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The People’s Liberation Army (PLA)

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Introduction

The field of People’s Liberation Army (PLA) studies has evolved with the PLA’s own development, and China studies more broadly, increasing tremendously in scale, scope, discipline, and diversity. The field has similarly evolved as the availability and variety of Chinese source material increased, particularly in the last few decades with the advent of the Internet. While all works usually include some historical background, many tend to focus on the PLA’s development largely around the same time as the works themselves were written. Early works trace the organization’s initial history following its founding in 1927, and subsequent participation in irregular warfare in the 1930s and conventional warfare in the 1940s that ultimately brought the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and its Army to power in 1949. The next several decades of PLA studies focused on organizational development and the PLA’s involvement in politics and policy as it transitioned from being a nonstate revolutionary military to one functioning within the role of a military force both of a political party and vis-à-vis the country that party ruled. These earlier phases of PLA studies were marked by limited access to Chinese sources, as well as archival material from countries that interacted with China, especially during the Cold War. Such seminal figures in the field as Ellis Joffe warned their readers that the insufficient source material available to them limited analysis. With the end of the Cold War, the opening up of more Chinese and foreign archives, and the proliferation of personal Chinese accounts and Internet resources, a new era in the field of PLA studies began in the 1990s. The increased accessibility and multiplicity of sources gave the field a breadth and depth of perspective long obscured by PRC censorship. The burst of activity that came from the PLA during this time to strengthen its capabilities similarly gave the field more data with which to work. The development of China’s media and information market, as well as the efforts from the central leadership and increasingly competitive services and branches of the PLA to showcase their capabilities to their fellow citizens and the world, have similarly resulted in an expansion of sources and data in the years since. However, despite their age, many older works retain great value. Not only do they show the different strands of thought that existed within the field at different periods of time, but they also contain some older sources otherwise unavailable, such as interviews and personal interactions with important actors who have since passed away, or even quotes from documents that have not yet been digitized. The laborious linguistic demands and other analytical challenges associated with this field incentivize collaboration. Many leading works are edited volumes based on conference proceedings. The views expressed

here are the authors’ alone. They are grateful for inputs from several dozen leading scholars and analysts in the field. They dedicate this bibliography to the memory of Ezra Vogel (1930–2020) in appreciation of his generous mentoring and support. Since this is a bibliography of the field of PLA studies, we do not include official PRC documents because they are not in the field itself but rather its subject. Space constraints likewise prevent us from including most reports from other nations’ governments.

Historical and Field Overviews and Methodology

A lack of survey works has long left too much of PLA studies an artisanal hodgepodge for generalists and specialists alike. This is compounded by the fact that few PLA experts teach at civilian universities; young aspirants attempting to enter the PLA studies field, including one of the authors, often have to learn through self-guidance and by reading whatever works they are able to get their hands on. The demographics of those who participate in the PLA studies field have also been changing with the times. In previous decades, many of the leading experts were either generalist China scholars or former US military attachés who served in China during their later years in uniform. Today, many of the younger members of the field work in academia, think tanks, and consultancies. Their careers and contributions reflect a relentless trend of professional specialization. Many have studied in China more extensively than their predecessors, have a greater level of fluency in Mandarin Chinese, and employ more diverse, complex, technology-augmented methodologies. For many members of the younger generation of experts, experience with the military comes through research or contracting work, rather than uniformed service. Early researchers typically lacked the ability to enter the PRC, those in recent decades enjoyed significant direct access, and now PRC security restrictions and related concerns may be narrowing in-country access once again. What impact these generational career differences have on the output of the field remains to be seen. Until recently, contributors’ knowledge bases have thus depended on what they are able to locate and consume. Following the foundational [Allen 2021](#), the pioneering [Mattis 2015a](#) and [Mattis 2015b](#) are geared toward newcomers to the field, as is [American Mandarin Society 2019](#). Surveys of the field of PLA studies itself have been rare. Two of the most notable are [Mulvenon and Yang 2001](#), which focuses on trends in the 1980s and 1990s, and [Ash, et al. 2007](#), which examines the differences within the field across several countries and regions. Given the difficulty of writing an effective history of the PLA for newcomers or outsiders, few works have attempted such an ambitious task; however, some, such as [Li 2007](#), have managed to do so. [Joffe 1987](#) traces the PLA’s recovery from Maoist diversion. Finally, with the growing diversity of source material available to the field, notably from archives in China, [Kraus 2016](#) provides a guide for those looking to utilize such material for further historical research. [Fanell and Martinson 2016](#) and [Martinson 2016](#) address open source research methodology.

- **Allen, Kenneth W.** “[Survey of English-Language Books on the PLA](#).” *China Analysis from Original Sources*, 1 March 2021.

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This foundational survey of modern PLA studies reveals the state of the field just before the two decades’ meteoric growth to its present profusion. It specifically covers five dozen of the most significant works published over the past three decades, together with

other sources emerging from China's government and in then-still-new media such as the Internet. This history remains significant; it reflects the context in which the PLA itself has modernized.

- **American Mandarin Society.** *Self-Study Syllabus on the Chinese People's Liberation Army*. Washington, DC: American Mandarin Society, 2019.

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As part of its syllabi project, the American Mandarin Society offers periodically updated self-study outlines, including one devoted to the PLA. This syllabus is divided into different subjects related to the PLA and is designed to be read in one-hour increments (about 40–50 pages per night) for five nights a week for four weeks.

- **Ash, Robert, David Shambaugh, and Seiichiro Takagi, eds.** *China Watching: Perspectives from Europe, Japan and the United States*. New York: Routledge, 2007.

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This work contains three chapters on the study of China's foreign and security policies in Europe, Japan, and the United States. While not focusing exclusively on the PLA, they provide rare perspectives regarding the differences between the PLA studies field in different countries and regions, which persist despite greater access to media and academic journals online. The amount of interaction among these communities is often surprisingly limited.

- **Fanell, James E., and Ryan D. Martinson.** "[Countering Chinese Expansion through Mass Enlightenment](#)." Washington, DC: Center for International Maritime Security (CIMSEC), 18 October 2016.

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There is much that US Navy intelligence can and should do to provide the raw materials needed for open source researchers to more fully grasp the nature of China's nautical ambitions. Sharing information about the movements and activities of Chinese forces could be done without compromising the secrecy of the sources and methods used to collect it. Doing so would improve the quality of scholarship and elevate the public debate.

- **Joffe, Ellis,** *The Chinese Army after Mao*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987.

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Analyzes the recovery of the PLA from the turbulent later years of Mao's rule, which saw "its decline as a professional force," and the subsequent strides it made on path toward modernization and toward a more specialist mindset.

- **Kraus, Charles.** "[Researching the History of the People's Republic of China](#)." Cold War International History Project Working Paper 79. Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, April 2016.

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Provides a guide for those looking to conduct archival research in China, with a special eye toward "the actual situations on the ground," given the disparity between what is legally allowed and what is actually allowed to happen with such work. In addition to providing advice on navigating bureaucratic hurdles and other characteristics of Chinese archives, it also highlights the value of tapping archives and discusses archive-specific opportunities.

- **Li, Xiaobing.** *A History of the Modern Chinese Army*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2007.

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This work details the history of the PLA from 1949 to 2002. Perhaps its most valuable aspect is the detailing of personal histories of PLA soldiers and officers, as well as some relevant civilians. While some works have focused on the personal histories of high-profile individuals involved with the PLA, this work includes the personal histories of less-well-known individuals to showcase the changing force.

- **Martinson, Ryan D.** "[The Scholar as Portent of Chinese Actions in the South China Sea](#)." Washington, DC: Center for International Maritime Security (CIMSEC), 25 July 2016.

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Argues for importance of distinguishing advisors from propagandists, both of whom have direct connections with the party-state. Studying the work of the propagandist has merits: we learn what the PRC wants domestic and international audiences to believe. The statements of the advisor, however, are potentially much more rewarding, for they may suggest future actions. Knowing what Beijing may do allows one to engage in proactive diplomacy and prepare countermeasures.

- **Mattis, Peter.** *Analyzing the Chinese Military: A Review Essay and Resource Guide on the People's Liberation Army*. Charleston, SC: Create Space, 26 May 2015a.

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A valuable compendium that provides helpful advice and guidance on everything from interpreting sources, to the relationship between the PLA and the CCP, to PLA expert conferences.

- **Mattis, Peter.** "[So You Want to Be a PLA Expert?](#)" *War on the Rocks*, 2 June 2015b.

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A short encapsulation of [Mattis 2015a](#), a landmark guide to the PLA studies field.

- **Mulvenon, James C., and Andrew N. D. Yang, eds. *Seeking Truth from Facts: A Retrospective on Chinese Military Studies in the Post-Mao Era*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2001.**

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This is a retrospective on trends within the 1980s and 1990s “in Chinese civil-military relations, force structure, doctrine, and capabilities, as well as the state of the Chinese military studies field.”

Current Surveys

Despite great progress, the volume and depth of studies of the PLA available today is much less than that surrounding the Soviet military in the 1970s and 1980s. [Saunders 2021](#) offers a basic overview; [Wuthnow, et al. 2021](#) is an extensive, in-depth survey. For current trends and PLA mission and force issues, reports by US government organizations provide some of the best information, particularly concerning specific technical details. [Office of the Secretary of Defense 2020](#) is the 2020 edition of an annual report, more commonly referred to as the “China Military Power Reports,” following the more widely publicized Cold War–era “Soviet Military Power Reports,” and is one of the most authoritative and comprehensive sources for yearly updates on the PLA. [Defense Intelligence Agency 2019](#) offers similar insights. [Campbell 2021](#), periodically updated via the Congressional Research Service (CRS), handily compiles these and other PLA overview sources. The primer on “everything that flies,” [Mulvaney and Allen 2019](#), is in its second edition; periodically updated via CRS, it provides the latest updates regarding China’s goals, missions, and operations in the disputed South and East China Seas. [Greitens 2021](#) outlines Xi’s operative national security concept, which starts with state/regime security above all else. [Glaser 2021](#) outlines Beijing’s approaches to gray zone operations, deterrence, and bilateral military interactions and offers corresponding policy recommendations. Finally, regarding the vital question of how the PLA might perform in key potential contingencies, [Chase, et al. 2015](#) and [Blasko 2019](#) identify lingering weaknesses; [Mastro 2019](#) surveys current PLA status and activities; and [Heginbotham, et al. 2015](#) and [Cliff 2015](#) provide rare unclassified net assessments.

- **Blasko, Dennis. “[PLA Weaknesses and Xi’s Concerns about PLA Capabilities](#).” Testimony before the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, Panel on “Backlash from Abroad: The Limits of Beijing’s Power to Shape its External Environment.” Washington, DC: U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, 7 February 2019.**

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Surveys what author assesses to be increasingly numerous, broad self-assessments in China’s official military and party media, citing significant shortcomings in PLA

warfighting and command capabilities. Argues that limitations illuminated by these internal assessments cast doubt over the senior party and military leadership's confidence in the PLA's ability to prevail in battle against a modern enemy and likely moderate China's near- and mid-term national security objectives and the manner by which they are pursued.

- **Campbell, Caitlin.** *China's Military: The People's Liberation Army (PLA)*. Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2021.

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Explains how the CCP is modernizing, reforming, and reorganizing the PLA to defend the party's interests and meet defense requirements, which have expanded in recent decades as China's economic and geopolitical power and ambitions have grown. China's military modernization is a major factor driving some observers' concerns about China's rise, China's intentions toward the United States and its allies and partners, and the role China aspires to play in the world. This report is periodically released with the latest updates.

- **Chase, Michael S., Jeffrey Engstrom, Tai Ming Cheung, et al.** *China's Incomplete Military Transformation: Assessing the Weaknesses of the People's Liberation Army (PLA)*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2015.

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One of the only publications that examines the PLA's remaining shortcomings systematically, including as related to specific campaigns.

- **Cliff, Roger.** *China's Military Power: Assessing Current and Future Capabilities*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2015.

DOI: [10.1017/CBO9781316217245](https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781316217245) [Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Offers systematic methodology and performs a comprehensive operational assessment of how PLA forces might perform in campaigns against US and allied/partner counterparts vis-à-vis Taiwan and disputed features in the South China Sea.

- **Defense Intelligence Agency.** *China Military Power: Modernizing a Force to Fight and Win*. Washington, DC: Defense Intelligence Agency, 2019.

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A comprehensive detailing by the US Defense Intelligence Agency of "China's defense and military goals, strategy, plans, and intentions; the organization, structure, and capability of its military supporting those goals; and the enabling infrastructure and industrial base." Includes numerous appendices on the services/forces and on certain topics such as intelligence and transportation.

- **Glaser, Bonnie S.** "[Statement before the Senate Armed Services Committee Hearing on 'The United States' Strategic Competition with China](#)." Washington, DC: Senate Armed Services Committee, 8 June 2021.

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Surveys China's gray zone tactics in support of its strategic objectives; deterrence in the Taiwan Strait and US policy toward Taiwan; and the role of US-China military ties in deterring conflict and managing escalation. Recommends US policies and countermeasures accordingly.

- **Greitens, Sheena Chestnut.** "[Internal Security & Grand Strategy: China's Approach to National Security under Xi Jinping](#)." Statement before the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, Hearing on "U.S.-China Relations at the Chinese Communist Party's Centennial," Panel on "Trends in China's Politics, Economics, and Security Policy." Washington, DC: U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, 28 January 2021.

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From 2014 to the present, Xi Jinping has outlined and operationalized a new national security strategy—a new grand strategy—for the PRC. For the CCP, national security means first and foremost state/regime security—the security of the CCP and its ability to govern Chinese society. Internal security is one of the chief ends of China's strategy, not just a means or a constraint on foreign policy. Testimony analyzes China's national security concept, its operationalization, and logical policy responses.

- **Heginbotham, Eric, Michael Nixon, Forrest E. Morgan, et al.** *The U.S.-China Military Scorecard: Forces, Geography, and the Evolving Balance of Power, 1996–2017*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2015.

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Traces the PLA's increasing capabilities vis-à-vis US forces over four "snapshot" years—1996, 2003, 2010, and 2017—and how they might strengthen its relative performance over time in ten key operational areas. Concludes that PLA forces can impose growing costs on US counterparts, although their ability to do so still diminishes significantly with distance from mainland China.

- **Mastro, Oriana Skylar.** "[China's Military Modernization Program: Trends and Implications](#)." Statement before the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission. Washington, DC: U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, 4 September 2019.

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Testimony surveys recent PLA progress and activities, Sino-Russian cooperation, and the Sino-American military balance. It concludes by recommending what the author believes is required to deter PLA employment in leading missions and scenarios.

- **Mulvaney, Brendan S., and Kenneth W. Allen. *PLA Aerospace Power: A Primer on Trends in China’s Military Air, Space, and Missile Force*. 2d ed. Montgomery, AL: China Aerospace Studies Institute, 5 August 2019.**

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The second edition of the China Aerospace Studies Institute (CASI)’s primer on China’s military air, space, and missile forces. Aside from examining the forces themselves, this work also has sections on the trends in PLA aerospace training and operational proficiency and the relevant industrial base. It also includes appendices on PLA ranks and grades, the PLAAF and PLARF leaderships, the PLASSF Military Space Force leadership, and select UAVs in use.

- **Office of the Secretary of Defense. *Military and Security Developments Involving the People’s Republic of China*. Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2020.**

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Each year the Pentagon releases its “China Military Power Report” on China’s armed forces, a major authoritative source within the field given the unique government data that inform it. While successive iterations typically cover the same core subjects, different topical themes are showcased as well. Complete set, with related analysis, is available online from *China Analysis from Original Sources*.

- **O’Rourke, Ronald. *U.S.-China Strategic Competition in South and East China Seas: Implications for U.S. Interests—Background and Issues for Congress*. Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2021.**

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This report is periodically released with the latest updates on Beijing’s policies, activities, and military operations vis-à-vis the South and East China Seas—home to virtually all of it unresolved maritime sovereignty disputes, and hence a major area of its focus.

- **Saunders, Phillip C. “U.S.-China Relations and Chinese Military Modernization.” In *After Engagement: Dilemmas in U.S.-China Security Relations*. Edited by Jacques deLisle and Avery Goldstein, 267–295. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2021.**

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Offers a basic, wide-ranging overview of PLA modernization, including discussion of the reforms, with limited jargon. Suitable for use in an undergraduate or graduate course.

- **Wuthnow, Joel, Arthur S. Ding, Andrew Scobell, Phillip C. Saunders, and Andrew N. D. Yang, eds. *The PLA beyond Borders: Chinese Military Operations in Regional and Global Context*. Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2021.**

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Broad survey of China’s increasingly active military operations within and beyond Asia. Themes include the goals of bureaucratic actors and how they pursue them; the motivations behind different types of operations and activities; restructuring to support overseas operations with theater commands, SSF, and JLSF; overseas access and sustainment of expeditionary forces; remaining challenges for power projection; and implications. Of note, chapter by John Chen, et al. offers unique information on SSF.

Wars, Incidents, and Disputes

The historical works that are detailed in the following subsections are of particular significance, given that quite a few of them are relatively unknown or relatively new, so they have not all been widely read and drawn upon by the PLA studies field, which tends to focus on current events. However, historical studies are of critical importance to even those members of the field focused on current events, as their basic knowledge of the PLA can be unintentionally based on dated or incomplete source material, which can impact how such members of the field understand the PLA’s current behavior and how it will likely act and evolve in the future. The subsections are broken down into [General Surveys](#) of the wars, incidents, and disputes; as well as those focusing on the [Chinese Civil War](#), the PLA’s involvement in [Building and Reasserting Control over Territory](#), the [Korean War](#), and areas that represent [Less-Studied Involvement in Conflicts](#). One important factor to keep in mind when it comes to reading and utilizing works on wars, incidents, and disputes is the date they were published. Information to which authors have access—news reports, interviews, official histories, memoirs, or declassified archival material—shapes their writings significantly. The tone, tenor, arguments, and even focus of works are all greatly impacted by this factor, with changes in censorship, archival access, and political rehabilitation of actors marking new eras of scholarship. While the works in newer eras of scholarship do not render those belonging to older eras obsolete, they enhance understanding and remind readers of the continual evolution of historiography, even regarding events long past.

General Surveys

Broad works focusing on China’s wars, conflicts, and disputes often tend to focus on China’s decision-making and the factors shaping it. While some works, such as [Rhodes 2020](#), focus only on one event or case study, most tend to examine several, such as [Barnett 2021](#), [Christensen 2006](#), [Dutton 2011](#), [Fravel 2008](#), [Scobell 2003](#), and [Whiting 2001](#).

- **Barnett, Robert. “[China Is Building Entire Villages in Another Country’s Territory](#).” *Foreign Policy*, 7 May 2021.**

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Since 2015, China has constructed a largely unnoticed network of roads, buildings, and military outposts deep in a sacred valley in Bhutan. Informative analysis, maps, and photos explain why there were no substantial “settlements” in these contested but climatically harsh hinterlands before PRC policies placed some there strategically. Article also explores what these latest developments may mean for PRC sovereignty claims, peripheral security activities, and broader border disputes with India.

- **Christensen, Thomas.** “**Windows and War: Changes in the International System and China’s Decision to Use Force.**” In *New Directions in the Study of China’s Foreign Policy*. Edited by Alastair Iain Johnston and Robert Ross, 50–85. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006.

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Examines post-1949 cases of China’s use of force, with worrying implications for the ability to maintain stability in the Taiwan Strait through deterrence. Argues that regardless of whether the PRC perceives “red-line” provocations or not, its actual force employment is triggered by perception of “closing windows” to achieve PRC strategic objectives, deter increases in adversary aggression, or establish favorable long-term strategic trends. Moreover, risk-acceptant PRC leaders have employed force to achieve domestic political objectives and dispel gathering foreign threats.

- **Dutton, Peter.** “[Three Disputes and Three Objectives—China and the South China Sea.](#)” *Naval War College Review* 64.4 (2011): 42–67.

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Breaks down the disputes in the South China Sea into three categories, “each with its own parties, rule sets, and politics.” They are disputes over (1) territorial sovereignty, (2) “which coastal states claim rightful jurisdiction over waters and seabed,” and (3) “the proper balance of coastal-state and international rights to use the seas for military purposes.” In addition, this work classifies and analyzes China’s three main objectives in the region: regional integration, resource control, and enhanced security.

- **Fravel, M. Taylor.** *Strong Borders, Secure Nation: Cooperation and Conflict in China’s Territorial Disputes*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008.

DOI: [10.1515/9781400828876](#) [Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Examines the two dozen territorial disputes in which the PRC has been involved since its founding, and why in some cases it chose conciliation with the other disputant, while in others it chose to use force. Argues that internal threats explain China’s willingness to compromise in territorial disputes, while declines in bargaining power as a state actor at critical junctures explain its willingness to use force.

- **Rhodes, Andrew.** “[Same Water, Different Dreams: Salient Lessons of the Sino-Japanese War for Future Naval Warfare](#).” *Journal of Advanced Military Studies* 11.2 (Fall 2020): 35–50.

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Contends that this 1894–1895 conflict remains a cautionary tale full of salient lessons for future conflict, with several consistent themes that underpin Chinese thinking about naval strategy and might shape future operational choices. Chinese authors assess that future dynamics require China to inculcate an awareness of the maritime domain in its people, build institutions that can sustain sea power, and, at the operational level, actively seek to contest and gain sea control far from shore.

- **Scobell, Andrew.** *China’s Use of Military Force: Beyond the Great Wall and the Long March*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

DOI: [10.1017/CBO9780511510502](#) [Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Examines “the impact of Chinese strategic culture, civil-military culture, and military organizational culture on decisions to employ armed force at home and abroad.” Cases are divided into those during the Mao, Deng, and Jiang eras. Contains an examination of what the author terms the “Chinese Cult of Defense” to describe how the interplay between two strands of strategic culture encourages engagement in offensive operations rationalized as defensive.

- **Whiting, Allen S.** “China’s Use of Force, 1950–96, and Taiwan.” *International Security* 26.2 (Fall 2001): 103–131.

DOI: [10.1162/016228801753191150](#) [Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Examines eight PLA engagements involving the US, USSR, or their proxies. Prioritizing deterrence and coercive diplomacy, Beijing was able to balance risk-taking and management to avoid either defeat or escalation by opponents. Suggests past willingness to use force against Taiwan portends risks. Retains particular relevance since China has not fought a war for decades.

Chinese Civil War

Despite representing the start of the Chinese Civil War, the 1927 Nanchang Uprising and the events surrounding it are often glossed over in histories of the PLA. A few works, however, such as [Elleman 2009](#), do focus on it and the surrounding events that are often used to mark the birth of the Red Army/PLA. The much mythologized early years of the Red Army and PLA are tackled by several works that help break down the aura of morality and uniformity that has captured some audiences, as well as the centrality of Mao Zedong in the Chinese Communist movement’s early decades. Such works as [Benton 1992](#) and [Benton 1999](#), which cover those left behind on the Long March and the companion force to Mao’s later Eighth Route Army,

respectively, only became possible to write with the relative relaxation in producing history in China (including allowing and promoting regional and local histories) and the political rehabilitation of prominent individuals associated with heretofore neglected aspects of the Chinese Communist movement that emerged with the death of Mao and the rise of a post-Mao leadership in the mid-to-late 1970s. These changes allowed a flood of source material, from archives to memoirs to documentaries, to be released subsequently, which have greatly enriched the field. Some works, such as [Sun 2006](#), are among the last to benefit from direct interviews with surviving participants from such events as the Long March. While many observers tend to "skip" the period in between the end of World War II and the Korean War, the PLA's victory in the Chinese Civil War was not a forgone conclusion, as misperceived by some. This period is examined in works such as [Christensen 1996](#), [Tanner 2013](#), [Tanner 2015](#), and [Westad 2003](#). Finally, [Szonyi 2008](#) surveys the Civil War's lower-level continuation in the Cold War through a case study of frontline Quemoy/Jinmen.

- **Benton, Gregor. *Mountain Fires: The Red Army's Three-Year War in South China, 1934–1938*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992.**

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Covers the rarely examined guerilla war waged by Red Army members left behind in South China by the main force led by Mao Zedong that undertook the Long March. Examines in detail the activities and evolution of these "stay-behind" in each of their base areas during the period that the author terms the "Three-Year War." These activities include violent struggles between factions and the ways they acquired civilian support (including through coercion and moderating policies).

- **Benton, Gregor. *New Fourth Army: Communist Resistance along the Yangtze and the Huai, 1938–1941*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999.**

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Covers in detail the lesser-known companion force to Mao's Eighth Route Army during its first three years. Describes how this force was built around a core of those from the Three-Year War in the south, and how it, unlike Mao's force, had to navigate a more complex political and military environment, often by forming alliances with different powerholders. It also examines how this force was able to expand Communist influence in key areas at Nationalist expense.

- **Christensen, Thomas J. *Useful Adversaries: Grand Strategy, Domestic Mobilization, and Sino-American Conflict, 1947–1958*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996.**

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A classic tracing the US involvement in the late stages of the Chinese Civil War, the First Taiwan Strait Crisis (1954–55), the Second Taiwan Strait Crisis (1958), and the emergence of the US-Taiwan defense relationship. Emphasizes the security and foreign policy implications of domestic political constraints. Concludes that Truman and Mao

consolidated domestic support for their larger Cold War grand strategies by manipulating short-term bilateral conflicts not necessarily in their direct national interests.

- **Elleman, Bruce.** *Moscow and the Emergence of Communist Power in China, 1925–30: The Nanchang Uprising and the Birth of the Red Army.* London and New York: Routledge, 2009.

DOI: [10.4324/9780203881606](#)[Save Citation »](#)[Export Citation »](#) [Share Citation »](#)

Examines the history leading up to, during, and after the first CCP independent military action, the 1927 Nanchang Uprising. Places this formative event, which is often used to mark the birth of the Red Army/PLA, in the context of larger political maneuverings between rivals in the international communist movement embodied by the Soviet-dominated Comintern. Argues this failed uprising was ordered by Stalin more to fight against his political rivals in Moscow—most notably Trotsky—than to support the CCP.

- **Sun, Shuyun.** *The Long March: The True History of China's Founding Myth.* New York: Anchor Books, 2006.

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The author seeks to demythologize the Long March of the main body of the Red Army by traveling the same route and interviewing some of the last survivors of this event. Reveals the uncomfortable truths about the behavior and actions of those on this trek, including some that haunted participants for decades to come, which have been papered over by significant state and party propaganda of a period that was considered crucial for Mao Zedong's rise and legitimacy.

- **Szonyi, Michael.** *Cold War Island: Quemoy on the Front Line.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

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At the Cold War's height, tiny Quemoy, just off mainland China's coast, became a garrisoned Republic of China fortress and a two-decade target of PLA shelling. This history surveys the frontline position of Quemoy, its local societal and cultural dynamics, and its unique connection to relations among Beijing, Washington, and Moscow. Employs diverse methodologies, including oral history, official documents, and dissident writings.

- **Tanner, Harold M.** *The Battle for Manchuria and the Fate of China: Siping, 1946.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013.

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Analyzes the controversial Second Battle of Siping in 1946, where the Nationalists were interrupted in their pursuit of the fleeing Communist main force by a ceasefire insisted upon by the US special representative to China, General George Marshall. While the

ceasefire gave the PLA time and space to help rebuild itself, the author argues that even had this not happened, it is unlikely the Nationalists would have been able to achieve a decisive victory, as argued by many.

- **Tanner, Harold M.** *Where Chiang Kai-shek Lost China: The Liao-Shen Campaign, 1948.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015.

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Examines the Liao-Shen (Liaoning-Shenyang) Campaign in 1948 and the events leading up to it. The campaign marked the end of the struggle for Manchuria and, the author argues, “the historical moment when Chiang Kai-shek lost China.” The campaign, which saw the loss of some of the best Nationalist armies, is also significant because it “marked the Communist forces’ transition from guerilla warfare to large-scale maneuver operations, coordination between infantry, artillery, and armor, and attacks on heavily defended cities.”

- **Westad, Odd Arne.** *Decisive Encounters: The Chinese Civil War, 1946–1950.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003.

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Focuses on the often overlooked latter phase of the Chinese Civil War, from 1946–1950. Has a strong theoretical focus as it seeks to explain the outcome of the conflict, for which it argues events in this phase were decisive. Contends that in combination with the Japanese invasion, the Communists were able to build legitimacy across the country by promoting themselves as a force for modernizing change, while the Nationalists alienated much of society by asserting centralization without due regard for local actors.

Building and Reasserting Control over Territory

The building and reasserting of control by the CCP and PLA over territory that makes up today’s PRC and its official sovereignty claims was a complex, protracted, and, all too often, bloody process. [DeMare 2019](#) details the relationship between the PLA and land reform, begun during the Chinese Civil War but also continued into the early years of the new PRC state. [Lai 2011](#) showcases the importance of the fiscal and supply systems created by the Chinese Communists to the military situation and state-building during and after World War II. [Yick 1995](#) examines the different ways the PLA could build support and capture major urban areas, in this case Beijing (Beijing) and Tianjin, during the Chinese Civil War. [Gao 2004](#) details how the process of solidifying control over territory had to adapt when the PLA began taking major cities, including after the founding of the PRC, that had little to no history of Communist presence. The process of solidifying control continued for years after the founding of the PRC, and sometimes had to be repaired when the government ran into resistance, typically of its own instigation. The insurgencies that had to be put down by the PLA across the country during the Cultural Revolution, covered in [Walder 2019](#), represent one such case of having to reassert control. While the CCP, PLA, and PRC usually had to deal with threats to their control in areas with a strong non-Han presence, even in areas with an overwhelming Han majority, such

Canton/Guangdong and the surrounding region, a strong localist presence and tradition could still complicate the move to solidify control, particularly central control, as seen in [Vogel 1969](#).

- **DeMare, Brian.** *Land Wars: The Story of China's Agrarian Revolution*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2019.

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Briefly shows the relationship between the military and land reform. The military used land reform to help finance itself and gain recruits. It saw military victory in the Chinese Civil War and land reform as being intertwined, with the author arguing land reform was "a critical factor in military victory by tying the peasants of North and Northeast China to the fates" of the CCP. However, violence related to land reform sometimes destabilized the countryside and threatened the war effort.

- **Gao, James Z.** *The Communist Takeover of Hangzhou: The Transformation of City and Cadre, 1949–1954*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004.

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Showcases how the PLA was critical for, or even sometimes in charge of, the setting up and running of city governments (rather than civilians), creating a positive impression of the Communists among the urban masses, co-opting urban elites, and restoring the urban economy. The case of Hangzhou contrasts with earlier takeovers of urban areas by the PLA that were more destructive and less successful. It also highlights the cultural difficulties encountered in a rural PLA taking over urban areas.

- **Lai, Sherman Xiaogang.** *A Springboard to Victory: Shandong Province and Chinese Communist Military and Financial Strength, 1937–1945*. Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2011.

DOI: [10.1163/ej.9789004198005.i-346](#) [Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Examines the largely ignored fiscal and supply systems of the Chinese Communists during the civil war and their impacts on the military situation and state-building. Details how the Communists were able to build up their "military-fiscal state" in Shandong as a springboard for a series of important victories in North and Northeast China. Highlights how the Communists financed themselves in the region, such as by supplying the Japanese Imperial military, and the importance of economic warfare.

- **Vogel, Ezra.** *Canton under Communism: Programs and Politics in a Provincial Capital, 1949–1968*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969.

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Focuses on Communist solidification of power in Canton/Guangdong and the surrounding region, where Nationalist and localist influences was more firmly entrenched than in the North. Touches on how the largely northern PLA occupation had to deal with

local Communist guerillas and Nationalist soldiers (active and former) and the tensions and challenges with both. Shows the significance of the armed forces in supporting agriculture and socialist education, and the importance of former Communist and Nationalist soldiers and guerillas in providing rural leadership.

- **Walder, Andrew G. *Agents of Disorder: Inside China’s Cultural Revolution*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2019.**

DOI: [10.2307/j.ctvnjbhrb](#)[Save Citation](#) »[Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Examines the Cultural Revolution from 1966–1969, when rebelling civilians and responding armed forces paralyzed much of the country with “destructive civil disobedience and violent factional warfare, which in many regions resembled civil war.” In some cases, the military units, despite the expectation of them to act as a bulwark of order, actually became “agents of disorder.” This period saw “most regions [being placed] under a harsh regime of military control” and, by 1969, close to 1.6 million deaths.

- **Yick, Joseph K. S. *Making Urban Revolution in China: The CCP-GMD Struggle for Beiping-Tianjin, 1945–1949*. Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1995.**

[Save Citation](#) »[Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Examines CCP strategies for building support and winning control in urban areas, focusing on Beiping (Beijing) and Tianjin. Highlights the different ways the Communists captured Beiping (the “Beiping pattern”), which served as a model for “peaceful liberation,” and Tianjin (the “Tianjin pattern”), with the former being more politically heavy and the latter being more militarily heavy. Argues that the use of students, along with “significant work among GMD officers and soldiers,” was critical for success, rather than use of proletarian workers.

Korean War

As the first war the PLA waged under the newly established People’s Republic of China (PRC) and a war fought against a US-led United Nations force, a significant amount of literature has, understandably, been produced in the decades since the conflict. For many of those decades, however, the literature was unable to benefit from much in the way of Chinese materials; therefore, the conflict in the was largely understood through the lens of the experiences of the United States’ military, and to a lesser extent those of its friends and allies in the UN force. Greater access to and use of Chinese and Korean materials in the past three decades, and particularly since 2000, has enabled the literature to reflect a more nuanced and accurate understanding of the conflict and its genesis. As such, works on the Korean War that are focused on China can often be divided into those focusing broadly on the process of the country entering the war and on the fighting itself. The former include works such as [Chen 1996](#); [Goncharov, et al. 1993](#); [Scobell 1999](#); and [Zhang 1995](#). The latter include works such as [Li, et al. 2001](#); [Li 2020](#); and [Li 2014](#). Other works focus more narrowly on specific topics, such as Chinese prisoners of war (POWs) in [Chang 2020](#), and the air war in [Zhang 2003](#).

- **Chang, David Cheng.** *The Hijacked War: The Story of Chinese POWs in the Korean War.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2020.

DOI: [10.1515/9781503605879](#)[Save Citation](#) »[Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

An in-depth examination of the experiences of Chinese prisoners of war (POWs) held during the Korean War by the US-led United Nations Command (UNC). Benefits from interviews with more than ninety Chinese POWs, both those who returned to China and those who went to Taiwan after their release. It not only details the experiences of the Chinese troops prior to their capture, but also how they behaved as POWs, including their responses to influence efforts by the UNC forces.

- **Chen, Jian.** *China's Road to the Korean War: The Making of Sino-American Confrontation.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1996.

[Save Citation](#) »[Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

One of the most-cited works on China's involvement in the Korean War, it helped establish what is now the relatively standard narrative that Beijing's decision to enter the peninsular conflict was due to broader considerations than simply the security of its border with North Korea.

- **Goncharov, Sergei N., John W. Lewis, and Xue Litai.** *Uncertain Partners: Stalin, Mao, and the Korean War.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993.

[Save Citation](#) »[Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Focuses on the interactions and relationships between the Communist leaderships preceding and during the Korean War, as well as their impact.

- **Li, Xiaobing.** *China's Battle for Korea: The 1951 Spring Offensive.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014.

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Focuses on the largest and longest military offensive conducted by Communist forces during the Korean War, the fifth Chinese offensive of the war, also known as the 1951 Spring Offensive Campaign. It provides a level of granularity for the decisive turning point in the war not found in other works, and specifically examines why the Chinese force failed to achieve its objectives in this offensive.

- **Li, Xiaobing.** *Attack at Chosin: The Chinese Second Offensive in Korea.* Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2020.

[Save Citation](#) »[Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

An operational history of the Chinese fighting in the pivotal Battle of Chosin Reservoir during the Korean War. There is special focus given to the lessons the PLA learned from this battle, which resulted in a shift from mobile toward positional warfare, as well as

more emphasis on developing a number of previously neglected areas, such as air power and logistical support. This work benefits from recently released material and more than two hundred interviews conducted with Chinese soldiers.

- **Li, Xiaobing, Allan R. Millett, and Bin Yu, trans. and eds. *Mao's Generals Remember Korea*. Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2001.**

[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Contains unique insights from high-ranking Chinese military officers who served just prior to and during the Korean War, including their personal and professional views and assessments regarding China's situation, as well as divisions within the leadership in Beijing and troops on the ground.

- **Scobell, Andrew. "Soldiers, Statesmen, Strategic Culture and China's 1950 Intervention in Korea." *Journal of Contemporary China* 8.22 (1999): 477–497.**

DOI: [10.1080/10670569908724358](https://doi.org/10.1080/10670569908724358) [Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Uses the Korean War case study to argue that that the "Chinese military mind" is distinctive yet "no more hawkish than [those of] their civilian counterparts"; however, the PLA may be willing to engage in brinkmanship and *political* provocation in response to threats to Taiwan or other "core" interests deemed close to the military's central national security mission.

- **Zhang, Shu Guang. *Mao's Military Romanticism: China and the Korean War, 1950–1953*. Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1995.**

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Argues for the importance of Mao Zedong's personal beliefs and sentiments in China's decision to intervene officially in the Korean War, particularly his romanticized view of military affairs concerning the ability of the "human element" to triumph over the technological element. The author notes that this work was written at a time when previous English-language literature was generally sympathetic in its analysis of China's decision to intervene, with the predominant argument being that "China was under threat."

- **Zhang, Xiaoming. *Red Wings over the Yalu: China, the Soviet Union, and the Air War in Korea*. College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2003.**

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Offers a rare focus and in-depth insights regarding the birth of the People's Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF) and its development and experience in the Korean War, including both Sino-Soviet leadership- and pilot-level interactions. Contains various useful appendices, including the service records of both Soviet and Chinese air forces in Korea.

Less-Studied Involvement in Conflicts

While the PLA’s involvement in conflicts such as the Korean War against the US-led UN forces are well studied, its involvement in certain conflicts, often against Communist or non-Western countries, have been generally been underexamined by the field. This is generally because the vast majority of the PLA studies field overwhelmingly publishes in English and is located in the United States, or at least publishes with American institutions. Works on such conflicts include [Goldstein 2001](#) (Sino-Soviet border conflict), [Lintner 2018](#) (1962 Sino-Indian War), [O’Dowd 2007](#) (Third Indochina War), and [Zhang 2015](#) (Third Indochina War). Several such conflicts have been against or involve Western countries, but due to Chinese obfuscation or the brevity of the event, they have received relatively less attention. Examples include PRC seizure of islands from Vietnam in the Battle of the Parcels ([Yoshihara 2016](#)), pursuit of maritime and territorial sovereignty claims more generally from 1970–2015 ([Chubb 2020–2021](#)), Chinese involvement in the Vietnam War ([Li 2020](#)), the 2009 Sino-American *Impeccable* Incident ([Odom 2010](#)), and the ongoing Sino-Indian border dispute ([Milliff 2020](#)). One work included here ([Ryan, et al. 2003](#)) even covers, among others, several less-studied PLA involvements in conflicts, including ones against Communist, non-Western, and Western countries.

- **Chubb, Andrew. “PRC Assertiveness in the South China Sea.” *International Security* 45.3 (Winter 2020–2021): 79–121.**

DOI: [10.1162/isec_a_00400](#)[Save Citation »Export Citation » Share Citation »](#)

Offers a new typology of “assertive” PRC state behaviors in maritime and territorial disputes, and original time-series events data, 1970–2015. Contends that the key policy change—China’s rapid administrative buildup and introduction of regular coercive behaviors—occurred in 2007. Focused qualitative case studies of four breakpoints identified in the data indicate 1973, 1987, and 1992 policy shifts in what were largely opportunistic responses to favorable geopolitical circumstances; whereas policy change observed from 2007 was a lagged effect of decisions taken in the 1990s to build specific capabilities designed to realize strategic objectives that emerged in the 1970s.

- **Goldstein, Lyle J. “Return to Zhenbao Island: Who Started Shooting and Why It Matters.” *China Quarterly* 168 (December 2001): 985–997.**

DOI: [10.1017/S0009443901000572](#)[Save Citation »Export Citation » Share Citation »](#)

Cites Chinese and Russian sources and emerging bilateral scholarly consensus to suggest compellingly that it was Mao who deliberately planned and initiated the Sino-Soviet border crisis of 1969. This included the Wusuli/Ussuri River clashes, specifically the PRC-premeditated Zhenbao/Damansky Island ambush on 2 March 1969. Argues that Mao’s core calculus was not deterring Soviet interventionist aggression under the “Brezhnev Doctrine” following the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia, but rather employing an external threat to generate domestic unity and political mobilization.

- **Li, Xiaobing.** *The Dragon in the Jungle: The Chinese Army in the Vietnam War.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2020.

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Examines China's significant secret support to North Vietnam during the Vietnam War, which, along with Soviet support, this work argues, provided the "decisive edge" against the United States and South Vietnam. Benefits from interviews with Chinese and Vietnamese veterans, as well as recently released archival material. This work "provides a comprehensive coverage of China's foreign war-fighting experience, including Beijing's decision-making, mobilization, command and control, cooperation and interactions with the Vietnamese and Russians, reinforcement and rotation, and combat assessment."

- **Lintner, Bertil.** *China's India War: Collision Course on the Roof of the World.* New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2018.

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This work aims to update misconceptions concerning the 1962 Sino-Indian War stemming from a hugely influential 1970 book that swayed the opinions of many observers and policymakers, including Henry Kissinger and President Richard Nixon, causing them to view India more negatively and China more positively. While centered around the build-up to the conflict and the conflict itself, this work also covers China's other lesser-known military activities aimed at India in the decades since, including via third parties.

- **Milliff, Aidan.** "[Tension High, Altitude Higher: Logistical and Physiological Constraints on the Indo-Chinese Border.](#)" *War on the Rocks*, 8 June 2020.

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The Sino-Indian border dispute is a significant subject with broad ramifications. It is likely to become even more so as the world's two most populous great powers face growing domestic challenges amid enduring issues of bilateral contention. All too often, however, emerging new data are granular and unclear. This article distills enduring dynamics governing this contested, unforgiving geopolitical and geophysical terrain, offering a "big picture" view that is likely to remain revealing long after today's sundry specific details have evolved.

- **Odom, Jonathan G.** "[The True 'Lies' of the Impeccable Incident: What Really Happened, Who Disregarded International Law, and Why Every Nation \(Outside of China\) Should Be Concerned.](#)" *Michigan State Journal of International Law* 18.3 (April 2010).

[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

On 8 March 2009, in international waters in the South China Sea, five PRC-flagged vessels harassed the United States Naval Ship (USNS) *Impeccable*. This definitive analysis considers the "*Impeccable* Incident" from a factual and legal perspective.

- **O'Dowd, Edward C.** *Chinese Military Strategy in the Third Indochina War: The Last Maoist War*. New York: Routledge, 2007.

DOI: [10.4324/9780203088968](#)[Save Citation »Export Citation » Share Citation »](#)

Examines the third Sino-Vietnamese conflict, with a focus on Chinese military strategy. Argues that the lingering Maoist legacy held back the PLA during this conflict, constituting the "fundamental cause of their problems," rather than simply inadequate training or poor leadership. It also coins the term "artillery diplomacy" to describe a PRC tactic to make political points with a particular use of force.

- **Ryan, Mark, David Finkelstein, and Michael McDevitt, eds.** *Chinese Warfighting: The PLA Experience since 1949*. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2003.

[Save Citation »Export Citation » Share Citation »](#)

Focused on the PLA's limited warfighting experience, this volume includes information and analysis on some of the PLA's lesser-known operations, such as post-1949 aerial engagements with the Nationalist and American air forces over southeastern China and the Taiwan Strait, the Sino-Indian War of 1962, and the Sino-Soviet Border Conflicts of 1969.

- **Yoshihara, Toshi.** "The 1974 Paracels Sea Battle: A Campaign Appraisal." *Naval War College Review* 69.2 (Spring 2016): 41–65.

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Leading, and virtually only, study of the several-hour clash between China's navy and maritime militia and South Vietnam's navy on 19 January 1974. Results included modest casualties in ships and personnel, the taking of two American advisors as prisoners (soon released), and the disputed Paracel Islands under subsequent PRC control. Complex, preplanned PRC operation employed hybrid tactics common in Chinese naval history that foreshadowed subsequent PRC sovereignty advancement operations in the South China Sea.

- **Zhang, Xiaoming.** *Deng Xiaoping's Long War: The Military Conflict between China and Vietnam, 1979–1991*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015.

DOI: [10.5149/northcarolina/9781469621241.001.0001](#)[Save Citation »Export Citation »Share Citation »](#)

Analyzes the geopolitical context of the war, the Chinese decision-making process to initiate hostilities with Vietnam, as well as the importance of Deng Xiaoping's personal views and plans for China. It also probes the rarely discussed decade-long border conflict

that followed the war’s official conclusion, as well as the impact of that conflict on the PLA and the PRC home front.

Potential Future Scenarios and Contingencies

China’s overall future course, the trajectory of its military capabilities, and the situations in which its armed forces might be involved are some of the greatest sources of scrutiny and debate for PLA scholars and analysts. This section offers a sampling of distinctive studies that focus on key future elements at the macro and micro levels. [Henley 2014](#); [Babbage, et al. 2020](#); and [Scobell, et al. 2020](#) plot alternative futures decades out for China and its military. [Christensen 2001](#) outlines the asymmetric nature of PLA development, which remains a source of strength today; while [Erickson, et al. 2017](#) consider how related PLA capabilities might evolve as much as two decades hence. [Murray 2008](#), [Chong 2020](#), [Glaser 2020](#), and [Savino and Durst 2021](#) cover various issues relevant to a Taiwan scenario—the PLA’s lead planning driver for decades—while [China Maritime Studies Institute 2021](#) offers an amphibious invasion-focused net assessment. [Erickson and Liff 2016](#) examine Sino-Japanese crisis management capabilities vis-à-vis East China Sea contingencies. [Mastro 2018](#) probes PLA-relevant aspects of a North Korea collapse scenario. [Rielage 2018](#) imagines how prior choices might shape a future US-China conflict. [Collins 2018](#) considers the related but geographically broader prospects for a US oil and gas blockade of China. From a US perspective, [Denmark 2020](#) considers regional allies and partners. [Friedberg 2012](#); [Mahnken 2012](#); and [Mahnken, et al. 2019](#) consider the nature of Sino-American great power competition and how the United States might compete more effectively, particularly in the military dimension.

- **Babbage, Ross, Jack Bianchi, Julian Snelder, Toshi Yoshihara, Aaron Friedberg, and Nadège Rolland.** *Which Way the Dragon? Sharpening Allied Perceptions of China’s Strategic Trajectory.* Future Warfare & Concepts Series. Washington, DC: Center for Strategic & Budgetary Assessments, 6 August 2020.

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Offers several overarching alternative scenarios for China as potential guideposts over the next fifteen years. Each outcome includes a series of leading indicators, allowing analysts to determine which future scenario China is headed toward, prepare for potential alternatives in advance, and adjust strategies, operational concepts, and military and security systems accordingly.

- **China Maritime Studies Institute.** “[Large-Scale Amphibious Warfare in Chinese Military Strategy](#).” “Quick Look” conference summary. Newport, RI: Naval War College, 14 June 2021.

[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

This summary of CMSI’s May 2021 conference offers key findings, namely that the PLA has achieved tremendous progress in developing many of the capabilities needed for a cross-Strait invasion. The threat posed to Taiwan is grave. Nevertheless, the inherent challenges and risks remain sufficiently high for Xi and the CCP that Taipei,

Washington, and Tokyo can continue to deter—or, in a worst case, frustrate—an invasion. US planners must consider the possibility of the PRC improvising in just-good-enough-for-long-enough fashion.

- **Chong, Ja Ian.** “A Matter of Trust: Understanding Limited Support for Taiwan’s Defense Reform.” In *Taiwan in Dynamic Transition*. Edited by Ryan Dunch and Ashley Esarey, 181–197. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2020.

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Explains why Taiwan’s citizenry maintains a curious ambivalence toward military reform and modernization. Public appetite for military spending is limited. Defense-related budgets, including for transfers of more advanced technologies, have been falling since the early 2000s and remain low despite a rebound. These trends reflect suspicion of the military for martial law-era excesses and legacies of abuse. Reform needs to address not only acquisition, capabilities, doctrines, and organizational transformation, but also transitional justice, civil-military relations, and building a military Taiwanese can trust.

- **Christensen, Thomas.** “[Posing Problems without Catching Up: China’s Rise and Challenges for U.S. Security Policy](#).” *International Security* 25.4 (Spring 2001): 5–40.

DOI: [10.1162/01622880151091880](#)[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Argues that with certain new equipment and certain strategies, China can pose major problems for American security interests, and especially for Taiwan, even without equaling the United States by an overall measure of national military technology or power. Certain Chinese military capabilities, combined with the political geography of East Asia, the domestic politics of mainland China, and the perceptual biases of Chinese elites, can pose significant challenges for American security strategy in the region—first and foremost vis-à-vis Taiwan.

- **Collins, Gabriel.** “[A Maritime Oil Blockade against China—Tactically Tempting but Strategically Flawed](#).” *Naval War College Review* 71.2 (2018): article 6.

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Aims to fill a critical gap by examining in greater detail the nonmilitary means that China would likely employ in response to a maritime oil blockade and these approaches’ strategic effects. While the US military almost certainly could execute a blockade mission against the PRC, adverse political and economic dynamics likely would turn tactical success into a strategic outcome that would be muddled, at best.

- **Denmark, Abraham.** *U.S. Strategy in the Asian Century: Empowering Allies and Partners*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2020.

DOI: [10.7312/denm19764](#)[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Surveys the history and present of the Indo-Pacific as the world's most strategically consequential region. Contends that as China grows more powerful and aggressive, and increasingly attempts to revise the liberal regional order—with Sino-American competition intensifying accordingly—the United States must adapt its approach to preserve its power and sustain regional stability and prosperity. Recommends leveraging the critical roles that American allies and partners can play as indispensable strategic assets for the United States and regional stabilizers.

- **Erickson, Andrew S., and Adam P. Liff. "Installing a Safety on the 'Loaded Gun'? China's Institutional Reforms, National Security Commission and Sino-Japanese Crisis (In)Stability." *Journal of Contemporary China* 25.98 (March 2016): 197–215. DOI: [10.1080/10670564.2015.1075713](#)[Save Citation »Export Citation » Share Citation »](#)**

With China's active assertion of its claim to the Japan-administered Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands and fears of possible escalation as a focal point, assesses the extent to which institutional reforms since the 2001 US-China EP-3 crisis have ameliorated long-standing internal and external weaknesses in China's crisis management capabilities. Argues that the establishment of a Central National Security Commission (CNSC) and other recent reforms suggest Beijing has achieved modest improvements. Regarding external crisis management, many concerns remain.

- **Erickson, Andrew S., Evan Braden Montgomery, Craig Neuman, Stephen Biddle, and Ivan Oelrich. "Correspondence: How Good Are China's Antiaccess/Area-Denial Capabilities?" *International Security* 41.4 (Spring 2017): 202–213. DOI: [10.1162/ISEC_c_00278](#)[Save Citation »Export Citation » Share Citation »](#)**

A discussion of an article by Biddle and Oelrich that documents China's growing ability to threaten Taiwan with a blockade; the high cost and risks of any US planning predicated on finding and kinetically striking mobile mainland targets; and the value in the United States, Taiwan, and regional allies enhancing their own countermeasures. Debates the interaction of geography, technology, and physics and related assumptions for assessing how far China could extend credible combat power offshore and target US and partner forces.

- **Friedberg, Aaron L. *A Contest for Supremacy: China, America, and the Struggle for Mastery in Asia*. New York: W. W. Norton, 2012. [Save Citation »Export Citation » Share Citation »](#)**

Contends that PRC policymakers want China to succeed the United States as the leading power in Asia, and would prefer to "win without fighting." Washington, by signaling improperly about its commitments to allies and resolve to deter, unnecessarily increases the risk of actual conflict. With close attention to military aspects, offers comprehensive recommendations for the United States to prevail in its great power competition with China.

- Glaser, Bonnie S. "[Taiwan and the United States: Enduring Bonds in the Face of Adversity](#)." Statement before the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Asia, the Pacific, and Nonproliferation, 10 December 2020. Washington, DC: Center for Strategic & International Studies.

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Taiwan's vibrant democracy, crucial role in IT supply chains, and geographic position in the First Island Chain make it central to the competition for power and influence in the Indo-Pacific. Chinese occupation of the island would enable the PLA to operate more freely in the Pacific and put Japan's security in jeopardy. If the United States permitted this to occur, it would undermine confidence in US security guarantees and potentially deal a fateful blow to US alliances in the region.

- Henley, Lonnie D. "[Whither China? Alternative Military Futures, 2020–2030](#)." In *The Chinese People's Liberation Army in 2025*. Edited by Roy Kamphausen and David Lai, 31–54. Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2014.

[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Offers alternative visions of Chinese military posture in the decade between 2020 and 2030: a PLA focused on regional issues, a global expeditionary PLA, and a weakened PLA. Posits and weighs variables, constants, drivers, and non-drivers.

- Mahnken, Thomas G., ed. *Competitive Strategies for the 21st Century: Theory, History, and Practice*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012.

[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Considers peacetime great-power strategic competition conceptually and empirically to derive recommendations for just such a strategy. Assesses the US-China military balance in depth, considers the role of America's allies in the region, and explores strategies that the US could adopt to improve its strategic position relative to China's over the long term.

- Mahnken, Thomas G., Travis Sharp, Billy Fabian, and Peter Kouretsos. [Tightening the Chain: Implementing a Strategy of Maritime Pressure in the Western Pacific](#). Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 23 May 2019.

[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Describes the strategy, operational concepts, and resource investments that the United States and its allies would need to compete and counter PRC aggression in the Western Pacific. Proposes a strategy of maritime pressure to erode the Chinese leadership's confidence in its ability to present the United States and its allies with a *fait accompli*. Provides an in-depth analysis of the costs required to implement the strategy and potential PRC responses.

- **Mastro, Oriana S. "Conflict and Chaos on the Korean Peninsula: Can China's Military Help Secure North Korea's Nuclear Weapons?" *International Security* 43.2 (2018): 84–116.**

DOI: [10.1162/isec_a_00330](#)[Save Citation](#) »[Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Assesses that if war erupts on the Korean Peninsula, the PRC would likely intervene, and that Chinese forces would seek to gain control of North Korea's nuclear facilities and matériel. Judges that China has the capabilities to secure, identify, and characterize North Korean nuclear facilities, albeit with some weaknesses in weapons dismantlement and nonproliferation practices. Overall, PRC intervention would benefit US interests and regional security. To mitigate risks, the US and China should coordinate movements in potential operating areas and share intelligence.

- **Murray, William S. "Revisiting Taiwan's Defense Strategy." *Naval War College Review* 61.3 (Summer 2008): 13–38.**

[Save Citation](#) »[Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

This highly influential article argues that China's recent military modernization has fundamentally altered Taiwan's options for defending itself in a range of conceivable scenarios, which it surveys. Since Taipei can no longer expect to counter Chinese military strengths in a symmetrical manner, it must therefore rethink and redesign its defense strategy, emphasizing the asymmetrical advantage of being the defender, particularly of an island with favorable geography, and seeking to deny the PRC its strategic objectives rather than attempting to destroy its weapons systems.

- **Rielage, Dale C. "[How We Lost the Great Pacific War](#)." *Proceedings* (U.S. Naval Institute) 144.5 (2018).**

[Save Citation](#) »[Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

A hypothetical retrospective on a notional US-China conflict set in 2025, in which America's loss generates a potential Suez Crisis moment, spelling the end of US primacy in the international order. Structured as a memo from Commander, US Pacific Fleet to the Chief of Naval Operations on "Lesson Learned from Recent Naval Actions in the Western Pacific."

- **Savino, Shahn, and Charles Dunst. "[Will Taiwan's Dongsha Islands Be the Next Crimea?](#)" *World Politics Review*, 16 March 2021.**

[Save Citation](#) »[Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Describes a potential Crimea-like scenario in the South China Sea. In this case, China would be the aggressor, while Taiwan's Dongsha/Pratas Islands, which Beijing also claims, are the potential targets. They have no permanent inhabitants, but host a detachment of some five hundred Taiwanese marines, and are also visited by fishers and

researchers. Although the Dongsha are located about 275 miles from Kaohsiung, the municipality in southern Taiwan that administers them, they lie just 170 miles from Hong Kong and are within the city's flight information region.

- **Scobell, Andrew, Edmund J. Burke, Cortez A. Cooper III, et al.** *China's Grand Strategy: Trends, Trajectories, and Long-Term Competition*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2020.

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Any one of four China scenarios analyzed—triumphant, ascendant, stagnant, or imploding—is a possibility three decades hence. By 2050, China most likely will have experienced some mixture of successes and failures, and the most plausible scenarios would be an ascendant China or a stagnant China. In the former scenario, China would be largely successful in achieving its long-term goals; in the latter, China would confront major challenges and would be mostly unsuccessful in implementing its grand strategy.

- **Scobell, Andrew, Arthur S. Ding, Phillip C. Saunders, and Scott W. Harold, eds.** *The People's Liberation Army and Contingency Planning in China*. Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2015.

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Examines how the PLA prepares for a range of domestic, border, and maritime contingencies as rapidly expanding international interests are creating demands for the PLA to conduct new missions. Contributors conclude that improving PLA capabilities are giving Chinese leaders new options to respond to domestic and international crises, but the PLA still has significant limitations in projecting and sustaining power, especially in contested environments.

Foreign Military Assistance

Relatively little has been written on China's military aid to foreign entities. While the amount, diversity, and complexity of Chinese contributions is growing, together with Chinese acknowledgement thereof, most of the available literature—outside of short news media articles—is concentrated on Beijing's past foreign military assistance to Communist groups. The extent of China's military assistance to foreign entities, especially to those that fought against the US military, was always of great interest, but was little-known for decades. Greater access to archives and other sources, including from the recipient countries, has enabled a better accounting. [Zhai 2000](#) was one of the first major works, exploiting access to previously restricted archival and other material. The PLA's growing presence and activities beyond China's borders has made newer works all the timelier. [Tsui 2015](#) showcases, *inter alia*, Chinese military assistance to North Korean forces in the lead-up to, and during, the Korean War. [Li 2019](#) focuses on Chinese military assistance to North Vietnam primarily during the 1950s and 1960s. [Mertha 2014](#) focuses on the assistance, including military, provided by China to the Khmer Rouge, primarily during the mid-to-late 1970s. While these three later works show Chinese military assistance to fellow Communist forces, they also particularly illustrate the tensions between

Chinese participants and their local partners, as well as the limitations of such assistance in successfully influencing those recipient forces at times. [Ratner, et al. 2015](#) examines more recent examples of PRC security assistance and considers possible future trends.

- **Li, Xiaobing. *Building Ho’s Army: Chinese Military Assistance to North Vietnam*. Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2019.**

DOI: [10.2307/j.ctvkjb352](https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvkjb352)[Save Citation »](#)[Export Citation »](#) [Share Citation »](#)

Focuses on Chinese military assistance to Vietnamese Communist forces during the 1950s and 1960s. This work employs Vietnamese sources, including interviews, rarely utilized by PLA researchers. Also benefits from interviews with veterans from the PLA, as well as the militaries with some involvement in the war efforts of Vietnamese Communist forces, such as those of Russia/former Soviet Union.

- **Mertha, Andrew. *Brothers in Arms: Chinese Aid to the Khmer Rouge, 1975–1979*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014.**

DOI: [10.7591/9780801470738](https://doi.org/10.7591/9780801470738)[Save Citation »](#)[Export Citation »](#) [Share Citation »](#)

While not focused on the PLA *per se*, contains information on the activities and experiences of the PLA providing military assistance in Cambodia. This includes information drawn from not only Chinese sources directly involved, but also Cambodian ones—which most PLA scholars would be both unaware of and unable to understand. Such non-Chinese sources are especially important given PRC opacity regarding prior military support for the genocidal regime.

- **Ratner, Ely, Elbridge Colby, Andrew Erickson, Zachary Hosford, and Alexander Sullivan. *More Willing and Able: Charting China’s International Security Activism*. Washington, DC: Center for a New American Security, 2015.**

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Assesses that China will be increasingly willing and able to conduct overseas missions, including major international humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, noncombatant evacuation operations, securing of important assets overseas, sea-lane defense, counterterrorism strikes, and stabilization operations—many with some degree of cooperation from local governments and militaries.

- **Tsui, David. *China’s Military Intervention in Korea: Its Origins and Objectives*. Bloomington, IN: Trafford Publishing, 2015.**

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Includes detailed information on military assistance provided by China to North Korea’s military before and during the Korean War. Showcases the dynamics among Chinese, Soviet, and North Korean leaderships surrounding such assistance, as well as its execution by those on the ground. Also benefits from unique interviews with high-level

Chinese military officials associated with Beijing’s involvement in the lead-up to and during the Korean War.

- **Zhai, Qiang. *China and the Vietnam Wars, 1950–1975*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000.**

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Focuses on China’s involvement in the Viet Minh’s (and later Democratic Republic of Vietnam/DRV’s) wars against France and its Vietnamese allies and later the United States and its Vietnamese allies. Includes information on Chinese military assistance rendered to the Viet Minh prior to the PRC’s establishment in 1949, that rendered in the interwar years, and an itemized table listing China’s military aid to the DRV from 1964 to 1975.

Strategy, Doctrine, and National Security Interests

China’s self-defined strategy, doctrine, and national security interests have historically been closely connected with its own internal politics and geography, as outlined historically in [Swaine and Tellis 2000](#). Party unity coinciding with fundamental shifts in the conduct of warfare catalyzed major changes in military strategy in 1956, 1980, and 1993. In the more recent instances, limitations in PLA capabilities in the Third Sino-Vietnamese Conflict (1975–1991) and the Third Taiwan Strait Crisis (1995–1996), along with the success of the US technological warfare in the first Gulf War, catalyzed PLA reform. This modernization was facilitated by economic development producing greater links with the global economy, bringing new risks when Chinese individuals and firms ventured increasingly abroad. While the PLA’s primary focus remains relatively close to home, its growing interests are directing a growing proportion of its focus and resources overseas, as emphasized in [Tobin 2020](#). [Finkelstein 2007](#) outlines PLA doctrine. [Cliff, et al. 2007](#) explains the PLA’s anti-access approach; [Erickson and Wuthnow 2016](#) explains its (incomplete) overlap with the concept of Pacific “Island Chains.” [Heath and Erickson 2015](#) explains the PRC’s counter-intervention strategy, one part of which might consist of anti-access measures; but, unless those measures are completely successful, defeating an intervening power will require other operations as well. Works such as the edited volume [Mulvenon and Finkelstein 2005](#) cover emergent trends in Chinese doctrinal affairs. [Wuthnow 2021](#) distills the latest insights from PLA National Defense University’s 2020 *Science of Military Strategy* textbook, which outlines Chinese military thinking as it is currently explained to PLA officers themselves. Perhaps the most comprehensive work on Chinese military strategy, [Fravel 2019](#) addresses successive strategies both individually and in the context in which they were adopted and superseded. The edited volume [McReynolds 2016](#) focuses more narrowly on the more recent developments in Chinese military strategic thought, with chapters on such topics as electronic and network warfare. [Twomey 2010](#) considers how differing strategic situations, histories, and doctrines generate foreign policy misperceptions. [Economy 2018](#) outlines Xi’s leadership vision, priorities, and approach; [Goldstein 2020](#) his grand strategy. [Laird 2017](#) examines PLA views on escalation control. [McCaughey 2017](#) deeply probes PLA thinking on system of systems operations. Focusing on aerospace examples, [Harold 2018](#) emphasizes PLA pragmatism in emulating foreign models

it lacks but needs, while pursuing its own approaches where effective and efficient. The literature covering Chinese national security issues has evolved in recent years as PRC overseas economic and military presence grows, particularly in more dangerous locations. The start of this shift is covered in works such as [Wortzel 2013](#), [Parello-Plesner and Duchâtel 2015](#), [Cole 2016](#), [Gunness and Mastro 2016](#), [Thorne and Spevack 2018](#), [Rolland 2019](#), [Rithmire and Li 2019](#), [Saunders 2020](#), and [Ghiselli 2021](#); and continues with in-depth analysis of Beijing’s first overseas military facility in Djibouti by [Downs, et al. 2017](#) as well as [Dutton, et al. 2020](#). Chinese naval strategy is arguably leading this transformation progressively outwards. In 2015, China’s national defense “white paper” described the PLAN’s naval strategy as “Near Seas Defense, Far Seas Protection.” This suggested that Beijing’s aim was to build the PLAN into a strong regional navy capable of limited operations abroad, with a narrow geographic focus on the western Pacific and the northern Indian Ocean. Since then, new evidence reveals that the service has plans to build a “world-class” navy with a global reach extending as far as the polar regions. [Martinson 2019](#) documents the next iteration of PLA Navy strategy and operations through 2030: across the world’s oceans and toward the Arctic and Antarctica.

- **Cliff, Roger, Mark Burles, Michael S. Chase, Derek Eaton, and Kevin L. Pollpeter.** *Entering the Dragon’s Lair: Chinese Antiaccess Strategies and Their Implications for the United States.* Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2007.
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Pathbreaking study that laid out the PLA’s anti-access efforts and the challenges they pose for the United States and its allies: impeding the deployment of US and allied forces into the combat theater, limiting the locations from which those forces could effectively operate, or forcing them to operate from locations farther from the locus of conflict than they would normally prefer.

- **Cole, Bernard D.** *China’s Quest for Great Power: Ships, Oil, and Diplomacy.* Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2016.
[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Measured analysis of China’s maritime interests and their enduring historical and geographic fundamentals, maritime forces, growing economy, grand strategy, and related foreign and security policies, as well as their implications for the United States. Traces the evolution of the People’s Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) into a capable 21st-century sea force charged—among its major missions—with supporting China’s increasingly global pursuit of energy sources and security.

- **Downs, Erica, Jeffrey Becker, and Patrick DeGategno.** *China’s Military Support Facility in Djibouti: The Economic and Security Dimensions of China’s First Overseas Base.* Arlington, VA: Center for Naval Analyses, 2017.
[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Provides a preliminary look at the origins of China’s military support facility in Djibouti. Explores the evolution of the economic and security relations between the two countries

that led to the establishment of the facility, how it may be used, and what it may presage regarding future Chinese military facilities abroad.

- **Dutton, Peter, Isaac Kardon, and Conor Kennedy.** *Djibouti: China’s First Overseas Strategic Strongpoint*. China Maritime Report 6. Newport, RI: China Maritime Studies Institute, April 2020.

[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

This case study on Djibouti is the first in a series on China’s “overseas strategic strongpoints.” It argues that China’s first base abroad at Djibouti offers both a secure commercial foothold on the African continent and a military platform for expanding PLA operations in the Indian Ocean and beyond.

- **Economy, Elizabeth C.** *The Third Revolution: Xi Jinping and the New Chinese State*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018.

[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Examines Xi’s dual-reform trajectories—a more authoritarian system at home and a more ambitious foreign policy abroad. Beyond its current internationally recognized borders, Beijing has recast itself as a great power, seeking to reclaim past glories and promote international norms favoring its more ambitious geostrategic objectives. Traces how this provides Beijing with new levers of influence. Argues that the United States must learn to exploit them to protect its own interests.

- **Erickson, Andrew S., and Joel Wuthnow.** “Barriers, Springboards and Benchmarks: China Conceptualizes the Pacific ‘Island Chains.’” *China Quarterly* 225 (March 2016): 1–22.

DOI: [10.1017/S0305741016000011](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0305741016000011) [Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Long before China had a modern navy or naval strategists worthy of the name, the “island chains” concept had originated and been developed for decades by previous great powers vying for Asia-Pacific influence. Today, China’s own authoritative interpretations are flexible, nuanced and multifaceted—befitting the multiple and sometimes contradictory factors with which Beijing must contend in managing its meteoric maritime rise. These include the growing importance of sea-lane security at increasing distances and levels of operational intensity.

- **Finkelstein, David M.** “China’s National Military Strategy: An Overview of the ‘Military Strategic Guidelines.’” In *Right-Sizing the People’s Liberation Army: Exploring the Contours of China’s Military*. Edited by Roy Kamphausen and Andrew Scobell, 69–141. Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, September 2007.

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The first study to explain and explore the concepts and components behind the PLA's "Military Strategic Guidelines," which is foundational to understanding China's national military strategy at any given time. Introduces key PLA doctrinal planning concepts such as "strategic directions" and places the "Active Defense" strategy in a larger doctrinal context.

- **Fravel, M. Taylor.** *Active Defense: China's Military Strategy since 1949*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019.

DOI: [10.1515/9780691185590](#) [Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

The first systematic examination of Chinese military strategy, its evolution, and the context and reasons for its alteration. Argues that the PLA "has pursued major changes in military strategy in response to shifts in the conduct of warfare—but only when the CCP is united and stable." Also reviews those military strategies adopted and utilized by the CCP's forces between 1927 and 1949.

- **Ghiselli, Andrea.** *Protecting China's Interests Overseas: Securitization and Foreign Policy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021.

DOI: [10.1093/oso/9780198867395.001.0001](#) [Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Charts the origin and evolution of China's approach to defending its equities abroad, and the use of its military to do so. Considers the role, influence, and stakes of a variety of actors—from the civilian and military leadership to the ministries of the State Council, experts, and public opinion, in the policymaking and policy-implementation process. Provides an in-depth analysis of changes to date in laws, institutions, regulations, military doctrine, and operations.

- **Glaser, Bonnie, Scott Snyder, and John S. Park.** "[Keeping an Eye on an Unruly Neighbor: Chinese Views of Economic Reform and Stability in North Korea](#)." USIP Working Paper. Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 3 January 2008.

[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Beijing viewed Pyongyang's explosion of a nuclear device in October 2006 as an act of defiance toward China. PRC officials acknowledge that their toolbox for managing Pyongyang's nuclear weapons challenge must now include a combination of pressure and inducements. Significant policy debates continue. Points of consensus include the assessment that North Korea remains stable. In the event of instability, China's priority will be to prevent refugees from flooding across the border, dispatching PLA troops into North Korea if necessary.

- **Goldstein, Avery.** "[China's Grand Strategy under Xi Jinping: Reassurance, Reform, and Resistance](#)." *International Security* 42.1 (2020): 164–201.

DOI: [10.1162/isec_a_00383](#) [Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Under Xi, China’s grand strategy is clearly distinctive. But its strategic pursuit of “the dream of national rejuvenation” is best understood as the latest, most ambitious of three successive approaches since the early 1990s. New emphases include moving China from rhetoric to action in promoting reform of an international order that has facilitated China’s rise and resisting challenges to what the Chinese Communist Party defines as the country’s “core interests.” Xi’s bolder approach triggers concerns that undermine its success.

- **Gunness, Kristen, and Oriana Skylar Mastro.** “[A Global People’s Liberation Army: Possibilities, Challenges, and Opportunities](#).” *Asia Policy* 22.1 (2016): 131–155.

DOI: [10.1353/asp.2016.0045](#)[Save Citation »Export Citation » Share Citation »](#)

Argues that developing expeditionary capabilities for the PLA is a priority for PRC leaders, and the Chinese public’s expectation for protection while abroad further motivates such plans; doctrine appears under development. Considers conditions under which Chinese leaders may decide to use the military outside East Asia, and corresponding implications for the United States.

- **Harold, Scott W.** *Defeat, Not Merely Compete: China’s View of Its Military Aerospace Goals and Requirements in Relation to the United States*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2018.

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The PLA appears to emulate foreign militaries when it can find low-cost hardware, organizational methods, or operational concepts that it can adapt from abroad to solve the operational challenges it confronts. In contrast, when foreign capabilities or organizational practices are irrelevant to Chinese military aerospace problem sets, the PLA either innovates its own solution or declines to replicate the foreign capability. The PLA appears not to compete in certain areas because it does not need certain capabilities or has alternatives.

- **Heath, Timothy, and Andrew S. Erickson.** “Is China Pursuing Counter-Intervention?” *Washington Quarterly* 38.3 (2015): 143–156.

DOI: [10.1080/0163660X.2015.1099029](#)[Save Citation »Export Citation » Share Citation »](#)

Contends that the term “counter-intervention” has become burdened with conflated meanings and thus controversial in describing aspects of Chinese national and military strategy. Yet the term should be retained—albeit refined—to help US policymakers and planners devise appropriate responses to PRC behavior aimed at undermining US leadership in Asia.

- **Laird, Burgess.** *War Control: Chinese Writings on the Control of Escalation in Crisis and Conflict*. Washington, DC: Center for a New American Security, April 2017.

[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Examines authoritative PLA writings published since about 2008, when a comprehensive RAND Corporation study reviewed PLA writings on escalation management. Concludes that while more attention is being devoted to escalation control, "the authoritative writings continue to be characterized by the same or similar omissions and silences that led the authors of the 2008 RAND study to conclude that Chinese writings on escalation were 'undertheorized and still under development.'"

- **Martinson, Ryan D.**, "[The Role of the Arctic in Chinese Naval Strategy](#)" *China Brief* 19.22, 20 December 2019.

[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Surveys key Chinese writings. Reviews PLAN strategy to date. Presciently anticipates a key ongoing shift to be completed no later than 2030: adding new layers of focus involving "near seas defense, far seas protection, [global] oceanic presence, and expansion into the two poles." A key takeaway is that China's Navy has formally decided to incorporate Arctic ambitions into its naval strategy, and Chinese scientists and engineers are already conducting research to help it realize these ambitions.

- **McCauley, Kevin.** *PLA System of Systems Operations: Enabling Joint Operations*. Washington, DC: Jamestown Foundation, 2017.

[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

This comprehensive study of the PLA's System of Systems operations lays a logical, thorough foundation for understanding and evaluating PLA efforts to build a networked, joint fighting force.

- **McReynolds, Joe, ed.** *China's Evolving Military Strategy*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2016.

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This work contains sector-by-sector assessments of the important recent (as of 2016) developments in Chinese strategic thought. This includes chapters on information warfare, and on military operations other than war (MOOTW), about which relatively little scholarship in the Chinese context has been produced.

- **Mulvenon, James, and David Finkelstein, eds.** *China's Revolution in Doctrinal Affairs: Emerging Trends in the Operational Art of the Chinese People's Liberation Army*. Alexandria, VA: Center for Naval Analysis, 2005.

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Focuses on the doctrinal changes, particularly at the operational level, that emerged with the 1999 guidance for the PLA collectively titled “The New Generation Operations Regulations.”

- **Parello-Plesner, Jonas, and Mathieu Duchâtel.** *China’s Strong Arm: Protecting Citizens and Assets Abroad.* London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2015.

[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

One of the first works to lay out and assess the impact of China’s “Going Out” policy on its national security structure. With Chinese businesses and individuals coming under threat abroad, the authors analyze the debate within the government and society on how these organizations and people should be protected.

- **Rithmire, Meg, and Yihao Li.** “[Chinese Infrastructure Investments in Sri Lanka: A Pearl or a Teardrop on the Belt and Road?](#)” Harvard Business School Case 719-046 Cambridge, MA: Harvard Business School, January 2019.

[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

This examination from the world’s leading source of business case studies surveys the construction of a port in Hambantota, Sri Lanka, and its 2016 purchase by the state-owned China Merchants Group, which triggered concerns about sovereignty in Sri Lanka and Chinese naval ambitions in Delhi and Washington. Explores the dynamics of China’s ambitious Belt and Road Initiative to build strategic global infrastructure, as well as the politics and economics of sovereign borrowing in the age of PRC lending.

- **Rolland, Nadège, ed.** *Securing the Belt and Road Initiative: China’s Evolving Military Engagement along the Silk Roads.* Special Report 80. Seattle, WA: National Bureau for Asian Research, 3 September 2019.

[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Assesses the implications of China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) for the calculations of the PLA and other Chinese security actors. Expansion of China’s overseas interests necessitates military protection. Surveys the set of options under consideration to secure China’s interests along the BRI routes, including normative adjustments and military overseas operations and basing; as well as indirect approaches, such as engaging in extended international cooperation on nontraditional security and subcontracting protection either to host nations or to private contractors.

- **Saunders, Phillip C.** “China’s Global Military-Security Interactions.” In *China and the World*. Edited by David Shambaugh, 181–207. New York: Oxford University Press, 2020.

DOI: [10.1093/oso/9780190062316.003.0009](#)[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Examines China's external military and security interactions, including overseas security interests, military missions, post-reform PLA organization, and power-projection capabilities. China's military and security interactions include traditional military missions (mostly in Asia), military diplomacy to support Chinese foreign policy by engaging foreign military counterparts and providing public goods, and protecting China's expanding overseas economic and security interests. Highlights tensions and synergies between these competing objectives, and considers how these global military and security interactions are likely to evolve in the future.

- **Scobell, Andrew, David Lai, and Roy Kamphausen, eds.** *Chinese Lessons from Other Peoples' Wars*. Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2011.

[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Lacking full-scale war experience post-1979, PLA analysts seek to transfer and reverse-engineer insights from other militaries. The 1991 Gulf War helped catalyze ongoing PLA modernization. China similarly scrutinizes PACOM's strategic design and operations. Other case studies include foreign conflicts concerning Kosovo, the Falklands, Iran-Iraq, Afghanistan, and Chechnya.

- **Swaine, Michael D., and Ashley J. Tellis.** *Interpreting China's Grand Strategy: Past, Present, and Future*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2000.

[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Offers enduring insights, including that virtually every Chinese regime that successfully establishes a strong, unified state and achieves domestic order has sought to maximize its control or influence over a geographically grounded strategic periphery; and thereby set regime boundaries at the maximum level permitted by geophysical, economic-administrative, and military-political constraints. Accordingly, regime vicissitudes generate corresponding patterns of peripheral territorial expansion and contraction.

- **Tanner, Murray Scott, and Peter W. Mackenzie.** *China's Emerging National Security Interests and their Impact on the People's Liberation Army*. Quantico, VA: Marine Corps University Press, 2015.

[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Published jointly with CNA Corporation. Analyzes evolving perceptions by China's national security community of Chinese national security interests and the potential threats to those interests. Examines the challenges that China's emerging security concerns are creating for the PLA, and how these challenges are shaping its roles, missions, and activities. Concludes that Beijing may face difficult choices between short-term assertion of ability to advance its increasingly ambitious interests and long-term regional acceptance of its behaviors.

- **Thorne, Devin, and Ben Spevack.** *Harbored Ambitions: How China's Port Investments Are Strategically Reshaping the Indo-Pacific*. Washington, DC: Center for Advanced Defense Studies, 2018.

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Analyzes the details of fifteen Chinese maritime port investments in the context of China's Belt and Road Initiative, national security interests, and the thinking of Chinese analysts on maritime defense-industrial development. Proposes a framework for evaluating whether a potential seaport investment could be in service of Chinese strategic interests. Investigative case studies reveal how prominent port projects may facilitate future military activities throughout the Indo-Pacific.

- **Tobin, Daniel.** *How Xi Jinping's "New Era" Should Have Ended U.S. Debate on Beijing's Ambitions*. Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 8 May 2020.

[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

The ambitions Xi articulated at the 19th Party Congress underscore that Washington and its allies face a global, strategic rivalry driven as much by ideology and values embodied in competing domestic governance systems as by perceptions of changing power dynamics. This rivalry differs in many respects from the Cold War. One of the most important distinctions is that it is a competition to define the rules and norms that will govern a world highly integrated, not divided into competing camps.

- **Twomey, Christopher P.** *The Military Lens: Doctrinal Difference and Deterrence Failure in Sino-American Relations*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010.

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Demonstrates how differing strategic situations, histories, and military doctrines generated US-China foreign policy misperceptions. Case studies of strategic coercion attempts during early Cold War Sino-American conflicts in Korea and the Taiwan Strait suggest future hazards.

- **Wortzel, Larry M.** *The Dragon Extends its Reach: Chinese Military Power Goes Global*. Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2013.

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Places China's ongoing military growth into historical context. Beijing requires a military that can project itself around the globe, albeit on a scale that diminishes with distance, to secure its interests. CCP leaders have thus charged the PLA with new and challenging missions that require global capabilities. Advances in technology and the development of indigenous weapons platforms in China, combined with reactions to modern conflicts, have produced a military force very different from that which China has fielded in the past.

- **Wuthnow, Joel.** “[What I Learned from the PLA’s Latest Strategy Textbook](#).” *China Brief* 21.11 (25 May 2021).

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In August 2020, China’s NDU released a revised version of its *Science of Military Strategy* core textbook for senior PLA officers on how wars should be planned and conducted at the strategic level. This article compares the 2020 version of this book with its last revision, in 2017, and finds that the former contains new details on wartime political work, “intelligitization” concepts, China’s military strategic guidelines, major war operations, joint logistics and the PAP.

Policy Formulation, Debate, and Crisis Management

Given the PLA’s relatively short history and limited combat experience, most of the literature on its involvement in the policy formulation process and related debate focuses on the PLA’s bureaucratic maneuvering and influence within the Chinese government during peacetime or short-term crises, rather than wartime. [Swaine 1998](#) considers the various avenues through which the PLA can interact with the rest of the government in the national security policymaking process. [Sun 2013](#) highlights the importance and impact of the level of control by the PLA over certain information going to decision-making bodies. [Shambaugh 1999–2000](#) examines the distinctive perspective the PLA brings when it interacts with the rest of the government. The edited volume [Lampton 2001](#) showcases the changing bureaucratic environment in which the PLA has operated over recent decades. [Swaine and Zhang 2006](#) offers unique bilateral official and scholarly perspectives on key crises and their management. The report [Godwin and Miller 2013](#) highlights the decision-making process vis-à-vis Chinese signaling and the resulting actions taken. [Zhang 2002](#) contains reported transcripts that reveal the raw decision-making process regarding one of the most traumatic scenarios in which the PLA has been involved—bloodily suppressing the protests that ended in the Tiananmen Massacre. The edited volume [Saunders and Scobell 2015](#) updates [Scobell and Wortzel 2005](#) and other earlier literature on the PLA’s role and influence in national security policymaking with the evolution of the PLA and the policymaking environment in China. As the Chinese military footprint overseas expands, [Ghiselli 2020](#) shows how the different interests of the PLA and the civilian leadership have shaped the development of Chinese Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW). Other works, such as [Ross 2009](#), use more traditional political science frameworks, such as realism, to examine how decisions are made.

- **Ghiselli, Andrea.** “Civil-Military Relations and Organisational Preferences Regarding the Use of the Military in Chinese Foreign Policy: Insights from the Debate on MOOTW.” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 43.2 (2020): 421–442.

DOI: [10.1080/01402390.2018.1438892](https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390.2018.1438892) [Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Analyzes the positions of the Chinese civilian leaders and military elites on Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW) to elucidate their preferences regarding the use

of the armed forces in foreign policy between the late 1990s and the early 2010s. Over time, a significant divergence developed between civilians and soldiers until 2011, when the Libyan crisis occurred. Prompts important considerations about civil-military relations and the PLA’s future as a tool of statecraft in foreign policy.

- **Godwin, Paul H. B., and Alice L. Miller.** *China’s Forbearance Has Limits: Chinese Threat and Retaliation Signaling and Its Implications for a Sino-American Military Confrontation*. China Strategic Perspectives 6. Washington, DC: Institute for National Strategic Studies, April 2013.

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Argues that the PLA may shape elite beliefs and decision-making on China’s use of threats and uses of force regarding perceived dangers to its security and territorial integrity. Suggests a complex but tightly integrated process of deterrence signaling in which the PLA is part of a mostly coherent policy implementation process. Features chronological appendices on the 1961–1962 Sino-Indian Border Crisis, the 1978–1979 Sino-Vietnamese Border Crisis, and Chinese signaling regarding Taiwan in 1991, 1995, 1999, and 2003–2004.

- **Lampton, David M., ed.** *The Making of Chinese Foreign and Security Policy in the Era of Reform, 1978–2000*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001.

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While focusing on actors beyond the PLA in examining how foreign and security policy was made between 1978 and 2000, this book showcases the changing bureaucratic environment in which the PLA operated. Contains chapters elucidating the operations of the Central Military Commission (CMC) vis-à-vis foreign and security policy, its relationship with the rest of China’s armed forces, and the CCP and PRC government decision-making systems, as well as arms control policy and decision-making regarding Taiwan.

- **Ross, Robert S.** *Chinese Security Policy: Structure, Power and Politics*. London: Routledge, 2009.

DOI: [10.4324/9780203876015](#) [Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Employs a realist political science framework to assess PRC state behavior, use of force (including deterrence, coercive diplomacy, and war), and engagement, cooperation, balance of power politics, with a recent focus on international power transitions. Examines how Chinese strategic vulnerability since Sino-American rapprochement in the early 1970s has compelled Beijing to seek cooperation with Washington and avoid US-China conflict over Taiwan. Addresses implications of China’s rise for American and East Asian security.

- **Saunders, Phillip, and Andrew Scobell, eds. *PLA Influence on China's National Security Policymaking*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2015.**

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Contains chapters on the PLA's influence on the development of China's national security and foreign policies. This includes the PLA's interaction with the party and state systems, the PLA's role in specific cases—such as in policymaking concerning Taiwan and North Korea—and the PLA's interactions with other actors regarding China's territorial disputes.

- **Scobell, Andrew. "[Is There a Civil-Military Gap in China's Peaceful Rise?](#)" *Parameters* 39.2 (2009).**

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Judges PLA influence on policy to be in decline despite insecurity about party control over the military, with the PLA as only "one voice among many" in the policy arena, and usually not the most potent one. Nonetheless, the loose civilian control and narrowly focused PLA interests may allow "rogue" PLA leaders to intervene in certain areas (weapons testing, for example).

- **Scobell, Andrew, and Larry M. Wortzel, eds. *Chinese National Security Decision-Making under Stress*. Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2005.**

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Even today, with China arguably the most secure and stable it has been in more than a century, crises continue to emerge with relative frequency. This volume therefore categorizes and analyzes China's behavior in conditions of tension and stress, and particularly how the PLA is a factor in that behavior. Beijing is entirely adept regarding fabricated crises, typically capable regarding anticipated crises, and "at sea" regarding unanticipated crises.

- **Shambaugh, David. "China's Military Views the World: Ambivalent Security." *International Security* 24.3 (Winter 1999–2000): 52–79.**

DOI: [10.1162/016228899560239](#) [Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Argues there is a "prominent sense of angst and ambivalence" in the PLA's views of China's security due to the international system and disposition of power, and that, in many cases, the perceptions of PLA personnel differ from and are firmer than those of their civilian counterparts. It describes the socialization of the military leadership and PLA perceptions of several factors and events that showcase the PLA's sometimes ambivalent views.

- **Sun, Yun. *Chinese National Security Decision-Making: Processes and Challenges*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2013.**

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Argues that “institutional deficiency created by the structure of the political system” limits effectiveness of PRC national security decision-making. Detailed section on the process by which information filters into the key decision-making organs emphasizes that partial PLA information monopoly and staffing and analytical limitations make the CMC the only venue for data integration and dissemination to civilian decision-makers.

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

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Chinese and American official participants in past confrontations, as well as scholars, explore changing features of crisis behavior and how future encounters may be defused accordingly. Case studies include PRC involvement in the Korean and Vietnamese Wars, the Three Taiwan Strait Crises, the Belgrade Embassy Bombing, and the EP-3 Incident.

- **Swaine, Michael D. *The Role of the Chinese Military in National Security Policymaking*. Rev. ed. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 1998.**

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In-depth examination of how the PLA has interacted with the civilian government in China’s national security policymaking process. It “emphasizes the specific mechanisms, both personal and bureaucratic, formal and informal,” by which the PLA did so, especially during the 1990s. Identifies highly integrated structures and processes at low levels of seniority, but recognizes informal relationships (related to personal prestige and power of individuals) at higher levels as ultimately determining direct military influence on policy.

- **Zhang, Liang, comp. *The Tiananmen Papers: The Chinese Leadership’s Decision to Use Force Against Their Own People—In Their Own Words*. Edited by Andrew J. Nathan, and Perry Link. New York: PublicAffairs, 2002.**

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Contains “full or partial transcripts from hundreds of documents detailing the highest-level processes of decisionmaking” surrounding the Tiananmen Square protests and eventual massacre. Surveys how members of the CMC and PLA, at many levels, responded to the unrest; as well as the various ideas promulgated, and actions attempted, by the CCP leadership and civilian government.

Interest Groups, Interservice Rivalry, and Lobbying

Despite experts’ general acknowledgement of interservice rivalry within the PLA, relatively few works examine such bureaucratic contestation. Even fewer works consider the lobbying actions services take to advance their interests within the context of such rivalries. From that low baseline, however, has emerged a surge of works on these topics in recent years, with the relative decline in influence of the PLA Army/Ground Forces and the corresponding rise of the other services. While [Harding 1987](#), [Garver 1997](#), and [Kardon and Saunders 2015](#) focus on the PLA itself as a faction, most of the works in this section focus on a specific service. The book chapters [Yung 2015](#), [Fravel and Liebman 2011](#), and [Zhang 2012](#), as well as the report [McCaslin and Erickson 2019](#), fall into this latter category.

- **Fravel, M. Taylor, and Andrew Liebman. “Beyond the Moat: The PLAN’s Evolving Interests and Potential Influence.”** In *The Chinese Navy: Expanding Capabilities, Evolving Roles*. Edited by Phillip C. Saunders, Christopher Yung, Michael Swaine, and Andrew Nien-Dzu Yang, 41–80. Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2011.

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Analyzes the continuity and change in what the PLAN sees as its interests and roles, as well as its attempts to shape certain related PRC policies, such as those concerning energy security, maritime law, and sea lane security. Argues that the PLAN is casting itself as the protector of country’s economy, and is using that self-anointment to try to increase its budgetary share.

- **Garver, John W. *Face-Off: China, The United States, and Taiwan’s Democratization*.** Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997.

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Argues that in the mid-1990s, China’s military lobbied effectively for a more assertive *political* stance vis-à-vis the United States and Taiwan. Influence mechanisms include the General Staff Department (GSD) Intelligence Department, CMC Policy Research Offices, PLA leadership’s public criticism of Foreign Minister Qian Qichen, and PLA delegates’ efforts at the 1995 NPC.

- **Harding, Harry. “The Role of the Military in Chinese Politics.”** In *Citizens and Groups in Contemporary China*, Michigan Monographs in Chinese Studies, vol. 56. Edited by Victor C. Falkenheim, 213–256. Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan, 1987.

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Argues that the PLA has a formidable institutional and interpersonal arsenal with which to influence national policy, but has generally refrained from intervening in major policy arenas—even national defense—in deference to party/civilian leadership.

- **Kardon, Isaac B., and Phillip C. Saunders. “Reconsidering the PLA as an Interest Group.”** In *PLA Influence on China’s National Security Policymaking*. Edited by

Phillip C. Saunders and Andrew Scobell, 33–57. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2015.

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Considers the extent to which and the issues regarding which the PLA acts as a coherent interest group in Chinese politics, using John Garver's 1996 essay on the PLA as an interest group in Chinese foreign policy as a basis. Examines the PLA as a factional constituency in the 1990s, and how its ability to exert influence as a bureaucratic actor has changed subsequently.

- **McCaslin, Ian Burns, and Andrew S. Erickson. *Selling a Maritime Air Force: The PLAAF's Campaign for Bigger Maritime Role*. Montgomery, AL: China Aerospace Studies Institute, 1 April 2019.**

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Examines the public relations (PR) campaign being waged by the People's Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF) over roles and missions related to the maritime domain, formerly the PLAN's preserve. Employs the "Revolt of the Admirals" event from US interservice history to illustrate the growing similarities in lobbying and PR efforts within Western militaries—about which much has been published—and the PLA, where such studies remain nascent.

- **Yung, Christopher D. "The PLA Navy Lobby and Its Influence over China's Maritime Sovereignty Policies." In *PLA Influence on China's National Security Policymaking*. Edited by Phillip C. Saunders and Andrew Scobell, 274–299. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2015.**

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Focuses on the "PLA Navy lobby," composed of the PLAN itself and "affiliated individuals and organizations," and this faction's influence on policies relevant to China's "maritime sovereignty." Utilizes three case studies to assess the group's impact: China's decisions to (1) use force against Vietnam over the Spratlys in 1988, (2) acquire its first aircraft carrier, and (3) centralize its maritime sovereignty enforcement capabilities in 2013.

- **Zhang, Xiaoming. "The PLAAF's Evolving Influence within the PLA and upon National Policy." In *The Chinese Air Force: Evolving Concepts, Roles, and Capabilities*. Edited by Richard P. Hallion, Roger Cliff, and Phillip C. Saunders, 71–92. Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2012.**

[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

This book chapter examines the influence of the PLAAF within the PLA and in China's national policymaking. A product of its time, it focuses mostly on the factors that

traditionally limited PLAAF influence, which began to change in the early 2010s and accelerated following the reforms initiated in 2015.

Diplomacy, Propaganda, and Political Warfare

Public-facing activities, including diplomacy, propaganda, or political warfare, are key PLA duties. The growing power and influence of China abroad and the similarly growing presence abroad of the PLA give these activities unprecedented scope and importance. The PLA’s military diplomacy in the late 1900s is covered in the report [Allen and McVadon 1999](#), while its more recent military diplomacy is addressed in the report [Allen, et al. 2017](#) and the working paper [Jost and Strange 2018](#). [Finkelstein 2010](#) analyzes Sino-American military relations from the 1980s through the 2000s and [Hooper 2006](#) from 1994–2001, while [Harold 2013](#), [Rielage 2015](#), [Nolan 2015](#), [Harold 2019](#), and [Saunders and Bowie 2019](#) consider more recent developments. [Southerland 2019](#) evaluates PLA humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HA/DR) operations within the context of U.S.-China military relations. The PLA’s role in diplomacy vis-à-vis other parts of the government, particularly the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, assessed early by [Segal 1981](#), is discussed in [Lu 2000](#), [Jakobson and Knox 2010](#), and [You 2013](#). Members of what is sometimes dubbed the PLA’s “hawkish faction,” whose talking heads make headline-grabbing remarks around the world, are examined in the two-part article [Chubb 2013a](#) and [Chubb 2013b](#). The primary organization for waging the PLA’s political warfare activities prior to the reforms begun in 2015, the General Political Department, is examined in the report [Stokes and Hsiao 2013](#), while the “Three Warfares” concept in PLA political warfare is analyzed in [Wortzel 2014](#) and [Mattis 2018](#).

- **Allen, Kenneth, and Eric A. McVadon. *China’s Foreign Military Relations*. Washington, DC: Henry L. Stimson Center, 1999.**

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Provides an overview of the PLA’s foreign military relations program, such as those people and organizations involved, the types of military exchanges (including functional-level), and the activities specifically conducted by the PLAN and PLAAF. Benefits from interviews done by the authors in multiple Asian cities “with Chinese and non-Chinese military, government, and non-government officials.” Also includes several notable appendices, such as PLAAF Commander-level exchanges from 1979 to 1999.

- **Allen, Kenneth, Phillip C. Saunders, and John Chen. *Chinese Military Diplomacy, 2003–2016: Trends and Implications*. China Strategic Perspectives 11. Washington, DC: Institute for National Strategic Studies, July 2017.**

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Offers analysis based on a unique dataset of military diplomatic activities by the PLA, organized by time period and service. The types of activities and the partner militaries with which they are performed are also analyzed. All findings are distilled into useful graphics.

- Chubb, Andrew. "[Propaganda, Not Policy: Explaining the PLA's 'Hawkish Faction' \(Part One\)](#)." *China Brief* 13.15 (July 2013a).

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This is part one of an article that analyzes the "backgrounds, affiliations, and statements" of those PLA officers whose sensationalist statements often grab headlines in media around the world. The purpose: to understand whom these individuals represent and the implications of their public pronouncements. This article argues that the information analyzed indicates that the role of these individuals probably has more to do with propaganda work than influential political debates.

- Chubb, Andrew. "[Propaganda as Policy? Explaining the PLA's 'Hawkish Faction' \(Part Two\)](#)." *China Brief* 13.16 (August 2013b).

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This follow-on article "explores how the activities of China's military hawks may contribute to the regime's domestic and international goals." Specifically, it explores the role of China's military hawks in external propaganda and potential deterrence of foreign governments, such as those of the Philippines and Japan concerning disputes over physical features in the South and East China seas.

- Finkelstein, David M. *The Military Dimensions of U.S.-China Security Cooperation: Retrospective and Future Prospects*. Alexandria, VA: Center for Naval Analyses, 2010.

[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

A primer for understanding the evolution of the military relationship between the United States and China since the early 1980s through the first decade of the new century.

- Harold, Scott W. "[Expanding Contacts to Enhance Durability: A Strategy for Improving U.S.-China Military-to-Military Relations](#)." *Asia Policy* 16 (July 2013): 103–137.

DOI: [10.1353/asp.2013.0031](https://doi.org/10.1353/asp.2013.0031) [Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

US and Chinese observers recognize that the military-to-military relationship between the two countries is the weakest component of their bilateral relationship. Strategic mistrust between Washington and Beijing is high and centers primarily on defense issues. This study outlines a standard by which to judge what sorts of contacts are acceptable and explores the risks and benefits of various policy options.

- Harold, Scott W. "[Optimizing the U.S.-China Military-to-Military Relationship](#)." *Asia Policy* 14.3 (July 2019): 145–168.

DOI: [10.1353/asp.2019.0042](https://doi.org/10.1353/asp.2019.0042) [Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Assesses the increasingly questioned value of US military engagement with the PLA. Argues the United States has largely accomplished its goals of sending authoritative messages and learning about the PLA, while China sought increased PLA recognition and raised concerns among US allies about Washington's reliability. Offers related recommendations.

- **Hooper, Charles W.** "[Going Nowhere Slowly: U.S.-China Military Relations, 1994–2001](#)." Cambridge, MA: Weatherhead Center for International Affairs, Harvard University, 7 July 2006.

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Presciently concludes that the policy of military engagement with China, as originally envisioned and articulated by Secretary of Defense William Perry in the early 1990s, and executed by subsequent defense secretaries through the turn of the century, failed to meet its stated objectives. Contends the bilateral military relationship has not made a significant contribution to improving US-China relations and has had little-to-no influence on Chinese security policies that conflict with US national security interests. Accordingly, suggests more realistic operating assumptions, approaches, and expectations.

- **Jakobson, Linda, and Dean Knox.** *New Foreign Policy Actors in China*. SIPRI Policy Paper 26. Stockholm: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, September 2010.

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Argues the PLA role in foreign policy decision-making is narrowed by professionalization and elite bifurcation. PLA authority is most significant—although not exclusive—regarding arms control, nonproliferation, territorial disputes, and national security issues involving major world powers and Taiwan. Stresses the limited institutional channels (principally the CMC and LSGs) and inability of the MND to adequately represent the PLA in the policy arena. In rare cases, the CMC General Office may directly commission reports or make policy suggestions.

- **Jost, Tyler, and Austin Strange.** "[Delegated Diplomacy: Why China Uses the Military for Face-to-Face Exchanges](#)." Working Paper, 28 April 2018.

[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Shows that China's military was responsible for nearly half of all its high-level public diplomacy in recent years. Uses original, individual-level data on China's diplomatic exchanges and recently declassified government materials and meeting transcripts from the United States and China to offer the first systematic evidence on why states opt into military diplomacy.

- **Lu, Ning.** *The Dynamics of Foreign Policy Decision-Making in China*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2000.

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Argues that the PLA is not an independent force in PRC foreign policy. Although it is influential in narrow areas like arms sales abroad, it does not encroach on foreign policy formulation uniquely or systematically. However, the PLAN's emergence and international scope of its operations "may add new dynamics to the PLA's role in foreign policy in the future."

- **Mattis, Peter.** "[China's 'Three Warfares' in Perspective](#)." *War on the Rocks*, 30 January 2018.

[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

A brief overview of the "Three Warfares" concept (public opinion warfare, psychological warfare, and legal warfare) of the PLA.

- **Nolan, James P.** "Why Can't We Be Friends? Assessing the Operational Value of Engaging PLA Leadership." *Asia Policy* 20 (2015): 45–80.

DOI: [10.1353/asp.2015.0025](#) [Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

In-depth interviews reveal that US military flag officer/general officer (FOGO) engagement with PLA counterparts is valuable for strengthening both military-to-military and diplomatic relations. But numerous individual barriers prevent the building of trust between counterparts, and institutional barriers prevent the translation of FOGO relationships into operational value.

- **Rielage, Dale C.** "[An Imperative to Engage](#)." *Proceedings (U.S. Naval Institute)* 141.4 (2015).

[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Calls for a realistic assessment of what the United States can obtain from military-military relations with the PRC, specifically in the naval realm. Cites US-Soviet Cold War and other operational examples to suggest that strategic trust remains elusive in critical areas and cannot be readily improved through military exchanges, but increasing operational trust and reducing the risk of unintended escalation are realistic goals for bilateral military relations.

- **Saunders, Phillip C., and Julia G. Bowie.** "U.S.-China Military Relations: Competition and Cooperation in the Obama and Trump Eras." In *Reshaping the Chinese Military: The PLA's Roles and Missions in the Xi Jinping Era*, 88–108. Edited by Richard A. Bitzinger and James Char. London: Routledge, 2019.

[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

China's efforts to build a "new type of military-to-military relations" failed to transform military ties with the United States. Political relations set limits on military cooperation, and the two sides have proved unable to construct a sustainable strategic basis for relations. Trends show a pattern of frequent disruptions in military-to-military relations from 2000 to 2010, followed by an increase in interactions from 2012 to 2017. Obstacles on both sides are likely to limit mutual trust and constrain future development of military-to-military relations.

- **Segal, Gerry.** "The PLA and Chinese Foreign Policy Decision-Making." *International Affairs* (Royal Institute of International Affairs) 57.3 (1981): 449–466.

DOI: [10.2307/2619579](#)[Save Citation »](#)[Export Citation »](#) [Share Citation »](#)

Presents military role in foreign policy decision-making as one essentially determined by factions cutting across institutional lines. The PLA does not have any clear policy preferences distinct from those of civilian leaders, but rather is involved in cross-cutting cleavages leading to non-systematic influence from military actors in policy processes in China.

- **Southerland, Matthew.** *The Chinese Military's Role in Overseas Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief: Contributions and Concerns*. Washington, DC: U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, 11 July 2019.

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In recent years, the PLA has increased its involvement in overseas humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HA/DR) missions. Despite these contributions, Beijing routinely allows political considerations to guide its participation in HA/DR missions, violating the humanitarian spirit of these operations. Beijing also exploits HA/DR-related exchanges to learn combat skills from and gather intelligence on advanced militaries, particularly the United States and its allies and partners.

- **Stokes, Mark, and Russell Hsiao.** *The People's Liberation Army General Political Department: Political Warfare with Chinese Characteristics*. Arlington, VA: Project 2049 Institute, October 2013.

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One of the few works covering the then-General Political Department and Chinese political warfare. Although the 2015 reorganization of the PLA renders aspects of this work dated, it remains valuable both for historical background and for elucidating enduring targets and goals of Chinese political warfare.

- **Swaine, Michael D.** "[China's Assertive Behavior, Part III: The Role of the Military in Foreign Policy](#)." *China Leadership Monitor* 36 (Winter 2012).

[Save Citation »](#)[Export Citation »](#) [Share Citation »](#)

Argues that institutionalization of PLA policy influence into more narrowly focused areas is the dominant trend. The military's principal functions appear to be more of an "advisory, coordinating, and consensus-building" nature, and limited to a narrowly defined set of areas (e.g., Taiwan/territorial disputes, military resources, defense industry).

- **Wortzel, Larry.** *The Chinese People's Liberation Army and Information Warfare*. Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College Press, March 2014.

[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Examines in-depth technical aspects of PLA information operations, as well as the PLA's joining together in a comprehensive information operations doctrine, its "Three Warfares": (1) psychological warfare; (2) the manipulation of public opinion, or media warfare; and (3) the manipulation of legal arguments to strengthen China's diplomatic and security position, or "legal warfare." Explains how the PLA is revising its operational doctrine to meet what it sees as the new mode of "integrated, joint operations" for the 21st century.

- **You, Ji.** "The PLA and Diplomacy: Unraveling Myths about the Military Role in Foreign Policy Making." *Journal of Contemporary China* 23.86 (September 2013): 236–254.

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Argues that the PLA's indirect, nuanced role in foreign policy is "more directional than detailed and is often behind the scenes," and that it follows a "fine division of labor," with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs handling most general issues and the PLA handling military-specific issues. Maintains that a "broad civil-military consensus exists on the fundamentals of China's foreign and security policies."

Academia

As the PLA has made more significant strides in learning in recent years, there has been a growing interest in how the PLA learns. In the early years of the Chinese Communist movement, even before the birth of the Red Army, many of those who would become involved in military affairs received education and training in the Soviet Union in the 1920s and 1930s, as seen in [Pantsov 2000](#). Similarly, Soviet advisors were also providing and guiding military, intelligence, and counter-intelligence education and training inside China to various Chinese entities, including the Nationalists and CCP, as seen in [Wilbur and How 1989](#). The Chinese Communists began to move more toward instructing their own with their involvement in organizations such as the Whampoa Military Academy and the Peasant Movement Institute, which, among other things, provided military education and training, as seen in [Hofheinz 1977](#). Graduates of such institutions would help provide the personnel for the failed uprisings in 1927 and 1928 that mark the formal founding of the Red Army. Over the decades that would follow, there would be many reforms and attempted reforms to improve the educational and training

capabilities of the Chinese armed forces, as seen in [Kamphausen, et al. 2008](#) and [Kamphausen, et al. 2012](#). With the recent reorganization of the PLA's academic institutions, [Allen and Chen 2020](#) provides an update on those that remain or newly exist. The growing awareness and concern surrounding the PLA's interactions with foreign academic institutions has led to works such as [Joske 2018](#).

- **Allen, Kenneth, and Mingzhi Chen.** *The People's Liberation Army's 37 Academic Institutions*. Montgomery, AL: China Aerospace Studies Institute, 2020.

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This work offers "relevant background material on the overall PLA academic institution program and provides profiles of the current 37 academic institutions" following the 2017 reorganization of the PLA's "officer and noncommissioned officer (NCO) academic institution structure." It also provides numerous appendices on issues such as terminology, PLA research institution Ministry of Education codes, PLA force adjustments, and the Conferences of PLA Military Educational Institutions.

- **Hofheinz, Roy, Jr.** *The Broken Wave: The Chinese Communist Peasant Movement, 1922–1928*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977.

DOI: [10.4159/harvard.9780674418578](https://doi.org/10.4159/harvard.9780674418578) [Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

While unable to benefit from the greater access to original source material that began in the 1980s, this work nevertheless provides a rare examination of the CCP's involvement in institutions that, prior to the formal establishment of the Red Army, provided military education and training to Communists in China, such as the Whampoa Military Academy and Peasant Movement Institute (where Mao Zedong was a principal), among others. It also discusses the CCP's involvement in creating and supporting peasant armies.

- **Joske, Alex.** *Picking Flowers, Making Honey: The Chinese Military's Collaboration with Foreign Universities*. Australian Strategic Policy Institute Policy Brief 10. Canberra: Australian Strategic Policy Institute, 2018.

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Details the significant, but often overlooked, collaboration between PLA scientists and engineers and foreign universities. Includes breakdowns by institution and home country, as well as efforts by the PLA to deceive foreign universities as to the true affiliations and intentions of these PLA personnel operating abroad.

- **Kamphausen, Roy, David Lai, and Travis Tanner, eds.** *Learning by Doing: The PLA Trains at Home and Abroad*. Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College, November 2012.

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An edited volume focusing on domestic and foreign PLA training. Includes chapters on the shift toward increasingly realistic exercises, PLA Navy domestic exercises and those

with international partners, PLA Army and Airborne transregional exercises, PLA participation in the *Peace Mission 2010* multilateral exercise, and involvement with international peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HA/DR). It also includes chapters on the People's Armed Police (PAP) and lessons the PLA has learned in logistics.

- **Kamphausen, Roy, Andrew Scobell, and Travis Tanner, eds.** *The "People" in the PLA: Recruitment, Training, and Education in China's Military*. Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College, September 2008.

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An edited volume that details the many facets of recruitment, training, and education by the PLA. Includes chapters on trends in education and training, technology, and simulation in training, conscript and noncommissioned officer (NCO) training, the officer corps and its reform, career progression, and major educational institutions.

- **Pantsov, Alexander.** *The Bolsheviks and the Chinese Revolution, 1919–1927*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2000.

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Provides a brief examination of the education and training given to Chinese nationals in the Soviet Union in the 1920s and 1930s. Of particular note, Moscow "gave great assistance to the Chinese Communists in the field of military training." Discusses the impact and influence of the opposition in the USSR led by Stalin's rival Trotsky on Chinese nationals receiving such education and training. Contains biographical sketches of many of the Soviets and Chinese involved in the education and training relationship.

- **Wilbur, C. Martin, and Julie Lien-ying How.** *Missionaries of Revolution: Soviet Advisors and Nationalist China, 1920–1927*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989.

DOI: [10.4159/harvard.9780674863187](https://doi.org/10.4159/harvard.9780674863187) [Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Examines the primarily military assistance provided by Soviet advisors to various Chinese entities, including the Nationalists and the CCP, inside China from 1920 to 1927. Among the assistance rendered, these advisors helped set up, and teach at, educational and training institutions focused on military affairs, including the Whampoa Military Academy; intelligence; and counterintelligence. Also traces how the CCP used the Nationalist organization to grow and gain greater influence, including among military personnel. Contains many translated documents, including on early CCP military affairs.

Representation in Media and Educational Spheres

Since the CCP came to power and the PRC came into existence through the success of the PLA, the military is integral to the story of both the ruling political party and the current state. As works such as [Xu 2019](#) highlight, how its military and soldiers were presented by the party during its rise to power greatly influenced the ability of the Communists to build legitimacy and emotional bonds with the public, especially compared with the Nationalists. Since building that initial legitimacy and relationship with the public, the PLA and notable members of it have often been used to both bolster the legitimacy and narrative of the party-state and to influence the behavior of military members and members of the general public. The latter still often entails allusions to “model” soldiers, covered in works such as [Edwards 2010](#). However, as China has developed and as younger generations are growing up in a significantly different world than that of the revolutionary generations, how the Chinese Communist armed forces and the conflicts in which they have been involved (at home and abroad) are remembered, understood, and presented have changed. This, in turn, impacts how the Chinese public, including potential recruits and conscripts, perceives the PLA. Some of these evolving remembrances, understandings, and presentations are examined in [Denton 2014](#), [Lim 2014](#), [Mitter 2020](#), and [Rhodes 2021](#). As most of the works in this section indicate, the PLA is hardly a passive actor in how it is understood and represented in media and education. With the increasing interest in defense issues, China’s defense media market ballooned and diversified. Despite the fact that it shapes the reporting from China that so heavily influences the field of PLA studies, the subfield of Chinese defense-related journalism has been subject to little examination, with the notable exception of such works as [Cheung 2011](#).

- **Cheung, Tai Ming.** “Engineering Human Souls: The Development of Chinese Military Journalism and the Emerging Defense Media Market.” In *Changing Media, Changing China*. Edited by Susan L. Shirk, 128–149. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.

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Analyzes China’s evolving defense media market, including attempts by the PLA to make its official infotainment content more appealing, cutting-edge, multifaceted, and accessible to new audiences. Shows how this environment is changing with the growing importance of media produced by other groups, including China’s defense industrial complex, online chat communities, blogs, and so on. Includes a table of leading PLA and defense industry periodicals.

- **DeMare, Brian James.** *Mao’s Cultural Army: Drama Troupes in China’s Rural Revolution*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2015.

DOI: [10.1017/CBO9781139923798](https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139923798) [Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Showcases military drama troops that spread the CCP’s messages to the huge numbers of often illiterate rural masses, whom written propaganda could not reach. Their audiences included both soldiers and civilians. They aimed to spread CCP messages, create new socialist identities for citizens, “re-educate” captured enemy troops, bolster morale, and fuel “anger and hatred against enemy soldiers and class enemies alike.” These military drama troops would eventually be joined by civilian counterparts as a “cultural army.”

- **Denton, Kirk A.** *Exhibiting the Past: Historical Memory and the Politics of Museums in Postsocialist China*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2014.

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Contains several chapters on how China's Communist armed forces have been presented over the decades to Chinese and foreign audiences in revolutionary and military museums and memorials (whose directors are "often from the military"). Argues that while such exhibits are still largely propagandistic, glorify war, and seek to bolster martial spirit in the market reform era generations, they also reflect the changing environment of China, including showcasing more diverse, in-depth histories at the national, provincial, and local levels.

- **Edwards, Louise.** "Military Celebrity in China: The Evolution of 'Heroic and Model Servicemen.'" In *Celebrity in China*. Edited by Louise Edwards and Elaine Jeffreys, 21–44. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2010.

DOI: [10.5790/hongkong/9789622090873.003.0002](#) [Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Examines the production and use of "Heroic and Model Servicemen" by the party-state "to promote ideals of personal behavior" among the armed forces and general public. Compares three traditional "solider celebrities" with two more recent ones to showcase the challenges the CCP faces in producing and promoting such figures in the new social environment and how it is "repackaging" these figures "with new technologies and new narrative lines in order to establish novel ways to invigorate and legitimize their leadership."

- **Lim, Louisa.** *The People's Republic of Amnesia: Tiananmen Revisited*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.

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Follows the stories of several participants and eyewitnesses of the protests at Tiananmen Square and subsequent massacre in Beijing as the author examines not just what happened, but also how the domestic event involving the armed forces is remembered and forgotten, including the impact of the increase in "patriotic education" in subsequent years. In addition, this work details the often forgotten crackdown by People's Armed Police (PAP) in Chengdu following the more famous massacre in Beijing.

- **Mitter, Rana.** *China's Good War: How World War II Is Shaping a New Nationalism*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2020.

DOI: [10.4159/9780674249578](#) [Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

One of the few studies on the workings of Chinese wartime history scholarship, it analyzes the evolution of China's perception of World War II, including the rehabilitation and appropriation of Nationalist figures, contributions, and experience. Traces how

political events have changed how Chinese historians, including some who are themselves veterans, write about this war over time. This, in turn, has impacts downstream on how the conflict is depicted to and perceived by the general public in movies, online forms, and museums.

- **Rhodes, Andrew J.** “[The 1988 Blues—Admirals, Activists, and the Development of the Chinese Maritime Identity](#)” *Naval War College Review* 74.2 (Spring 2021): 61–79.

[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Captures the nexus of culture and strategy in describing a key moment in the development of Chinese sea power. In the late 1980s, pro-democracy activists and the PLA were on divergent political paths, but both embraced similar language and concepts about the importance of the global maritime system. The parallel 1988 stories of the television documentary *River Elegy* and the Navy’s campaign to occupy the Spratlys offer key insights into understanding China’s path to becoming a maritime power.

- **Xu, Yan.** *The Soldier Image and State-Building in Modern China, 1924–1945*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2019.

DOI: [10.5810/kentucky/9780813176741.001.0001](#) [Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Examines the use of the imagery of soldiers by political, social, and cultural forces to “explore state-building processes in the GMD [Nationalist] and CCP areas and the complex state-society relations that were engendered by these processes.” The sixth chapter focuses specifically on this topic in wartime Yan’an, and argues that the Communists “constructed the soldier figure within the framework of army-people solidarity”—unlike the Nationalists, who sought to elevate the “soldier’s status as model citizens to be emulated by the public.”

Civil-Military Relations

For decades in PLA studies, “civil-military relations” meant exclusively “party-military relations.” More recently, not only the CCP leadership but also the “civil” aspect of the relationship is garnering attention, with greater focus on how the PLA interacts with different parts of the civilian government, such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or local governments, as well as civil society at large. One of the foremost PLA scholars, Ellis Joffe, was instrumental in cataloging the initial slow growth of professionalism within the PLA following the PRC’s establishment (see [Joffe 1967](#)), which impacted how the military interacted with the party-state. [Jencks 1982](#) continues tracing of PLA professionalism. While much of the early literature was largely centered around competing theoretical models of civil-military relations, as encapsulated in [Joffe 1996](#), most writing since 2003 has focused more on assessing relevant events and newly observed changes, rather than developing new theoretical models. The models include, among others, (1) Symbiosis ([Perlmutter and LeoGrande 1982](#), [Zhu 1998](#), and, to an extent, [Shambaugh 2002](#) and [Shambaugh 2009](#)), (2) Conditional Compliance (Joffe is credited

with generating the concept at a conference, and Mulvenon examines it in several of his works, including [Mulvenon 2001](#), and (3) State Control ([Scobell 2005](#)). Some works, such as [Li 2013](#), trace the evolution of the relationship from one model, in this case Symbiosis, toward a new state—even if a new model was not explicitly created. The remaining literature largely focuses on analyzing the state of Chinese civil-military relations centered on specific topics or events ([Bi 2002](#), [Mulvenon 2002](#), [Li 2006](#), and [McGregor 2010](#)), long-term trend analysis ([Finkelstein and Guinness 2007](#) and [Kiselycznyk and Saunders 2010](#)), or officers’ personal experiences ([Ledberg 2018](#)).

- **Bi, Jian.** “The Role of the Military in the PRC Taiwan Policymaking: A Case Study of the Taiwan Strait Crisis of 1995–1996.” *Journal of Contemporary China* 11.32 (2002): 539–572.

DOI: [10.1080/10670560220152328](#)[Save Citation »Export Citation » Share Citation »](#)

Argues that the PLA shaped PRC policy during the 1995–1996 Taiwan Strait crisis by bargaining during a crisis to create *ad hoc* influence—specifically by leveraging its importance in the succession process and forcing Jiang Zemin’s hand.

- **Finkelstein, David M., and Kristen Guinness, eds.** *Civil-Military Relations in Today’s China: Swimming in a New Sea*. New York: Routledge, 2007.

[Save Citation »Export Citation » Share Citation »](#)

One of the only books devoted to PRC civil-military relations. Traces the new-generation PLA’s adjustments to impediments created by new socioeconomic realities through “intra-institutional policies and practices it can control;” while exploiting corresponding opportunities, in part by exerting influence in new policy domains.

- **Jencks, Harlan W.** *From Muskets to Missiles: Politics and Professionalism in the Chinese Army, 1945–1981*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1982.

[Save Citation »Export Citation » Share Citation »](#)

Examines the extent, nature, and political implications of professionalization in the PLA. Provides a description and evaluation of the military, political, economic, and social context within which PLA officers have functioned since the civil war. Particular coverage of Soviet influence, formative Chinese conditions, Mao-era events including the Cultural Revolution, the military industrial system, and personnel management. An eBook edition was published in 2019 (New York: Routledge).

- **Joffe, Ellis.** “Party-Army Relations in China: Retrospect and Prospect.” *China Quarterly* 146 (1996): 299–314.

DOI: [10.1017/S0305741000045045](#)[Save Citation »Export Citation » Share Citation »](#)

Concludes that a synthesis of the professionalization, party control, and symbiosis models will better capture the mixed influence of the PLA on policy; it is a “party-army with professional characteristics” that is increasingly averse to direct political action.

- **Joffe, Ellis.** *Party and Army: Professionalism and Political Control in the Chinese Officer Corps, 1949–1964*. Harvard East Asian Monographs. Cambridge, MA: Harvard East Asian Research Center, 1967.

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Examines the necessity and corresponding effort by China to create a professional officer corps within the PLA following the establishment of the PRC in 1949, to provide the personnel to operate within a “complex military establishment” that modernization sought to construct. Also examines the resulting creation of a “professional generation” of officers, the disagreements between them and the party on certain issues, and the party’s reaction to them.

- **Kiselycznyk, Michael, and Phillip C. Saunders.** *Civil-Military Relations in China: Assessing the PLA’s Role in Elite Politics*. China Strategic Perspectives 2. Washington, DC: Institute for National Strategic Studies, August 2010.

[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Specifically examines the literature produced from 1989–2010 on the role of the PLA in elite-level politics. Outlines five major trends in Chinese civil-military relations that emerged by 2010, examines related theoretical models, and analyzes the predictive capability of these models against four cases that occurred during 1980–2010.

- **Ledberg, Sofia.** “Analysing Chinese Civil-Military Relations: A Bottom-Up Approach.” *China Quarterly* 234 (2018): 377–398.

DOI: [10.1017/S0305741018000401](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0305741018000401) [Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Examines professional autonomy and political control of the officer corps through the organization of military work at two PLA education institutes. This pioneering scholarship, based on actual formal interviews with PLA personnel, is one of the only investigations of this type by a Western social science researcher.

- **Li, Nan.** “[From Symbiosis to Quasi-Autonomy: China’s Evolving Civil-Military Relations](#).” *World Politics Review*, 30 April 2013.

[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

This article analyzes the transition in Chinese civil-military relations between what was characterized as symbiosis toward a situation whereby the PLA enjoys quasi-autonomy.

- **Li, Nan, ed.** *Chinese Civil-Military Relations: The Transformation of the People’s Liberation Army*. New York: Routledge, 2006.

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Editor argues that personalistic control by Mao and Deng fully subordinated the PLA, but that the Deng era saw a greater need for PLA support. The Jiang/Hu eras saw increasing civilian control in institutional form that severely constrains PLA access to the policy arena (as evidenced by checked military budgets), but military influence still “depends primarily on the stature of the leader.” Chapters address specific aspects of civil-military relations, e.g., political commissars, arms control, defense industry, and Xinjiang.

- **McGregor, Richard.** “Why We Fight: The Party and the Gun.” In *The Party: The Secret World of China’s Communist Rulers*. By Richard McGregor, 104–134. London: Allen Lane, 2010.

[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Details with personal examples and discusses the deeply intertwined relationship between the CCP and the PLA hierarchies.

- **Mulvenon, James.** “China: Conditional Compliance.” In *Coercion and Governance: The Declining Political Role of the Military in Asia*. Edited by Muthiah Alagappa, 317–335. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001.

[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Argues that the CCP guarantees PLA professional interests with resources, autonomy on purely military affairs, and a limited role in defense-related foreign policy. Includes case studies on the commercialization and divestiture of the PLA’s business empire, as well as the 1995–1996 missile tests surrounding Taiwan.

- **Mulvenon, James.** “[Civil-Military Relations and the EP-3 Crisis: A Content Analysis](#).” *China Leadership Monitor* 1 (30 January 2002).

[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Focuses on Chinese civil-military relations during the EP-3 crisis, with special emphasis on the PLA’s monopoly on relevant information that informed the civilian government’s position, the interplay of and differences between military and civilian media, and the implications for civil-military relations of the crisis and Chinese responses thereto.

- **Perlmutter, Amos, and William M. LeoGrande.** “The Party in Uniform: Toward a Theory of Civil-Military Relations in Communist Political Systems.” *American Political Science Review* 76.4 (December 1982): 778–789.

DOI: [10.2307/1962970](https://doi.org/10.2307/1962970) [Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Proposes a symbiotic “dual-role elite” model for civil-military relations in communist political systems. Argues that such a military (e.g., the PLA) is capable of acting as a “functionally specific elite engaged in bargaining to defend its perceived institutional interests; and in crisis politics, the military is a political resource that various party factions seek to enlist against their opponents.”

- **Scobell, Andrew.** “China’s Evolving Civil-Military Relations: Creeping Guojiahua.” *Armed Forces & Society* 31.2 (Winter 2005): 227–244.
DOI: [10.1177/0095327X0503100204](#)[Save Citation »Export Citation » Share Citation »](#)

This article argues “that the most significant transformation underway in Chinese civil-military relations [in 2005] is *statification* or *nationalization*—what the Chinese call *guojiahua* [state control]”; that is, the PLA “is being transformed from a party army into a party-state army.” Also discusses other trends in civil-military relations.

- **Shambaugh, David.** *Modernizing China’s Military: Progress, Problems, and Prospects*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002.
[Save Citation »Export Citation » Share Citation »](#)

This book’s force-specific details have been overtaken by events, but its civil-military insights remain relevant. Foresees demise of the “symbiotic model,” even as “PLA remains a party army.” Military autonomy in areas within its “corporate domain”—e.g., training, doctrine, force structure, personnel appointments, military education, and protection of national security—is strong. There is a general “zoning of authority” at play, leaving “greater scope and relative autonomy . . . for institutional and civic actors” including the PLA.

- **Shambaugh, David.** “The Soldier and the State in China: The Political Work System in the People’s Liberation Army.” *China Quarterly* 127 (February 2009): 527–568.
DOI: [10.1017/S0305741000031052](#)[Save Citation »Export Citation » Share Citation »](#)

This article “examines the politicization of the PLA over the period from 1927 to 1991” through the analysis of the PLA’s political work system. Argues that with the fading of the original symbiosis, which grew out of the CCP’s and PLA’s revolutionary experience, the PLA’s political work system has been crucial to sustaining the CCP’s relationship with and control of the PLA by intertwining the latter’s identity with the party-state.

- **You, Ji.** “China: From Revolutionary Tool to Professional Military.” In *Military Professionalism in Asia: Conceptual and Empirical Perspectives*. Edited by Muthiah Alagappa, 111–133. Honolulu, HI: East-West Center, 2001.
[Save Citation »Export Citation » Share Citation »](#)

Contends that the PLA has become a “true professional military,” albeit under CCP command, with political influence limited and externally oriented missions overriding concerns about domestic politics. The PLA is less quiescent when there are perceived threats to Chinese sovereignty, but has also recognized that the organization was unprepared for major combat operations against Western powers (as of this writing). The

PLA has used this situation to garner more resources for modernization instead of to push policy in a more militaristic direction.

- **Zhu, Fang.** *Gun Barrel Politics: Party-Army Relations in Mao’s China*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998.

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Offers a “symbiotic” reading of civil-military relations, finding no role for the PLA in policy without a specific interpersonal or factional point of entry.

Leadership and Organization

The subfields of leadership and organization are closely tied to who heads the Central Military Commission (CMC), and their personality, power, and relationship with the PLA. Stronger and more engaged CMC heads, such as Xi Jinping, are able to exert greater authority over the PLA, including through far-reaching reforms. Weaker and less engaged CMC heads, such as Hu Jintao, enable uniformed leaders to serve their own interests and those that they represent, at the expense of civilian control. [Miller 2007](#) offers a snapshot of CMC composition under Hu. [Whitson and Huang 1973](#) details the politics within the military from 1927 to 1971 and the military’s involvement in early PRC political processes. The edited volume [Pollpeter and Allen 2015](#) examines the administrative and operational structures of the PLA. [Saunders and Wuthnow 2016](#) and [Smith, et al. 2018](#) highlight selected aspects of the 2015 reforms of the Chinese armed forces by comparing them to those of the US armed forces’ famous Goldwater-Nichols reforms. Finally, [Wuthnow and Saunders 2017](#) and [Mulvenon 2018](#) examine the changes within the Chinese armed forces that Xi has been able to effectuate since assuming power in 2012.

- **Miller, Alice.** “[Hu Jintao and the PLA Brass](#).” *China Leadership Monitor* 21 (Summer 2007).

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Forecasted that the CCP national congress meeting in fall 2007 was likely to register only limited changes among China’s top military leadership. These changes would only slightly alter the representation of the military on the Party’s top decision-making body, the Politburo, and the composition of the key military policy body, the CMC. Analysis proved accurate; methodology remains instructive.

- **Mulvenon, James.** “[The Cult of Xi and the Rise of the CMC Chairman Responsibility System](#).” *China Leadership Monitor* 55 (January 2018).

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One of the only works to focus on the CMC “chairman responsibility system” created under Xi Jinping. Under this authority, the buck clearly stops at the chairman’s desk, where logjams are broken and problems are resolved: “all significant issues in national defense and Army building [are] planned and decided by the CMC chairman.”

- **Pollpeter, Kevin, and Kenneth W. Allen, eds. *PLA as Organization v2.0*. Vienna, VA: Defense Group, 2015.**

[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

This detailed reference comprehensively examines the administrative and operational structures of the PLA prior to the 2015 reforms, including those of the CMC, four general departments, three services, and then-Second Artillery Corps.

- **Saunders, Phillip C., and Joel Wuthnow. "[China's Goldwater-Nichols? Assessing PLA Organizational Reforms](#)." *Strategic Forum* 294 (April 2016).**

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This work dubs the 2015 reforms "Goldwater-Nichols with Chinese characteristics" for their similarity to the sweeping reforms undertaken within the US military following the passage of the eponymous 1986 congressional act.

- **Smith, Shane A., Thomas Henderschedt, and Timothy D. Luedecking. "[Reverse Engineering Goldwater-Nichols: China's Joint Force Reforms](#)." *Joint Force Quarterly* 90 (3rd Quarter 2018): 68–77.**

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Long scrutinizing US gold standards, the PLA is now charged with undergoing Goldwater-Nichols-like organizational reforms in pursuit of a more efficient, capable joint force. In acting three decades after the United States, it is arguably able to learn US joint lessons with greater focus and less trauma, cost, and frustration. However, the ultimate measure of success in joint force reform will be its performance in combat, with which today's PLA lacks experience.

- **Whitson, William W., with Chen-hsia Huang. *The Chinese High Command: A History of Communist Military Politics, 1927–71*. New York: Praeger, 1973.**

DOI: [10.1007/978-1-349-01980-9](#) [Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

A granular, comprehensive examination of China's military elite, including a breakdown by field army, regarding the role of this vanguard in the Cultural Revolution and its aftermath, the "military generations" that existed from 1927 to 1971, the interactions between the commanders and political commissars, and the military's role in the early PRC political processes.

- **Wuthnow, Joel, and Phillip C. Saunders. *Chinese Military Reform in the Age of Xi Jinping*. China Strategic Perspectives 10. Washington, DC: Institute for National Strategic Studies, March 2017.**

[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Contains an overview of the PLA reforms begun by Xi Jinping in 2015, and "assesses the contents, drivers, and implications of the PLA's restructuring." Includes an appendix detailing CMC departments, commissions, and offices, with summaries for each.

Personnel Recruitment, Development, and Training

The "software" of the people, their capabilities, and the organizations and activities used to maximize them is under-studied and often intangible, yet perhaps the most critical factor in evaluating the PLA's ability to execute the missions assigned it. [Li and Harold 2007](#) and [Lee 2020a](#) trace top leadership selection, composition, and career trajectories. [Scobell, et al. 2008](#) outlines recruitment, training, and education. [Blasko and Clay 2020](#) examines the PLA personnel system, with particular focus on enlisted personnel. [Clay 2018](#) surveys family and benefits issues. [Lee 2020b](#) follows navy training beyond the First Island Chain. (Service-specific studies of personnel-related issues are included in the respective service-related sections later in this bibliography.)

- [Blasko, Dennis, and Marcus Clay. "People Win Wars: The PLA Enlisted Force . . . and Other Related Matters." *War on the Rocks*, 31 July 2020.](#)

[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Addresses the PLA personnel system in unprecedented depth. Following a 300,000-personnel reduction in 2017, officers and civil cadres now number approximately 450,000 personnel (23%), NCOs 850,000 (42%), and conscripts about 700,000 (35%). Surveys PLA's personnel structure, including active-duty "civil cadres," contract civilians, and the often-overlooked category of local government civilians responsible for recruiting the young men and women who join the PLA. Reviews composition of and developments in the conscription system and the NCO corps.

- [Clay, Marcus. *Understanding the "People" of the People's Liberation Army: A Study of Marriage, Family, Housing, and Benefits*. Montgomery, AL: China Aerospace Studies Institute, 2018.](#)

[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Family and personnel issues are a foundational aspect of PLA strengths and weaknesses, and a major concern during this period of military reform. Efforts are underway to improve salaries, benefits, and housing. Following several rounds of increases, in 2018, a division-leader grade PLA officer, roughly equivalent to a US O-7, made roughly ¥264,000 (\$41,969) annually in total compensation. As more active-duty military members come from China's single-child generation, leave policies have become significantly more generous.

- [Lee, Roderick. "Building the Next Generation of Chinese Military Leaders." *Journal of Indo-Pacific Affairs* 3.3 \(Fall 2020a\): 135–145.](#)

[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Surveys what the PLA views as a good leader, how it develops such leaders, and their career timelines. Judges that the PLA seeks expert strategic warfighters who always obey orders. Development strategy entails deliberately selecting only desirable officer candidates, then inducting them through a rigorous professional military education process focused on skill building. Expects significant positive results between roughly 2035 and 2050.

- **Lee, Roderick.** "[The PLA Navy's ZHANLAN Training Series: Supporting Offensive Strike on the High Seas.](#)" *China Brief* 20.7 (2020b).

[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Argues that the PLAN is close to being able to execute offensive naval operations outside of the First Island Chain (and perhaps beyond the Second Island Chain) in a wartime environment. The PLA has long discussed the concept of conducting offensive naval operations beyond the First Island Chain. Comparing observables from the ZHANLAN-2020A training event with the list of proficiencies necessary to conduct deep strike suggests the PLAN is likely close to operationalizing this concept.

- **Li, Cheng, and Scott W. Harold.** "[China's New Military Elite.](#)" *China Security* 3.4 (Autumn 2007): 62–89.

[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Demographic and professional characteristics of China's military elites are changing rapidly. PLA representatives at the 17th Party Central Committee are better educated, more balanced by service, more specialized, and more technologically adept than any preceding group. China's military modernization efforts, much of which focus on enhancing the country's air and naval power, appear to be in the process of being translated into greater representation for these service branches in the Party's Central Military Commission and Central Committee.

- **Scobell, Andrew, Roy D. Kamphausen, and Travis Tanner, eds.** *The "People" in the PLA: Recruitment, Training, and Education in China's Military.* Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2008.

[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Describes the advances and reforms the PLA has made in its recruitment, officer and NCO training and education, and mobilization. Probes how the PLA's personnel system is adapting to fulfill the requirements of a military force capable of winning local wars under informatized conditions. Explores how the PLA is cultivating a new generation of officers and what capabilities these new officers will likely possess.

Budget, Acquisition System, and Defense Industry

PLA development is funded by what is now by any measure the world’s second-largest defense budget. [Liff and Erickson 2013](#) offers one of the few comprehensive assessments of this still opaque topic. Cold War tensions significantly impacted the geographic spread and development of the defense industry in China, most notably with the decision to move a significant portion of it into the country’s hinterlands to protect it from potential US and Soviet attacks. Mao’s recommendation after reading an April 1964 General Staff report and dogged policy promotion prompted a massive relocation and development of strategic and military industries deep into China’s remote interior, consuming a plurality of national budgetary outlays from the mid-1960s through Sino-American rapprochement. Decades later—with the shift in focus of China’s government from military conquest within claimed territory and exporting revolution under Mao to developing the domestic economy under Deng—the path of the defense industry was again significantly impacted, this time when the PLA was encouraged to go into business to offset budget cuts. This commercial surge and its consequences are covered in [Cheung 2001](#). Eventually the crippling effects of corruption and the defense industry’s inability to produce the products desired by the military leadership for fighting modern wars catalyzed reversing reforms. Once known for producing substandard copies of foreign products, China’s defense industry has undergone a dramatic shift since the 1990s. These reforms began bearing fruit several years after their introduction, as shown by works such as [Medeiros, et al. 2005](#). The growing capabilities the PLA has acquired over the past two decades from China’s defense industry have generated considerable interest in how such progress materialized. The resulting literature is typically demarcated by area of focus, with two subjects stimulating the lion’s share: innovation and acquisition. Innovation primarily focuses on reform efforts to spur improvement in Chinese defense firms. It is covered in such works as [Cheung 2009](#) and the edited volume [Cheung 2014](#). Works that focus primarily on acquisition examine the means, both legal and illegal, that China uses to acquire advanced technology from both the civilian economy and countries abroad. Such works include [Saunders and Wiseman 2011](#); [Barabanov, et al. 2012](#); [Hannas, et al. 2013](#); [Levesque and Stokes 2016](#); [Kashin 2018](#); and [Angliviel de la Beaumelle, et al. 2019](#). Another more recent round of literature is now assessing the current state of China’s defense industry and the next generation of capabilities it will soon provide the PLA. [Fisher 2010](#) offers an initial overview. Sector-specific works include the edited volume [Erickson 2016](#) (shipbuilding), the report [Wood and Stewart 2019](#) (aviation), and [Wood and Stone 2021](#) (ballistic missiles).

- **Angliviel de la Beaumelle, Marcel, Benjamin Spevack, and Devin Thorne. *Open Arms: Evaluating Global Exposure to China’s Defense-Industrial Base*. Washington, DC: Center for Advanced Defense Studies, 2019.**

[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Focuses on the scale, implementation, and implications of China’s “military-civil fusion” (MCF) strategy by analyzing Chinese military procurement announcements, import records, and investment transactions. Identifies risk signals for evaluating participation in MCF by Chinese companies and academic institutions. Details the principal ways technology is acquired by actors in China’s defense-industrial base: domestic procurement, overseas purchase of dual-use products, and investment in or acquisition of foreign companies. Includes several case studies and useful graphics.

- **Barabanov, Mikhail, Vasily Kashin, and Konstantin Makienko. *Shooting Star: China’s Military Machine in the 21st Century*. Minneapolis: Eastview Press, 2012.**

[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Experts from a leading Russian think tank survey the developments and progress made by China’s defense industry over the last twenty years, including in-depth analysis of China’s key defense corporations in all major sectors, as well as its arms imports and exports. Offers particular insights regarding China’s Russian weapons and defense technology imports.

- **Carlson, Christopher P. *PLAN Force Structure Projection Concept: A Methodology for Looking Down Range*. China Maritime Report 10. Newport, RI: China Maritime Studies Institute, November 2020.**

[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Currently, the majority of predictions regarding China’s future naval buildup are based on a simple extrapolation of the impressive historical ship construction rate and shipyard capacity, without acknowledging that the political and economic situation in China has changed dramatically. To probe China’s current shipbuilding costs and capabilities, the author offers an analytical model examining construction man-hours as well as the mid-life overhaul and modernization for each ship, which is a major capital expense in the out years following initial procurement.

- **Cheung, Tai Ming. *China’s Entrepreneurial Army*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.**

[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Focuses on the PLA’s involvement in business from 1985 to 2000. It includes an examination of the key personalities in the military business complex and the relationships between major PLA and civilian firms. Also examined: advantages and disadvantages regarding the military’s involvement in business, Chinese military business operations in the then-seven military regions (MRs) and abroad, as well as the relationship between the PLA’s business and civilian defense industrial complexes.

- **Cheung, Tai Ming. *Fortifying China: The Struggle to Build a Modern Defense Economy*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009.**

[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

This book offers a particularly rigorous examination of the early reform efforts focused on China’s defense industry, with the Mao and Deng eras both having chapters devoted to them. The post-Deng reform era also receives considerable attention.

- **Cheung, Tai Ming, ed. *Forging China’s Military Might: A New Framework for Assessing Innovation*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2014.**

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Contains a myriad of chapters focused on specific elements of the administration of and innovation in China's defense industry, including the General Armament Department's Science and Technology Committee and the country's human spaceflight program, as well as rare insight into the defense industry's military representative system for quality control.

- **Erickson, Andrew S., ed. *Chinese Naval Shipbuilding: An Ambitious and Uncertain Course*. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2016.**

[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

A particularly detailed examination of Chinese ship production for military purposes. Contains chapters detailing everything from the resources now available to the industry from global capital markets; the state of shipyard infrastructure; the standards for warship construction; remaining challenges, such as shipboard electronics and propulsion; and potential trajectories for the industry and the PLA Navy it supplies.

- **Fisher, Richard D. *China's Military Modernization: Building for Regional and Global Reach*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010.**

[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Probes China's evolving geo-strategy, and examines in detail how China has sought to transform its military to pursue that strategy into the first decade of the 21st century. Offers particular depth on China's military-technical transformation, and progress regarding specific defense industrial sectors and weapons systems.

- **Hannas, William C., James Mulvenon, and Anna B. Puglisi. *Chinese Industrial Espionage: Technology Acquisition and Military Modernisation*. London: Routledge, 2013.**

DOI: [10.4324/9780203630174](#) [Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

While not focused solely on military technology, this book provides critical context by analyzing China's "elaborate, comprehensive system for spotting foreign technologies, acquiring them by every means imaginable, and converting them into weapons and competitive goods." Includes an examination of this system as it exists now, as well as its historical evolution. Concludes with an appendix of case histories of illicit PRC technology acquisition.

- **Kashin, Vasily. *The Current State of Russian-Chinese Defense Cooperation*. Arlington, VA: CNA, 2018.**

[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Examines the long Sino-Russian defense and security cooperation history—including arms sales, defense industrial cooperation, and joint exercises; Russia’s approach to developing them; and possible outcomes of further rapprochement. Addresses Russia’s evolving views on potential for an even closer strategic alliance. Concludes that although the two countries are not ready for Western-style cooperation in defense technology, they are gradually moving toward a security partnership characterized by greater integration and interdependence.

- **Levesque, Greg, and Mark Stokes.** *Blurred Lines: Military-Civil Fusion and the “Going Out” of China’s Defense Industry*. Dallas, TX: Pointe Bello, December 2016.

[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Examines the impact and implications of the acceleration of military-civil fusion (MCF) initiatives, which breach definitions and demarcations of the military and the civilian, as well as the “going out” of Chinese defense firms. Includes substantive tables and graphics on the rising “defense industry clique,” MCF Small Group members, and MCF demonstration zones and bases. Also includes a case study on the Aviation Industry Corporation of China (AVIC).

- **Liff, Adam P., and Andrew S. Erickson.** “Demystifying China’s Defence Spending: Less Mysterious in the Aggregate.” *China Quarterly* 216 (December 2013): 805–830.

DOI: [10.1017/S0305741013000295](#) [Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Offers a nuanced, comprehensive assessment of China’s defense budget, the world’s second largest by any measure. Even with this study’s detailed analysis, many specifics remain unclear. Yet analyzed in the aggregate, the drivers and consequences of China’s defense spending are no mystery—Beijing prioritizes PLA modernization and personnel development as well as its announced objectives of securing China’s homeland and asserting control over contested territorial and maritime claims, with a focus on the Near Seas.

- **Medeiros, Evan S., Roger Cliff, Keith Crane, and James C. Mulvenon.** *A New Direction for China’s Defense Industry*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2005.

DOI: [10.7249/MG334](#) [Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Published several years after China’s 1998–1999 defense industry reforms, this volume analyzes their initial impact. Special attention is devoted to the missile, shipbuilding, military-aviation, and information technology (IT) sectors. Includes an accounting of the state of China’s defense economy from 1980 to this round of reforms and the details of the reforms themselves.

- **Saunders, Phillip C., and Joshua K. Wiseman.** *Buy, Build, or Steal: China’s Quest for Advanced Military Aviation Technologies*. China Strategic Perspectives 4. Washington, DC: Institute for National Strategic Studies, December 2011.

[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Analyzes China’s three main avenues for procuring advanced military technology—purchasing from abroad, developing indigenously, and purloining from others—and how the prevalence of each has varied over time, particularly for aviation technology. Also examines three sub-avenues: reverse engineering, coproduction, and co-development, which combine different elements of the three aforementioned main avenues.

- **Wood, Peter, and Robert Stewart.** *China’s Aviation Industry: Lumbering Forward*. Montgomery, AL: China Aerospace Studies Institute, August 2019.

[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

This detailed examination of China’s aerospace industry includes a history of this sector, as well as biographies of key individuals both in major aerospace firms and the PLA, summaries of important organizations, research, development, and testing facilities, in addition to notable platforms produced by this sector.

- **Wood, Peter, and Alex Stone.** *China’s Ballistic Missile Industry*. Maxwell, AL: China Aerospace Studies Institute, 11 May 2021.

[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Along with space and cyber, the PLA’s missile forces have seen the greatest increase in importance, and funding, over the last two decades. China continues to have the world’s most active and diverse ballistic missile development program. Report survey’s PRC ballistic missile industrial history, institutions, and products.

Military and Society

Despite the PLA being the largest military in the world, few works examine the interaction between the members of this force and society, whether while serving in uniform or following retirement, or the employer-employee relationship between the organization and those who staff it. [Miller 2006](#) looks at the challenges facing the PLA in recruitment and retention in a changing domestic environment. Perhaps the most comprehensive work with a primarily focus on veterans is [Diamant 2010](#). [Diamant 2014](#) focuses more narrowly on activism by veterans of the PLA and the state’s response under Hu Jintao. [Clay 2018](#) and [Ma and Chen 2019](#) pick up the focus on current members and veterans, respectively, following the reforms initiated in 2015. The two-part article [Zi 2019a](#) and [Zi 2019b](#) focuses on the mental health challenges experienced by members of the PLA, how it impacts their work, and how the organization is responding. Finally, [Kania and McCaslin 2020](#) highlights how the military plays a leading role in the country’s response to medical and natural disaster crises, in this case the COVID-19 pandemic.

- **Clay, Marcus.** *Understanding the "People" of the People's Liberation Army: A Study of Marriage, Family, Housing, and Benefits.* Montgomery, AL: China Aerospace Studies Institute, August 2018.

[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Examines the current personnel support system within the PLA, notably the marriage, family, housing, and benefits components. While all militaries confront "people problems," and while many of these challenges facing the PLA are shared with other militaries, some are unique to the PLA. The successes and failures of the personnel support system have a direct impact on both recruitment and retention.

- **Diamant, Neil J.** *Embattled Glory: Veterans, Military Families, and the Politics of Patriotism in China, 1949–2007.* Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2010.

[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

The most comprehensive historical examination of PLA veterans, their families, and how the government and society interact with them. It is also the first book-length work to focus primarily on PLA veterans. Includes sections on specific issues; such as veteran identities; jobs, including support finding them; residency rights; health care; support for families; and relationships with the bureaucratic entities charged with dealing with veterans on many of these issues.

- **Diamant, Neil J.** "Who Cares if You've Been in a War?": Veteran Activism, State Repression, and Civil-Military Relations in Hu-Era China." In *Assessing the People's Liberation Army in the Hu Jintao Era.* Edited by Roy Kamphausen, David Lai, and Travis Tanner, 355–397. Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College, 2014.

[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Focuses on the interactions between Chinese veterans and the state during the Hu era. Finds that many PLA veterans "had difficulty adjusting to the massive changes in the reform period," which began under Deng and evolved under Jiang and Hu. These changes included their relationship with the state, as well as with and within society. Covers many specific cases of veteran activism and repression by the state.

- **Kania, Elsa, and Ian Burns McCaslin.** "*People's Warfare against COVID-19: Testing China's Military Medical and Defense Mobilization Capabilities.* Washington, DC: Institute for the Study of War, December 2020.

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Examines the critical role the military played in China's response to COVID-19. Highlights the national defense mobilization system's ability to tap military and civilian resources to form a more centralized response to a crisis. Discusses the contributions of the military medical community, as well as those of nonmedical military personnel who facilitated medically relevant work. Argues that these factors, demonstrated during this

peacetime event, also constitute "critical elements of Chinese military readiness and potential operational resilience" in times of conflict.

- **Ma, Chengkun, and John Chen.** "System Overload? The 2015 PLA Force Reduction, Military-Locality Relations, and the Potential for Social Instability." In *Chairman Xi Remakes the PLA: Assessing Chinese Military Reforms*. Edited by Phillip C. Saunders, Arthur S. Ding, Andrew Scobell, Andrew N. D. Yang, and Joel Wuthnow, 661–709. Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2019.

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One of the few works to include a focus on military-locality relations. Concentrates on this interaction within the context of the 2015 personnel reductions. While such force reductions and veteran relations in general have been particularly fraught issues for China, the authors argue that this particular reduction has been more successful than past ones, given countervailing factors present when it occurred, such as better alternative separation options.

- **Miller, Frank.** "Changing the Landscape of Civil-Military Relations in China: The PLA Responds to Recruiting and Retention Challenges." In *Shaping China's Security Environment: The Role of the People's Liberation Army*. Edited by Andrew Scobell and Larry Wortzel, 15–34. Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College, 2006.

[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

One of the few works to focus on the challenges the PLA faces in recruiting and retaining personnel and what it is doing to address those challenges. It assesses the competition that occurred between the General Political Department (GPD) and the GSD over related countermeasures.

- **Zi, Yang.** "[Assessing Mental Health Challenges in the People's Liberation Army, Part 1: Psychological Factors Affecting Service Members, and the Leadership Response](#)." *China Brief* 19.14 (31 July 2019a).

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The first article in a two-part series. Draws from Chinese military medical and psychological surveys to show how mental health challenges manifest themselves differently across different services, careers, backgrounds, and genders. Also details the state of those who provide mental health services in China's armed forces and how the different parts of the leadership at different levels are approaching psychological wellbeing.

- **Zi, Yang.** "[Assessing Mental Health Challenges in the People's Liberation Army, Part 2: Physical Operational Environments and Their Impacts on PLA Service Members](#)." *China Brief* 19.15 (14 August 2019b).

[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

This second article in a two-part series details how operating in the varied environments under PRC control impacts PLA service members’ mental health. The specific environments detailed are high-altitude plateaus, features in the South China Sea, and underground and tunnel facilities.

Service- and Domain-Specific Studies

Thanks in part to service-supported China research centers as well as the RAND Corporation’s ongoing efforts, a considerable proportion of recent literature on the PLA has been service-specific or service-focused. This includes the establishment of the US Naval War College’s China Maritime Studies Institute (CMSI) in 2006 and of the US Air War College’s China Aerospace Studies Institute (CASI) in 2015, as well as the RAND Corporation’s multifarious contracts with the US government/Air Force focusing on the PLAAF. The U.S. Army War College, meanwhile, continues to lack a China center to produce service-specific literature, but nevertheless convenes conferences and publishes high-caliber PLA assessments. These organizations help maintain a small but strong stable of experts who analyze the PLA in detail and publish reports for public consumption. Growing interest in the PLA from militaries and civilian governments around the world, as well as the general public, has further inspired these organizations to more rapidly generate publications with greater diversity and granularity. While the PLA ground force or Army (PLAA) continues to be the largest service in the PLA, the literature produced in the United States has focused relatively more on the PLA Navy (PLAN) and the PLA Air Force (PLAAF), in part because of the greater involvement of those services in current disputes with US allies and partners and related potential scenarios. Beyond the regular military and paramilitary forces, there is also a limited but expanding literature on the role of private security contractors in Chinese foreign and security policy.

Army

The current literature on the PLA’s ground force or Army (PLAA) is predominately focused either on its history ([Blasko 2012](#)) or its new significant transformation following Xi’s 2015 reforms ([Chen 2019](#), [Blasko 2019](#)). [Blasko 2012](#) offers the definitive comprehensive study, [Gady 2020](#) the latest insights. [McCauley 2020](#) surveys campaign doctrine. Additionally, some analyses focus on specific parts of the PLAA, such as Special Operations Forces (SOF) ([Blasko 2015](#)) and aviation ([Blasko 2017](#)), both “new-type combat forces” prioritized for development. [Arostegui 2020](#) outlines the army’s new battalion concept.

- [Arostegui, Joshua](#). “[An Introduction to China’s High-Mobility Combined Arms Battalion Concept](#).” *Infantry*, Fall 2020: 12–17.

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Contingent on the PLAA’s overcoming enduring structural challenges, its high-mobility Combined Arms battalion concept offers a unit type with unparalleled advantages. Its modularity and level of informatization enables it to move from being a unit that serves as part of a large formation to a combat unit capable of independent missions. Most

importantly, their lightweight equipment turns these forces into a highly deployable, integrated combat team that can make full use of PLA transport aircraft and shipping.

- **Blasko, Dennis J. *The Chinese Army Today: Tradition and Transformation*. 2d ed. New York: Routledge, 2012.**

[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Offers a detailed examination of the basic elements of the army “intended to serve as a baseline for further study on the Chinese military by students, journalists, and analysts in and out of government.” The author describes it as “the kind of book I would have liked to read before becoming a U.S. Army attaché to China in 1992.” However, even experienced PLA watchers will glean insights from it.

- **Blasko, Dennis J. “[PLA Special Operations Forces: Organizations, Missions and Training](#).” *China Brief* 15.9 (1 May 2015).**

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A rare study of Chinese Special Operations Forces (SOF). Discusses the organization and distribution of SOF units across the country and across the PLA’s services and branches, the missions they are assigned within PLA doctrine, and how they train.

- **Blasko, Dennis J. “[Recent Developments in the Chinese Army’s Helicopter Force](#).” *China Brief* 17.8 (9 June 2017).**

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Prioritized for improvement and expansion, Army Aviation underpins a number of important capabilities from tactical mobility and special operations to logistics support. Even with over a thousand helicopters, it remains small for a million-person ground force.

- **Blasko, Dennis J. “The Biggest Loser in Chinese Military Reforms: The PLA Army.” In *Chairman Xi Remakes the PLA: Assessing Chinese Military Reforms*. Edited by Phillip C. Saunders, Arthur S. Ding, Andrew Scobell, Andrew N. D. Yang, and Joel Wuthnow, 345–392. Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2019.**

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Outlines the changes for PLA ground forces that resulted from the 2015 reforms. Argues that “coming in second” behind the other services in areas it used to dominate is now “good enough” for the army, as it is today just one component in a joint force, which already has a greater focus on the maritime and aerospace domains.

- **Blasko, Dennis J. “The PLA Army After ‘Below the Neck’ Reforms: Contributing to China’s Joint Warfighting, Deterrence and MOOTW Posture.” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 44.2 (2021): 149–183.**

DOI: [10.1080/01402390.2019.1701440](#)[Save Citation](#) »[Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Downsized and restructured with new combined arms brigades and battalions, the PLA Army is expanding its “new-type combat forces,” such as special operations, helicopter, long-range rocket, and electronic warfare units, to contribute to maritime operations as well as to land missions.

- **Chen, John.** “Choosing the ‘Least Bad Option’: Organizational Interests and Change in the PLA Ground Forces.” In *Chairman Xi Remakes the PLA: Assessing Chinese Military Reforms*. Edited by Phillip C. Saunders, Arthur S. Ding, Andrew Scobell, Andrew N. D. Yang, and Joel Wuthnow, 85–124. Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2019.

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Argues that while organizational and bureaucratic interests led the PLAA to slow-walk or resist previous reforms, they also led it to support the 2015 reforms: it likely saw a future of being the ground component as part of a joint force as being its “least bad option.”

- **Gady, Franz-Stefan.** “[Interview: Ben Lowsen on Chinese PLA Ground Forces.](#)” *The Diplomat*, 8 April 2020.

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Assesses the diminished status of the PLAA’s ground forces within the increasingly joint PLA hierarchy, their current state of operational readiness following sweeping reforms, and their possible future development trajectory.

- **McCauley, Kevin.** *People's Liberation Army: Army Campaign Doctrine in Transition*. Fort Leavenworth, KS: US Army Foreign Military Studies Office, 8 October 2020.

[Save Citation](#) »[Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Examines current PLA Army campaign doctrine, with a discussion of PLA theorists’ vision of the evolutionary development of warfare to provide context for current doctrine as well as potential future direction. Suggests insights into Beijing’s perception of potential conflict scenarios by probing the PLA’s current focus regarding specific campaigns.

Navy

As the importance of the maritime domain has increased for China and the PLA, the importance and influence of the PLA Navy has grown in recent decades, and the force itself has evolved rapidly. The literature therefore reflects this transformation, with much predominantly focusing on changes in “software” (personnel, education, training, etc.) and hardware (equipment), as well as future PLAN capabilities or on some combination of these categories. [Swanson 1982](#); [Muller](#)

[1983](#); [Dreyer 2006](#); and [Erickson, et al. 2009](#) offer historical background. [Cole 2010](#) is the foundational overview. [McDevitt 2020](#) offers updates and forecasts future possibilities. [Tobin 2018](#) assesses PRC maritime strategy. Works focusing on “software” include [Allen and Clemens 2014](#), [Rielage 2016](#), [Allen and Morris 2017](#), and [Lee and Clemens 2020](#). [Becker, et al. 2013](#) and [Becker 2016](#) evaluate PLAN leadership. [Li 2010](#) offers a unique study of the implications of civil-military relations for PLA(N) development and crisis management. Benson and Yang probe the PLAN’s system of political commissars and its implications for at-sea encounters. [Blasko and Lee 2019a](#) and [Blasko and Lee 2019b](#) form a two-part article that focuses on the reorganization and continuing development of the PLAN’s Marine Corps. Hardware-focused works include [Lewis and Xue 1996](#); [Erickson, et al. 2007](#); [Erickson, et al. 2009](#); [Chase, et al. 2015](#); the edited volume [Dutton and Martinson 2017](#); and [Meyer 2021](#). [Erickson and Strange 2015](#) offers broad analysis of anti-piracy naval operations. [Sharman 2015](#) and [Fanell 2019](#) track growing Far Seas strategy and operations. [Karotkin 2014](#) and [McCaslin and Erickson 2019](#) examine emerging and future PLAN capabilities. [Heath 2020](#) surveys PLAN diplomacy.

- **Allen, Kenneth, and Morgan Clemens.** *The Recruitment, Education, and Training of PLA Navy Personnel*. China Maritime Study 12. Newport, RI: China Maritime Studies Institute, August 2014.

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One of the only works to focus on the recruitment, education, and training of PLAN personnel. Traces the history of these subjects as the PLAN has evolved to become a more technologically advanced force with responsibilities that extend far from China’s shores, and its need for personnel who can fulfill its tasks.

- **Allen, Kenneth, and Lyle J. Morris.** *PLA Naval Aviation Training and Operations: Missions, Organizational Structure, and Training (2013–15)*. Montgomery, AL: China Aerospace Studies Institute, 20 December 2017.

[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

One of the only works devoted to the PLAN’s Naval Aviation branch, it examines the state of Naval Aviation’s training and operations as it evolved between 2013 and 2015.

- **Becker, Jeffrey.** “[Who’s at the Helm? The Past, Present, and Future Leaders of China’s Navy](#).” *Naval War College Review* 69.2 (Spring 2016): 1–25.

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Examines how China’s navy leaders compare with their fellow senior officers in other services, and how their characteristics and capabilities will affect the PLAN’s ongoing modernization efforts. The PLAN is undergoing a substantial leadership transition, from an Old Guard that is fast retiring to a Rising Cohort, to be followed by its Future Leadership, representing a profound shift in professional education, training, international experience, and direct experience with new operations.

- **Becker, Jeffrey, David Liebenberg, and Peter Mackenzie.** *Behind the Periscope: Leadership in the PLA Navy*. Alexandria, VA: Center for Naval Analyses, 2013.

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Examines the past three decades of senior leadership within China’s navy; considers common career experiences for members of this cohort, as well as basic metrics for success and how those metrics have changed overtime.

- **Benson, Jeff, and Zi Yang.** *Party on the Bridge: Political Commissars in the Chinese Navy*. Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 29 June 2020.

[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

The PLAN follows US warships operating in the East and South China Seas. To avoid future miscues that could lead to further confrontation, a better understanding of the Chinese navy’s planning and decision-making process aboard vessels can reduce the likelihood of a conflict. As a component of Beijing’s CCP-led political system, the PLAN, unlike the US Navy, utilizes political commissars aboard its warships and submarines. Explores the political commissar’s influence and function aboard Chinese naval vessels.

- **Blasko, Dennis J., and Roderick Lee.** “[The Chinese Navy’s Marine Corps, Part 1: Expansion and Reorganization](#).” *China Brief* 19.3 (1 February 2019a).

[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

This two-part article discusses the PLAN Marine Corps’ organizational reforms and evolving missions. Part one surveys the growing order of battle.

- **Blasko, Dennis J., and Roderick Lee.** “[The Chinese Navy’s Marine Corps, Part 2: Chain-of-Command Reforms and Evolving Training](#).” *China Brief* 19.4 (15 February 2019b).

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Part two of this article, which focuses on the creation of a service headquarters for the PLAN Marines, and their expanding training for expeditionary warfare and other missions.

- **Chase, Michael S., Kristen Gunness, Lyle J. Morris, Samuel K. Berkowitz, and Benjamin Purser.** *Emerging Trends in China’s Development of Unmanned Systems* RR-990-OSD. Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 12 March 2015.

[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

RAND’s exploratory analysis of China’s development and use of unmanned systems focuses on maritime unmanned systems, the roles China sees for them, Chinese

development of unmanned vehicles, and uses for such systems in the East and South China Seas.

- **Cole, Bernard D.** *The Great Wall at Sea: China's Navy in the Twenty-First Century*. 2d ed. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2010.

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Draws on author's decades of operational and research experience; extensive interviews with PRC naval authorities; in-depth examination of documents; and visits to PLAN warships, training venues, and shore-based facilities. Surveys China's navy comprehensively, including its establishment, personnel system, ships, submarines, and aircraft. Emphasizes Beijing's increased attention to guarding vital sea lanes because of growing dependence on maritime trade, particularly energy supplies.

- **Dreyer, Edward L.** *Zheng He: China and the Oceans in the Early Ming Dynasty, 1405–1433*. Library of World Biography Series. London: Pearson Longman, 2006.

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Classic history that delineates the eunuch explorer's life and his early 15th-century voyages. Situates these epochal journeys within the context of early Ming history. Addresses China's leading technical position at the time, the voyages' political motive and distinctive characteristics, and the larger legacy and implications.

- **Dutton, Peter A., and Ryan D. Martinson, eds.** *Beyond the Wall: Chinese Far Seas Operations*. China Maritime Study 13. Newport, RI: China Maritime Studies Institute, May 2015.

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Examines China's efforts to shape its navy to meet new and growing needs beyond Asia, in waters it usually refers to as the "far seas." Remote from domestic bases of support, the far seas offer both logistical and operational challenges and new opportunities for cooperation with other navies, port facilities, and security partners.

- **Dutton, Peter A., and Ryan D. Martinson, eds.** *China's Evolving Surface Fleet*. China Maritime Study 14. Newport, RI: China Maritime Studies Institute, July 2017.

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This edited volume focuses on the PLAN's evolving surface fleet. Includes chapters on high-profile aspects of the surface fleet, such as carrier aviation; as well as on less well-examined aspects of the surface fleet, such as missile craft, the auxiliary fleet, maintenance, and the surface forces' importance as conceived in doctrinal writings.

- Erickson, Andrew S., Lyle J. Goldstein, and Carnes Lord, eds. *China Goes to Sea: Maritime Transformation in Comparative Historical Perspective*. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2009.

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Assesses prospects for China’s maritime development by situating its efforts from the Ming dynasty to now within a larger world historical context of land powers turning seaward—typically disastrously. Contributors, all authorities on their respective historical eras, examine cases of attempted maritime transformation through the ages, from the Persian Empire to the Soviet Union, and determine the reasons for success or failure. Offers detailed maps and forward-looking analytical framework for understanding the prospects of China and other maritime power aspirants.

- Erickson, Andrew S., Lyle J. Goldstein, Andrew R. Wilson, and William S. Murray, eds. *China’s Future Nuclear Submarine Force*. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2007.

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Focuses on the potential future structure, composition, and roles of the PLAN’s modern nuclear submarine fleet. Key roles include strengthening deterrence and projecting power. Considers the trajectory of Chinese nuclear propulsion for submarines as one of the best single indicators of the extent to which China intends to become a full-fledged global military power.

- Erickson, Andrew S., William S. Murray, and Lyle J. Goldstein. *Chinese Mine Warfare: A PLA Navy ‘Assassin’s Mace’ Capability*. China Maritime Study 3. Newport, RI: China Maritime Studies Institute, June 2009.

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Examines the important, though often overlooked, topic of sea mine operations in the PLAN. This report includes a history of Chinese mine warfare, the role of the Persian Gulf War as a “catalytic moment” in contemporary Chinese mine warfare, descriptions of China’s naval mine inventory and delivery methods, PLAN mine warfare training and exercise patterns, and the PLAN’s evolving mine warfare doctrine.

- Erickson, Andrew S., and Austin M. Strange. *Six Years at Sea . . . and Counting: Gulf of Aden Anti-Piracy and China’s Maritime Commons Presence*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2015.

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Comprehensively assesses China’s extant anti-piracy experience and naval operational lessons therefrom. Considers drivers, decision-making, operational evolution, port access, and implications for future global maritime governance.

- **Fanell, James E.** "[Asia Rising: China's Global Naval Strategy and Expanding Force Structure](#)." *Naval War College Review* 72.1 (2019): 6–21.

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Argues that the balance of power in the Indo-Pacific is shifting substantially as China spends its national treasure to build a modern, blue-water navy and exerts its influence around the region, and the world, through economic investment and military power projection. Beijing's pursuit of the "China Dream" is pushing America and its allies into a decade of concern, when the already tenuous situation may lead to further destabilization. Illustrated with extensive maps and figures.

- **Heath, Timothy R.** [Winning Friends and Influencing People: Naval Diplomacy with Chinese Characteristics](#). *China Maritime Report* 8. Newport, RI: China Maritime Studies Institute, September 2020.

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To directly support broader strategic and foreign policy objectives, PRC leaders task the PLAN with "far seas" naval diplomacy. Overtly political naval diplomatic activities range from senior leader engagements to joint exercises with foreign navies. These activities have involved a catalogue of platforms, from surface combatants to hospital ships, and included Chinese naval personnel of all ranks. In the future a more blue-water capable PLAN could serve more overtly coercive functions to defend and advance China's rapidly growing overseas interests when operating abroad.

- **Karotkin, Jesse L.** [Trends in China's Naval Modernization](#). Washington, DC: U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, 30 January 2014.

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At the time of his testimony, Karotkin was the senior intelligence officer for China, Office of Naval Intelligence. Since 2000, the PLAN has undertaken an ambitious modernization effort, resulting in a more technologically advanced, flexible force. This transformation is evident not only the PLAN's Gulf of Aden counter-piracy presence, but also in the navy's more sophisticated regional operations and exercises. In contrast to its narrow focus just a decade ago, the PLAN is evolving to meet manifold missions including conflict over Taiwan, enforcement of maritime claims, protection of economic interests, and humanitarian missions.

- **Lee, Roderick, and Morgan Clemens.** [Organizing to Fight in the Far Seas: The Chinese Navy in an Era of Military Reform](#). *China Maritime Report* 9. Newport, RI: China Maritime Studies Institute, October 2020.

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The PLAN's peacetime command structure has been brought into line with its wartime command structures. For near seas defense, those command structures have been

streamlined and made joint. For far seas operations, command arrangements have not yet been clearly delineated or publicly ascribed to responsible organ(s). Meaningful increase in size, scope, frequency, and intensity of far seas operations will require further structural reforms at the Central Military Commission and theater command levels in order to lay out clear command responsibilities.

- **Lewis, John Wilson, and Xue Litai.** *China's Strategic Seapower: The Politics of Force Modernization in the Nuclear Age*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996.

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This landmark history makes unprecedented use of authoritative sources to explain why and how China developed its initial nuclear-powered and ballistic-missile submarine programs despite extreme Cold War limitations in resources and technology access. Traces implications for PRC politics, technology, industry, and strategy.

- **Li, Nan.** *Chinese Civil-Military Relations in the Post-Deng Era: Implications for Crisis Management and Naval Modernization*. China Maritime Study 4. Newport, RI: China Maritime Studies Institute, January 2010.

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Argues post-Deng leadership has pursued an “objective control” strategy (per Huntington’s definition of depoliticizing and professionalizing); this process of creating a more professional, corporate, and technically expert military “limits undesirable military intervention in politics,” except in crisis scenarios, in which this institutional autonomy and professionalism prepares the PLA to act efficaciously without—or perhaps in spite of—civilian authority.

- **McCaslin, Ian Burns, and Andrew S. Erickson.** “The Impact of Xi-Era Reforms on the Chinese Navy.” In *Chairman Xi Remakes the PLA: Assessing Chinese Military Reforms*. Edited by Phillip C. Saunders, Arthur S. Ding, Andrew Scobell, Andrew N. D. Yang, and Joel Wuthnow, 125–170. Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2019.

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Argues that there are three vectors of naval modernization the PLAN can take, each of which would result in navies with different compositions’ best suited for different tasks; and preferred by different actors: within the PLAN, within the PLA writ large, and within the civilian government.

- **McDevitt, Michael.** *China as a Twenty-First-Century Naval Power: Theory, Practice, and Implications*. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2020.

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Comprehensively charts the PLAN's transformation toward a "world-class" navy that has already made it the world's second largest in terms of global capabilities. Probes Xi's ambitions that China should become a "great maritime power" and the PLA "a world-class armed force by 2050," to be largely completed by 2035. Scrutinizes PLAN's role in South China Sea, a Taiwan conflict, and Indian Ocean. Concludes with forecast of how Xi's vision might materialize by the 2035 midway milestone.

- **Meyer, Manfred.** *Modern Chinese Maritime Forces*. Edited by Larry Bond and Chris Carlson. Admiralty Trilogy Group, 1 October 2021.

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Most complete unclassified information on Chinese state-owned vessels available. Quarterly updated compilation of all ships of China's Navy, Coast Guard, Maritime Militia, and other state authorities. Over 570 drawings show everything from aircraft carriers to buoy tenders, accompanied by detailed information on their characteristics. Additional supporting material includes systematic order of battle, individual vessels' theater navy assignments, and descriptions of systems for hull numbers and equipment designations.

- **Muller, David G., Jr.** *China as a Maritime Power*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1983.

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Employs declassified US intelligence reports and primary Chinese source materials to elucidate historical foundations of PRC navy, merchant marine, and maritime development. Examines Soviet support for PLAN development, 1950s offshore islands crises, Sino-Soviet split, impact of Cultural Revolution and Lin Biao incident, PLAN's role in the Korean and Vietnam wars, history of PRC sovereignty claims to vast areas of the East and South China seas, and maritime policy positions of key Chinese political and naval figures.

- **Rielage, Dale C.** "[Chinese Navy Trains and Takes Risks](#)." *Proceedings* (U.S. Naval Institute) 142.5 (May 2016).

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This article details how the "PLAN's proficiency is increasing through . . . deliberate investment in more advanced and realistic training." Includes a brief examination of unit-level execution, distant-seas training and exercises, and live-fire exercises.

- **Sharman, Christopher H.** *China Moves Out: Stepping Stones toward a New Maritime Strategy*. China Strategic Perspectives 9. Washington, DC: Institute for National Strategic Studies, July 2015.

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Demonstrates how Hu’s New Historic Missions served as the strategic impetus for the PLAN to expand its mission requirements from traditional near seas operating areas to operations in the far seas. Provides a strategic framework for a new maritime defense strategy that would incorporate far seas capabilities. Examines the evolution of PLAN operations and exercises into the Far Seas from 2004 to 2015. Identifies observable indicators of PLAN incorporation of far seas defense as part of an emerging new maritime strategy, including construction of icebreakers, enhanced logistics, and intelligence support to ships that are more frequently deployed.

- **Swanson, Bruce.** *Eighth Voyage of the Dragon: A History of China’s Quest for Seapower*. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1982.

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Unique history documents China’s longtime limitations and tribulations as a land-oriented power. Next traces the portentous beginnings of China’s post-Mao maritime transformation under Deng’s commercial emphasis. From virtually no capability in 1970, by early 1981 China’s commercial fleet was able to transport 70 percent of contracted cargo—and the still-backward PLAN had the world’s third-most major combatants. Valuable background to help understand subsequent decades’ rapid progress.

- **Tobin, Elizabeth.** “[Underway—Beijing’s Strategy to Build China into a Maritime Great Power](#).” *Naval War College Review* 71.2 (Spring 2018).

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Articulates the end state that Beijing envisions achieving in the maritime realm per China’s higher-order national strategy. Traces the origins of China’s maritime strategy, demonstrating that Beijing’s aspirations for maritime power are rooted in long-standing concern for China’s security and development interests. Examines China’s current maritime strategy, an exceptionally broad approach employing all available tools of statecraft to achieve multifarious objectives. Concludes by examining how Beijing’s conception of its maritime rights and interests is expanding to weigh the strategy’s future prospects.

- **Yoshihara, Toshi, and James R. Holmes.** *Red Star over the Pacific: China’s Rise and the Challenge to U.S. Maritime Strategy*. 2d ed. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2018.

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Historically grounded assessment of how the rise of Chinese sea power will affect US maritime strategy in Asia. Contends that China is mounting a sustained challenge to American primacy in maritime Asia, and that China will undermine America’s strategic position unless countered effectively. Considers the geo-economic and geostrategic foundations of Chinese maritime power as well as China’s strategic will move seaward. Specifically evaluates the PLAN’s operational concepts, tactics, and capabilities in the age of missile warfare.

Air Force

With the continuation of the RAND Corporation’s Project Air Force and the creation of the US Air Force’s China Aerospace Studies Institute (CASI), a profusion of detailed literature on this service has been produced in recent years. The definitive empirical study of China’s military aviation industry and forces at the Cold War’s close is [Allen, et al. 1995](#). [Hallion, et al. 2012](#) offers a review following significant reforms. Much of the recent literature on the PLA focuses, understandably, on the impacts of the reforms beginning in 2015, but a large quantity of the literature on the PLAAF, in particular, focuses on changes that have been in the works for some time, as the service seeks to expand its responsibilities and area of operations. [Allen and Garafola 2021](#) is the foundational non-hardware study. The concepts about how the PLAAF would be employed in operations are covered in [Cliff, et al. 2011](#). The growing area of operations for the PLAAF can be seen in [Chase and Garafola 2016](#); [Garafola and Heath 2017](#); [Cozad and Beauchamp-Mustafaga 2017](#); and [Grossman, et al. 2018](#). The changes in recruitment and training for personnel to operate at a higher level and new areas for the military are primarily covered in [Allen 2016](#); [Morris and Heginbotham 2016](#); [Chase, et al. 2016](#); [Allen and Allen 2018](#); and [Clay 2019](#). [Burke, et al. 2016](#) assesses PLAAF training and operational proficiency. The transition of most of the PLAAF to a brigade structure is covered in [Trevethan 2018](#). [Allen, et al. 2021](#) covers this and other reforms, as well as their costs and benefits. Finally, the growing presence of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) is covered in [Kania 2018](#).

- **Allen, Jana, and Kenneth Allen. *The PLA Air Force’s Four Key Training Brands*. Montgomery, AL: China Aerospace Studies Institute, 31 May 2018.**

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Probes in detail four capstone activities of the PLAAF: the *Golden Helmet* competition, the *Golden Dart* competition, the *Blue Shield* exercise (which includes the *Golden Shield* competition), and the *Red Sword* exercise.

- **Allen, Kenneth W. *PLA Air Force, Naval Aviation, and Army Aviation Aviator Recruitment, Education, and Training*. Washington, DC: Jamestown Foundation, February 2016.**

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Examines the recruitment, education, and training of aviators in the PLAAF Aviation, PLAN Naval Aviation (excludes the PLAN Marine Corps), and PLA Army Aviation branches. Includes appendices regarding key terminology and the PLA rank and grade structure.

- **Allen, Kenneth W., and Cristina L. Garafola. *70 Years of the People’s Liberation Army Air Force: An Overview of Strategy, Organization, Personnel, Education, Training, Military Diplomacy, and Prospects for the Future*. Montgomery, AL: China Aerospace Studies Institute, 2021.**

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Offers unique insights from a leading analyst together with a leading US Air Force Foreign Area Officer and analyst who has engaged the PLAAF in military diplomacy and conducted pioneering Chinese-language research for decades. Traces post-1949 evolution PLAAF organizational structure, personnel (officer/cadre corps and enlisted force), education, training, and military diplomacy. Considers future trajectory for PLAAF.

- **Allen, Kenneth W., Glenn Krumel, and Jonathan D. Pollack.** *China’s Air Force Enters the 21st Century*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 1995.

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Reviews China’s military aviation industry, and forces and status, through its Long March to modernization through the end of the Cold War, during which it suffered the worst of Maoist malpractice and de-prioritization under Deng. Reveals a situation far removed from today’s much-advanced PLAAF: minimal maintenance and logistical infrastructure unable to support modern air power doctrine and operations. Reform efforts including targeted acquisition of high-end Western and Russian technology; incorporation of advanced designs (some from Israel’s abortive *Lavi* project) had yet to pay off substantially.

- **Allen, Kenneth W., Brendan S. Mulvaney, and James Char.** “Ongoing Organizational Reforms of the People’s Liberation Army Air Force.” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 44.2 (2021): 184–217.

DOI: [10.1080/01402390.2020.1730818](#) [Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Details 2017 “below the neck” reforms: creating a “base-brigade” structure by reforming several command posts into bases, abolishing selected divisions, and replacing air regiments with brigades. The results have helped the PLAAF become a modern air force with enhanced aerial power alongside greater interoperability with the other PLA services, but the reconstitution of its organizations has generated fallout from policy changes concerning its rank-and-file.

- **Burke, Edmund J., Astrid Stuth Cevallos, Mark Cozad, and Timothy R. Heath.** *Assessing the Training and Operational Proficiency of China’s Aerospace Forces*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2016.

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Examines the effect that leadership priorities and the composition of the Central Military Commission might have on PLAAF influence, bureaucratic leverage, and force development goals; evaluates the factors and concepts driving PLAAF joint training and the PLAAF’s progress toward achieving this critical component of its long-term modernization objectives; and details extensive PLAAF efforts to reform its logistics and maintenance systems. See in particular pages 65–85.

- Chase, Michael S., Kenneth W. Allen, and Benjamin S. Purser III. *Overview of People's Liberation Army Air Force "Elite Pilots."* Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2016.

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Surveys how the PLAAF selects and trains what it terms its "elite fighter pilots." This entails an examination of the PLAAF's Cangzhou Test and Training Base, Dingxin Test and Training Base, *Golden Helmet* competition from 2011 to 2015, participation in Russia's Aviadarts-2014 competition, and Bayi Aerobatics Team.

- Chase, Michael S., and Cristina L. Garafola. "[China's Search for a 'Strategic Air Force.'](#)" *Journal of Strategic Studies* 39.1 (2016): 4–28.

DOI: [10.1080/01402390.2015.1068165](https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390.2015.1068165) [Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

The PLAAF has undergone an impressive transformation over the past two decades, emerging as one of the world's premier air forces. Moving forward, it seeks increasingly to play a decisive role in protecting Chinese national interests, field modern capabilities commensurate with China's standing as a major power, and enjoy the institutional status befitting its role as a "strategic service."

- Clay, Marcus. *China's "Little Eagles": People's Liberation Army Developing Its Next-Generation Pilots.* Montgomery, AL: China Aerospace Studies Institute, November 2019.

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Traces the development paths and programs being utilized by the PLAAF and the PLAN to cultivate their next generation of pilots. Particularly scrutinizes how these two services are working with Chinese high schools and universities "to experiment with new ways to recruit and train their next-generation pilots."

- Cliff, Roger, John F. Fei, Jeff Hagen, Elizabeth Hague, Eric Heginbotham, and John Stillion. *Shaking the Heavens and Splitting the Earth: Chinese Air Force Employment Concepts in the 21st Century.* Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2011.

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This study focuses on the how the PLAAF would be employed in different campaigns, particularly air offensive campaigns, air defense campaigns, air blockade campaigns, and airborne campaigns. Also considers how the PLAAF might be employed in a future scenario focused on a conflict centered around Taiwan.

- Cozad, Mark, and Nathan Beauchamp-Mustafaga. *People's Liberation Army Air Force Operations over Water: Maintaining Relevance in China's Changing Security Environment.* Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2017.

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Focuses on PLAAF overwater operations. Examines the PLAAF’s expanding strategic roles, including a growing focus on the maritime domain, the development of a training program specifically for operations over water, the recent training for said operations, and joint training with the other services in the maritime domain.

- **Garafola, Cristina L., and Timothy R. Heath.** *The Chinese Air Force’s First Steps toward Becoming an Expeditionary Air Force*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2017.

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Examines the initial efforts of the PLAAF to move toward becoming a service with significant ability to conduct military operations abroad. Profiles several expeditionary units. Highlights the major types of deployments and the challenges the service faces in overseas operations. Contains an appendix with the PLAAF’s international deployments from 2002 to 2016.

- **Grossman, Derek, Nathan Beauchamp-Mustafaga, Logan Ma, and Michael S. Chase.** *China’s Long-Range Bomber Flights: Drivers and Implications*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2018.

DOI: [10.7249/RR2567](#) [Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Catalogues the PLAAF’s long-range bomber flights made since 2015, which are broken down by route and destination. Also examines the likely drivers of these flights and the regional reactions to them. Considers the prospects for a future “H-20” bomber. Also includes a full list of all PLA H-6 long-range bomber flights over water from September 2013 to May 2018.

- **Hallion, Richard P., Roger Cliff, and Phillip C. Saunders, eds.** *The Chinese Air Force: Evolving Concepts, Roles, and Capabilities*. Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2012.

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Surveys China’s considerable progress in its long-term effort to achieve a modern air force. Effort is most visible in PLAAF investments in aircraft and in China’s efforts to develop a capable military aviation industry. Less-visible but equally important in terms of PLAAF development and expanding operational and combat capabilities have been improvements in organization, personnel, training, and doctrine.

- **Kania, Elsa.** *The PLA’s Unmanned Aerial Systems: New Capabilities for a “New Era” of Chinese Military Power*. Montgomery, AL: China Aerospace Studies Institute, August 2018.

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Surveys the PLA’s history regarding unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), their employment by the PLA to date, their potential future missions, and their presence across the various components of the PLA.

- **Lin, Bonny, and Cristina L. Garafola.** *Training the People’s Liberation Army Air Force Surface-to-Air Missile (SAM) Forces*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2016.

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Analyzes key trends and themes in an important aspect of China’s air defense forces: PLAAF surface-to-air missile (SAM) unit training. Documents significant but uneven progress among diverse entities.

- **Morris, Lyle J., and Eric Heginbotham.** *From Theory to Practice: People’s Liberation Army Air Force Aviation Training at the Operational Unit*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2016.

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Examines such key areas as the training system the pilots pass through before they are assigned to units, the training they undergo when in an assigned unit, and the training and development of the aviation instructors themselves. Also includes an appendix with a notional comparison of the training for US Air Force and PLAAF pilots before they are assigned to units.

- **Trevethan, Lawrence “Sid.”** “*Brigadization*” of the PLA Air Force. Montgomery, AL: China Aerospace Studies Institute, 31 May 2018.

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Traces the transformation of the PLAAF “from the traditional Division-Regiment organization, to a new Base-Brigade structure.” Includes sections on flight college aviation brigades and flight transition training bases.

Rocket Force, Missiles, and Deterrence

Given the close relationship among nuclear weapons, missiles, and deterrence, the literature on any one of these subjects almost inevitably involves the other two. Given its primacy in all three, the PLA Rocket Force (PLARF)—as well as its predecessor Second Artillery Force—is also often covered in conjunction with those three topics in the Chinese context. [Smith and Bolt 2021](#) offers a current *tour d’horizon*. The history of China’s developing its first atomic weapon is covered by [Lewis and Xue 1991](#), its neutron bomb program by [Ray 2015](#). China’s subsequent nuclear forces and their doctrine and systems are addressed in [Wortzel 2007](#), [Fravel and Medeiros 2010](#), and [Cunningham and Fravel 2019](#). The then Second Artillery Force’s conventional capabilities, in general, are examined in the journal article [Chase and Erickson](#)

[2012](#). The PLA’s anti-ship ballistic missile development program in particular is analyzed in [Erickson 2013](#), and its cruise missiles are analyzed in [Gormley, et al. 2014](#). The organizations that have been primarily tasked with its missiles and deterrence capabilities, the PLARF and the former Second Artillery Force, are detailed and examined in [Logan 2019a](#), [Logan 2019b](#), and [Lee 2020](#). Deterrence in general is examined in [Chase and Chan 2016](#) and [Heginbotham, et al. 2017](#). Crisis management is analyzed in [Johnston 2016](#), as well as [Kaufman and Hartnett 2016](#). [Christensen 2012](#) discusses specific implications for Sino-American nuclear deterrence relations.

- **Chase, Michael S., and Arthur Chan.** *China’s Evolving Approach to “Integrated Strategic Deterrence.”* Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2016.

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Argues that China’s strategic-deterrence concepts are evolving in response to a changing assessment of its external security environment and a growing emphasis on protecting its emerging interests in space and cyberspace. Chinese sources see the PRC’s improving space and counter-space, cyber, and electronic warfare capabilities as key warfare enablers.

- **Chase, Michael S., and Andrew S. Erickson.** “The Conventional Missile Capabilities of China’s Second Artillery Force: Cornerstone of Deterrence and Warfighting.” *Asian Security* 8.2 (2012): 115–137.

DOI: [10.1080/14799855.2012.686253](#) [Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Focuses on the conventional missile component of the then Second Artillery Force, increasingly important in deterrence and warfighting. Explains how the force supports Beijing’s goal of achieving information dominance, air superiority, and sea control to counter third-party intervention.

- **Christensen, Thomas J.** “The Meaning of the Nuclear Evolution: China’s Strategic Modernization and U.S.-China Security Relations.” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 35.4 (August 2012): 447–487.

DOI: [10.1080/01402390.2012.714710](#) [Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

China’s ongoing nuclear modernization drive appears primarily to increase both the numbers and mobility of China’s retaliatory force while reducing response time, thereby making China’s arsenal more survivable against a first strike. Misapplying lessons from the Cold War US-Soviet experience would be a mistake. Instead, what is needed to stabilize US-China nuclear deterrence relations in the present era is greater bilateral dialogue about crisis management and greater transparency regarding both the trends and goals in China’s military modernization and doctrine.

- **Cunningham, Fiona S., and M. Taylor Fravel. “Dangerous Confidence? Chinese Views on Nuclear Escalation.” *International Security* 44.2 (Fall 2019): 61–109.**
DOI: [10.1162/isec_a_00359](#)[Save Citation »Export Citation » Share Citation »](#)

Authoritative documents and interviews reveal Chinese experts’ skepticism that nuclear escalation would be controlled in a Sino-American crisis or armed conflict between the United States and China. PRC nuclear doctrine and force structure, not optimized for conducting limited strikes, reflects this skepticism, which may reinforce crisis stability but carries its own risks.

- **Erickson, Andrew S. *Chinese Anti-Ship Ballistic Missile Development: Drivers, Trajectories, and Strategic Implications*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2013.**
[Save Citation »Export Citation » Share Citation »](#)

This book, published in conjunction with the Jamestown Foundation, assesses a wide range of authoritative Chinese-language sources to trace the motivations, genesis, programmatic history, and implications of Chinese anti-ship ballistic missile development. It also offers a methodological model for conducting and evaluating Chinese-language open source research concerning Beijing’s many military megaprojects to come.

- **Fravel, M. Taylor, and Evan S. Medeiros. “China’s Search for Assured Retaliation: The Evolution of Chinese Nuclear Strategy and Force Structure.” *International Security* 35.2 (Fall 2010): 48–87.**
DOI: [10.1162/ISEC_a_00016](#)[Save Citation »Export Citation » Share Citation »](#)

Offers two explanations for the slow pace and shallow trajectory in the development of China’s nuclear strategy and forces until the mid-1990s: First, Mao, Deng, and other top leaders favored assured retaliation, not minimum deterrence. Second, the PLA faced multiple organizational and political constraints on developing nuclear strategy and an associated operational doctrine.

- **Gormley, Dennis M., Andrew S. Erickson, and Jingdong Yuan. *A Low-Visibility Force Multiplier: Assessing China’s Cruise Missile Ambitions*. Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2014.**
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Focuses on China’s development of anti-ship cruise missiles (ASCMs) and land-attack cruise missiles (LACMs) as part of its manifold anti-access/area-denial (A2/AD) capabilities. Includes an examination of the institutional and organizational actors in China’s cruise missile program, relevant doctrine and training, and excerpts on cruise missile employment and defense from the 2006 edition of the PLA National Defense University Press doctrinal textbook *Science of Campaigns*.

- **Heginbotham, Eric, Michael S. Chase, Jacob L. Heim, et al.** *China’s Evolving Nuclear Deterrent: Major Drivers and Issues for the United States*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2017.

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Argues that China has recently accelerated nuclear force building and modernization, with both domestic and international factors likely to drive faster modernization in the future. The lack of firewalls between China’s conventional and nuclear missile forces mean that new technologies developed for the former are being, and will continue to be, applied to the latter. Accordingly, China is likely to increase emphasis on nuclear deterrence, accelerate nuclear force modernization, and make policy adjustments.

- **Johnston, Alastair Iain.** “[The Evolution of Interstate Security Crisis-Management Theory and Practice in China](#).” *Naval War College Review* 69.1 (Winter 2016): 29–44.

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Comprehensive monograph-length article drawing extensively on a wide range of instructive and demonstrably authoritative Chinese-language sources. Explores in-depth how PRC international security crisis-management theory and practice has evolved over the past fifteen years, particularly regarding PLA operations. Examines problems, including hypernationalism, exceptionalism, and underdevelopment.

- **Kaufman, Alison, and Dan Hartnett.** *Managing Conflict: Examining Recent PLA Writings on Escalation Control*. Arlington, VA: CNA, 2016.

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Finds that controlling the outbreak and escalation of crisis is an area of PLA focus. Divergences from US thinking suggest that some PLA activities in a crisis could be perceived as—and therefore become—escalatory even if not intended as such. PLA views are evolving; many critical unknowns remain.

- **Lee, Roderick.** “[Integrating the PLA Rocket Force into Conventional Theater Operations](#).” *China Brief* 20.14 (14 August 2020).

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Contends that PLA theater commands almost certainly have clearly defined operational control authorities over some of the PLARF’s conventional missile force. Conclusion is based on the evidence of command authorities granted to certain PLARF bases; the integration of missile operations into theater joint operations command structure; and indications from PLA press outlets that PLARF units are subordinate to the theater command operational structure.

- **Lewis, John, and Xue Litai. *China Builds the Bomb*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991.**

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Examines the reasons why China chose to develop an atomic weapon and how it organized and conducted the program's research and development, as well as debates surrounding the subsequent development of a hydrogen bomb and missile delivery systems, and the doctrine and deployment of China's nuclear capacity. Includes a list of China's nuclear tests from 1964 to 1978 and key program biographies from 1954 to 1967.

- **Logan, David C. "Career Paths in the PLA Rocket Force: What They Tell Us." *Asian Security* 15.2 (2019a): 103–121.**

DOI: [10.1080/14799855.2017.1422089](#) [Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Examines PLARF officers' professional trajectories, with a particular focus on those who eventually rise to the ranks of senior leadership. Findings: senior leaders are more likely to have served in the Rocket Force's premier conventionally armed missile base, there is an informal institutional hierarchy among the missile bases, and, at least at the personnel level, there is some separation between conventional and nuclear units. Suggests implications for PLARF development and assessing potential escalation dynamics in a possible Sino-American conflict.

- **Logan, David C. "Making Sense of China's Missile Forces." In *Chairman Xi Remakes the PLA: Assessing Chinese Military Reforms*. Edited by Phillip C. Saunders, Arthur S. Ding, Andrew Scobell, Andrew N. D. Yang, and Joel Wuthnow, 393–436. Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2019b.**

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Reviews the PLA Second Artillery's evolution "as guided by technological and bureaucratic influences," describes the organizational structure and operational practices of the force just before reforms begun in 2015, examines the impact of said reforms, and assesses the implications of recent changes of the successor, the PLA Rocket Force—"including its orientation toward either the nuclear or conventional mission sets and its relationship with other military units."

- **Ray, Jonathan. *Red China's "Capitalist Bomb": Inside the Chinese Neutron Bomb Program*. China Strategic Perspectives 8. Washington, DC: Institute for National Strategic Studies, January 2015.**

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Examines why China developed an enhanced radiation weapon (ERW), better known as a "neutron bomb," but did not deploy it. Surveys ERW program history. Additionally suggests a new theoretical model of "technology reserve," in which "China develops a

weapons technology to match the capabilities of another state but defers deployment.” Considers how this model might apply to several other weapons technologies.

- **Smith, James M., and Paul J. Bolt, eds. *China’s Strategic Arsenal: Worldview, Doctrine, and Systems*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2021.**

[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Surveys China’s strategic world, including China’s own interpretation of the political context, perception of requirements for stability, strategic weapons capabilities, and doctrines guiding their use. Analyzes China as a strategic power, not just a nuclear power. While nuclear weapons are the backbone of strategic power, various security concepts, force structures, and weapons platforms can have strategic military effects. Broader strategies and structures, even those extending beyond the traditional military dimension, can also extend and amplify strategic effects.

- **Wortzel, Larry. *China’s Nuclear Forces: Operations, Training, Doctrine, Command, Control and Campaign Planning*. Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2007.**

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Indicates that the “major insights” in this work come from “an unclassified ‘study guide’ for PLA officers,” *A Guide to the Study of Campaign Theory*, by the PLA’s National Defense University. Focuses on the insights gained therefrom, as well as several other recently published PLA books, for the then Second Artillery Force, particularly its nuclear component. Covers the evolving debate concerning “no-first-use” policy for nuclear weapons.

Strategic Support Force, Joint Logistic Support Force, C4ISR, Space, and Cyber

Established in 2015, the PLA Strategic Support Force (PLASSF) is charged with enabling PRC dominance across space, cyberspace, and the electromagnetic spectrum. Established in 2016, the Joint Logistic Support Force (JLSF) is the “backbone” facilitating relationships between joint logistics units and other PLA service logistics elements while integrating civilian logistics into military operations. [Puska 2010](#) surveys the evolving military logistics requirements that prompted the force’s subsequent development. [McCauley 2018](#), [Luce and Richter 2019](#), [McCauley 2020](#), and [Wuthnow 2021](#) provide insights into the nascent, understudied JLSF. [McCauley 2018](#) and [Engstrom 2018](#) lay a pioneering foundation regarding PLA Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (C4ISR), now under the SSF’s jurisdiction. [Pollpeter, et al. 2017](#) trace the SSF’s key role in increasingly prioritized military space operations. [Burton and Stokes 2018](#) and [Ni and Gill 2019](#) outline its organization and leadership. [Kania 2018](#) explains how the SSF can support other services like the PLARF. The most comprehensive sources to date on this important but obscure new organization are [Costello and McReynolds 2018](#) and [Kania and Costello 2021](#). [Pollpeter 2015](#) and [Cheng 2017](#) examine the role of cyberspace in Chinese military doctrine and its contribution to coercion. [Kania 2017](#) focuses on the role and potential impact of artificial intelligence (AI) for the PLA. [Pollpeter, et al. 2016](#) and [Pollpeter, et al. 2020](#) survey

PRC space objectives. [Pollpeter 2016](#) analyzes space operations. [Doshi, et al. 2021](#) probes PRC efforts to become a "cyber great power." [Goodwin 2021](#) examines how China seeks to militarize AI-related technologies through military-civil fusion (MCF).

- **Burton, Rachel, and Mark Stokes.** *The People's Liberation Army Strategic Support Force: Leadership and Structure*. Arlington, VA: Project 2049 Institute, 25 September 2018.

[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Outlines the SSF's role within the PLA, its leadership structure, and the biographies of its core decision-makers. Examines how the PLASSF's apparent ability to provide "cross-domain fusion" enhances synergies among PLA assets including by integrating the launch, tracking, and control of satellites with the operational units that apply their services, such as C4ISR.

- **Cheng, Dean.** *Cyber Dragon: Inside China's Information Warfare and Cyber Operations*. Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger Security International, 2017.

[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Analyzes and contextualizes China's extensive cyber-espionage efforts and multi-decade modernization of its military by incorporating information technology as widely as possible. Explains China's focus on establishing information dominance as a key component of its military efforts. Traces the evolving relationship between information and future warfare and probes such specific manifestations as computer network warfare and electronic warfare.

- **Costello, John, and Joe McReynolds.** *China's Strategic Support Force: A Force for a New Era*. China Strategic Perspectives 13. Washington, DC: Institute for National Strategic Studies, September 2018.

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Most comprehensive study to date on the PLA Strategic Support Force (PLASSF). Examines the historical context in which this force was created, its composition (Space Systems Department and Network Systems Department), its primary roles (strategic information support and strategic information operations), the potential impacts of the PLASSF on the PLA's capabilities, and its bureaucratic relationships within the newly restructured PLA.

- **Doshi, Rush, Emily De La Bruyère, Nathan Picarsic, and John Ferguson.** *China as a "Cyber Great Power": Beijing's Two Voices in Telecommunications*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, April 2021.

[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Reviews Chinese government, commercial, and academic discussion of both IT generally and telecommunications specifically. Contextualizes its analysis in terms of Beijing's

program to become a “cyber great power”—also translated as “network great power”—the blueprint for China’s ambitions to leapfrog legacy industrial leaders and define the architecture of the digital revolution.

- **Engstrom, Jeffrey.** *Systems Confrontation and System Destruction Warfare: How the Chinese People's Liberation Army Seeks to Wage Modern Warfare*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2018.

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Explains how the PLA considers 21st-century militarized conflict a contest between opposing operational systems. The PLA sees system of systems as the foundation by which to achieve integrated joint operations and “win informationized local wars,” with system destruction warfare its theory of victory.

- **Goodwin, John A.** “China’s Military Civil Fusion Project: Transferring Emerging Technology to Defense.” MA diss., Harvard University, 2021.

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Examines two mechanisms by which China seeks to bring AI-related technologies from the civilian sector to the military: (1) Military-Civil Fusion Innovation Demonstration Zones connect defense and civilian research entities to develop technologically advanced defense products, albeit with limited efficacy thus far; and (2) the public online procurement platform “All-Army Weapons and Equipment Procurement Information Network,” which enables military units to post demands for civilian companies to bid on—already a relatively efficient mechanism to resolve information asymmetry.

- **Kania, Elsa.** *Battlefield Singularity: Artificial Intelligence, Military Revolution, and China's Future Military Power*. Washington, DC: Center for a New American Security, 2017.

[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Examines the rise of artificial intelligence (AI) in the “Fourth Industrial Revolution” and its implications for China’s military capabilities. In particular, it focuses on China’s ambitions for AI, strategic thinking on AI in warfare, the prospects for advancing military-civil fusion (MCF) in AI, projected employment of AI for military purposes, and relevant organizations and potential funding for future research and development of AI.

- **Kania, Elsa.** “[China's Strategic Arsenals in a New Era](#).” *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, 20 April 2018.

[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Explains how the PLASSF consolidates, and enables the integration of, China’s capabilities for space, cyber, electronic, and psychological warfare—the first three new “strategic frontiers” of warfare; the last a CCP standby. Focuses particularly on how the

PLASSF can help the PLARF fulfill its evolving technological and operational requirements.

- **Kania, Elsa, and John Costello. “Seizing the Commanding Heights: The PLA Strategic Support Force in Chinese Military Power.” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 44.2 (2021): 218–264.**

[DOI: 10.1080/01402390.2020.1747444](#)[Save Citation »](#)[Export Citation »](#) [Share Citation »](#)

Explains how the PLASSF complements the PLA’s existing arsenal by leveraging synergies and the integration of critical capabilities across space, cyberspace, and the electromagnetic spectrum to support joint operations. Contends that the PLASSF would play an integral role in the PLA’s quest to “fight and win” any future wars, and may meanwhile become a critical force for innovation.

- **Luce, LeighAnn, and Erin Richter. “[Handling Logistics in a Reformed PLA: The Long March Toward Joint Logistics](#).” In *Chairman Xi Remakes the PLA: Assessing Chinese Military Reforms*. Edited by Phillip C. Saunders, Arthur S. Ding, Andrew Scobell, Andrew N. D. Yang, and Joel Wuthnow, 257–292. Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2019.**

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PLA imperatives to master joint operations and high-tech warfare—amid limitations in oversight, efficiency, and readiness—necessitated reforms. Describes how the JLSF’s establishment and related structural reforms facilitate greater centralization of command and control that allow the PLA to more effectively capitalize on two decades of information technology, transportation, and facility improvements; maturing combat service support doctrine and training; and civil-military fusion that collectively improve PLA capabilities to manage and execute precision logistics support.

- **McCauley, Kevin. “[China’s Military Reforms and Modernization: Implications for the United States](#).” Testimony before the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission. Washington, DC: U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, 15 February 2018.**

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Assesses the Joint Logistic Support Force (JLSF) China established in 2016 to unify joint logistics organization at the strategic level and support theater commands based on a strong foundation of integrated C4ISR, and thereby facilitate emerging integrated joint operations capability.

- **McCauley, Kevin. “[China’s Logistic Support to Expeditionary Operations](#).” Testimony before the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission,**

"China's Military Power Projection and U.S. National Interests," Washington, DC: U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, 20 February 2020.

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While the PLA currently assesses its strategic delivery and logistics capabilities as weak, the future growth of these capabilities will increase its capability to operate globally during nonwar and noncombat actions. China views a strategic delivery capability as a critical logistics component to support expeditionary operations as well as an important means of deterrence and gaining influence. The Joint Logistic Support Force (JLSF) plays an important role in coordinating strategic delivery.

- **Ni, Adam, and Bates Gill.** "[The People's Liberation Army Strategic Support Force: Update 2019](#)." *China Brief* 19.10 (29 May 2019).

[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Outlines the PLASSF's missions, leadership, and organizational structure. Explains how it remains in the extensive, multi-year process of consolidating, reorganizing, and integrating the assorted capabilities and organizations that have come under its authority.

- **Pollpeter, Kevin.** "Chinese Writings on Cyberwarfare and Coercion." In *China and Cybersecurity: Espionage, Strategy, and Politics in the Digital Domain*. Edited by Jon R. Lindsay, Tai Ming Cheung, and Derek S. Reveron, 138–162. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.

DOI: [10.1093/acprof:oso/9780190201265.003.0006](#) [Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Examines the role of Chinese cyber activities in Chinese military doctrine and its role in coercion.

- **Pollpeter, Kevin.** "Space, the New Domain: Space Operations and Chinese Military Reforms." *Journal of Strategic Studies* 39.5–6 (2016): 709–727.

DOI: [10.1080/01402390.2016.1219946](#) [Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Examines PRC space programs and how they advance national security interests as China seeks to become a space power on a par with the United States. Covers organizational and doctrinal issues related to PLA military reforms, which increasingly emphasize space to enable long-range precision strikes, and on counterspace to deny space capabilities to an adversary. The PLA has officially designated space as a new domain and established an organization to command space forces.

- **Pollpeter, Kevin, Eric Anderson, Jordan Wilson, and Fan Yang.** *China Dream, Space Dream*. Washington, DC: U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, 2016.

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The report examines China’s space programs and how they advance China’s national security, economic, and diplomatic interests. Concludes that China’s goal is to become a space power on a par with the United States.

- **Pollpeter, Kevin, Michael Chase, and Eric Heginbotham.** *The Creation of the PLA Strategic Support Force and Its Implications for Chinese Military Space Operations.* Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2017.

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Explores the missions and organization of China’s military space enterprise, focusing on the structure of the PLASSF, charged with developing and employing most PLA space capabilities. Its creation signifies an increased prioritization and role for PLA space capabilities.

- **Pollpeter, Kevin, Timothy Ditter, Anthony Miller, and Brian Waidelich.** *China’s Space Narrative: Examining the Portrayal of the U.S.-China Space Relationship in Chinese Sources and its Implications for the United States.* Montgomery, AL: China Aerospace Studies Institute, September 2020.

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Examines China’s perceptions of its space program and the US space program during their long-term competition. Chinese officials and analysts view China’s space program as trailing but advancing rapidly; it plans to surpass the US by mid-century in pursuit of comprehensive interests—national security foremost. China’s extant space success can be attributed in large part to leaders’ recognition of the benefits of space power, consistent planning, and ample, consistent funding.

- **Puska, Susan.** “[Taming the Hydra: Trends in China’s Military Logistics Since 2000.](#)” In *The PLA at Home and Abroad: Assessing the Operational Capabilities of China’s Military.* Edited by Roy Kamphausen, David Lai, Andrew Scobell, 553–635. Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College, 2010.

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Examines trends in the modernization of China’s military logistics, particularly since divestiture, when modernization efforts began to gain momentum, moving beyond remedial reforms toward that of building capacity to support both defensive and offensive military operations under informatized conditions. This is a significant transformation whose accomplishment is critical to successfully supporting PLA force composition, capabilities, and missions. Published in conjunction with the National Bureau of Asian Research.

- **Wuthnow, Joel.** “A New Era for Chinese Military Logistics.” *Asian Security* (Online First, 11 February 2021).

DOI: [10.1080/14799855.2021.1880391](#)[Save Citation](#) »[Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

PLA ability to project force within and beyond China’s borders—“strategic delivery”—depends on adequate logistics capabilities, systems, and policies. The JLSF will play a critical role. Established in 2016 as part of Xi Jinping’s reforms, this force made its operational debut in the PLA’s response to the novel coronavirus outbreak in Wuhan in 2020; case elucidates JLSF’s structure, capabilities, and operations. Untested, JLSF remains in transition. Absent further improvements, it could be a weak link in future joint operations.

Paramilitary Forces/Other Principal Chinese Armed Forces

China’s armed forces have three major components: the PLA, the People’s Armed Police (PAP), and the Militia. Each, for example, has its own sea force: the PLA Navy, China Coast Guard (CCG), and Maritime Militia; which each command the world’s largest by number of ships. With recent reforms under Xi Jinping, the latter two components have become even more closely connected to the PLA, with the PAP being brought under the sole ultimate authority of the CMC, and the Coast Guard under it. Increasingly professional and capable, the PAP and Militia are strengthening their ability to engage in military and military-support tasks. [Greitens 2019](#) surveys PAP restructuring and other major domestic security changes under Xi. [Wuthnow 2019](#) includes the changes with the PAP, following its own round of reforms in 2017 and 2018. [Martinson 2018](#) surveys the CCG’s role in advancing PRC maritime sovereignty claims, sometimes in conjunction with the PLAN. [Martinson 2021a](#) surveys the Coast Guard’s latest reforms, [Martinson 2021b](#) the new legal framework under which it operates. [Kennedy and Erickson 2017](#) is the culmination of a long-running series of articles on China’s Maritime Militia (termed by them and in subsequent US government reports the “People’s Armed Forces Maritime Militia,” or PAFMM). Although this work draws on all the previous publications in the series, they offer additional themes and details when read individually. Such forces play important roles in operations aimed at advancing China’s disputed sovereignty claims, which are covered in [Erickson and Martinson 2019](#), [Poling 2019](#), and [Chubb 2021](#); and their administration in the South China Sea in [Haver 2021](#). While these more recent developments have captured the greater attention, the history of the Militia as an institution, including its ground component, has been subject to fewer inquires, with the notable exception of [Perry 2007](#). [Guo 2012](#), while not solely focused on the PLA, includes an examination of the more domestic security–focused elements of the PLA, as well as those that have played a role in domestic political struggles. [Kennedy 2019](#) explains how civil transport increasingly supports PLA power projection. [Blasko 2015](#) covers the Special Operations Forces resident in nearly all services. [Blasko 2016](#) surveys PRC contributions to UN Peacekeeping operations.

- **Blasko, Dennis.** “[PLA Special Operations Forces: Organizations, Missions, and Training](#).” *China Brief* 15.9 (1 May 2015).

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Overview of PLA Special Operations Forces, which PLA doctrine considers one link in system of systems operations; to be integrated with the other important campaign activities of information warfare, firepower assault, and maneuver and psychological warfare. The Army has the most units; but the Navy, Air Force, and PLARF all have units.

- **Blasko, Dennis J.** "[China's Contribution to Peacekeeping Operations: Understanding the Numbers](#)." *China Brief* 16.18 (5 December 2016).

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Of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, China contributes the largest number of military and civilian personnel to these missions. According to UN statistics as of 31 August 2016, China provides 2,436 troops, 30 military experts, and 173 police, for a total of 2,639 personnel out of just over 100,000 uniformed and civilian personnel from all countries performing PKO duties. Beijing has garnered maximum political and propaganda value from a minimal investment in personnel and money.

- **Chubb, Andrew.** *Chinese Nationalism and the "Gray Zone": Case Analyses of Public Opinion and PRC Maritime Policy*. China Maritime Study 16. Newport, RI: China Maritime Studies Institute, May 2021.

[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Examines the role of popular nationalism in China's maritime conduct. Detailed multi-methods analysis of nine case studies of assertive but ostensibly nonmilitary actions by which the PRC has advanced its position in the South and East China Seas in recent years reveals little compelling evidence of popular sentiment driving decision-making. Where surges of popular nationalism have been evident, they have tended to follow PRC maritime actions, suggesting that Chinese authorities channeled public opinion to support existing policy.

- **Erickson, Andrew S., and Ryan D. Martinson, eds.** *China's Maritime Gray Zone Operations*. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2019.

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This comprehensive edited volume situates theoretically and details operationally China's uses of its Coast Guard and Maritime Militia, particularly to advance its disputed sovereignty claims without triggering escalation to the level of armed conflict.

- **Greitens, Sheena Chestnut.** "[Domestic Security in China under Xi Jinping](#)." *China Leadership Monitor* 59 (1 March 2019).

[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Addresses recent major structural, legal, personnel, and policy changes to the CCP's approach to domestic security. Xi has created new institutions, such as the Central National Security Commission and the National Supervision Commission, to improve coordination and discipline; restructured the PAP; and significantly altered the CCP's security strategy in Xinjiang. Reviews these developments and their cumulative effect on domestic security.

- **Guo, Xuezhai.** *China's Security State: Philosophy, Evolution, and Politics*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

DOI: [10.1017/CBO9781139150897](#)[Save Citation »Export Citation » Share Citation »](#)

Although it covers other topics as well, this book includes an examination of the domestically oriented security elements of the PLA, such as the Garrison Commands and Central Guard Regiment, as well as certain entities, like the 38th Group Army and the historic Beijing Military Region, that have played important roles in domestic political struggles.

- **Haver, Zachary.** *Sansha City in China's South China Sea Strategy: Building a System of Administrative Control*. China Maritime Report 12. Newport, RI: China Maritime Studies Institute, January 2021.

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Examines Sansha City, which China established in 2012 to control and administer the bulk of its territorial and maritime claims in the South China Sea. Each level of the Chinese party-state system has worked to develop Sansha, improving the city's physical infrastructure and transportation, communications, corporate ecosystem, party-state institutions, and rights defense system. These capabilities ultimately allow China to govern contested areas of the South China Sea as if they were Chinese territory.

- **Kennedy, Conor M.** *Civil Transport in PLA Power Projection*. China Maritime Report 4. Newport, RI: China Maritime Studies Institute, December 2019.

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This study explains that national objectives require the PLA to be able to project significant combat power beyond China's borders. To meet these needs, the PLA is building organic logistics support capabilities such as large naval auxiliaries and transport aircraft, while also turning to civilian enterprises to fulfill its transportation needs.

- **Kennedy, Conor M., and Andrew S. Erickson.** *China's Third Sea Force, The People's Armed Forces Maritime Militia: Tethered to the PLA*. China Maritime Report 1. Newport, RI: China Maritime Studies Institute, March 2017.

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A periodically updated compilation of PAFMM-related writings and data is available [online](#), with a recent iteration from [Erickson's website](#). Among them, this capstone summary documents the PAFMM's "exact identity, organization, and connection to the PLA as a reserve force that plays a parallel and supporting role to the PLA."

- **Martinson, Ryan D., "[Early Warning Brief: Introducing the 'New, New' China Coast Guard](#)"** *China Brief* 21.2, 25 January 2021a.

[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Analyzes results of the China Coast Guard's second reform beginning in 2018. Following five years of "abject failure," the already-consolidated force was transferred from to the PAP, itself newly reorganized and placed under the CMC. Much work remains, but today the Coast Guard has finally achieved a unitary identity, a clear command structure, and a revised legal framework for its increasingly capable, wide-ranging operations.

- **Martinson, Ryan D. *Echelon Defense: The Role of Sea Power in Chinese Maritime Dispute Strategy*. China Maritime Study 15. Newport, RI: China Maritime Studies Institute, February 2018.**

[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Examines China's post-2006 use of naval and Coast Guard forces to advance its maritime sovereignty claims. Outlines PRC maritime claims, their value to leaders, and overall objectives driving policy. Examines organization, doctrine, and capabilities of forces charged with defending and advancing claims; strategic context; and six major types of operations. Concludes with accounting of PRC expansion over the ten-year period from 2006 to 2016, including key decisions that guided and enabled expansion.

- **Martinson, Ryan D., "[Gauging the Real Risks of China's New Coastguard Law](#)".** *The Strategist*, Australian Strategic Policy Institute, 23 February 2021b.

[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Analyzes China's new Coast Guard Law. Key coercive provisions include: Subjects foreign vessels operating within claimed PRC jurisdiction to boarding and inspection. Refusal to comply could mean a forcible boarding by armed personnel prepared to compel compliance. Authorizes deadly force to uphold China's expansive maritime claims. Unlikely to be maximally applied in all instances, but authorizes Coast Guard to do so as ordered as Beijing sees fit. The law's very ambiguity in application risks tension and miscalculation.

- **Perry, Elizabeth J. *Patrolling the Revolution: Worker Militias, Citizenship, and the Modern Chinese State*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007.**

[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

A more historically minded examination of the militia as an institution in China, using the case study of worker militias in Shanghai. Primarily focuses on the Militia, beginning with the uprisings in Shanghai in the mid-1920s until Mao Zedong's death in 1976. It ends with a look at the reforms the institution underwent with the shift toward a post-Mao China. Highlights the many military, security, political, and state-building roles of the Militia over the decades.

- **Poling, Gregory B.** "[Illuminating the South China Sea's Dark Fishing Fleets.](#)" Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 9 January 2019.
[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Employs innovative methodology to demonstrate that numbers of China Maritime Militia vessels in the Spratly Islands are much larger and much more persistent than was generally understood. Subsequent research by other analysts has corroborated these cutting-edge findings.

- **Thorne, Devin, and Ben Spevack.** "[Ships of State: Chinese Civil-Military Fusion and the HYSY 981 Standoff.](#)" Washington, DC: Center for International Maritime Security (CIMSEC), 23 January 2019.
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Considers the 2014 Sino-Vietnamese HYSY 981 oil rig standoff, in which PRC Coast Guard and Maritime Militia forces contended nonlethally, but aggressively, with Vietnamese counterparts, causing harm to Vietnamese ships and personnel. Re-examining the incident through vessel tracking data reveals that China's merchant marine also participated in the standoff as aggressors. In the context of China's civil-military fusion strategy, the incident displays Beijing's strategic thinking on a role that China's merchant marine could play in future conflict.

- **Wuthnow, Joel.** *China's Other Army: The People's Armed Police in an Era of Reform.* Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2019.
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One of the only publications to focus on the People's Armed Police (PAP). It examines the post-2017/2018 reform impacts on the force, such as its degree of centralized control, its composition, missions in peacetime and wartime, and its current and future potential for cooperation with the PLA as a whole and different services.

Private Security Companies

Today, there are more employees of Chinese private security companies (PSCs) overseas than Chinese soldiers deployed in peacekeeping missions. The reports in Chinese and Western media about the presence of Chinese PSCs in Africa (detailed by [Nantulya 2020](#) and [Nantulya 2021](#)) and Central Asia has increased over the years and a small number of scholars have started to

produce a limited but expanding literature on this issue. Given the novelty of the topic and the difficulty of finding reliable information, work remains to be done. However, a basic consensus has already emerged: Chinese PSCs will become an increasingly common presence in the coming years, and such a development is mostly related to the necessity to protect the lives and assets of Chinese nationals in unstable regions. This is the core message of [Arduino 2018](#), the only book-length study devoted exclusively to this topic. Nonetheless, Chinese PSCs are unlikely to assume a role similar to their Russian counterparts in the foreseeable future. Moreover, there are even doubts concerning the extent to which they will become similar to high-end Western PSCs in terms of the range and quality of services that they will be able and allowed to offer to their customers. According to [Nouwens 2020](#), it is in the field of maritime security that we should expect Chinese PSCs to play a relatively large role. Yet, as pointed out by [Ghiselli 2020](#), the overall situation is unlikely to change fundamentally because of still-unresolved concerns about the political and diplomatic risks of reforming the Chinese private security industry, especially in the case of loosening the existing laws and regulation related to the use of firearms.

- **Arduino, Alessandro. *China’s Private Army: Protecting the New Silk Road*. Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018.**

DOI: [10.1007/978-981-10-7215-4](#)[Save Citation »Export Citation » Share Citation »](#)

Economic globalization and the transnational exploitation of natural resources have increased the need for Chinese-owned PSCs in spite of the disdain for the profession offering “a lance for hire.” This is especially true in the regions included in China’s Belt and Road Initiative that are characterized by a high level of insecurity. Argues that the state’s monopoly of force privatization will play a significant role in protecting PRC interests overseas.

- **Ghiselli, Andrea. “Market Opportunities and Political Responsibilities: The Difficult Development of Chinese Private Security Companies Abroad.” *Armed Forces & Society* 46.1 (2020): 35–45.**

DOI: [10.1177/0095327X18806517](#)[Save Citation »Export Citation » Share Citation »](#)

The growing responsiveness of the state to the request for protection of Chinese interests overseas prompted the initial development of Chinese PSCs’ overseas operations. However, policymakers’ focus on political loyalty has inhibited the full-fledged maturation of this industry. Thus far, large foreign PSCs have been the main beneficiaries of this situation. The future development of Chinese PSCs remains possible in a gradual and pragmatic way, but Chinese policymakers will have to address critical diplomatic and political questions.

- **Nantulya, Paul. *Chinese Security Contractors in Africa*. Beijing: Carnegie-Tsinghua Center for Global Policy, 8 October 2020.**

[Save Citation »Export Citation » Share Citation »](#)

Explains how, as China’s engagement with African countries has grown over the past several years, Beijing is increasingly turning to Chinese security contractors to protect its

Belt and Road Initiative projects, citizens, and diplomats. Active in a growing number of African countries, they mostly work for Chinese SOEs and increasingly with African security forces and security companies. They protect oil and gas installations, railways, mines, construction sites, and even Chinese embassies.

- **Nantulya, Paul.** “[Chinese Security Firms Spread along the African Belt and Road.](#)” Washington, DC: Africa Center for Strategic Studies, 15 June 2021.

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Draws on both Chinese and African sources to survey deployment of Chinese security firms across Africa, with particular details on the top nine. Contends that rapid expansion absent a strong regulatory framework poses heightened risks to African citizens and raises fundamental questions regarding responsibility for security in Africa. Includes valuable bibliography with links to earlier research by author and other experts in this important but still-limited field.

- **Nouwens, Veerle.** “[Who Guards the ‘Maritime Silk Road’?](#)” *War on the Rocks*, 24 June 2020.

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Chinese private maritime security companies recruit Chinese military veterans and foreigners alike, and offer a range of armed and unarmed vessel protection services. The foreign companies traditionally dominating this industry are losing some of their appeal, with Chinese companies that operate abroad in search of more affordable services with better cultural fit. Chinese private maritime security companies stand to capitalize on business opportunities that are “on brand” with Chinese government interests.

Gender and Ethnicity in China’s Communist Armed Forces

While those that have made up the Chinese Communist armed forces have hitherto been relatively homogeneous—with usually more than 90 percent being male and usually more than 90 percent being Han—the armed forces have served an important, though often ignored, role in the Chinese Communist Party’s interactions with women and ethnic minorities, who have had critical experiences with the Chinese Communist armed forces, both as members and outsiders. While women have been part of the Chinese Communist armed forces in various capacities since the beginning, their experiences have largely been obscured and forgotten, outside of occasional propaganda “fluff pieces” or rhetoric. Like their male counterparts, though to a lesser extent, select women in the armed forces have been used for propaganda purposes, as examined in [Edwards 2016](#). Works such as [Lee and Wiles 1999](#) and [Young 2001](#) examine the experiences of women in relation to specific events, in this case the Long March. Publications such as [Li 1995](#) examine women in the Chinese Communist armed forces across time. These works not only highlight the experiences and contributions of women to the armed forces, but also areas in which women have traditionally had greater involvement but have received less attention from the PLA studies field, such as in recruitment, intelligence collection, logistics, medicine, and public relations work. When it comes to ethnic minorities and the Chinese Communist armed

forces, inquiries are often hampered by linguistic barriers caused by the use of non-Mandarin languages by many ethnic minorities. Difficulties in accessing ethnic minority eyewitnesses and literature, along with a general lack of awareness of these peoples' experiences outside of the more prominent ones like Tibetans, also contribute to the dearth of literature relative to the many ethnic minorities within the bounds of the PRC. One of the works on the topic in general is [Heaton 1981](#). The rest of the literature can generally be broken down by which ethnic minority group is being examined. [Li 2016](#) focuses on Tibetans, [Yang 2017](#) on Mongolians, and [Murray 2017](#) on the Li people. One publication that does focus on a region with a more diverse mix of ethnic minorities is [Weiner 2020](#) on the Amdo region of the Sino-Tibetan borderland. Finally, some works, such as [Averill 2006](#), include a focus, not just on ethnic relationships (Hakka), but also the complex relationships with the much-maligned bandit gangs and sworn brotherhoods that were so common during China's Republican era—in this case, in the Jinggangshan base area following the failed urban uprisings of 1927.

- **Averill, Stephen C. *Revolution in the Highlands: China's Jinggangshan Base Area*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006.**

[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Focuses on the rarely examined era of the Jinggangshan base area (1927–1930), which served as Mao Zedong's first base area following the failed urban uprisings in 1927. Showcases how the Red Army navigated an area that had complex relationships with bandit gangs and sworn brotherhoods, as well as ethnic tensions between Han "early settlers" who inhabited the lowlands and Hakka "guest people" who inhabited the mountains. Details the many early debates about the Red Army that would shape its future.

- **Edwards, Louise. *Women Warriors and Wartime Spies of China*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2016.**

DOI: [10.1017/CBO9781316536346](https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781316536346) [Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

While many in the PLA studies community are familiar with famous male soldiers like Lei Feng who are held up as paragons of dedication and service, the last half of this book explores some of the notable female militia members, guerillas, and soldiers who are hailed in similar ways, yet are less-well recognized outside of China. This work explores these women and how their stories have been crafted and utilized for propaganda purposes.

- **Heaton, William R., Jr. "The Chinese People's Liberation Army and Minority Nationalities." In *Ethnicity and the Military in Asia*. Edited by DeWitt C. Ellinwood and Cynthia H. Enloe, 176–192. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1981.**

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Examines the relationship between ethnic minorities and the PLA. Emphasizes that the PLA has long had "an important role to play with non-Han ethnic minorities, both because the PLA has been generally used for political mobilizing functions and because

China's minorities are located in strategically critical frontier regions." Highlights the importance of the PLA's relationships with ethnic minorities to the central government's goal of national integration.

- **Lee, Lily Xiao Hong, and Sue Wiles. *Women of the Long March: The Never Before Told Story*. St. Leonards, Australia: Allen & Unwin, 1999.**

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Details the experiences of thirty women who served with the 1st Front Army during the Long March. While primarily focusing on their experiences during the Long March, this work also examines the complex involvement of these women in the early Chinese Communist forces, which often entailed a fluid shifting of jobs and a delicate relationship with one of the more male-dominated Red Armies. In addition, this work includes an appendix of brief bibliographies of these women.

- **Li, Jianglin. *Tibet in Agony: Lhasa 1959*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016.**

DOI: [10.4159/9780674973688](#) [Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Examines the 1959 "Lhasa Incident," where the PLA massacred thousands, together with the events leading up to it. Draws on memoirs by former CCP cadres, PLA veterans, Chinese militia members, and Tibetans who worked with them; interviews with hundreds of Tibetan exiles, including the Dalai Lama and guerillas; a "rare series of interviews in China with a prominent Tibetan political figure in Qinghai"; and documents now in libraries and archives that have "slipped" out of China over the years.

- **Li, Xiaolin. "[Women in the Chinese Military](#)." PhD diss., University of Maryland, 1995.**

[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

This dissertation is an in-depth examination of women in militaries that operated in what is now the PRC, ranging from ancient China to post-Opium War China to modern China. Covers in greater detail women in the Red Army and PLA, such as demographic breakdowns, participation in operations in peacetime and wartime, promotion and career prospects, military life, and their own evaluations thereof. Benefits from a survey the author conducted in 1992 of 230 women in the PLA.

- **Murray, Jeremy A. *China's Lonely Revolution: The Local Communist Movement of Hainan Island, 1926–1956*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2017.**

[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Examines the Chinese Communist movement on Hainan Island between 1926 and 1956, which was the only base area to have a continual Communist presence from the beginning of the movement to its incorporation into the PRC. Argues that the Han

islanders—who received little to no support from the mainland, predominantly Han, Communists—were only able to survive thanks to an alliance with the indigenous Li people. Highlights the tensions between the localist Hainan Communists and the mainland Communists pushing increasing centralization.

- **Weiner, Benno.** *The Chinese Revolution on the Tibetan Frontier*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2020.

DOI: [10.7591/cornell/9781501749391.001.0001](#)[Save Citation](#) »[Export Citation](#) »[Share Citation](#) »

This is the “first in-depth study of an ethnic minority region during the first decade” of the PRC, in this case the “Amdo region of Sino-Tibetan borderland.” While not focused on the PLA *per se*, it showcases how the PLA worked alongside United Front efforts in ethnic minority areas. Initially, the PLA was less necessary for conquest than for establishing a real communist presence and doing good works to win local support. Later on, it was necessary for suppressing many rebellions.

- **Yang, Haiying.** *Special Issue: The Truth about the Mongolian Genocide during the Cultural Revolution.* *Asian Studies* 6 (March 2017).

[Save Citation](#) »[Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Highlights the little-studied mass murder of ethnic Mongolians in Inner Mongolia during the Cultural Revolution. The author argues this event meets the criteria to be labeled a genocide, and that the PLA had a “major role” in it. The alleged “crime” of the victims was an “association with the Inner Mongolian People’s Revolutionary Party,” which the PRC labeled as separatist. Also examines the treatment of ethnic Mongolians in the PLA, including their replacement by ethnic Han Chinese personnel.

- **Young, Helen Praeger.** *Choosing Revolution: Chinese Women Soldiers on the Long March*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001.

[Save Citation](#) »[Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Examines the experiences of women on the Long March, including why they joined the Red Army. Benefits from interviews with twenty-two individuals who “represent a good spectrum of the female participants” from the “three major contingents of the Red Army” and a variety of jobs, ages, and birthplaces.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The coauthors of this bibliography have three final pieces of advice for casual or professional, new or veteran members of the PLA studies community. (1) First, remember that we are always students of the field. New literature is constantly being produced as new authors, sources, and archival material enter the field or become available. Even decades after their occurrence, works covering events like the Chinese Civil War, Korean War, or Vietnam War are being released that

contain new revelations and other information that force members of the field to re-evaluate what we once considered certain. In a landmark example, [Bjorge 2004](#) offers a comprehensive yet theoretically innovative study of the pivotal 1948–1949 Huaihai campaign more than half a century after its triumphant conclusion. (2) Second, PLA-relevant information can often be found in works traditionally thought of as being outside the realm of the field. As seen in this bibliography, works in international and non-Chinese history, sociology, economics, women's studies, ethnic studies, museum studies, etc., can offer valuable insights regarding the PLA, including aspects of it that are downplayed, obscured, or even ignored by more traditional sources. In a particularly sophisticated example, [Meyskens 2020](#) illuminates the "Third Front" geo-military concept and its Maoist operationalization, central to Cold War PRC strategy, through multi-methods research that proved most fruitful when investigating sensitive security issues only indirectly. This book delineates geographic context, surveys propaganda waves, and documents unrealistic expectations and inefficiency regarding military manufacturing. It offers perspectives centered on the personal experiences and recollections of many among the millions mobilized, with particular focus on a physically concealed but ideologically lionized Maoist megaproject: Panzhihua Iron and Steel. (3) Third, there are many more excellent works, as well as news articles, video documentaries, and databases, that the coauthors were not able to include in this bibliography. They highly recommend that interested readers examine them, including those produced in languages other than English in places outside of the United States, such as Taiwan, Singapore, and Japan. Some non-American actors provide quality surveys in English, such as the National Institute for Defense Studies' annual [China Security Report](#), a topical report on Chinese security issued by the Japanese Ministry of Defense's research arm. The "China" documents released annually by Japan's Ministry of Defense offer specific PLA-related data that are often difficult to find and/or corroborate elsewhere (see [Japan Ministry of Defense 2021](#)).

- **Bjorge, Gary J.** *Moving the Enemy: Operational Art in the Chinese PLA's Huai Hai Campaign*. Leavenworth Paper 22. Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2004.

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Examines the Huaihai Campaign, the largest and most decisive campaign of the Chinese Civil War, itself the third largest war of the 20th century and the most significant war since the end of World War II. Based on staff rides, extensive interviews with veterans and historians from both sides, and detailed examination of authoritative Chinese-language sources. Deems the PLA's conduct of the Huaihai Campaign a leading example of effective operational-level warfare employing large-unit maneuver.

- **Japan Ministry of Defense.** *Security Environment Surrounding Japan: China (わが国を取り巻く安全保障環境)*. Tokyo: Japan Ministry of Defense (防衛省), 2021.

[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [Share Citation](#) »

Offers periodically updated graphics and accompanying text documenting recent PRC military and security actors and activities. Areas of repeated focus include the organization and missions of China's armed forces, including the Coast Guard and its rules of engagement, as well as China's activities and their key dynamics and trends in

the East China Sea (particularly surrounding the Senkaku Islands), South China Sea, Sea of Japan, and Pacific Ocean.

- **Meyskens, Covell F.** *Mao's Third Front: The Militarization of Cold War China*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2020.

DOI: [10.1017/9781108784788](https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108784788)[Save Citation »Export Citation » Share Citation »](#)

Examines the often neglected construction of the Third Front, which “militarized Chinese developmental strategy” and created a “top-secret massive military industrial complex in the mountains of inland China” to protect the country’s military industrial capabilities from potential attack by the Soviet Union or United States. This effort, which “received more government investment than any other developmental initiative of the Mao era,” entailed the forcible relocation of millions of individuals and hundreds of state-owned enterprises from coastal cities to hinterlands.

- **National Institute for Defense Studies.** *China Security Report: China's Military Strategy in the New Era*. Tokyo, Japan: National Institute for Defense Studies, 2021.

[Save Citation »Export Citation » Share Citation »](#)

The 2021 edition of a trilingual annual report (with Japanese, English, Chinese versions), focusing on both general aspects of Chinese military and strategic issues, with new areas of focus each year. Past topics include the US-China relationship, the US-Taiwan relationship, and diversification of roles in the PLA and People’s Armed Police (PAP).