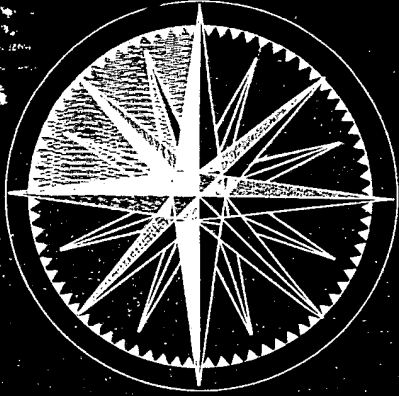


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# SPECIAL REPORT

## CHINESE COMMUNIST MILITARY DOCTRINE

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17 January 1964

## CHINESE COMMUNIST MILITARY DOCTRINE

Chinese military doctrine, developed by Mao Tse-tung in the 1930s to meet pre-nuclear military situations, has been maintained almost intact into the 1960s. The major problem facing the Chinese military forces--how to defend China against an enemy armed with nuclear weapons and other unconventional arms--has not been met but has been side-stepped. Although this is partly because the Chinese, with no nuclear capability, have no simple alternative, it is also the result of the heavy influence of political ideology on military thinking.

Mao's decision to challenge the Soviet Union has affected military doctrine in two ways: the cutoff of Soviet aid in modernizing China's armed forces requires adherence to a doctrine in many ways as antiquated as its instrument, and Mao's writings on military strategy are trumpeted so as to enhance the claim that he has creatively enriched Marxist-Leninist thought in this area as in others and thus deserves to lead the Communist world.

Aside from its weakness as a defensive strategy for China today, Maoist revolutionary doctrine does have a major application in the 1960s--as an offensive doctrine to be used by Communists in underdeveloped countries as a guide in their attempts to overthrow established governments.

### Formulation of Chinese Doctrine

Chinese Communist military doctrine is the product of more than 30 years of development. Although influenced by the military strategy of foreign countries, in particular that of the Soviet Union, the Chinese have relied primarily on their own experience for their military strategy and tactics.

As in every other aspect of current Chinese Communist

thinking, the seminal influence has been Mao Tse-tung. His basic concepts were formulated during the days of the Chinese Communist guerrilla warfare and are still maintained. Any attempt to separate out the elements which still have validity and are consciously applied from those maintained for purely propaganda purposes must remain tentative because of the lack of available information. Unlike the Soviet Union, China permits no open discussion of over-all military doctrine. No

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Chinese reviews or journals dealing with military affairs are regularly available, and only scattered issues of the Liberation Army Daily have been obtained in the past five years. The single most valuable source has been the secret Chinese Communist military documents captured by Tibetan guerrillas in October 1961.

#### The Basic Doctrine

These documents indicate that Chinese military doctrine still focuses on defensive war, and there is virtually no evidence that Chinese Communist leaders are preparing for or thinking in terms of an offensive strategy by their own forces outside Chinese territory. References to policy, preparedness and training are concerned with a defensive war fought on Chinese territory against an enemy, probably the US, employing nuclear weapons.

Chinese doctrine thus remains centered on the means available to destroy any occupying force. The strategy followed in the war against Japan, involving the use of both guerrilla and regular warfare, would probably be modified and used in any war against another invader. The Chinese acknowledge that nuclear weapons can destroy China's industrial capacity, but they argue that the effectiveness of nuclear weapons used tactically will be reduced markedly by maintaining close contact with the enemy and by fighting at night.

Mao's doctrine stresses the dominance of men and of politics, and maintains that the thoroughly indoctrinated and trained soldier will always be more important than the weapons he employs. Another basic doctrine, that of the "people's war," in which "every man is a soldier," amounts to total mobilization in all areas under Communist control. Faced initially with an overwhelmingly stronger enemy, Mao rejected "the completely groundless theory of quick victory" for either side, and formulated the strategy and tactics of a "protracted" war.

These principles envisage an initial retreat before powerful enemy forces until lengthening supply lines and enemy dispersion would permit the establishment of defense positions. There would follow a period of stalemate as Chinese forces were concentrated to bring about the defeat and annihilation of enemy forces through superior mobility and a concentration of force in critical areas. The theory calls for trading space for time, for a gradual build-up of forces, and for the dissipation of the enemy's will to fight by both military and psychological warfare. During the stalemate stage there is to be heavy dependence on the militia and on guerrilla warfare, and the major goal of the Communists is to change the balance gradually through a large-scale reduction of the enemy's armed forces and thus set up conditions for a counter-offensive.

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### The Role of Nuclear Weapons

Chinese thought on the role of nuclear weapons in military doctrine is ambiguous and contradictory, reflecting the difficulty in which the Chinese find themselves because they maintain a hostile world view without adequate arms to back up their hostility. Although Mao Tse-tung and other Chinese Communist leaders have repeatedly downgraded the effectiveness of nuclear weapons, the regime nevertheless tacitly acknowledges their importance by devoting considerable effort and investment to develop its own nuclear weapons.

In recognition of their vital role today, Chinese Foreign Minister Chen Yi stated in October 1963 that China would have to manufacture nuclear weapons, missiles and supersonic aircraft or degenerate into a second-class or third-class nation. He expressed this determination when he noted that the Chinese would develop nuclear weapons, even if it meant a reduction in consumer goods production, even if it meant they had to go without trousers.

Peiping's willingness to beggar itself in order to develop modern means of warfare suggests that the Chinese propaganda debunking the power and role of these weapons in a future war is largely an effort by the Chinese leaders to rationalize the predicament in which they find themselves. The Chinese refusal to discuss realistically

the effects of nuclear weapons, even in the classified Tibetan documents, might reflect an inadequate knowledge of their true effects, but it more likely is a recognition that a power without these weapons must ignore or derogate them if it is to continue to insist that it is a great power. In addition, as Mao has himself pointed out, any undue emphasis on the use or destructiveness of nuclear weapons could only have a detrimental effect in China, frightening the people and undermining their morale and their will to fight.

Thus Chinese doctrine continues to maintain that weapons cannot be decisive in war, that the thoroughly indoctrinated and trained soldier will always be more important than the weapons he employs. It is in this context that the Chinese claim that the "spiritual atomic bomb" is more important than the material one. Such statements, made partly to maintain the morale of the Chinese fighting man, must be read in the light of the high priority given to the nuclear weapons program.

In another notable contradiction between Chinese propaganda and Chinese action, Peiping claims that the US will never dare to use nuclear weapons, but it has been careful since the Korean war to avoid situations where a direct confrontation with US military power would arise. In this way the Chinese remain true to

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## CHINESE AND SOVIET VIEWS ON NUCLEAR WARFARE

Marshal Yeh Chien-ying, at Military Training Conference, January 1961

If there is a war in the next several years, what kind of weapon shall we principally rely on to defeat our enemies? Here we are confronted with a question concerning the relationship between conventional and unconventional weapons. Atomic weapons are indeed very powerful but they can be used only to destroy strategic points and the economic potential of the country during strategic air attacks, and to prepare the way for an actual offensive attack. However, the army and conventional weapons are necessary to solve the main problem of a war, to eliminate the enemy, to occupy battlefields, and to win a victory.

To rely on the army and conventional weapons is to rely on manpower. Therefore, manpower still constitutes the main factor in war. We rely on manpower, and stress the political factor. US militarists know clearly that they cannot rely on manpower to win a victory over China and the Soviet Union. They have to rely on nuclear weapons.

If there is a war within the next several years, we will have to rely on the weapons we have on hand. How can we defeat our enemy by using the weapons we have on hand? Our enemy is stronger than we are in distant fighting, but close fighting, especially face to face fighting, is more advantageous to us. In the event of war in the next several years, we can defeat our enemy by using close combat even though we have no unconventional weapons.

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Marshal of Aviation Vershinin, 1949

The underestimation of the infantry reflects the fear of the imperialist bourgeoisie of their peoples, of mass armies.... Not having reliable reserves of manpower at their disposal, the warmongers boom and exaggerate the role of air power out of all proportion. These ideas emanate from the completely distorted view that the outcome of war can be decided by some kind of weapon alone. History has proved the reverse more than once.

Marshal Moskalkenko, 1954

Soviet military science decisively rejects any arbitrary fabrications of bourgeoisie military theorists that one could achieve strategic victory by employment of one or another new weapon. There are no such weapons which possess exceptional and all-powerful qualities. Historical experience teaches that with the appearance of new technology, new more powerful and more destructive weapons, the significance of men on the battlefield not only does not decrease but increases all the more.

From Military Strategy, 1962  
(Editor: Marshal Sokolovsky)

Modern strategic weapons make it possible to achieve decisive results and at times even victory without utilizing the means and forces of the tactical and operational elements.... Under modern conditions, if a state does not have nuclear weapons at its disposal, it could never achieve victory over an opponent that did.... The country that finds itself in a catastrophic situation as the result of mass nuclear-missile strikes may be forced to surrender even before its armed forces have suffered any decisive defeat.

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Mao's dictum, "despise the enemy strategically, but respect him tactically." They can continue to claim that the US is a "paper tiger" without testing whether or not it has teeth.

In their propaganda, the Chinese have drawn a parallel between the use of poison gas and the use of nuclear weapons in war, declaring that nuclear weapons are no more likely to be used today than was poison gas in World War II. They have in the past attributed US unwillingness to use nuclear weapons to fear of Soviet retaliation. The probable loss of their protected position behind the Soviet nuclear "umbrella" does not appear to weigh as heavily as might be expected with the Chinese leaders, nor do they profess to be as fearful of the prospect of general nuclear warfare as Moscow is.

While the Chinese often publicly state that the likelihood of war is not high, the Tibetan documents make numerous references to the possibility of a surprise attack. All information available indicates that, though the Chinese believe a surprise nuclear attack would be enormously destructive, they have an equally firm belief that it would not be decisive or mean defeat for China in the initial stage of the war.

Chinese statements regarding the impact of nuclear weapons in a future war are similar to those of the Soviet Union before it became a major nuclear power.

During that period statements made by Soviet political and military leaders discounted the effectiveness of nuclear weapons, and there was little stress on nuclear warfare in Soviet strategy and tactics.

Now, however, Soviet military thinking, which in the past has concentrated on the problems of waging war in the European land theater, has been broadened to include the strategic problems of intercontinental warfare. It considers the initial nuclear exchange decisive in the sense that if one loses it, all is lost. But it continues to stress the possibility of a long war, conducted by large armies and won by the destruction of the enemy's armed forces and the seizure and occupation of his territory.

In contrast, Chinese doctrine, concerned primarily with defensive warfare, has not delved into the problem of defeating and occupying the homeland of a potential aggressor such as the US. Considering the capabilities of the Chinese armed forces, such a discussion would be wholly academic.

The Tibetan documents do not reveal any concentrated effort to prepare for nuclear attack, or even for large-scale conventional bombing attacks. The few surface-to-air missile sites available are insufficient to act as a real deterrent to an attack by a modern bomber force. There have been isolated reports that atomic training,

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mostly of the passive defensive type, is being given to Chinese troops. There have been scattered reports of air-raid drills. A few army officers were assigned in 1960 to scientific research organs and specialized technical units, indicating preparations for integration of advanced weapons as they become available.

A campaign was initiated in 1959 to disperse military bases and to carry out future construction near or under hills and cliffs in order to reduce the effects of a nuclear attack. The Tibetan documents indicate that this plan was unsuccessful in 1960 and 1961, and implementation since then seems unlikely in view of the sharp reduction in all construction. A June 1961 directive claimed that failure to carry out this plan resulted from general apathy and lack of awareness of the destructiveness of nuclear weapons. So long as Peiping's lack of nuclear weapons requires it to downgrade their effectiveness, this situation can be expected to continue.

#### The Policy of "Self-Reliance"

As is the case with Chinese rationalizations on the effects of nuclear warfare, Peiping's insistence on the need for military, as well as economic, self-reliance is more a justification than a policy. Until 1959, the Chinese were more than willing to accept Soviet assistance in modernizing their armed forces, as they accepted economic assist-

ance to modernize their entire economy. Their open refusal to accept less than an equal status in the Communist bloc, however, precipitated a Soviet decision to halt military assistance, as well as to apply economic sanctions, in an effort to curb Chinese independence. Because there was no simple alternative open to the Chinese short of surrendering this independence, they adopted a policy of self-reliance.

The Tibetan documents showed the severe setback which the program for modernizing the armed forces suffered in 1960 and 1961 and the concomitant steady deterioration in their capability to fight an enemy well equipped with advanced conventional and unconventional arms. The scattered information available since then indicates continued decline in 1962 and 1963, particularly the air force and the navy. Even in the army, items of heavy ordnance, including armor, are not being increased, and a serious question of its ability to maintain even its present armored capability has arisen. The cut-back in the supply of new weapons has forced the military to place renewed emphasis on maintenance and economy.

This is a situation which no professional military leaders could accept with equanimity and the Chinese were no exception. The policy of military self-reliance was vigorously opposed by many military leaders, led by Peng Te-huai, then minister of national defense. Peng argued

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for the continuing need for Soviet military and economic assistance, even if this meant some degree of Russian control over Chinese military-economic policies. Mao, however, had already made the decision to be independent of Soviet controls even if it cost the remaining Soviet assistance, and in mid-1959 Peng and a number of his followers were purged.

This drastic move apparently has stopped open expression of disagreement within the military with Mao's present policies, but it could hardly have erased all military dissension. Dissatisfaction in high military circles over the delays in modernizing the armed forces still exists, particularly in the air force, where some elements are reported to favor a political accommodation with Moscow as a means of restoring Soviet military aid to China. There are no indications, however, that disgruntled military men are willing to take on the party leadership in regard to the dispute with the USSR or the schedule of priorities established in over-all economic development.

In the Chinese adoption of a policy of "self-reliance" in military affairs can be seen the direct impact of political thinking on military affairs. It is a clear illustration of how political decisions shape military doctrine over the protests of the military hierarchy and to the detriment of China's military posture. The loss of

outside aid in modernizing the Chinese military machine condemns the Chinese for some time to come to make do with what is essentially an antiquated force. They are forced thereby to maintain a military doctrine developed during a different time and fitting a different situation, because it takes into account the type of military forces they still have and the only type of war they would be able to fight. This is likely to be a temporary expedient and the Chinese can be expected, when they are able, to modernize their armed forces and then adjust their military doctrine to meet their new capabilities.

#### "National-Liberation" Wars

The Chinese point to their own successful revolution as an example for revolutionaries in Latin America, Africa, and Asia, and believe that in conflicts that have taken place in Indochina, Cuba, and Algeria, and in the one now under way in South Vietnam, Maoist revolutionary doctrine has considerable applicability. These claims have much more validity than the views of the Chinese that Mao's doctrine is applicable to the defense of the mainland against armed forces equipped with nuclear weapons.

Leaders of the revolutions in Cuba, Indochina, and Algeria have acknowledged their debt to Maoist strategy and the Chinese experience. Castro,

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speaking of guerrilla warfare in December 1961, referred to the precedent of the Chinese struggle. Vo Nguyen Giap, minister of defense of North Vietnam and commander in chief of the Viet Minh Army, in his book, People's War, People's Army, referred to the lessons learned "from the valuable experience of the Chinese revolution, which have enriched the theories of the national democratic revolution, of revolutionary war, and of the army in a semicolonial country." Algerian leaders have referred to the "vast influence" of the Chinese revolution on their revolution and on other revolutionary movements in Asia and Africa.

Maoist doctrine--as restated in 1963--calls for using the peasants as the main force in this type of war and for the establishment of rural base areas protected by peasant armies as the "only way to surround the cities" and finally take them. Politically, Mao stresses the use of the united front as a means for Communists to gain control of nationalist movements in underdeveloped areas. His doctrine emphasizes the necessity of building up popular support before victory can be won in such a war, but denies the need for such support to begin one.

During 1963 the Chinese placed an increased emphasis on Maoist revolutionary doctrine.

This is indicated by the publication of the Selected Military Writings of Mao Tse-tung, by the extended observance of the 25th anniversary of the publication of Mao's On Protracted War and by the concern of People's Daily, the English-language Peking Review, and other Chinese publications with the applicability of Maoist doctrine to "revolutionary struggle" in underdeveloped areas. This concern with "national liberation" wars is due partially to the Chinese Communists' belief that the time is ripe for pushing Maoist revolutionary doctrine in underdeveloped areas and partially to their feeling that stress on guerrilla war and revolution will give them the edge over the USSR in the struggle to gain control of Communist movements in these areas.

#### Outlook

The Chinese Communists' military doctrine is and will continue to be basically defensive, so long as they do not have nuclear weapons and a delivery capability. Peiping, however, remains willing to use its armed forces in Asia in circumstances that Chinese leaders deem to involve little risk of war with the United States.

Mao's guerrilla concepts, adjusted to suit local conditions, will continue to be stressed by the Chinese as a guide to be used by revolutionaries

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in "national-liberation" wars. In Southeast Asia, for example, the terrain, the political situation, and the logistical-communications problems would require almost exclusive reliance on guerrilla warfare.

The Chinese realize that nuclear weapons can cause immense destruction and appear determined to continue to give high priority to their own nuclear weapons program. However, until a nuclear capability is achieved, they are likely to continue to stress the dominance of men and of politics in war

and to place heavy emphasis on the major role of the ground forces and reject any theory that use of nuclear weapons might bring quick and decisive victory. They will also continue to profess less concern over both the possibility of and disastrous effects of a nuclear war than the USSR and use this as partial justification for urging on the world Communist movement a hard line opposing a detente with the US and favoring militancy and violence as a means of obtaining power. ~~(SECRET  
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