to prevent conflict and “does not reject preemptive strikes in campaigns and combat.”⁹⁸ In the context of comprehensive threats to PRC interests, “striking back” militarily may be justified even if an adversary’s “first strike” occurred in the political, economic, diplomatic, or informational realm.⁹⁹

⁹⁴ Timothy Heath, Kristen Gunness, and Cortez Cooper, *The PLA and China’s Rejuvenation: National Security and Military Strategies, Deterrence Concepts, and Combat Capabilities* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2016), accessed August 16, 2018, http://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1402.html.

⁹⁵ People’s Republic of China, *China’s Military Strategy*; for an excellent discussion on how the PLA receives direction, see: Timothy R. Heath, “An Overview of China’s National Military Strategy,” in Joe McReynolds, ed., *China’s Evolving Military Strategy*, (Washington, DC: The Jamestown Foundation, 2017), 13.

⁹⁶ Sun, [*Science of Military Strategy*], 48.

⁹⁷ People’s Republic of China, *China’s Military Strategy*.

⁹⁸ Sun, [*Science of Military Strategy*], 48, 107.

⁹⁹ Heath, Gunness, and Cooper, *The PLA and China’s Rejuvenation*.

To implement the strategic concept of “active defense,” the PLA identifies winning “informationized local wars” as its basic point in *preparation for military struggle*.¹⁰⁰ Since 2004, winning informationized local wars has been a key concept and requirement in PLA doctrine.¹⁰¹ DOD’s 2012 annual report on PRC military power interprets this concept as “high-intensity, information-centric regional military operations of short duration.”¹⁰² The concept also emphasizes full spectrum, multi-domain operations as a central characteristic of future conflict, with particular emphasis on the maritime domain added in the 2015 DWP.¹⁰³ Winning short and intense conflicts under such conditions requires an efficient command and control system that can quickly process information and accept the high risks of offensive military actions. For political leaders, this drives centralization of decision making and the need to integrate military actions with quick and decisive actions in other spheres, including diplomatic, economic, and informational fields. Winning “informationized local wars” requires increased political-military integration and the integration of the military with other instruments of national power. Under Xi’s holistic approach, these requirements are driving and accelerating significant trends in PLA doctrine.

¹⁰⁰ People’s Republic of China, *China’s Military Strategy*; People’s Republic of China Ministry of Defense website defines preparation for military struggle as “a basic military practice and an important guarantee for safeguarding peace, containing crises and winning wars.” Accessed November 2, 2018, http://eng.mod.gov.cn/Database/WhitePapers/2015-05/26/content_4586714.htm.

¹⁰¹ Heath, Gunness, and Cooper, *The PLA and China’s Rejuvenation*, 35.

¹⁰² Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People’s Republic of China 2012* (Washington, DC, 2012). The report defines “informatization” as “conditions in which modern military forces use advanced computer systems, information technology, and communication networks to gain operational advantage over an opponent.”

¹⁰³ People’s Republic of China, *China’s Military Strategy*.

Influence on PLA Doctrine

In conjunction with the concepts of active defense and “informationized local wars,”

PLA doctrine has recently emphasized three significant, inter-related trends. These trends include:

1. The use of military means in peacetime and beyond China’s periphery to support a broad range of global governance and developmental interests
2. A focus on political centralization
3. an emphasis on the offense

While Xi’s holistic approach may not be the genesis for these trends, as some have been evolving over the last decade or longer, increased political-military integration under the holistic approach is accelerating these trends. The same influences that are propelling these trends in PLA doctrine, such as growing global interests and the assessment that China’s period of strategic opportunity is closing, are the same influences driving Xi’s holistic approach.

One of the most profound shifts these factors are driving in PLA doctrine is the use of military means to support a broad range of increasingly global political, economic, social, and security interests. Building on Hu’s historic missions, which emphasize the PLA’s role in safeguarding China’s developmental interests, the period of strategic opportunity, and maintaining regional and world peace, this trend is gaining momentum under Xi. Xi has urged the military to play an active role in economic and social development and “coordinate economic development with national defense.”¹⁰⁴ Accordingly, the 2015 DWP outlines eight “strategic tasks” for the military, which emphasize safeguarding China’s overseas interest and supporting national economic and social development.¹⁰⁵ These tasks build on the 2013 DWP, entitled *The Diversified Employment of China’s Armed Forces*, which urges the military to “broaden its vision of national security strategy and military strategy.” The 2013 White Paper specifically emphasizes the PLA’s role in military operations other than war (*feizhanzheng junshi xingdong*),

¹⁰⁴ Xi, *The Governance of China*, vol. 2, 448-456.

¹⁰⁵ People’s Republic of China, *China’s Military Strategy*.

such as humanitarian assistance/disaster relief (HA/DR), maritime security and protection of sea lines of communication, international peacekeeping, counter-terrorism cooperation, and evacuation of Chinese nationals. PLA involvement in these international governance and developmental-related tasks dovetails with the 2013 and 2015 White Papers' emphasis on the employment of military means in peacetime.¹⁰⁶

These trends are particularly relevant to the PLA Navy (PLAN), which has recently grown in prominence in China's traditionally Army-dominated force structure. The 2015 DWP instructs the PLAN to "develop a modern maritime military force structure commensurate with its national security and development interests" and "gradually shift its focus from 'offshore waters defense' to a combination of 'offshore waters defense' with 'open seas protection.'"¹⁰⁷ China's efforts to develop a blue-water navy able to secure its global interests can be seen in the deployment of its first aircraft carrier, the *Liaoning*, in 2016 and the production of its first indigenous carrier, expected to be operational by late 2019. Two additional carriers are also reportedly under construction.¹⁰⁸ China's military logistics facility in Djibouti, as well as anticipated future overseas facilities, will complement its blue water naval ambitions in advancing China's global governance, developmental, and security interests.

In addition to emphasizing the use of military means to support global political, economic, social, and security interests, Xi's holistic approach and growing perceptions of a closing period of strategic opportunity are driving the centralization of military decision making.

¹⁰⁶ People's Republic of China, *The Diversified Employment of China's Armed Forces* (Beijing: State Council Information Office of the PRC, April 2013), accessed November 2, 2018, <http://en.people.cn/90786/8209362.html>; People's Republic of China, *China's Military Strategy*.

¹⁰⁷ People's Republic of China, *China's Military Strategy*.

¹⁰⁸ Scott Neuman, "China's Newest Aircraft Carrier, 'Type 001A,' Reportedly Begins Sea Trials," *NPR*, August 28, 2018, accessed November 12, 2018, <https://www.npr.org/2018/08/28/642493101/chinas-newest-aircraft-carrier-type-001a-reportedly-begins-sea-trials>; Kyle Mizokami, "China's Navy: On the Verge of Becoming an Aircraft Carrier Superpower?," *The National Interest*, October 11, 2018, accessed November 12, 2018, <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/chinas-navy-verge-becoming-aircraft-carrier-superpower-33131>.

In line with Posen's hypothesis that anticipated conflict leads to greater political-military integration, Xi is advancing numerous initiatives to ingrain centralized decision making in PLA doctrine.¹⁰⁹ This includes the extension of the nation-wide anticorruption campaign to the PLA, which has resulted in the investigation of thousands of PLA officers, including former CMC Vice Chairmen Xu Caihou and Guo Boxiong.¹¹⁰ Centralization efforts also include the restructuring of PLA headquarters in 2016, which abolished the previous four PLA General Departments in exchange for fifteen departments directly under the Central Military Commission (CMC) and its Chairman Xi Jinping. Centralizing decision making and strengthening political-military integration is also the aim of the newly established "CMC Chairman Responsibility System." The system's primary objective is best described by a recent article in the Central Party School's theoretical journal, *Study Times (Xuexi Shibao)*, which states, "only by resolutely safeguarding and implementing the CMC Chairman responsibility system can we truly centralize highest decision-making and command authority in the Party Central Committee, the CMC, and Chairman Xi, thus assuring the entire military and PAPF are highly centralized, unified, and coordinated under the absolute leadership of the party."¹¹¹ Centralized military decision making is a direct reflection of increased political-military integration under Xi's holistic approach.

Increased centralization coincides with a growing emphasis on the offense in PLA doctrine. This emphasis is seen in the 2015 DWP's strategic requirement to build air and space

¹⁰⁹ Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 80.

¹¹⁰ Choi Chi-yuk and Minnie Chan, "Xi Takes Aim at More Top Chinese Generals as Anti-Graft Drive Rolls On," *South China Morning Post*, August 24, 2018, accessed November 12, 2018, <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy-defence/article/2161289/president-xi-jinping-takes-aim-more-top-chinese>.

¹¹¹ Wang Ning, "坚决维护和贯彻军委主席负责制确保党对武警部队绝对领导" [Resolutely Safeguard and Implement the CMC Chairman Responsibility System to Ensure Absolute Leadership of the Party over the Armed Police], *Xuexi Shibao*, October, 11 2017, accessed October 14, 2018, <http://www.studytimes.cn/zydx/GCFT/2017-10-11/10817.html>; For further discussion on the CMC Chairman Responsibility System, see: James Mulvenon, "The Cult of Xi and the Rise of the CMC Chairman Responsibility System" *China Leadership Monitor*, no. 55 (January 23, 2018), accessed October 10, 2018, <https://www.hoover.org/research/cult-xi-and-rise-cmc-chairman-responsibility-system>.

capabilities to conduct “*offensive* [emphasis added] and defensive operations” and its direction to the PLA Air Force (PLAAF) to shift its focus from “territorial air defense” to “both defense and offense.” Long-range PLAAF bombing missions in the SCS and beyond the first island chain are a reflection of this trend. For the PLAN, this includes growing emphasis on offensive operations, including maritime joint sea and air strike formations, blockade forces, and special forces infiltration.¹¹² To justify the shift, the SMS claims the “militaries of great powers increasingly emphasize offensive operations.”¹¹³

This doctrinal shift to the offense coincides with Posen’s hypothesis concerning the influence of balance of power theory on military doctrine. While Posen asserts that while in general, balance of power theory predicts heterogeneity among a state’s reliance on an offensive, defensive, or deterrence-focused military doctrine, states that are expansionist, geographically encircled, or have no alliances tend to prefer offensive doctrines. Furthermore, political leaders in these states will tend to intervene more in military organizations and have higher levels of political-military integration.¹¹⁴ China’s identification as an expansionist power is a topic long debated, but its expanding global aspirations and desire to rebalance global governance systems in its favor is clear.¹¹⁵ Fear of geographic encirclement is also a prominent theme of China’s world view, especially given the US’s regional alliance system and its courting of a Quad-alliance structure with India, Japan, and Australia. In line with Posen’s assertion that balance of power theory plays a dominant role in determining military doctrine when threats appear greater and conflict more likely, the growing emphasis on the offense is likely to continue as China foresees

¹¹² Andrew S. Erickson, “Doctrinal Sea Change, Making Real Waves: Examining the Naval Dimension of Strategy,” in Joe McReynolds, ed., *China’s Evolving Military Strategy*, (Washington, DC: The Jamestown Foundation, 2017), 101-140.

¹¹³ Sun, [*Science of Military Strategy*], 107.

¹¹⁴ Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*. Pg 78-9, 230.

¹¹⁵ Andrew J. Nathan and Andrew Scobell, *China’s Search for Security* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012); John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2014); F. Huiyun, “Is China a Revisionist Power?,” *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* 2, no. 3 (June 1, 2009): 313–334.

the end of its period of strategic opportunity.¹¹⁶ CPC leaders view tighter political-military integration and centralization as necessary in ensuring military actions align with political ends in an increasingly challenging environment that requires a more offense-oriented doctrine.

Increased political-military integration under Xi's holistic approach will continue to shape PLA doctrine. Its influence is seen in the expanding use of military means to support a broad range of global political, social, and economic development interests, increased centralization, and growing emphasis on the offense. While Xi's holistic approach may not be the genesis of all these trends, it is certain to accelerate them. Within the holistic approach to national security, each of these trends play a vital role in perfecting the ways and means to achieve national rejuvenation.

Conclusion: Implications for the United States

PRC military strategy and doctrine, as a subset of China's grand strategy and national security strategy, conceptually represents a system of tightly integrated means and ends. Yet well-coordinated political narrative does not guarantee the smooth execution of strategy. As observed by Weigley, political-military integration remains "an intractable problem" endemic to "the whole history of the modern state," regardless of whether the state is democratic or totalitarian.¹¹⁷ Gray has noted that "just because a government drafts a document which proclaims the existence of a grand strategy, or a 'comprehensive approach,' there is no guarantee that [officials] will behave cohesively, coherently, and comprehensively."¹¹⁸ Gray speaks to the individual actors and organizations that comprise large bureaucracies, who despite high-level initiatives to centralize decision making and coordinate inter-organizational behavior, each have competing priorities and interests. These organizational tendencies amplify what Luttwak calls the lack of "natural

¹¹⁶ Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 59.

¹¹⁷ Russell F. Weigley, "Military Strategy and Civilian Leadership," in *Historical Dimensions of National Security Problems*, ed. Klaus Knorr (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1976), 38-39.

¹¹⁸ Colin S. Gray, *The Strategy Bridge: Theory for Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 28.

harmony” between the vertical levels of strategy.¹¹⁹ These forces will counteract the balance of power theory tendencies identified by Posen, and challenge Xi’s holistic approach and desired political-military integration.

Despite these competing influences, the holistic approach to national security attempts to elevate the integration of military and other means with political ends to a new level. While a detailed assessment of the influence of Xi’s holistic approach on political-military integration beyond the conceptual level is beyond the scope of this paper and perhaps too early to tell, China’s military strategy, approach to Asia-Pacific security, and stated Arctic policy each embrace a holistic approach. China’s holistic approach to national security, and resultant levels of political-military integration, will have significant implications for US-Sino relations and US Indo-Pacific theater strategy. Implications include:

1. Complication of conflict prevention and crisis management
2. Greater opportunities for cooperation and conflict as encounters with US forces increase
3. PLA actions and doctrine can only be understood in context of China’s holistic approach

Foremost, China’s melding of all policy fields into the realm of national security complicates conflict prevention and crisis management. Beijing may perceive US infringement in any of the holistic approach’s eleven task areas as a threat to national security. Growing bilateral tensions and endemic strategic distrust intensify this danger.¹²⁰ This danger is also compounded by Yun’s depiction of the “first instinct” of Chinese analysts “to highlight the US factor in almost any national security challenge China faces.”¹²¹ Considering the propensity for confrontation in US-Sino relations and shortcomings within each country’s crisis management systems, as demonstrated in previous security crises such as the 1999 bombing of the Chinese embassy in

¹¹⁹ Edward Luttwak, *Strategy: The Logic of War and Peace* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1987), 234.

¹²⁰ Wang Jisi and Kenneth G. Lieberthal, *Addressing U.S.-China Strategic Distrust* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institute, 2012).

¹²¹ Yun, “Chinese National Security Decision-Making.”

Belgrade and the 2001 military aircraft collision off Hainan, the challenges to conflict prevention over perceived national security interests appear to be growing.¹²²

In a detailed study of US-Sino security crisis management, Swaine and Zhang adapt several requirements for successful crisis management developed by Johnson into eight basic principles specific to US-Sino relations. Two of these principles—the need to divide large, integrated, hard-to-resolve disputes into smaller, more manageable issues, and the need to focus on limited objectives and employ means on behalf of such objectives—are challenged by Xi’s holistic approach. By conflating all interests as national security interests, disputes become more complex, more likely, and less manageable. As issues become more integrated, limited objectives become harder to identify and bargaining room shrinks. Conversely, one of Johnson’s principles, the need to maintain direct channels of communication and send clear, specific signals, may improve crisis management as political centralization extends.¹²³

The PLA’s expanding role in global governance and development interests also carries important implications for US policy and military strategy. As the PLA extends its operations beyond China’s periphery, opportunities for both cooperation and competition with the US military increase. Future encounters will likely include elements of both, as seen in the cooperative anti-piracy patrols in the Gulf of Aden and China’s establishment of a competitive foothold in Djibouti. Future encounters, such as in the Arctic and Middle East, will bring increased risks, especially as the distance from Beijing lengthens.

Increased centralization of PLA decision making appears to be an attempt to better manage this risk. As Beijing perceives an increasingly hostile external environment, it judges military means, and potentially offense-oriented doctrine, will be required to secure

¹²² Michael D. Swaine, Tuosheng Zhang, and Danielle F. S. Cohen, eds., *Managing Sino-American Crises: Case Studies and Analysis* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2006).

¹²³ Ibid, 1-10.

developmental interests. Balancing risk with the CPC's need for economic growth requires a more calculated approach to risk management, an approach Beijing feels is best in the hands of political, rather than military, leaders. This is especially true given trends in PLA doctrine towards the offense, and its view that great powers tend to fight wars away from its borders.¹²⁴

Trends in PLA doctrine, including the military's expanding role in global governance and development, increased centralization, and emphasis on the offense, can only be understood within the context of Xi's holistic approach to national security. China's logistics support facility at Djibouti, PLAN anti-piracy patrols in the Gulf of Aden, support to UN peacekeeping, HA/DR activities in Nepal, and naval operations in the SCS, to name a few, are all manifestations of this holistic approach. These activities are driven by governance and developmental interests as much as by traditional security interests. Increased political-military integration under Xi's holistic approach will expand the role of the PLA and its doctrine as China marches towards rejuvenation. Understanding how PLA activities and doctrine are nested within China's military, national security, and grand strategy is critical to the US as it seeks to constructively manage competing interests and implement its Indo-Pacific theater strategy.

¹²⁴ Sun, [*Science of Military Strategy*], 108; for an excellent discussion on the 2013 SMS's introduction of 'forward defense' (*qianyan fangwei*) and 'strategic space' (*zhanlue kongjian*), see M. Taylor Fravel, "China's Changing Approach to Military Strategy: The SMS from 2001 and 2013," in Joe McReynolds, ed., *China's Evolving Military Strategy*, (Washington, DC: The Jamestown Foundation, 2017), 55-66.

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