
New Developments in Chinese Strategic Psychological Warfare

by Timothy L. Thomas

Chinese military analysts have meticulously studied the use of armed force during the 1991 Gulf War and during the fight for Kosovo. They have noted with great interest the integration of military strikes and psychological-warfare activities, and the increased strategic role that the mass media played during both operations.¹

To highlight the apparent shifting emphasis toward psychological warfare for officers of the People's Liberation Army, or PLA, the prominent Chinese military journal *China Military Science* has published six articles on psychological warfare during the last two years:² "On PSYWAR in Recent High-Tech Local Wars," by Wang Zhenxing and Yang Suping; "The Doctrine of Psychological Operations in Ancient China," by Wu Juncang and Zhang Qiancheng; "Focus on Psychological War Against the Background of Grand Strategy," and "Psychological Operations in the Context of Grand Strategy," both written by Xu Hezhen; "Comparison of Psychological Warfare between China and the West," by Wang Lianshui, Ma Jingcheng and Yan Jianhong; and "On Defense in Modern Psychological Warfare," by Li Yuankui, Wang Yanzheng and Yang Xiaoli.

With the exception of Wu Juncang, Zhang Qiancheng, Wang Lianshui, Ma Jingcheng and Yan Jianhong, the authors of the six articles are identified as being instructors at the Shijiazhuang Ground

Forces Command Academy, which indicates that the academy has an active and influential psychological-warfare department. In fact, judging by their tone, some of the articles could have been lifted directly from lectures presented during the academy's psychological-warfare courses.

The authors of the six articles suggest that at the strategic level, China's psychological-warfare operations will be characterized by coercion, which will take the form of intimidation achieved through demonstrations and shows of force. (Their suggestion supports a recent Pentagon finding that viewed Chinese coercion as the greatest threat to Taiwan.)

At the tactical level, the articles suggest that the Chinese are interested in offsetting their current deficiencies by procuring advanced psychological-warfare equipment and by developing advanced deployment techniques. The advanced equipment would include unmanned aerial vehicles, or UAVs, fitted with loudspeakers and capable of distributing "talking leaflets."

The articles also underscore the differences in the cultural and subjective-cognition patterns of Oriental and Western minds. Those differences lead the Chinese to apply the principles of psychological warfare differently from the West. If the U.S. is to see "eye to eye" with the Chinese and truly understand their psychological-warfare methodology, it is vital that we comprehend those differences. Finally, the

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articles provide recommendations about the PLA's future psychological-warfare requirements. From the discussion in all six articles, it is clear that China is working hard to develop its psychological-warfare capabilities for peacetime and wartime uses.

History of Chinese PSYOP

In "The Doctrine of Psychological Operations in Ancient China," Wu Juncang and Zhang Qiancheng note that China's history of psychological operations goes back more than 4,000 years. The authors point out that during the period 2100-256 B.C., psychological operations were part of such historical events as the Zhuolu War (Zhuolu is a county in Hebei Province), during which "victory could not be achieved with weapons"; the Tang Oath, under which Chinese swore to do everything possible to spread propaganda; and the Mu Oath, which prohibited the killing of enemy soldiers who surrendered or who were taken as prisoners of war — a psychological operation for that time period. Schemes for sowing deception and creating false impressions and expectations represented the acme of psychological operations during the period.³

According to Wu and Zhang, those early psychological experiences culminated in Sun Tzu's *Art of War*, which describes the main objective of war as defeating the enemy without having to fight; the main essence of war as attacking the enemy's strategy; the main principle of war as contending for control of hearts, minds and morale; and the main idea of war as focusing on the enemy commander's decision-making skills and personal traits. Ancient Chinese psychological-operations doctrine also focused on attacking the enemy's strategy and diplomacy, on conducting demonstrations and seeking dominance, on ignoring luck and dispelling doubt; and on making threats and adhering to the Tao, the philosophy and system of religion based on the teachings of Lao-tzu during the sixth century B.C.⁴

Wu and Zhang indicate that Taoism, which coupled hardness with softness in

warfare, was not the only influence on the theory of psychological operations in ancient China. Other influences were military studies; Confucianism, which stressed the idea of "just wars"; and the study of the I Ching (Book of Changes), which stressed the idea of yin and yang (hardness and softness) being coupled to each other and thereby changing each other. The I Ching formed an important theoretical foundation of psychological-operations doctrine in ancient China⁵ that continues to influence subjective cognition patterns in China today.

According to Wu and Zhang, the Qin (221-206 B.C.) and Han (206 B.C.-8 A.D. and 25-220 A.D.) periods of Chinese history witnessed other types of psychological operations. The Qin period used the diplomatic psychological-operations strategy of maintaining friendly relations with distant enemies while attacking the enemy nearby. The Han dynasty integrated the political, economic and military aspects of psychological operations, raising it to a new level.

The authors note the Three Kingdoms (220-280 A.D.) and the Two Jins (263-420 A.D.) for the diversity of their psychological-operations theory. Both dynasties believed that attacking the enemy's psychological state was more effective than attacking his cities; therefore, they favored psychological operations over combat operations with troops. The Ming (1368-1662) and Qing (1662-1912) dynasties, on the other hand, allowed Chinese psychological-operations doctrine to stagnate.⁶

Ancient Chinese books discuss the psychological-operations experiences of their time. For example, the *Six Arts of War* notes that in a command structure of 72 men, 19 (26 percent) were psychological-operations personnel responsible for controlling morale: Five were to tout the army's strength; four were to tout the army's fame in order to destroy the enemy's confidence; eight were to scout out the enemy's mood and intent; and two were to confuse the people by exploiting their belief in gods and spirits. The book also instructs Chinese soldiers to protect their morale by ignoring rumors, by disregarding luck and by avoiding any dealings with

omens or superstitions. The *Six Arts* also tells soldiers to sap enemy morale, to string enemy nerves, and to strike terror in the enemy. Wu and Zhang discuss two ancient tales that hint at the creativity of the Chinese in accomplishing these tasks. In the first tale, Chinese soldiers tied reed pipes to kites and flew the kites at night. The kites made a wailing sound that, in the darkness, unnerved the enemy. In the second tale, Chinese soldiers painted oxen in odd colors and tied oil-soaked reeds to the tails of the oxen. The soldiers lit the reeds and sent the enraged animals charging through the enemy camp at night, causing terror among the enemy soldiers.⁷

Wu and Zhang note that the *Six Arts* also refers to another key psychological aspect that should be attacked — the mind of the enemy's commanding general. While the *Six Arts* discusses the psychological condition of the commander at the strategic and tactical levels differently, it lists intelligence, temperament and moral character as the three main characteristics required of a Chinese commander.⁸ The book also lists 10 psychological weaknesses of commanders that must be exploited. Those weaknesses include being brave, treating death too lightly, being impatient and thinking too quickly.

According to Wu and Zhang, the Marxist concept of the “dialectic” — the process of change brought about by the conflict of opposing forces — had a significant impact on the development of ancient Chinese psychological-operations theory, although that fact was not “discovered” until the advent of Marxism. The authors note that ancient doctrine involved many categories of contradictions, out of which evolved many of the principles and methods of psychological operations.⁹ Although ancient, Sun Zi's *Art of War*, Wu Zi's *Art of War*, and Weiliao Zi and Sun Bin's *Art of War* provide incisive and comprehensive explanations of the objectives, principles, methods and laws of psychological operations, and their explanations are still valid.

In summarizing their understanding of ancient Chinese psychological operations, Wu and Zhang maintain that those operations were designed to achieve strategic

deception, to map out a strategy, to secure victory through strategy, and to integrate military strategy and psychological attack.¹⁰ The authors find these objectives or activities of ancient Chinese psychological-operations doctrine to be reflective of what the Chinese observed during the Gulf War and during the fight for Kosovo, further emphasizing the importance of psychological operations in the modern era.

Definitions

Each of the Chinese articles on psychological operations define the concepts of psychological warfare or psychological operations in a different way. Wu Juncang and Zhang Qiancheng (who do not teach at the Shijiazhuang Academy) define a psychological operation as the use of various measures to influence a combat opponent's ideology, attitude, will or actions. The objective of a psychological operation is to win without fighting or to win a big victory with only a little fighting. Only by securing a favorable position in terms of politics and in terms of the nature of warfare (by making one's own side's reasons for war to appear to be moral and just) can one achieve a fundamental psychological advantage.¹¹

Xu Hezhen, a major general in the Chinese army and president of the Shijiazhuang Academy, defines psychological warfare as a kind of propaganda, and as persuasion that uses real force as its foundation. According to Xu's definition, a group can use political, economic, scientific, military, diplomatic, ideological or cultural forces to change an opponent's national will or to influence and change an opponent's belief in, attitude toward, or hostility toward a populace, toward organizations, or toward military and government agencies. Xu's two articles stress the need for using power and intimidation as key psychological-warfare tools.¹² Regarding the importance of psychological warfare, Xu notes: “You may not be interested in psychological warfare, but psychological warfare is interested in you.”¹³

According to Xu, psychological warfare is also the exploration and study of the psy-

chological quality of the thinking practiced by a nation's strategic leadership. To the Chinese, psychological quality includes the aspects of psychological attainments and psychological character. Psychological attainments primarily reflect the level at which a person grasps and understands psychology. Psychological character is the individual human aspect, primarily the psychological character that an individual has already formed or is developing; e.g., an individual's intellect, temperament, disposition, emotions and will.¹⁴

Xu notes that Eastern psychological attainments are developed through education in both dialectical materialism and historical materialism, and through the influence and edifying effects of Eastern culture. His theory applies particularly to strategic thought, in which "how to think" is the key element and the most valuable quality.¹⁵ Xu agrees that, in the end, the most important battles of modern psychological war will be fought over values. The superpowers, he feels, are using armed force to impose their value systems on other people. This was demonstrated during operations in Kosovo, in Xu's opinion, when politicians used the idea that human rights are greater than sovereign rights.¹⁶

After 50 years of Marxism, Xu notes, "Decadent culture has unavoidably entered China. ... Foreign culture has constantly infiltrated China in the form of weapons and then at the mental and conceptual level. In particular, the value system of Western culture, with the idea of individualism at the center, a decadent lifestyle based on materialism, and a concept of gain or benefit in interpersonal relations, has produced a profound effect on certain people's values."¹⁷

Wang Lianshui, Ma Jingcheng and Yan Jianhong, the three other authors who are not identified as being faculty of the Shijiazhuang Academy, define psychological-warfare theory as a field of study that serves both as the point of intersection and as the boundary line between psychology and the study of strategy and tactics. In their opinion, psychological-warfare theory has a psychological foundation as well as an ideological/theoretical foundation. The

latter foundation is determined by national characteristics, but the former foundation is more constant. Psychological-warfare strategy is a psychological embodiment of the orientation of a country's national and military strategies.¹⁸

Li Yuankui, a senior colonel at the Shijiazhuang Academy, and two master's-degree candidates, Lieutenant Wang Yanzheng and Lieutenant Yang Xiaoli, define psychological warfare as a multi-level activity that is employed at the strategic, operational and tactical levels. The authors perceive the targets of psychological warfare as national will, the state of social awareness, cultural traditions, a nation's economic pulse, an opponent's public sentiment, the tendencies of popular will, military morale, and the opponent's various social groups, classes and strata. Because of the increased use of information technology, the number of people who are subjected to psychological war is greater than ever before.¹⁹ The increase in psychological-warfare targets requires the development of a people's war-defense mentality.

Li, Wang and Yang, like Xu, focus on values. They define a system of values as a system of psychological tendencies that people use to discriminate between good and bad. A system of values also provides the basis by which a person recognizes the correct way of thinking and acting. The highest strategic objective in psychological warfare, the authors note, is achieved by changing a country's fundamental social concepts and its society's sense of values. In this regard, the West uses a system of values (democracy, freedom, human rights, etc.) in a long-term attack on socialist countries. The West used the ideas of democracy and human rights to undermine the communist party in the Soviet Union, and it intends to use the same rationale for interfering in China's internal affairs. The U.S.'s strategy is to attack political, moral, social and cultural values in target countries.²⁰ Chinese authors are fond of quoting former U.S. President Richard Nixon's phrase, "Attacking ideas is key to affecting history" as an explanation of U.S. strategy.

Senior Colonel Wang Zhenxing and

Major Yang Suping of the Shijiazhuang Academy did not define psychological warfare or psychological operations in their article.

Psychological security

A key aspect of conducting psychological warfare is to understand the psychological characteristics of an opponent's strategic leadership and to conduct psychological attacks against them.²¹ Authors Wang Lianshui, Ma Jingcheng, and Yan Jianhong discuss differences in Eastern and Western minds in order to highlight East/West variances both in the characteristics and in the laws of psychological warfare. The authors note, "Differences in environment, cultural traditions, political systems, economic strength, national-defense capability and national spiritual belief lead to a great distinction in various nations in subjective cognition, ideological basis, principles of applications and structure of organization of psychological warfare."²²

According to the authors, even though China is a socialist country, the Marxist theory of war provides the theoretical basis for Chinese psychological warfare and gives Chinese psychological warfare its advanced, moral, open and unified nature.²³ Marxist theory regarding proletarian strategy and tactics was one of Mao Zedong's "magic weapons" during the Chinese revolution. And even though psychological warfare is characterized by active defense, China's approach emphasizes psychological attacks and the use of stratagems, particularly the use of deception activities.²⁴

Marxist theory opposes peaceful evolution, which the authors assert is the basic Western tactic for subverting socialist countries. According to Wang, Ma and Yan, peaceful evolution is the process that caused the disintegration of the Soviet Union, and the Chinese must not allow peaceful evolution to take place in China. The authors note that Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping developed a theory and a complete set of tactics designed to counter the Western strategy.

In "On Defense in Modern Psychological

Warfare," Li, Wang and Yang emphasize that China must take the initiative in psychological-warfare defense because psychological security is now an important aspect of national security. Information and psychological factors are now political and diplomatic weapons, and their power cannot be ignored. Psychological warfare requires a low investment; it involves low risk; and it is highly effective. The greater the amount of information that is available to a population, the more room there will be for psychological warfare. Any corner into which information can spread can become a battlefield for psychological warfare. China must establish the strategic idea of an active psychological-warfare defense. Active defense should include tempering the minds of the Chinese people by inoculation: allowing the people to come into contact with other ideas and, through education and guidance, allowing them to see what is wrong with those ideas. That approach will allow people to develop psychological immunity. Opening their minds up to other ideas, however, is not the same as cutting them loose.²⁵

Li, Wang and Yang forecast that the main form of psychological warfare will be contests for public opinion. To be able to seize public opinion, China must develop its own independent information and media power, guide public opinion, and conduct public-opinion propaganda. The demand for information is a universal psychological need. Passive psychological defense will not suffice. Only with initiative and offense can China take the strategic initiative with regard to public opinion. Propaganda must be prepared in advance, and it must include material designed to counter the attacks that will be made against the initial release of propaganda.²⁶

In "On PSYWAR in Recent High-Tech Local Wars," Wang and Yang emphasize the importance of attaining media superiority and of controlling the negative effects of media coverage. Media control will be one of the front lines in psychological wars. News broadcasts and computer technology now allow people to watch a battle in progress, as they would watch a sporting event. An event that might have been

known to only a few people in the past can now be witnessed by millions. Such access to information affects public sentiment and morale. Wang and Yang accuse the West of fulfilling its hegemonic wishes by manipulating public opinion, by attaining media superiority, and by guiding people's psychological tendencies.²⁷ Yet all three methods are exactly what the Chinese are proud to claim elsewhere as their heritage.

According to Xu Hezhen in "Focus on Psychological War Against the Background of Grand Strategy," intimidation is a key strategy that can be used to influence both public opinion and the media. In fact, psychological war and intimidation are so difficult to tell apart that they are almost twins. Intimidation is both a strategy and a method. In modern times, the use of non-violent intimidation, which includes alliances, media manipulation, economic sanctions, financial attack, information isolation and network attacks, has increased.

The U.S., Xu says, uses its advantage of power as the foundation of psychological war, employing arms displays, arms sales, and military exercises as intimidation.²⁸ In response, China must implement its own intimidation-psychological war plan that includes Chinese threat forces and mechanisms, and intimidation-psychological war strategy.²⁹ China should develop an elite and effective military intimidation force, fully apply all kinds of nonmilitary intimidation methods, establish a psychological-intimidation mechanism that will have strategic maneuvering as its core, and organize and apply all kinds of psychological intimidation factors, thus developing the greatest psychological intimidation effect. Intimidation must be established on the foundation of power; without power, intimidation is only a scarecrow.³⁰

Strategy

In "The Doctrine of Psychological Operations in Ancient China," Wu Juncang and Zhang Qiancheng argue that strategy is fundamental, and that mapping out a strategy is the most traditional Chinese characteristic of psychological warfare. Mapping out the strategy is followed by

attacking an opponent's alliances, attacking his army, and attacking his cities — in that order. The best strategy is to attack the enemy's mind, leaving him unable to plan. Strategy can create psychological misperceptions that will cause one side to remain unprepared. The prepared side can then win without fighting. In a more narrow sense, the use of strategy may be seen in demonstrations and feints that surprise the enemy by hitting him where he is unprepared.³¹

Authors Wang, Ma and Yan see major differences between China and the West regarding the strategic starting points and the orientation of psychological warfare. By strategic starting points, the authors mean psychological warfare's nature, objectives and factors for victory. China, the authors say, looks at psychological warfare as a method of spreading truth and justice; of trying to win people's minds; and of exposing an enemy's plot to confuse, corrupt or penetrate China's mental space. The West, the authors contend, views psychological warfare as a way of promoting its hegemonic strategy that is designed to create turmoil and division within other countries. (Clearly, more than a few Western analysts would disagree with that categorization.)

Regarding the orientation of psychological-warfare strategy, Wang, Ma and Yan list two strategic orientations: offensive and defensive. The orientations differ in their roles, in their employment, and in the structure of their deployment. China must continue to combine offense with defense, and to use offense for defense (so that the country can shift from passive to active modes and expand its room for maneuver).³²

From Wu and Zhang's perspective, demonstrations and shows of force are the basic strategic methods of conducting psychological operations. Demonstrations were used in ancient times, as detailed in the "Thirty Six Stratagems of War," a collection of Chinese proverbs and instructions for winning at war. A demonstration is an attack that exploits strengths and weaknesses, and its objective is to take the enemy by surprise. One may exploit strengths and weaknesses by appearing to be strong when one is weak, or by appear-

ing to be weak when one is strong.³³ In short, demonstrations are a way of getting friendly and enemy forces to interact psychologically. Demonstrations are also a form of deterrence, which is another psychological-warfare concept. Demonstrations establish credibility and fear, two of the three elements of deterrence theory (reliability is the third).

Strategy's essence, according to Xu, is thinking, and the quality of one's thinking determines the quality of one's strategy. Strategic thinking is a big-picture, integrated method of thought, a bird's-eye-view way of thinking. It is anticipatory, realistic and response oriented, and it is a kind of rational thinking.³⁴

Information technology and forces

Information technology has made it possible for psychological warfare to become both a strategic resource and a method, and psychological specialists are exploiting many information-age technologies. For example, future military attacks will be combined with attacks on electronic technology; virtual reality will plant false information in an enemy's command-information system, creating misperceptions among commanders; and network intruders may be able to penetrate terminals on the network, executing an all-directional psychological attack.³⁵

According to Wang and Yang, "In modern times the vast development in information science, psychology, the science of broadcasting, and other sciences, and in particular the emergence of new and high technologies such as satellite communications, electronic computers, networking technology, and multimedia technology, provide a firm theoretical foundation and modern tools for psychological warfare."³⁶

Li, Wang and Yang see networks as the most important aspect of the technological battle. Network psychological warfare is a new topic in psychological-warfare defense, but networks will become the main psychological-warfare battlefield in the future. Global networks provide more space in which to engage in propaganda. Network data can be put online in secrecy by almost

anyone; it is difficult to verify who the providers of network data are; and access to information is not subject to restrictions of time or place. Network attacks can throw a country's social, political and economic life into chaos, producing a shock effect on people's minds and leading to political instability. In order to develop network defense, China must develop network sovereignty, establish laws for network activities, and establish information-protection forces. Creating competent forces for information war and psychological warfare will help ensure China's information security and psychological security.³⁷

Writing about the impact of information technology, Wang and Yang list several futuristic ideas for psychological-warfare equipment, but they do not specify whether the ideas are theirs or those of another country. They note that an "intelligent" component has been added to psychological-warfare equipment. The intelligent component includes computers used to guide the operating and sensing systems of UAVs. UAVs can recognize targets, broadcast propaganda and scatter leaflets before returning to their base. In the future, leaflets will combine visual, audio and speech elements, much like the talking birthday cards currently marketed by some U.S. card manufacturers. In a direct reference to U.S. technology, the authors note that Livermore Laboratories has developed a method of projecting holographic images high into the clouds. According to Wang and Yang, the projections produce a type of illusory psychological warfare by portraying Islamic martyrs who appear to speak to soldiers from the clouds.³⁸

In contemporary wars, such as the Gulf War, the first targets attacked have been targets with psychological value, such as television, broadcasting and other communications venues. Destruction of those targets helped cause psychological passivity, panic and, eventually, defeat. Russia underestimated the power of communications during its first war with Chechnya from 1994-96. The Chechens were able to exert a major psychological influence on the course and the outcome of the war by

utilizing the impact of instantaneous field reporting to TV stations. That reporting greatly affected public opinion.³⁹ TV also played a major role in the Gulf War, demonstrating the lethality of coalition weaponry to the Iraqi leadership. On the other hand, TV reports on Iraqi Scuds also played a significant psychological role by invoking terror and panic among the residents of Israel and Saudi Arabia.⁴⁰

Threats

General Xu Hezhen's article, "Psychological Operations in the Context of Grand Strategy," describes the threats facing China, which he labeled as "hard warfare" (high-tech warfare) and "soft warfare" (psychological warfare designed to "westernize" or "split" China). Xu notes that while the former is the most difficult, the latter could be accomplished in the context of a grand strategy in which psychological warfare plays an increasingly important role in safeguarding national security and in winning high-tech wars.⁴¹

Because psychological war can achieve the greatest number of political benefits and the greatest psychological influence while taking almost no risks, Xu believes that the U.S. is using a psychological-warfare strategy — peaceful evolution — to enhance the disintegration of socialist countries. He says that as part of that strategy, the U.S. has developed a military force that possesses advanced weapons, and that the U.S. has carried out violent psychological threats toward socialist nations. According to Xu, the U.S. has used economics and trade to infiltrate socialist nations and has used personnel exchanges to carry out ideological and cultural psychological infiltration, thereby fostering an anti-socialist force.

According to Xu, U.S. psychological warfare undermined the Soviet Union, and he sees evidence of a similar threat to China during the last two U.S. presidential administrations. While the Clinton era focused on engaging China, Xu says, the Bush administration has a clear strategic goal of containing China.⁴² Finally, in Xu's opinion, the U.S. is using religion to weak-

en the ideology of Marxism.⁴³

Of course, the greatest psychological-warfare threat is the threat of taking control of morale, the foundation stone for victory, according to Wu and Zhang. They describe five tactics for controlling morale:

- With a mighty opponent, wait him out;
- With an arrogant opponent, show him respect for a long time;
- With a firm opponent, entice and then seize him;
- With an evasive opponent, get close to him in front, make noise on his flanks, dig deep ditches and put up high ramparts, and make it hard for him to get provisions;
- With a placid opponent, make noise to frighten him, jolt him by breaking through, and if he comes at you, then attack him, otherwise, fall back.⁴⁴

Conclusions

The foregoing discussion indicates that the theory of psychological warfare has tremendous significance and value to China. Chinese theorists are attempting to develop an updated ideology and strategy of psychological warfare — one that will focus on intimidation and on exploiting the differences between Eastern and Western mentalities. That implies that China will be establishing a command structure for psychological warfare, as well as creating special units that will attempt to overcome Chinese inferiority in high-tech weapons.⁴⁵ More important, Chinese theorists appear to believe that because modern psychological warfare can help ensure stability and shape national-security thinking, it is more applicable in peace than in war.⁴⁶

In offering a recommendation for future psychological-warfare forces in China, Major General Xu asks Chinese leaders to:

- Develop a psychological-warfare system that integrates specialized and non-specialized personnel, and that emphasizes China's special characteristics.
- Establish a psychological-warfare coordination agency at the national level to provide guidance and coordination for national psychological-warfare actions.
- Establish a psychological-warfare com-

mand agency, under the unified leadership of the Central Military Commission and the party committee.

- Establish psychological-warfare scientific research agencies of all kinds to guide the work nationally and in the military.
- Establish a specialized psychological-warfare corps that would form a consolidated and effective psychological attack force.
- Develop a modernized basis for psychological-warfare material and technical equipment.
- Form a people's psychological-warfare mentality by developing psychological-warfare education for the masses and for all commanders in the military.⁴⁷

According to Wang and Yang, China has many psychological-warfare shortcomings to overcome. Those include the backwardness and nonspecialization of current Chinese psychological-operations forces, a lack of talent, and the difficulty of forming a unified and coordinated psychological-warfare command. Wang and Yang also believe that China lacks a unified understanding of the strategic role of psychological warfare and of the role that psychological warfare can play in high-tech local wars.⁴⁸

Wang, Ma and Yan believe that in order for China to overcome its weakness in equipment, materials and technical content, it must develop a force that combines its mass-action strength with a specialized structure for psychological warfare.⁴⁹ Overall, all these shortcomings hurt the development of a coordinated psychological war strategy for the PLA.

Apparently, other nations have noticed China's focus on psychological warfare and have responded. In January 2002, Taiwan, taking advice from U.S. military officials, activated its first modern psychological-warfare unit to counter China's buildup.⁵⁰ The existing Taiwanese psychological-operations unit, which is part of the political-warfare department, does not focus on such subjects as information warfare.

Finally, China will continue to view the U.S. as its major psychological-warfare threat. Xu says that the U.S. objective is to gain benefits from the Chinese consumer market and to maintain long-term political

and psychological pressure on China. The U.S. will accomplish that objective by attacking China's national self-respect and by compelling China to do what the U.S. asks.⁵¹ Xu warns the Chinese that psychological acceptance of socialism depends on China's comprehensive national strength and on the level of progress that the social system achieves in economic development and in socialist awakening. He says that one cannot believe that "the foreign moon is rounder than our own," for this is defeatist psychology. Conviction in the correctness of one's own system is what works, and that is what is required.⁵²

In the end, we should not expect China to waver from the main characteristics of its psychological-warfare doctrine: strong reliance on the use of war experience; deep cultural roots; the influence of Marxist materialist dialectics; and the role of strategic deception.⁵³ China will use power projection as a means of achieving success in influencing the activities of foreign nations. Its centralized leadership system will continue to exert control over the news, propaganda and public opinion.⁵⁴ Most important for Western analysts is the fact that Chinese theorists "think" strategically in a way that few foreigners do. Western analysts will have to come to terms with this fact if they are to learn to predict Chinese psychological-warfare strategy in the coming years. ✕

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Notes:

¹ Wang Zhenxing and Yang Suping, "On PSYWAR in Recent High-Tech Local Wars," *Junshi Kexue* (China Military Science), 20 December 2000, pp. 127-33, as translated and downloaded from the FBIS Web site on 8 March 2001. No specific pages will be listed for quotes from all the articles used in the preparation of this article, since the author cannot read Chinese and

does not know on which pages of the article the translations (from FBIS) appeared.

² These articles form the basis for this discussion. The journal *China Military Science* is the rough equivalent of the U.S. armed forces' *Joint Force Quarterly*. One of the Chinese articles noted that the terms "psychological warfare" and "psychological operations" are interchangeable (which, of course, Western analysts would refute). This author uses the term "psychological warfare" because FBIS translators used the term more often than they used "psychological operations." One exception is the article by Wu Juncang and Zhang Qiancheng, for which translators used the term "psychological operations" exclusively.

³ Wu Juncang and Zhang Qiancheng, "The Doctrine of Psychological Operations in Ancient China," *Junshi Kexue* (China Military Science), Issue 5 2002, pp. 88-94, as translated and downloaded from the FBIS Web site 14 January 2002.

⁴ Wu Juncang and Zhang Qiancheng.

⁵ Wu Juncang and Zhang Qiancheng.

⁶ Wu Juncang and Zhang Qiancheng.

⁷ Wu Juncang and Zhang Qiancheng.

⁸ Wu Juncang and Zhang Qiancheng.

⁹ Wu Juncang and Zhang Qiancheng.

¹⁰ Wu Juncang and Zhang Qiancheng.

¹¹ Wu Juncang and Zhang Qiancheng.

¹² Xu Hezhen, "Focus on Psychological War Against the Background of Grand Strategy," *Junshi Kexue* (China Military Science), Issue 5 2000, pp. 67-76, as translated and downloaded from the FBIS Web site 11 December 2000.

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