

# Gaining Victory in Systems Warfare: A Chinese Perspective on the U.S.-China Military Balance

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# Preparing the PLA for the “New Era”



## Systems Warfighting

Modern warfare is the confrontation of opposing combat systems

Flexibility, transparency, dynamism, and continuous assessment



## Joint Operations

Integrate capabilities, synchronize actions, and harmonize effects

Interoperability, command and planning structures



## Informatization

Information superiority most critical requirement for success in modern warfare

Collection, processing, analysis, dissemination, and protection across levels



## Prep for Military Struggle

Modern warfare requires highly skilled forces, flexible application, and innovation

Realistic training, reliability, readiness, and institutional reform/change

# What Xi Thinks About Most

Political reliability

Fight and win wars

## “Will They or Not?”

“What I think about most is that when the party and the people need it, will our armed forces always adhere to the party’s absolute leadership, will our armed forces be able to mobilize and fight winning battles, and will leaders at all levels in our armed forces be able to lead their people into battle and command in battle.”

- Xi Jinping (Oct 2017)

Leadership and command

Mobilization

# PLA Systemic Assessments

## Changes in Warfare

- Unpredictable
- Information-based
- Non-contact
- Non-linear
- Asymmetric
- Precision-based
- Resource intensive
- Integrated

## New Condition

Informatized warfare

Joint warfare

“Modern campaigns are confrontations between combat systems”

## New Requirements

- Readiness
- Proficiency
- Force generation
- Tailorable
- Objective-oriented
- Flexible/adaptive
- Synchronized

## Operational Concepts

- Target-centric warfare
- Control warfare
- Collective warfare
- Vital-point annihilation
- Multi-domain precision warfare
- Info-firepower-special operations-psyops

Systemic Change

Sense Making

Adaptation

Regulation

New Environment

Observations

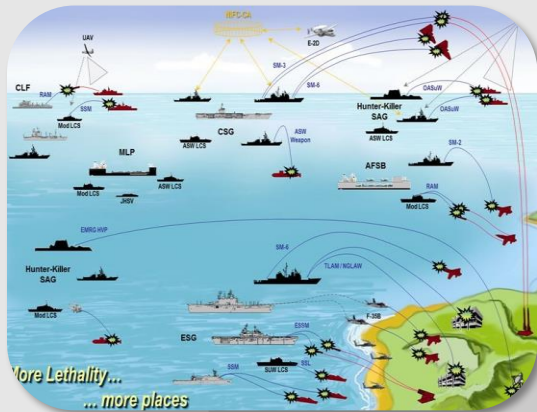
Lessons Learned

Concept Development

Experimentation

Implementation

# PLA Views of Combat Against the United States



## “Distributed Lethality”

- PLA generally groups new U.S. concepts of operation into one broad category
- Some in PLA view U.S. changes as PLA success
- Mix of PLA perspectives on what changes mean—majority concerned with implications
- PLA view of success—forced U.S. to modify
- PLA view of future challenges—targeting and efficient force application more difficult
- Shows need for new PLA operational concepts



# Emerging PLA Operational Concepts

## *“Four Types of War” (~2010-2015)*

Target-Centric Warfare  
Information-Firepower Warfare  
Control Warfare  
Collective Warfare



## *Multi-Domain Concepts (~2017-Present)*

Multi-Domain Precision Warfare  
Info-Firepower-Special Operations Warfare  
IFSO-Psychological Warfare

Relies on “new-type operational forces” and ability to employ a “combat-power generation model”

Requires (1) effective command, (2) adaptability, (3) initiative, (4) continuous assessment

# Preparing for Military Struggle

## Defining the Problem

United States and China have several overlapping problems as well as numerous differences that will shape outcomes

## Race to a Solution

Both U.S. military and PLA have done significant work to adapt—but problem definition along with systemic and environmental realities will shape how success for either side

## Institutional Factors

Organizational culture, organizational structure, and ability of institutions to innovate and adapt will all factor into achieving effective solutions (must be viewed relatively)



# Conclusions

- Assessments based on force structure, technology, and organization tell only part of the story
- PLA imperatives broader than most U.S. audiences appreciate—must be factored into our assessments
- PLA confidence in its progress is mixed with leaders expressing concerns about critical functions and tasks...may impact perspectives on deterrence
- Competing guidance challenges progress: PLA culture, contradictory ends, insularity, lack of experience



# Implications

- PLA views of combat against U.S. reveal what types of operational problems concern them most—targeting, decentralization, disaggregation
- United States should build operational concepts to take advantage of PLA systemic problems and concerns
- Core issue in future major power conflict will center on speed of decision making and adaptability
- United States needs to be prepared to fight the war it does not expect

# Questions?