

# China's Psychological Warfare

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In the summer of 1997, the eyes of the world were on Hong Kong as China assumed control over the former crown colony. How China handles the transition there is widely viewed as a preview of what might happen if China achieves its long-term goal of "reunification" with Taiwan. Increased Chinese defense spending since the late 1980s has purchased advanced arms from Russia and developed advanced domestic systems and platforms. Further, more aggressive military activities claiming disputed territories in the Spratly islands exercises apparently intended to bully Taiwan have heightened regional anxiety.<sup>1</sup>

Over the past decade, China has emerged as a significant player in virtually every arena of international competition. However, key events during this period, especially the prodemocracy movement in China in 1989, the strong performance of the allies in the Gulf War and the breakup of the Soviet Union, have significantly influenced Chinese leaders. Chinese national strategy seeks to build "comprehensive national strength" by enhancing China's international standing, improving weapons and telecommunications and promoting continued economic development, while maintaining internal stability.<sup>2</sup> For Chinese leaders, these objectives do not permit challenges to China's sovereignty or the internal authority of the Communist Party. Further, China seeks to ensure the widest possible latitude in trade, aid, diplomacy and military activity that will enhance its aims.<sup>3</sup>

As China grows militarily and economically, its leaders will have an increasingly credible arsenal to enforce policy objectives. Interpreting China's statements and actions in the international arena and developing the most appropriate responses are vitally important. Yet clearly understanding China's intentions is often difficult, obscured by differences in language, history, culture and ideology.

This article examines elements of Chinese propaganda and public diplomacy that may have contributed to that lack of understanding, particularly the various deception and perception management programs China has used to gain advantage on sensitive issues. Current Chinese procedures encompass ideas from premodern Chinese views of strategy and statecraft, world view of modern totalitarianism, experience of communist leaders as they rose to power and more recent experiences meeting domestic and international challenges since the start of economic reform. Recent publications have also shown that China is interested in using psychological warfare to incorporate traditional strategic approaches, exploit the power of modern communications technology and support national policy objectives across diplomatic, economic and military spheres.

## Historical Perspectives

China's premodern historical tradition produced extensive writings on military strategy. The best known by far is *The Art of War*, attributed to Sun Tzu, a 5th-century B.C. nobleman who lived in what is now Shandong Province. This widely read work emphasizes that the preferred strategy of all warfare is manipulating the enemy to create an opportunity for easy victory without combat. Sun Tzu advised that attacking the enemy's strategy is the best way to achieve victory, attacking his alliances is next, attacking his troops is next and attacking his fortified cities is the worst.<sup>4</sup> Modern Chinese sources often paraphrase the concept, "It is better to attack the enemy's mind than to attack his fortified cities," and it is considered the traditional origin of psychological warfare.<sup>5</sup> But achieving victory without combat requires careful planning, a prosperous and contented populace that fully supports the state, well-trained and highly disciplined troops and absolute secrecy within alliances and during operations. If a military campaign is required, it should seek to achieve its goals with minimum risk, destruction and suffering.<sup>6</sup>

The ability to use deception skillfully is a highly prized characteristic of a leader. Victory through physical and psychological deception forms a central theme in *The Art of War*, "Warfare is a game of deception. Therefore, feign incapability when in fact capable; feign inactivity when ready to strike; appear to be far away when actually nearby, and vice versa. When the enemy is greedy for gains, hand out a bait to lure him; when he is in disorder, attack and overcome him; when he boasts substantial strength, be doubly prepared against him; and when he is formidable, evade him. If he is given to anger, provoke him. If he is timid and

careful, encourage his arrogance. If his forces are rested, wear them down. If he is united, divide him. Attack where he is least prepared. Take action when he least expects you. Herein lies a strategist's subtlety of command that is impossible to codify in hard-and-fast rules beforehand."<sup>7</sup>

Douglas T. Stuart and William Tow's ground-breaking 1981 article on Chinese military deception summarizes four basic themes of deception in classical Chinese literature:

- Foreknowledge, full awareness and understanding of one's own forces, the opponent and the situation, are essential preconditions for successful deception. The intelligent use of spies and agents is critical in gaining foreknowledge.
- Deception may be useful in controlling the dynamics of a situation, such as determining the pace and timing of events, to reduce costs and control risks.
- One objective of deception is direct manipulation of the opponent's view of reality to induce him to pursue courses of action favorable to one's own interests.
- Through such measures, deception may cause the opponent to defeat himself.<sup>8</sup>

### **Modern Views of Deception**

Deception, the deliberate use of misinformation to mislead others or create uncertainty, is a vital tool in psychological warfare. The former Soviet Union's disinformation programs reflected the view that the most effective deceptions are active measures. Modern disinformation programs depend on state-controlled media to reach a wide audience, deny access to and discredit sources of contradictory information. Secrecy masks the employment of cover and deception, but intentional leaks increase the target's confusion about the authenticity of the information and still provide food for thought. Understanding the target's predisposition to take advantage of the likelihood that some information may be ignored or misinterpreted, is essential to success.

Strategic deceptions are generally large-scale, long term operations that seek advantage in a high-stakes contest with large numbers of perpetrators and victims on both sides.<sup>9</sup> Full appreciation of this approach is necessary to understand its effectiveness. In other words, even if all media cannot be controlled, which is the case in the modern electronic era, the state must still have enough control through official and unofficial sources to convince a critical mass of the target audience and sow seeds of doubt about the validity of opposing views. Even though the truth eventually becomes known in most cases, a deception can often remain effective as long as it is not disproved.<sup>10</sup>

### **Views of Psychological Warfare in Modern China**

Both Western and Chinese historians have concluded that the People's Liberation Army (PLA) effectively used psychological warfare against their nationalist opponents during the Chinese civil war. The communists knew their nationalist opponents and the terrain intimately, thus fulfilling the first essential precondition for action. They also had considerable ability to control the flow of information. In the end game that led to the final communist victory in 1949, communist leaders exploited nationalist beliefs that their opponents were stupid, cowardly, weak and in retreat, and then used a complex blend of maneuver, propaganda and rumors, while maintaining secrecy, to encourage nationalist leaders to split their army and attack from the wrong direction.<sup>11</sup>

The relative isolation of China from the West from the 1950s through the 1970s provided little opportunity for deception in day-to-day, government-to-government issues. However, in a broader perspective, much of the propaganda directed against Moscow and Washington during the 1960s and 1970s after the Sino-Soviet split appears to have been primarily a deterrence strategy aimed at achieving long-term behavior modification in a form of psychological warfare.<sup>12</sup> China had lost its major ally and lay weakened by the economic chaos and internal political struggles of the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution. The propaganda of that period was one element of a successful national strategy that kept both potential adversaries at bay while gradually engineering the rapprochement with the United States that resulted in readmission to the United Nations and diplomatic recognition by Washington. In 1981, Harlan Jencks predicted that as China expanded contact with the outside world and gained more "foreknowledge" of potential adversaries, China would likely use deception more frequently and effectively.

Since the late 1970s, China has focused on building up its national strength, wealth, international prestige and power. Tens of thousands of China's brightest students have studied abroad, the largest number in the United States. Thousands of official, academic and business-oriented Chinese delegations travel abroad annually. The global village of the electronic age, from CNN to the Internet, has provided China with unprecedented access to knowledge about the world. Thus, the essential precondition for action and foreknowledge, has become a concrete reality.

Moreover, the world media is now presenting China as a far stronger nation than at any time in the last two centuries. Although Chinese official spokesmen often critique the Western press as being anti-China, in fact a drumbeat of positive press emphasizes China's growing economic and military strength. One of the earliest examples of this genre coincided with the US election in November 1992, that *The Economist* predicted if China's economy continued to grow at the same rate for the next 20 years that it had over the previous 14, it would become the largest on earth.<sup>13</sup> A year later, former *New York Times* Beijing Bureau Chief Nicholas Kristof published an article in *Foreign Affairs* titled "The Rise of China," predicting that within a decade China's "rapidly improving army" might have the strength "to resolve old quarrels in its favor."<sup>14</sup> In the war of words, such appraisals are considerable force multipliers.

### **The Impact of Tiananmen Square**

With the growing international perception of China's strength and economic dynamism, the cloud over China's relations with the West created by the crackdown on the 1989 prodemocracy movement has largely dissipated, especially after the US decision in 1994 to de-link "most favored nation" (MFN) status for China from human rights issues.<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless, China remains hypersensitive about what occurred at Tiananmen and evidence of a dissident movement. Reviewing how China dealt with both internal and external media to manage perceptions of the prodemocracy movement and its aftermath might help predict future reactions.

According to numerous eyewitness accounts, during the six-week period of demonstrations prior to 4 June, diverse sources throughout China provided information on the demonstrations, the student demands and the workers' participation. Initially, the official media provided fairly objective reporting on the demonstrations in Beijing and elsewhere. However, shortly after martial law was declared on 20 May, troops began to occupy the offices of the major media outlets, enabling the party to tighten control over the media.<sup>16</sup> The massive public security crackdown on participants in the movement quickly snuffed out most overt dissent within China.<sup>17</sup>

The international media posed a separate challenge. For a short time, foreign broadcasts such as Voice of America, BBC, Voice of Australia, Chinese and English broadcasts from Taiwan and illustrated news reports faxed from Hong Kong provided alternatives to the official line. In the face of immediate international outrage over bloody images and eyewitness reports from Tiananmen Square, as well as much less widely acknowledged information confirming that demonstrations had spread throughout most major cities in China, Chinese authorities moved quickly to establish their own version of the events in Beijing on 4 June 1989.

The official line consistently denied that any students were killed, insisting that the only deaths were soldiers doing their duty to restore order. Although the protest included a broad-based workers' movement, a far more serious threat to the regime than the student movement itself, the workers' participation in the movement is not mentioned at all.<sup>18</sup> A typical example of the official line was presented by Deng Xiaoping's daughter, Deng Xiaorong, during a February 1995 interview in *The Washington Post* promoting her father's biography. When asked why her father gave the order to fire on the students at Tiananmen Square, she indignantly replied "Your information is not accurate. We didn't fire on the students. My office is just near Tiananmen Square . . . The troops entered Tiananmen Square without firing a single bullet. And I believe a lot of Western coverage is not accurate. The Western press had their own preference first. Some people did die during the event, but not the students. And when the troops entered the city, some rioters killed some of our soldiers and they died very tragic deaths."<sup>19</sup>

China's views on how it handled the Tiananmen episode from the public relations perspective were clearly stated in an article on Deng Xiaoping's program to design China's image, which appeared in the *People's Daily* in April 1994, shortly before the US decision on MFN. The Tiananmen episode and events of 1989 were described as a "political storm." "We handled a number of people who advocated liberalism and

violated the criminal law several years ago. China's image was not harmed. Instead, our image is getting better day by day." The article expressed concern that demonstrations, debates and "big posters" in the streets from time to time would distract people from the main task of national development, and foreign investment would decline. China should therefore "more strictly exercise control in this regard." Deng claimed that after 1989, China had to reassure its people and the world by promoting its image as a nation continuing to reform and open up. Further, China should strive to create the image of an economic power, thus enhancing its "comprehensive national strength."<sup>20</sup>

## Media Control

Actions to "more strictly exercise control" appear to be well under way. China relentlessly pursued leaders and participants in the 1989 prodemocracy movement, as well as others who dared to speak out against the regime, such as 1979 *Democracy Wall* activist Wei Jingsheng. Wei was finally released from prison in November 1997 after China's head of state, Jiang Zemin, received full honors during his summit visit to the United States. Wang Dan, a student leader at Tiananmen Square demonstrations, was not released until April 1998, just before President Clinton's June summit visit to China.<sup>21</sup> Families of other less-famous dissidents have reported ongoing harassment by authorities, especially after the MFN decision.<sup>22</sup> China has been trying to jam Voice of America broadcasts since 1989 and exerted considerable diplomatic pressure to prevent the creation of Radio Free Asia.<sup>23</sup> In August 1994, China sent shock waves through Hong Kong's press corps with the arrest and 12-year sentence imposed on Xi Yang, an economics specialist reporting for the independent Hong Kong newspaper *Ming Pao*. Xi, a Chinese national on assignment in Hong Kong, was charged with "espionage regarding state financial secrets" reporting on interest-rate movements in China. Further, other Hong Kong journalists who demonstrated in support of Xi Yang were warned by their publications to stop provoking Beijing.<sup>24</sup>

Almost no point seemed too small to be ignored. For example, one of China's top disabled athletes, a double-amputee champion discus, javelin and shot put thrower, whose legs were crushed by a tank at Tiananmen, was denied permission to participate in the Far East and South Pacific Disabled Games held in Beijing in September 1994. According to a friend of the athlete, Chinese officials feared that foreign reporters would ask "embarrassing questions" about how he became disabled.<sup>25</sup>

Control over internal media is a major concern for China's leaders. The rapid growth of the publishing industry and electronic media in China, a natural consequence of economic and technological development, is making it increasingly difficult to maintain effective state control. For example, in the early 1990s, the domestic market for satellite dishes in China exploded. Among the main producers and sellers of the dishes were the PLA General Staff Department and the Ministry of Electronics. Hundreds of local mini-cable networks sprang up in Chinese cities, greatly lessening the central government's control over programming. The official ban on the sale of satellite dishes in October 1993 was hardly enforced. Orville Schell observed in mid 1994, "The reality of China today is that issuing edicts against the sale of satellite dishes, banning books, fining second-channel publishers and even imprisoning the occasional book king have done little to slow down the commercial forces that are driving China's quasi-underground media forward."<sup>26</sup>

Nevertheless, even if China is unable to tame the commercial forces unleashed by economic reform, its leaders are using political and economic power to tighten control over the internal media and influence the external media. The chief concern is maintaining the image of strength and stability to ensure internal stability and consolidate the authority of the party during the period when power is passing to the new generation of leaders. This program appears to have begun in earnest in January 1995, when the party planned a new propaganda campaign to promote patriotism and developed measures to control ideological consistency in all forms of media. Intensified propaganda aimed at overseas Chinese, especially those in Hong Kong and Macao, was also planned.<sup>27</sup>

China has taken a series of complex measures to gain control over domestic television content, including foreign-based programming. In 1992, China created the APT Satellite Company, ostensibly as a Hong Kong-based international corporation. APT President He Kerang assured customers that the company was "purely commercial." However, a closer look at the APT ownership shows a clear attempt to obscure Chinese government control of the company. By 1993, APT was overtly owned in equal shares by seven

corporations, but four of these were directly state-owned, including China Telecommunications Broadcast Satellite Corporation, owned by the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications; China Yuan Wang Group, owned by the State Commission of Science, Technology and Industry for National Defense; Ever-Victory System Company, owned by China Aerospace Industry Corporation, formerly the Ministry of Aerospace Industry; and China Travel Fok Tai, owned by Ng Fok, a Macau company actually owned by a subsidiary of China Travel Service.

Other APT shareholders include Orient Telecom & Technology, owned by Charoen Pokphand of Thailand, which is controlled by ethnic Chinese Thais; Singapore Telecom and Kwang Hua Development and Investment, a Hong Kong firm owned by Ruentex Industries and China Development Corporation, which have ties to Taiwan's ruling Kuomintang.

At first, APT was quite attractive to various western blue-chip investors. It offered an alternative to Star TV in Asia, which suffers from a severe shortage of satellite transponders necessary to relay television, telephone and data signals. However, after a number of foreign broadcasters signed long-term contracts with APT, including such giants as Discovery Communications, ESPN, Home Box Office, NBC, Time-Warner, Turner Broadcasting System, Viacom, Walt Disney and Reuters, APT won the right to censor "offensive broadcasts" as defined by China. In a related 1994 action, APT declined to lease a transponder owned by Hong Kong's CIM conglomerate, which planned to operate a Mandarin-language news channel. CIM also owns *Ming Pao*, the newspaper that had employed jailed journalist Xi Yang.<sup>28</sup>

China has also shown strong concern for the power of the Internet. In January 1996, China's State Council and Party authorities issued a decree warning that dangerous information exists on the Internet. This was followed by orders that foreign vendors of economic information submit to regulation and possible censorship by Xinhua, the official voice of the party.<sup>29</sup> New regulations required most Chinese to register with China's state police before being allowed to log on. In May 1996, China's Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications unveiled the first of a series of regional computer networks, known as GNET and operating in southern Guangdong Province, which was set up to compete with the Internet, but with only limited links to the outside world.

The system would be controlled by China Internet Corporation (CIC). In turn, CIC is controlled by the state-run Xinhua news agency to screen incoming information and permit "only relevant international business information" to pass. Full Internet access would be limited to foreigners and selected Chinese nationals, while ordinary Chinese could only access the internal "Intranet."<sup>30</sup> These rules were relaxed slightly in January 1997, but the Chinese government still intends to block access to Web sites it considers politically sensitive, such as those featuring news and commentary from Hong Kong and Taiwan.<sup>31</sup>

This increased censorship of all forms of media intensified throughout 1996, as China's Propaganda Department Chief Ding Guangen led a campaign to tighten control over China's internal press and other forms of media. Internal publications that attempted to print articles critical of the regime, and even some historical articles such as memoirs of the Cultural Revolution, invited swift punishment. In large publications, such as daily newspapers, offending editors were sacked; in smaller magazines, the licenses were revoked and publication ceased. Party-controlled newspapers are encouraged to annex smaller publications.<sup>32</sup>

With its growing economic clout, China shows increased confidence in its attempts to influence foreign media and signs of self-censorship to avoid offending Chinese sensibilities. A recent case involved Walt Disney Company, the parent of ABC News, which backed production of *Kundun*, a movie about the life of the Dalai Lama, the spiritual leader of Tibet. Chinese authorities view any press presenting the Dalai Lama in a positive light as giving aid and comfort to Tibetan "splittists," who have never accepted the Chinese occupation and annexation of their homeland. China viewed the movie as "anti-China" and warned that release of the film would hurt Disney's business plans in China. The threat was significant in two respects: Disney had no plans to release the film in China, and it demonstrated how China mixes business and politics. The world media became aware of the threats in November 1996 but ABC News, which could have scooped the story in October, remained silent.<sup>33</sup>

Modern Chinese efforts at internal and external media control limiting expression of opposing views and discrediting those who present them embody the second and third points made by Stuart and Tow, using deception to control risk and manipulating the opponent's view of reality.

## New Proposals for Psychological Warfare

A recent Chinese proposal to promote psychological warfare revealed the military implications of media-control programs. The details are laid out in a November 1994 article in the *Liberation Army Daily*, the flagship publication of the Chinese People's Liberation Army. The article, written by Liu Yinchao, PLA 65th Group Army commander, states that psychological warfare is now the "fourth kind of warfare," after ground, sea and air warfare.<sup>34</sup> Liu indicated that psychological warfare will play a major role in China's strategic policy in the new era. While the article appears to be a proposal, the fact that it appeared in the *Liberation Army Daily*, and Liu's senior status in the PLA strongly implies that the ideas have complete official support.

Liu outlines four basic objectives of psychological warfare:

- To attack and influence the target's policy makers, causing their position to waver and make them choose a policy which is in fact disadvantageous to themselves.
- To instill fear and awe in the minds of enemy soldiers, destroy their mental equilibrium and boost the morale of one's own troops.
- To create panic among the adversary's civilian population by inducing fear of war, war weariness and antiwar feelings.
- To obtain the sympathy and support of neutral states, solidify coalitions among allied states and strengthen the desire for victory in one's own country.

Comparing the psychological warfare of earlier times with the modern era, Liu proposes that psychological warfare should now be carried out across the spectrum of national activities, including strategy, military technology, politics, diplomacy, religion, economics and propaganda and should use every available means to demonstrate national strength. In addition, increased military strength and technological capability are required to support psychological warfare and will serve as deterrents. In future wars, the overall distribution of power will play a major role, while actual engagement will play a relatively small role. The special characteristics of warfare in the future will be long distances and high speed.

Modern communications technology, which keeps the battlefield commander informed of major political and diplomatic developments and military movements, can also be harnessed to raise the influential power and deceptiveness of psychological warfare operations. Higher-speed, more destructive precision weapons enhance psychological warfare's deterrence and coerciveness. Liu suggests that the PLA develop a psychological warfare doctrine, adopt enhanced training and carry out supporting research to build up an elite cadre of specially trained personnel and psychological warfare units assigned to the group armies and divisions. Using new communications technology, they would be linked by a psychological warfare command system network. Liu further proposes enhanced training programs in which troops incorporate psychological warfare operations during live-fire exercises.

Although Liu's article stresses incorporating modern weapons and communications technology into the development of psychological warfare doctrine, traditional Chinese views on strategy and deception support his proposal. Liu emphasizes the objective of forming a force to defeat others without fighting. In his view, the traditional axiom that "it is better to attack the enemy's mind than to attack his fortified cities" will still be the "infallible law" of the military strategist.

Another byline article in the October 1996 *Liberation Army Daily* reiterates these views. This article notes that although the "content" of US psychological warfare during the Gulf War differed from that used by China, the forms are similar. The author also stresses that China should learn how to apply psychological warfare techniques within the realm of information warfare.<sup>35</sup>

## Psychological Warfare in the Taiwan Straits

The first news leaked to the world press in early 1996 regarding China's alleged plan to launch a "limited attack" on Taiwan of one missile strike per day for 30 days following Taiwan's elections if Lee Teng-hui, the

leading Kuomintang candidate, was elected. China officially denied the story, leading some observers to assess the threat as "merely psychological warfare." A commentator from Singapore who used the term "psychological warfare" to describe these threats believed China was unlikely to carry out the missile attacks because China had a very low probability of success in a full-scale invasion of Taiwan and attacks on Taiwan after the election would be pointless. The purpose of the threats, he reasoned, was to rattle Taiwan's leaders, temper Lee Teng-hui's efforts for greater official recognition and perhaps intimidate the US Congress so that it would refrain from inviting Lee for an official visit after his election.<sup>36</sup>

In some respects China's actions and policy lines seemed baffling and contradictory. For example, as China launched its live-fire exercises in the Taiwan straits in March 1996, a typical commentary carried the headline, "Is China Being 'Reckless' or Calculating?" This sense of confusion arose because China's show of force and bellicose jargon were carried out against a backdrop of careful planning. China had fully prepared for the exercises by giving its Asian neighbors, shipping companies and airlines advance notices as required under international law. China further upheld international law by treating Taiwan as a sovereign nation; it avoided crossing into what Taiwan considers its territorial waters or airspace.<sup>37</sup> The United States responded with its "prudent" and "precautionary" deployment of two carrier battle groups in the waters off Taiwan during the live-fire exercises, sending a signal to Beijing of its intention to defend its valid interests in the region.<sup>38</sup>

Immediately after the election of Lee Teng-hui, who won decisively, China suspended its exercises and switched to more conciliatory rhetoric toward Taiwan. The official Xinhua News Agency made a point of declaring Lee's win a big victory for reunification forces and declared that Lee had disavowed Taiwan independence during his campaign, omitting the fact that Lee has always disavowed Taiwan independence.<sup>39</sup>

A most insightful analysis of this series of events was presented by noted China scholar Andrew Nathan of Columbia University. In his view, China planned the exercises as part of a coercive strategy to escalate military pressure, test US resolve and locate Taiwan's breaking point. The Chinese have assessed that only the United States can frustrate their ambitions. The timing may have been planned to confront Taiwan before the US delivered 150 F-16 fighter aircraft to Taiwan in 1998.

Nathan suggested that China's key objectives included the following:

- Control over Taiwan's access to arms that could be used in self-defense against China.
- Veto power over diplomatic activity to consolidate Taiwan's international status.
- Keeping Chinese options open, rather than resolving the issue immediately.
- Demonstrating to Taiwan that the US aid might not be forthcoming in a crisis.

Nathan concludes that if it suits China's interests in the future, it might select any of a number of possible military actions short of invasion, including harassing shipping and air traffic, attacks on offshore islands and full or partial blockade of Taiwan. More likely, merely threatening these actions would intentionally create a crisis, arouse panic and economic disorder and thereby gain leverage to control the situation.<sup>40</sup>

Nathan describes China's threats and actions as "psychological terror" against Taiwan. Indeed, most of his conclusions fall neatly within the psychological warfare objectives specified by the 1994 *Liberation Army Daily* article. For example, Nathan's assertion that China was testing US resolve matches Liu's first objective of causing US policy makers to waver. The threats of missile attacks were clearly intended to create panic and the fear of war among both the civilian population and the military. Finally, China's actions to isolate Taiwan diplomatically follows the guise of obtaining sympathy and support among neutral states and solidifying support among allied states.

### **Hitting China's "Hot Buttons"**

Over the past decade it has become apparent that there are a few key national "hot buttons" that inevitably provoke quick public responses from Chinese authorities. These include actions by both foreign governments and large private organizations that seem to support or validate Taiwan's sovereignty, provide recognition to the Dalai Lama or show sympathy for Tibet, publicize charges of human rights violations or validate the existence of internal prodemocracy dissent and the Tiananmen massacre. These issues all impact strongly on China's sense of national sovereignty and internal authority. China generally reacts to any perceived

infringements or criticisms, taking whatever actions it deems necessary and dealing with the consequences later. If China's actions are considered sensitive, are in violation of known international standards or likely to provoke international criticism harmful to its image or business standing, China generally attempts to deny, discredit or otherwise weaken the force of the allegations. Heavy-handed measures to control internal media and influence external media are key tools in the effort to limit publicity on issues China considers harmful to its interests.

In contrast to this reactive pattern, the "missile-a-day" threat and other shows of force in the Taiwan straits and the South China Sea appear to demonstrate a new stage of aggressive measures by China, scripted and carried out according to psychological warfare doctrine. This assessment by no means implies that future Chinese threats should be dismissed as "merely" psychological warfare; as the violence at Tiananmen showed, China may indeed resort to force, especially on internal matters, if it feels its vital interests are threatened. However, since psychological warfare aims to achieve victory without combat, it does not necessarily follow that as China gains strength and a greater likelihood of success, it is more likely to use force. On the contrary, as its threats of force become more credible, the need to use force may actually fade as risks to the adversary grow greater.

Those attempting to assess Chinese intentions must fully understand China's national objectives and look carefully at its actions and words. China's international propaganda activities, bolstered by the "carrot and stick" of its huge domestic market and powerful military, are becoming increasingly effective at garnering international support for Chinese positions. Those responsible for relations with China must be keenly aware of Chinese national interests as well as their own and seek to resolve disputes on terms advantageous to both sides.

China appears to be moving from a mainly reactive mode in perception management on key issues toward development of carefully crafted initiatives supported by enhanced psychological warfare doctrine, capability and programs. Potential adversaries must be wary of more aggressive psychological warfare. Because China links economic, military and diplomatic objectives under the policy of building up "comprehensive national strength," psychological warfare programs could be applied in any of these arenas.

China controls the flow of information to shape international perceptions and quell internal dissent. Despite short-term successes in this program, this policy seems guaranteed to produce increasing internal and external tensions since it runs counter to the worldwide trend of enhanced communications access in the information age. **MR**

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1. Robert Karniol, "Chinese Actions Heighten Regional Anxiety," *Jane's Defense '96: The World in Conflict*, 55.
  2. Shi Zhihong, "How the 'Chief Architect' Designed China's Image," Beijing *Renmin Ribao*, (18 April 1994), 5, as translated in FBIS-CHI-94-076.
  3. Ibid., a main theme in Chinese propaganda in recent years has been China's assertions of independence and self-determination, and resistance to Western influence, usually stated as "opposing hegemonism and power politics."
  4. There are numerous translations of Sun Tzu's *Art of War*. An excellent study which places this work in context of other military classics from premodern China is by Richard D. Sawyer, *The Seven Military Classics of Ancient China* (Boulder: Westview, 1993), 149-186. The guidance on attacking strategy is from chapter 3 of *The Art of War*; see Sawyer, 161.
  5. Jiang Lianmeng, "Chuantong Xinlizhan Rengyou Yongwu zhi di," (Traditional Psychological Warfare Still Has Applications), *Jiefangjun Bao (Liberation Army Daily)* (15 October 1996), 6. Translation by author.
  6. Sawyer, 154-155.
  7. From a new translation by Liu Wusun, *Sun Tzu: The Art of War; Sun Bin: The Art of War* (Beijing: People's China Publishing House, 1995), 24-25, based on more complete texts, especially of the tract by Sun Bin,



compiled from recently excavated materials.

8. Douglas T. Stuart and William Tow, "The Theory and Practice of Chinese Military Deception," in *Strategic Military Deception*, edited by Donald C. Daniel and Katherine L. Herbig (New York: Pergamon, 1981), 294-295.
9. Daniel and Herbig, "Propositions on Military Deception," in Daniel and Herbig, 3-7.
10. Ibid., 5.
11. Harlan W. Jencks, "Strategic Deception in the Chinese Civil War," in Daniel and Herbig, 288-289.
12. Stuart and Tow, 310-311.
13. Jim Rohwer, "When China Wakes," *The Economist* (28 November 1992), 3-18.
14. Nicholas D. Kristof, "The Rise of China," *Foreign Affairs* (November-December 1993), 59.
15. Ann Devroy, "Clinton Reverses Course on China," *Washington Post* (27 May 1994), A1.
16. Michael F. Berlin, "Performance of the Chinese Media," in *Chinese Democracy and the Crisis of 1989*, edited by Roger V. DesForges et al. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), 272.
17. For descriptions of events outside Beijing, see Jonathan Unger, editor, *The Pro-Democracy Protests in China: Reports from the Provinces* (Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1991).
18. Jackie Sheehan, "Is There Another Tiananmen Uprising in the Offing?" *Janes Intelligence Review* (December 1996), 554-556.
19. Elisabeth Bumiller, "A Long March for her Father," *Washington Post* (14 February 1995), D8.
20. Article by Shi Zhihong.
21. Wei Jingsheng and Wang Dan were considered China's most famous dissidents. Wei served 14 years in prison after advocating that democracy be the "fifth modernization" in 1979; he was released briefly when China was seeking MFN, and rearrested in May 1994 after that goal was achieved. Wei was finally freed and forced to leave China in November 1997 after the Jiang-Clinton summit meeting in the United States. An article that expresses Wei's views were published in the Hong Kong *Lien Ho Pao* (20 May 1994), 10. Wang Dan was in jail for most of the period from 1989 to 1998. He, too had been briefly released, then was rearrested and retried in late 1996, convicted of charged of plotting to subvert the government, and sentenced to another 11 years in prison.
22. Chen Ziming, another leader of the 1989 protests, received a 13-year prison sentence; he was released briefly in March 1994 prior to the MFN decision, and was immediately rearrested in late May, after the decision; his family has been closely monitored by uniformed police. See Hong Kong *South China Morning Post* (29 May 1994), 8.
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**A mass review of Chinese ballistic missiles as depicted in a government journal.**

PLA armor in Beijing during the pro-democracy demonstrations, June, 1989