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**Understanding The 'Chinese Way':  
Cultural Influence and Military Intent**

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## **Abstract**

Chinese culture has played important role in the development of the national identity and methods of governance as it evolved from a feudal system, to an Empire, to a sovereign state. This paper looks at the key historical developments that saw the introduction of Confucian ideals into a political framework. Framed with this historical back-drop, the paper looks at current foreign policy initiatives and the modernization of the Chinese military, in an attempt to ascertain China's global military ambitions. It is the contention that based on the 'Chinese Way', the state does not aspire to create a far-reaching military apparatus, but is rather more concerned with domestic and regional spheres of influence. This thesis is supported by recent studies and reports, and that despite on-going intra-state conflicts, the conclusion is that for now, the Western world does not have cause to fear a global Chinese military presence on the scale of American, or previously Soviet, capabilities.

## **Introduction**

The spectre of a Chinese superpower looms on the horizon. A society of foreign ideals, philosophies and tastes, China has begun to venture out from an insular past to assert its place in the New World Order. It is a country of contrasts, simple peasant populations, and modern and bustling cities. It holds to the tenets of Communism, yet at the same time seeks to embrace capitalism and all that the world markets have to offer. It has remained behind closed doors for generations, and yet now seeks to draw international interest through tourism, an entrepreneurial spirit, and culture; no better example of which is the forthcoming hosting of the 2008 Summer Olympics.

The questions then are naturally raised, where does this rising power intend to go? In a post-Cold War environment, will China attempt to assume the mantle of a superpower and re-establish a bi-polar security environment in the vacuum left by the Soviet Union? How far abroad will its political and economic interests take it? How far will this nation go to protect those interests? As China expands its global aspirations, there arises an obvious concern as to whether it will feel the need to be able to project military power accordingly. Will China develop a far-reaching military capability as the Americans have done, or will its security concerns be restricted to the Asian continent and its littoral waters?

These are the questions this paper will seek to address. Firstly, it will summarize the historical and philosophical bedrock on which Chinese society is based. The teachings of Confucius are touted as the doctrine behind the Chinese approach to all things from interpersonal to international affairs, and the philosophy needs to be addressed if one seeks to define a 'Chinese Way'.

Secondly, this paper will look at the public face that China is putting on its contemporary international relations. There has been an evolution from an insular society to internationalism, and the country's current foreign policies should provide insight into what intent a modern China has towards the global community.

Thirdly, we will look at the modernization of the People's Liberation Army. The direction the PLA takes in shaping itself for the 21<sup>st</sup> century is indicative of China's perceived security environment concerns, and whether those concerns are regional, or require the ability to project power outside its borders.

Ultimately, when we compare the history and philosophy of the nation against its current stated international goals and ability to protect its interests, we should be able to assess whether China has expansionist aspirations, or is content to remain a regional power. It is the contention of this paper that in keeping with Confucian themes, China will choose a path of peace when possible, and that for now, regional hegemony will be sufficient. This paper will demonstrate that once examined, the philosophy, the foreign policy, and the military modernization indicate that power projection on the scale of the Americans, or previously the Soviets, is not the goal. Despite the far-reaching political and economic interests, for now, China will be content to remain a regional military power.

### **Historical Perspective – The Evolution of the 'Chinese Way'**

In order to understand where China is going, one must understand where it has been. Chinese history has shaped more than its perspective on contemporary events, it has in fact shaped the way the Chinese view the world, and their role in it. A comprehensive examination of the past is outside the scope of this paper; however a brief overview of the salient points should suffice to underscore the role of China's history in determining its path for the future.

The Chinese nation was born from a collection of fragmented states that battled for supremacy, a conflict that resulted in the first great unification of China by the Ch'in (Qin) dynasty in 221 BCE.<sup>1</sup> This unification was born out of two major periods of unrest. The "Springs and Autumns" period between 722 and 481 BCE saw the demise of the old feudal kingdom, and the political landscape consisted mostly of a struggle for primacy between the numerous existing states.<sup>2</sup> The result was the destruction or annexation of over 100 states, and led to the Warring States period (mid 4<sup>th</sup> Century BCE to 221 BCE) where the remaining Seven Great Martial States and fifteen weaker states battled until only one was left standing. The ultimate victory of Ch'in ended the internal state struggle, and he is considered the First Emperor of China.<sup>3</sup> Ch'in's rule was brutal and short-lived, collapsing in 207 BCE and making way for the Han dynasty. It was during this period that the centralized totalitarian structure imposed by Ch'in was married to the teachings of Confucius, and a new popular consciousness and philosophy of government was born.<sup>4</sup> During the Warring States period, the aspirations of the various factions had been to create a system of political unification, the ideal being a monistic society, with all elements under one supreme ruler. Upon attainment of this political ideal, the scene was ready for the application of Confucianism to governance. This philosophy is based on the importance of benevolence and righteousness, where man should "cultivate moral self-knowledge and virtue in the fulfillment of his responsibilities

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<sup>1</sup> Christopher A. Ford, "The Past as Prism: China and the Shock of Plural Sovereignty." *Joint Forces Quarterly* Issue 47 (4<sup>th</sup> Quarter 2007): 15.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Department of State. "Background Note: China." <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/18902.htm>; Internet; accessed 13 February 2008.

<sup>4</sup> Ford, 16.

within a network beginning with the family and extending through society as a whole.”<sup>5</sup> The system decrees that each man has a place in society, and only when each man acknowledges his place, and is virtuous in his conduct, will social harmony be achieved.<sup>6</sup> To that end, political authority is vested in only one man, and all others assume their rightful place, subordinate to him. The ruler with “high moral standards will be able to maintain harmony in family, stability in a kingdom, and peace in the world at large.”<sup>7</sup>

The Chinese believed that their Emperor was the one true leader, assuming his destined place of power, and the rest of the world was organized in corresponding levels of subservience, without exception. The surrounding nation-states were regarded as nothing more than uneducated barbarians that were lower in the social and political pecking order, their own leadership subordinate to that of the Chinese Emperor. This Chinese concept of a world order could not fathom the idea of international relations as other states were not equals, and thusly did not require a formal acknowledgement.

Nowhere was this more evident than with China’s dealings with British diplomatic overtures and trade relations in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Despite the ongoing mercantile trade between the two societies, attempts by the British to establish formal diplomatic relations with the Chinese governing power were stymied by the Chinese lack of recognition of the British government.<sup>8</sup> The Chinese were not attempting to be difficult, rather they were working under the assumption that their Celestine Emperor was the one true ruler, and that the British “head of state” was but a vassal to him. The refusal of the Emperor to recognize a foreign

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>7</sup> Huiyun Feng. *Chinese Strategic Culture and Foreign Policy Decision-Making*. (New York: Routledge, 2007), 19.

<sup>8</sup> Ford, 18.

ruler as an equal in international relations was frustrating, but highlighted the monistic mindset of the Chinese. Pluralism was a foreign concept, and its idea was a dangerous threat to the Emperor's hold on power; "...the granting of equality to foreign diplomats at the court would overthrow the whole social order".<sup>9</sup>

Despite the attempt to cling to the 'old ways', growing international trade meant that interaction with other societies was inevitable, and social and political unrest were about to characterize the next 100 years of Chinese history.

In 1910, Chinese youth and academics were frustrated by the slow pace of reform; the Qing dynasty was overthrown and an interim republic was formed to govern the state.<sup>10</sup> This rule lasted until 1916 when further political upheaval saw a societal regression to a feudal system of 'warlords' with "shifting coalitions of competing provincial military leaders."<sup>11</sup> In the 1920's, an effort to bring the warring factions together once again was marginally successful. With Soviet assistance, the fledgling Chinese Communist Party was formed, and entered into an alliance with the Chinese Nationalist People's Party.<sup>12</sup> This union was short-lived, and despite a common enemy in the Japanese during their invasion of China (1931-1945), the two parties split and had entered into their own civil war by 1927.<sup>13</sup> The end result of this conflict was the Nationalist camp under Chiang Kai-shek became entrenched on

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>10</sup> U.S. Department of State. "Background Note: China." <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/18902.htm>; Internet; accessed 13 February 2008.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*



Taiwan, declaring themselves the true rulers of China, and the Communists under Mao controlling the mainland and countering the Taiwanese claim of political dominance.

contemporary world order in which they found themselves. The solution was to characterize the current context by framing it as a ‘Warring States’ period, an era “characterized by clear boundaries between nations, between areas, and between cultures that exist in competition.”<sup>18</sup> It is the study of this period in history that even now allows Chinese academia and leadership to explain contemporary geopolitics, and presents the case for resisting the “alleged predatory onslaught of aspiring non-Chinese hegemons such as the former Soviet Union and, more recently the United States.”<sup>19</sup> This reflection on the past would indicate that the Chinese appear to find comfort in being able to draw upon historical precedent to describe their surroundings, and it is this reliance on history that allows some insight into their mindset. If one studies the actions and reactions of the Chinese culture in history books, one should be able to determine where the society has gone before, and where it should like to go in the future. It is therefore prudent to recall that the ‘Warring States’ period was transient, and that the end-game was the establishment of one supreme ruler, achieving unity and harmony amongst the various factions. To that end, it is feasible that the Chinese may interpret the contemporary political climate as simply a regression of history, and a sense of “here we go again” in order to re-establish their society as the one true enlightened people. One interpretation of this theory would indicate that the Chinese aspire to sole superpower status. However, there are numerous other factors that influence Chinese behaviour in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, and historical paradigms are only one aspect. It is also possible to extrapolate from the historical model that the Chinese culture simply seeks an ordered world, that they are more prosperous in peaceful times, regardless of the political leadership.

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

## Foreign Policy Perspectives – The Influence of the ‘Chinese Way’

Having looked at the historical forces that shaped China’s world view, and their place in it, the next aspect for consideration is their current approach to Foreign Policy. The country has stumbled since the Cold War to try and establish a coherent foreign policy doctrine, often putting it at odds with the nations it was seeking to engage.<sup>20</sup> Despite attempting to forge strong economic ties with the Americans, China also maintains relations with a number of nations that are antithetic to American ideals and policies. Additionally, the Chinese government has acknowledged the importance of fostering good relations within Asia proper, often with nations that have been its adversaries in the past.

An argument has been made that stability in the Asian sphere of influence is tied to China’s well-being. “When China has been strong and stable, order has been preserved...”<sup>21</sup> China has gone to great lengths over the last few years to reassure its neighbours that they have nothing to fear from the aspirant power emerging next door. To that end, China has become a clear supporter of multilateral organizations, from the U.N.,<sup>22</sup> to more local affiliations such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

The SCO is regional group that along with China, includes the border sharing nations of Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. One of the aims of the Organization is to peacefully settle old border disputes and affirm China’s stance of non-

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<sup>20</sup> Jane’s. “Jane’s Sentinel Country Risk Assessment: China.” [http://sentinel.janes.com/docs/sentinel/CNAS\\_country.jsp?Prod\\_Name=CNAS&Sent\\_Country=China&](http://sentinel.janes.com/docs/sentinel/CNAS_country.jsp?Prod_Name=CNAS&Sent_Country=China&); Internet; accessed 13 February 2008.

<sup>21</sup> Feng, 83.

<sup>22</sup> Evan S. Medeiros, “China’s International Behavior: Activism, Opportunism, and Diversification.” *Joint Forces Quarterly* Issue 47 (4<sup>th</sup> Quarter 2007): 37.

aggression towards its neighbours. The SCO has also provided a framework under which China and Russia have been able to conduct joint military exercises.<sup>23</sup> There is a contention that the SCO is an Asian attempt to bring counterweight to NATO, a claim that is not wholeheartedly denounced by Russia.<sup>24</sup> That said, China has indicated that it does not want to get drawn into a future U.S.-Russian conflict, and is not enthusiastic about the idea of the SCO as a strategic military alliance.<sup>25</sup>

ASEAN is a more far-reaching organization, and is a forum by which China has sought to improve relations with countries within the South Asian sphere of influence, including India. ASEAN has also provided the platform from which China has hosted the Six-Party talks on North Korea's weapons program.<sup>26</sup>

Importantly, to both regional states, and the global community at large, is the fact that China was the first nation to commit to a "no first use" of nuclear weapons clause.<sup>27</sup> China is also a signatory of the International Atomic Energy Agency (1984), the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (1992), and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (1996), all of which are efforts to re-assure the global community of its intentions as it seeks to become a responsible member of the 'nuclear club'.

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<sup>23</sup> U.S. Department of State. "Background Note: China." <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/18902.htm>; Internet; accessed 13 February 2008.

<sup>24</sup> Economist.Com; "Central Asia: Not Quite the Pact That Was." Aug 23<sup>rd</sup> 2007. Available from [http://www.economist.com/research/articlesBySubject/displaystory.cfm?subjectid=548623&story\\_id=9687791](http://www.economist.com/research/articlesBySubject/displaystory.cfm?subjectid=548623&story_id=9687791); Internet; accessed 27 February 2008.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> U.S. Department of State. "Background Note: China." <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/18902.htm>; Internet; accessed 13 February 2008.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

Despite their historic inclination towards a monistic society, China has become a strong proponent of a ‘multi-polar’ international order.<sup>28</sup> Currently, Chinese policy makers claim that they seek “to foster a stable and peaceful international environment that is conducive to building a well-off society in an all around way.”<sup>29</sup> Initially, the Chinese assumed that in a post-Cold War multi-polar environment, the United States would not remain as the sole superpower, and that there was room at the top for other emergent states to attain similar status. This expectation has proven somewhat false, and a number of key events in global conflict have only reinforced to the Chinese that the Americans remain militarily and technologically well ahead of Chinese capabilities.<sup>30</sup>

As the Chinese re-assess the global security environment, their concept of “multi-polarity” has evolved to now recognize the U.S. as a sole superpower, sharing the stage with the other major powers such as China, Japan, and Europe.<sup>31</sup> Within this framework, China has attempted to strengthen its global position by forging strategic partnerships, ASEAN being a key example.

In an article on ‘China’s International Behaviour’,<sup>32</sup> author Evan S. Medeiros claims that there are three “historically determined lenses” that influence China’s international relations. First and foremost is a strong belief that, as was stated in the first section of this essay, China is in the process of rebuilding and reclaiming its lost status as a major regional

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<sup>28</sup> Jane’s. “Jane’s Sentinel Country Risk Assessment: China.” [http://sentinel.janes.com/docs/sentinel/CNAS\\_country.jsp?Prod\\_Name=CNAS&Sent\\_Country=China&Internet; accessed 13 February 2008.](http://sentinel.janes.com/docs/sentinel/CNAS_country.jsp?Prod_Name=CNAS&Sent_Country=China&Internet; accessed 13 February 2008.)

<sup>29</sup> Medeiros, 34.

<sup>30</sup> Feng, 84.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 84

<sup>32</sup> Medeiros, 35.

and global player. While seemingly worrisome as a motivation for expansionist ideas, taken in context with the next two “lenses”, it would appear that this reclamation is aimed at gaining respect and honour in the world, as opposed to an ‘invade and conquer’ mindset.

The second lens frames a view that China is trying to recover from “100 years of shame and humiliation”, a period of time that witnessed suffering at the hands of foreign powers from the European interactions in the 1800’s until the establishment of the state under Mao in 1949.

The third lens is a “defensive security outlook”. This viewpoint holds that China is primarily concerned with protecting itself from external threats and influences. As Medeiros points out, “...There is little talk about territorial aggrandizement or the need for external adventurism to facilitate national rejuvenation...”<sup>33</sup>

Taken at face value, this appears to be a non-threatening policy. It is rendered further benign when coined journalistically as “smile diplomacy”, an acknowledgement of the fact that “without encouraging peace and prosperity around China’s long borders there will be no peace and prosperity at home.”<sup>34</sup> To return to the Confucian theme, Chinese strategic behaviour is to display a reluctance to use force, preferring diplomatic means and negotiations where possible.<sup>35</sup>

It is obvious that the Chinese are acutely aware of their image as they attempt to increase their influence and regional power, and they are taking steps to underscore their intentions. Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao stressed at a conference in the U.S. that, despite its

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<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>34</sup> Economist.Com; “China and its Region: Smile Diplomacy.” Mar 29<sup>th</sup> 2007. Available from [http://www.economist.com/research/backgrounders/displaystory.cfm?story\\_id=8880901](http://www.economist.com/research/backgrounders/displaystory.cfm?story_id=8880901); Internet; accessed 19 March 2008.

<sup>35</sup> Feng, 25.

rising power, China is dedicated to peace, and that the cultural element of their society will play a more important role in the new century.<sup>36</sup>

These perceptions and ideals have been instrumental in shaping China's New Security Concept (NSC).<sup>37</sup> The NSC provides a framework by which China's new leadership can formulate a security strategy that acknowledges the current world order, while attempting to reconcile it with Chinese ideals and philosophy. The NSC prescribes "actively preventing war and conflict" through mutual confidence building measures, dialogue and consultation. It emphasizes actively involving the country in international affairs. And it is based, unsurprisingly, on the Confucian standard of "virtue and morality".<sup>38</sup>

In the book, *Chinese Strategic Culture and Foreign Policy Decision Making*,<sup>39</sup> the author uses the interesting approach of gaming theory to attempt to predict Chinese policy direction. Considering the concepts previously outlined, such as Confucian ideals, and the New Security Concept, she assigns values to personal attribute variables and assesses the actions of the Chinese leaders in reaction to certain key events; such as the accidental NATO bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade in 1999, and the 2001 U.S. EP-3 incident in the South China Sea. The author concludes that given these individual's actions, it is safe to assume that the current Chinese leadership (in this study, ex-President and Party Elder Jiang and current President Hu) are guided by Confucian belief systems, and have a tendency towards diplomatic resolution of crises rather than military reactions.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 98.

This is reassuring, especially when one considers that there remains an ongoing unresolved dispute within the South China Sea, specifically the issue of Taiwan. As outlined earlier, the significance of Taiwan rests with its political stance, initially as the “claimed” seat of Chinese Government after the civil war between the factions of Mao and Chiang Kai-shek, and then its assertion that it is an independent nation, even as the world now recognizes Beijing as the seat of Chinese power. China has always maintained that Taiwan is part of the People’s Republic, and has stated unequivocally that it will use force if necessary to reign in the ‘renegade province’.<sup>41</sup> As Taiwan’s biggest benefactor, the United States has been viewed as the key adversary to any offensive action from the Chinese mainland, and the most recent tensions over the island in 1995-96 resulted in U.S. warships patrolling the Taiwan Strait.<sup>42</sup>

While the threat of violence looms over the Taiwan issue, there have been conciliatory gestures on both sides that have allowed an uneasy peace to remain. China has proposed a “one country two systems” framework, as seen in the administration of Hong Kong, the hope being that eventually the mainland will realize its goal of “peaceful reunification”.<sup>43</sup> As long as the political rhetoric remains bluster, the likelihood of conflict is slim, and the recent Taiwanese elections have placed a moderate in the Presidential seat. While not refuting an eventual claim of independence, the new President has reached out to the mainland to resume political dialogue with proposals such as “mutual non-denial”, a conciliatory promise to “no longer challenge the status quo, in which Taiwan is sovereign in fact though not in law.”<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 99.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 103.

<sup>44</sup> Economist.Com; “Taiwan: Ma’s Horse Comes In.” Mar 27<sup>th</sup> 2008. Available from [http://www.economist.com/world/asia/displaystory.cfm?story\\_id=10925699](http://www.economist.com/world/asia/displaystory.cfm?story_id=10925699); Internet; accessed 7 April 2008.



In situations such as Taiwan, Chinese ‘foreign’ policy is as much about military power as it is about political influence or economics. At this point, the paper will look at the current state and modernization of the Chinese military, and what influence it is likely to have on policy development in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **Military Reform – Application of the ‘Chinese Way’**

Notwithstanding the appearance of reduced tensions in Asia, the Chinese People’s Liberation Army is still a major military force, and is undergoing significant reforms to meet the challenges of the current security environment. In particular, the success of western military technology in the Persian Gulf and Afghanistan conflicts has captured China’s interest and forced it to re-evaluate its own military structure and capabilities.<sup>45</sup> The method by which China goes about addressing its modernization is of significant interest to the rest of the world, and in particular the United States. In the post-Cold War environment, China represents the largest potential military adversary to the U.S. As a result, extensive studies have been done to frame the Chinese threat as it pertains to American interests.

Outside of official government assessments, a non-partisan task force sponsored by the Council on Foreign Relations at the Maurice R. Greenberg Center for Geo-Economic Studies in New York was formed in 2003 to provide insight into Chinese military power. The study warned against over-reaction to the sheer size and scale of the PLA, but also cautioned readers to not be underwhelmed by the relative “backwardness” of their system.<sup>46</sup> While the

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<sup>45</sup> Richard L. Grant, *China and Southeast Asia: Into the Twenty-First Century* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, c1993), 8.

expectation is that China will eventually become the predominant military power in Asia, it is not envisaged that will happen within the next twenty years.<sup>47</sup> Currently, the People's Liberation Army, in concert with the People's Armed Police and the People's Militia, is doctrinally tasked with defence of sovereignty and domestic security. To that end, the large extent of PLA power projection is relatively local, and land-based.<sup>48</sup> That said, there are indications that efforts are being made to increase the effective range of the PLA naval forces to engage in their idea of 'open ocean' warfare; 150-600 nautical miles offshore.<sup>49</sup> This interest in more potent naval power has seen the PLA acquire three decommissioned aircraft carriers for study, none of which are expected to return to operational status.<sup>50</sup>

The interest in limited power-projection heralds a doctrinal shift that will make the PLA more effective in their primary scenario of a Taiwanese conflict. The training since the 1990's has emphasized small scale manoeuvres, anti-stealth and anti-cruise missile defence, and more recently Information and Computer Network Warfare.<sup>51</sup> China believes that the U.S. and Taiwan are particularly susceptible to computer attack, and such a strike, if it could successfully pre-empt military action, would be in keeping with Sun-Tzu and Confucian principles.

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<sup>46</sup> Council on Foreign Relations, Maurice R. Greenberg Center for Geo-economic Studies. *Chinese Military Power: Report of an Independent Task Force* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 2003), 20.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

<sup>50</sup> Economist.Com; "China's Military Might: The Long March to be a Superpower." Aug 2<sup>nd</sup> 2007. Available from [http://www.economist.com/research/articlesBySubject/displaystory.cfm?subjectid=548623&story\\_id=9581310](http://www.economist.com/research/articlesBySubject/displaystory.cfm?subjectid=548623&story_id=9581310); Internet; accessed 27 February 2008.

<sup>51</sup> Council on Foreign Relations, Maurice R. Greenberg Center for Geo-economic Studies, 55.

Overall, PLA modernization has seen reductions in the size of its standing force, a shift to a more professional and more educated senior-NCO and Officer corps, and a focus on strength through technology rather than sheer numbers.<sup>52</sup>

The American government also commissions its own internal assessments of the potential Chinese threat. The United States Congress requires the Department of Defense (DoD) to submit an annual report on the state of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) in an effort to gauge what capabilities the Chinese may be acquiring, and ascertain their military goals.<sup>53</sup> In a recent issue of *Joint Force Quarterly*, author Dennis J. Blasko<sup>54</sup> makes some interesting observations on the most recent 2007 DoD report, and compares it to the 2006 submission.

First of all, in keeping with this paper's theme of Chinese cultural influences on behaviour, the report highlights the concept of the "People's War".<sup>55</sup> This idea is central to the understanding of PLA doctrine; it describes a national powerbase in both peace- and war-time that combines the military and civilian populations into a greater war-fighting collective. The application of this concept during times of peace is important, as it is primarily a defensive strategy that acknowledges the spectre of war, but in Confucian terms seeks to avoid conflict where possible.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Economist.Com; "China's Military Might: The Long March to be a Superpower." Aug 2<sup>nd</sup> 2007. Available from [http://www.economist.com/research/articlesBySubject/displaystory.cfm?subjectid=548623&story\\_id=9581310](http://www.economist.com/research/articlesBySubject/displaystory.cfm?subjectid=548623&story_id=9581310); Internet; accessed 27 February 2008.

<sup>53</sup> United States. Department of Defense. *Annual Report to Congress: Military Power of the People's Republic of China 2006* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2006).

<sup>54</sup> Dennis J. Blasko, "The 2007 Report on the Chinese Military: The Top 10 List of Missing Topics." *Joint Forces Quarterly* Issue 47 (4<sup>th</sup> Quarter 2007).

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

A second key aspect of the American report is the description of the Chinese idea of strategic deterrence.<sup>57</sup> The more powerful the military capability, the more effective the deterrent; however one must first have a capable force (a Chinese nod to modernization), and one must demonstrate resolve to use the force. For the Chinese, demonstrations of force take the form of “large-scale military parades, joint military exercises, and military visits.”<sup>58</sup>

The 2007 report estimates a PLA budget of US\$45 billion, but which could be as high as US\$85-125 billion. Generally speaking, the numbers of active duty members in the PLA are in the region of 2.3 million, roughly 68 percent in the army, 11 percent in the navy, 17 percent in the air force, and 4 percent in the missile component. These numbers are somewhat speculative, and the report repeatedly highlights the lack of transparency in Chinese military affairs.<sup>59</sup>

Finally, the report assesses that China’s main perceived adversary is the United States, and in keeping with the teachings of Sun Tzu, it does not seek a fight that it cannot be sure to win.<sup>60</sup> To that end, understanding that the U.S. would likely come to the aid of Taiwan should tensions escalate, “Beijing appears prepared to defer unification (of Taiwan) as long as it believes trends are advancing toward that goal and that the costs of conflict outweigh the benefits.”<sup>61</sup>

The DoD report echoes the observations of a number of studies that have been conducted over the last few years, with those conducted after the events of 9/11 being the most

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<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>60</sup> Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*. Ed. and trans. by Samuel B. Griffith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), 82

<sup>61</sup> Blasko, 54.

relevant and telling. The impressive military power brought to bear on Afghanistan, and then Iraq, provided a highly visible show of force to the rest of the world. For a nation such as China that views the U.S. as its most dangerous potential adversary, this insight into American capabilities is key to shaping their own modern forces.

## **Conclusion**

If the Western world would like to ensure peaceful relations with China, there would appear to be a couple of key elements. Firstly, the issue of Taiwan is China's primary security and sovereignty concern, and although there is currently an acceptable status-quo, 'rocking the boat' could push the Chinese leadership to react with force, a confrontation that they do not necessarily desire. This leads to the second point, that as long as the U.S., and its allies, maintain a strong and technologically superior military force, the Chinese are not likely to be antagonistic. As highlighted in this paper, history and philosophy teach them to seek peaceful solutions where possible, and to not enter a battle that they cannot be sure of winning. These themes are central to the 'Chinese Way', and as the political leadership attempts to re-instill a sense of history and culture in the population, the western world should be able to rely on these societal and political tendencies in future interactions.

In order to make the paper as relevant and current as possible, many of the references on foreign policy have been culled from recent reports and news sources. It is interesting to note that a common theme in Western press was observed. The articles invariably took a sensationalist slant describing the rise of Chinese influence and power in the world, but tended to soften the 'military threat' stance by their conclusion. Despite the potential for an economic or military threat, actual Chinese actions seem to indicate that the military threat is minimal.

In reality, China is militarily lagging behind the powers that it desires to join on the world stage, and is faced with a choice between increasing economic or military prowess. China will have to focus its energies on non-military aspects of foreign policy as it attempts to become part of the greater global community.

In conclusion, the evidence indicates that despite being born from a narrow and monistic view of the world order, Confucian ideals have survived the China-centric perspective, and continue to guide Chinese actions in the current global environment. These ideals that promote “harmony and peace” may seem window dressing and political rhetoric, but recent foreign policy actions and the direction being taken with the modernization of the PLA would seem to support a non-aggressive stance. If the principles behind the New Security Concept are adhered to, there is presently little military threat of China seeking an expansionist policy; rather it will remain content with its place as a dominant power in the Asian sphere of influence.

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