

CHINA'S OPERATIONAL APPROACH TO INFORMATION ADVANTAGE:
CRISIS IN THE TAIWAN STRAIT

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MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE
Information Advantage Scholars

by

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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the US Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

ABSTRACT

CHINA'S OPERATIONAL APPROACH TO INFORMATION ADVANTAGE: CRISIS IN THE TAIWAN STRAIT, by Derail Young, 90 pages.

China's relationship with Taiwan is one of the most contentious 21st Century threats for the United States in the Indo-Pacific. Over the past thirty years, China has invested heavily in its ability to project power in the Indo-Pacific, with a keen focus on countering US capabilities. This study seeks to discover How will China use the informational dimension to achieve reunification with Taiwan in the 21st Century. Using China's approach to information advantage during two separate crises in the Taiwan Strait, this study aims to determine how China operationalizes information during a conflict with Taiwan. The study analyzes the 1955 and 1996 Taiwan Strait Crises using the PRC Reunification Strategy to analyze when China is likely to use information as the main effort toward reunification, and the 3Is theoretical framework to characterize how the PRC shapes its approach toward reunification with Taiwan while also specifying its use of information during a crisis in the Taiwan Strait. With the results of this study, modern military practitioners can project plausible Chinese approaches to information operations in a future conflict with Taiwan.

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ACRONYMS

A2AD	Anti-Access/Area Denial
AI	Artificial Intelligence
C4ISR	Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance
CMC	Central Military Commission
CPC	Chinese Communist Party
DPP	Democratic Progressive Party
EW	Electromagnetic Warfare
KMT	Kuomintang
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
NDU	National Defense University
PLA	People's Liberation Army
PLASSF	PLA Strategic Support Force
PRC	People's Republic of China
PSYOPS	Psychological Operations
ROC	Republic of China
TAO	Taiwan Affairs Office
UFD	United Front Work Department of the Central Committee of the CPC

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Chinese people will never allow any foreign force to bully, oppress, or subjugate us. Anyone who would attempt to do so will find themselves on a collision course with a great wall of steel forged by over 1.4 billion Chinese people.

—Xi Jinping, CPC Centennial Celebration

Background

Over the past three decades, China has developed its economic and military strength to become a global superpower capable of defending itself from foreign threats while simultaneously battling several domestic issues.¹ This position enabled the General Secretary of the People's Republic of China, Xi Jinping, to display a distinct shift in China's willingness to project power, unambiguously warning the global community against interfering with Chinese interests. During the Chinese Communist Party's (CPC) Centennial Celebration in July 2021, Xi demonstrated a will to assert hard power despite trying to sustain its robust economy, mitigate the COVID-19 pandemic, lay claim to the South China Sea and Taiwan, as well as modernize its military force.²

As a unique regional hegemon, China is defining the function and role of modern Communism. China's execution of Communism in the modern era has led to criticism over its adaptation of capitalist principles. For instance, before the late twentieth century

¹ 60 Minutes Australia, "War with China: Are We Closer than We Think?: Under Investigation." YouTube video, September 20, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kA2KaEKs1LA>.

² Xinhua, "Full Text: Speech by Xi Jinping at a Ceremony Marking the Centenary of the CPC," ed. huaxia, *XinhuaNet*, July 1, 2021, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/special/2021-07/01/c_1310038244.htm.

reforms known as the “Open-door policy,” in which China sought to achieve economic growth through the active introduction of foreign capital and technology, countered the period that the CPC discouraged foreign investment and private sector market development.³ Without these drastic changes to China’s economic practices, China’s ability to invest in a modern military force could have been marginalized. Now touting the world’s second-largest economy, China can leverage its economic prowess and military strength to project its instruments of power globally.⁴

Definition of Terms

Connected-level Information Manipulation - content that connects CPC-controlled themes set up by the Propaganda Department and the low-level rumors spread by pro-CPC individuals and groups.⁵

Competition Continuum – “describes a world of enduring competition conducted through a mixture of cooperation, competition below armed conflict, and armed conflict.”⁶

³ BBC, “China Profile – Timeline: A Chronology of Key Events,” *BBC News*, July 29, 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-13017882>.

⁴ Nick Shiffrin, “China: Power and Prosperity -- Watch the Full Documentary,” *PBS NewsHour*, YouTube video, November 22, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JovtmKFxi3c>.

⁵ Puma Shen, “How China Initiates Information Operations Against Taiwan,” *Taiwan Strategist*, no. 12 (December 2021): 16, <https://www.pf.org.tw/files/7675/1BB3C76F-A6C9-4356-BF96-53B7A2546F3416>.

⁶ Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Doctrine Note 1-19, *Competition Continuum* (Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, June 3, 2019), v, https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/jdn_jg/jdn1_19.pdf.

Decision Dominance - the ability for a military commander to sense, understand, decide, act, and assess faster and more effectively than any adversary.⁷

Force Resiliency - the ability to resist, counter, and prevail against adversary reconnaissance, technical disruptions, and malign activity such as misinformation, disinformation, and propaganda.⁸

Hard Power - actions that focus on military intervention, coercive diplomacy, and economic sanctions to enforce national interest.⁹

High-level Information Manipulation - information manipulation that is carried out by high-level departments in the CPC and United Front. Sets the tone and topic for official narratives.¹⁰

Information Advantage - as defined by the United Kingdom, "...the credible advantage gained through the continuous, adaptive, decisive, and resilient employment of information and information systems."¹¹

⁷ Barry Rosenberg, "Army's New Aim Is 'Decision Dominance'," *Breaking Defense*, March 17, 2021, <https://breakingdefense.sites.breakingmedia.com/2021/03/armys-new-aim-is-decision-dominance/>.

⁸ Eric X. Schaner, "MCDP 8, Information: A New Marine Corps Doctrine for the Information Warfighting Function," *Marine Corps Gazette* (April 2022): 5.

⁹ Robert J. Art and Kenneth N. Waltz, *The Use of Force: Military Power and International Politics*, 7th ed (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009), 1-483.

¹⁰ Shen, "How China Initiates Information Operations Against Taiwan," 25.

¹¹ United Kingdom, Director Concepts and Doctrine, Joint Concept Note 2/18, *Information Advantage* (Shrivenham, Swindon, Wiltshire: Chiefs of Staff, Ministry of Defence, November 2018), 7, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/919262/20200909-JCN_2_18_Information_Advantage_accessible.pdf.

Information Environment – “The information environment is the aggregate of individuals, organizations, and systems that collect, process, disseminate, or act on information.”¹²

Informational Dimension - encompasses “...where and how information is collected, processed, stored, disseminated, and protected.”¹³

Informatization - implies that information technologies, particularly those associated with command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (C4ISR), are deemed vital to military success.¹⁴

Intelligentization - a process that incorporates Artificial Intelligence (AI) throughout the development of future warfighting capabilities, including automated decision aids to enhance the speed and accuracy of operational decisions.¹⁵

Low-level Information Manipulation - information manipulation carried out by individuals and non-state actors capable of spreading disinformation.¹⁶

¹² Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 3-13, *Information Operations* (Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, November 20, 2014), ix, https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/pubs/jp3_13.pdf.

¹³ Ibid., x.

¹⁴ Richard A. Bitzinger, “China’s Love Affair with ‘Informatized Warfare’,” *Asia Times*, February 27, 2018, <https://asiatimes.com/2018/02/chinas-love-affair-informatized-warfare/>.

¹⁵ Edmund Burke, Kristen Gunness, Cortez Cooper, and Mark Cozad, *People’s Liberation Army Operational Concepts* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2020), 21-22, https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA394-1.html

¹⁶ Shen, “How China Initiates Information Operations Against Taiwan,” 25-26.

Prevailing Narrative - narrative that results in a “...public opinion or perception advantage by yielding trust, credibility, and believability in presence, mission, and objectives.”¹⁷

Psychological Warfare - undermines an adversary’s combat power, resolve, and decision-making, while exacerbating internal disputes to cause the enemy to divide into factions.¹⁸

Shi - Chinese word for “strategic advantage.”¹⁹

Soft Power - the ability to get what one wants through persuasion or attraction rather than coercion.²⁰

Stratagem – “a Chinese historical method designed to mislead an opponent’s perception, thinking, emotion, and will.”²¹

Systems Confrontation - war waged in the “...physical domains of land, sea, and air, but also in outer space, nonphysical cyberspace, electromagnetic spectrum, and even psychological dimension.”²²

¹⁷ Schaner, “MCDP 8, Information,” 22.

¹⁸ Elsa Kania, “The PLA’s Latest Strategic Thinking on the Three Warfares,” *China Brief* 16, no. 13 (August 22, 2016): 10-14, <https://jamestown.org/program/the-pla-latest-strategic-thinking-on-the-three-warfares/>.

¹⁹ Timothy L. Thomas, *China Military Strategy: Basic Concepts and Examples of Its Use* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Foreign Military Studies Office, 2014), 211.

²⁰ Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1990), 32.

²¹ Thomas, *China Military Strategy*, 315.

²² Jeffrey Engstrom, *Systems Confrontation and System Destruction Warfare: How the Chinese People’s Liberation Army Seeks to Wage Modern Warfare* (Santa

System Destruction – “seeks to paralyze and even destroy the critical functions of an enemy’s operational system.”²³

System Overmatch – “the technical advantage of one side over another, yielding fires, intelligence, maneuver, logistics, force protection, or C2 advantages.”²⁴

Problem Statement

During the CPC’s 19th National Congress in 2017, General Secretary Xi Jinping proposed key modernization goals for China to achieve by 2049.²⁵ Xi’s military modernization goals have led the People’s Liberation Army towards restructuring itself into an intelligentized joint force to achieve decision dominance.²⁶ Over the past few years, the United States military began shifting its focus from counterinsurgency to large-scale combat operations in a multidomain environment. With these changes, the United States is also incorporating its approach to information advantage to attain decision dominance. According to US doctrine, the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) foresees

Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, February 1, 2018), ix, https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1708.html

²³ Engstrom, *Systems Confrontation and System Destruction Warfare*, x.

²⁴ Schaner, “MCDP 8, Information,” 22.

²⁵ Zhang Hui, “China 2035: Achieving Socialist Modernization Basically,” *China Today*, June 25, 2021, http://www.chinatoday.com.cn/ctenglish/2018/commentaries/202106/t20210625_800250626.html.

²⁶ Timothy Thomas, “The Chinese Way of War: How Has It Changed?” (The MITRE Corporation, McLean, VA, June 2020), 77, https://community.apan.org/cfs-file/__key/docpreview-s/00-00-16-68-30/20200611-China-Way-of-War-_2800_Timothy-Thomas_2900_.pdf.

Informatized Warfare evolving into Intelligentized Warfare in the 21st Century.²⁷

China's incorporation of informatization into its joint military tactics challenges US pursuit of decision dominance, thereby threatening the United States' ability to project power in the Indo-Pacific region in the 21st Century.²⁸ China uses the informational dimension to achieve its political and military interests while undermining US influence in the Indo-Pacific Region.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to analyze how China uses the informational dimension to achieve its 21st Century political and military interests while also undermining US influence in the Taiwan Strait. The study will analyze China's activity within the informational dimension using multiple cases demonstrating China's use of force in the Taiwan Strait. This research will explore and describe China's approach to information warfare. Unlike China's historic military capabilities throughout its existence, information warfare and artificial intelligence are new capabilities that present the possibility of being a revolution in military affairs. These technological developments are vital to understanding Chinese strategy because they may allow China to fulfill its interest below the threshold of armed conflict. Historically, old Chinese regimes would avoid using force, especially if appeasement proved to be more effective at meeting their

²⁷ Headquarters, Department of the Army, Army Techniques Publication 7-100.3, *Chinese Tactics* (Washington, DC: Army Publishing Directorate, November 2021).

²⁸ Burke et al., *People's Liberation Army Operational Concepts*.

political interests.²⁹ Chinese theorists like Sun Tzu prioritize advantage in warfare. Because of Sun Tzu's influence, China is especially interested in accomplishing its interests below the threshold of war.

Research Questions

Primary Question: How will China use the informational dimension to achieve reunification with Taiwan in the 21st Century?

Secondary Research Question #1: How does China's strategy for complete reunification with Taiwan shape its approach to "informatized warfare" in the Taiwan Strait?

Secondary Research Question #2: How do China's information capabilities shape its ability to exploit the informational dimension in the Taiwan Strait?

Secondary Research Question #3: How has China used the informational dimension to seek decision dominance over the US within the Taiwan Strait?

Assumptions

The most significant assumption in this study is that China's newfound economic and military strength will allow it to seek an information advantage over the United States in the Indo-Pacific region. This study also assumes that decision dominance and information advantage are achievable. Given the confidential nature of information warfare, China has not published anything official stating its intentions to obtain information advantage. This assumption is based on the US Army's publication on

²⁹ Michael D. Swaine and Ashley J. Tellis, *Interpreting China's Grand Strategy* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 24 August 2000).

Chinese Tactics, which outlines China's intent to seek information advantage. When combining Xi Jinping's assertive tone regarding the use of force with the backdrop of numerous studies about China's information operations capable force, it is logical to assume information advantage is essential to their military strength in the region.

In addition to assumptions about China's intent, this study assumes every author and source contributor has accurately and honestly described China's strategies, tactics, and military capabilities. Despite the lack of primary military sources from China, this study will synthesize available sources to construct a reliable interpretation of China and its capabilities. To mitigate the use of inaccurate information within the study, sources will be scrutinized and assessed based on the contributor's expertise. For instance, sources produced by the US Government will be considered more substantial than independent researchers lacking access to classified intelligence about the PLA.

Scope

This project aims to examine the overarching framework of Chinese informatized warfare in the 21st Century. It will not be a prescriptive study for the US military because the study will not identify the exact steps needed to address the Chinese approach to information advantage. Given that this study will not use classified sources, the material will lack the information required to develop a comprehensive response to the Chinese threat. Instead, this study will concentrate on unclassified research and sources produced by Chinese experts. This study will place emphasis on the Chinese 20th Century political and military strategy referencing Chinese history that specifically shapes modern decision making.

Limitations and Delimitations

Access to classified material is the most significant limitation of this study because it is likely that both China's and the United States' intelligence communities have classified material related to information advantage. In addition to limited access to classified materials, this research will be limited by the need for third-party translations of primary sources written in Mandarin. This study will not fund travel to China, limiting access to sources found only in China. All resources will need to be gathered digitally or accessible from the US.

Due to the scope of this research, this study will be delimited to a qualitative analysis of the material because a quantitative study requires unavailable resources. Because of this delimitation, the study will lack empirical data and require qualitative information to expand the researchers' understanding of Chinese information-based warfare in the 21st Century. In order to ensure the research objectives are attainable, this study will also be limited in that it will only cover military affairs that occurred after the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949. This study will analyze China's information operations within the Taiwan Strait during the 1955 and 1996 crises using primary and secondary sources. To prevent bias, the study will incorporate multiple sources.

Significance of the Study

Over the past thirty years, China has developed into the world's second-largest economy and built a military force capable of rivaling US forces in the Indo-Pacific

region.³⁰ While, the United States has been focused on the Global War on Terrorism and counterinsurgency during the last two decades, China had the luxury of observing our military decision-making processes for the duration of the wars in the Middle East. However, the pendulum of US priorities has now shifted towards Great Power Competition. According to the previous US Secretary of Defense, James Mattis, China is leveraging military modernization, influence operations, and predatory economics to coerce neighboring countries in an effort to reorder the Indo-Pacific region to its advantage.³¹ Information practitioners must further explore China's capabilities and informatization strategies to help shape the US perspective of Chinese information warfare. In addition to personnel in information related fields, military service members and civilians in every warfighting function will benefit from a detailed analysis of Chinese information warfare by understanding the potential impact on joint operations.

Summary

Through his speech at the CPC Centennial, President Xi Jinping has made it clear China is willing to use force to preserve the right to pursue its goals and objectives. As a country with a history spanning the civilizations of humankind, China has a different perspective on warfare against great power competitors deserving further analysis. Most importantly, China is focused on achieving its national interests without the use of

³⁰ Shiffrin, "China: Power and Prosperity."

³¹ Secretary of Defense, *Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy of The United States of America: Sharpening the American Military's Competitive Edge* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2018), 14.

military force.³² Now that China is displaying its capability to use force, it is time to assess the Chinese political and military decision-making process against the backdrop of information advantage as a goal in the Indo-Pacific. The US needs to further analyze how China's "informatized" military force challenges US pursuit of decision dominance in the Indo-Pacific region in the 21st Century. Understanding China's approach to reunification through the informational dimension will help the US manage the unique threat in the Taiwan Strait and will thus be better enabled to shape its modernization efforts.

³² Swaine and Tellis, *Interpreting China's Grand Strategy*.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Shi is sought everywhere, whether it be with the use of forces, electrons, or some other force. Through Sun Tzu, Chinese leaders establish the constant struggle for Shi, an advantage over your adversary.

—Timothy Thomas, “The Chinese Way of War: How Has It Changed?”

Introduction

This thesis aims to analyze the following question: How will China use the informational dimension to achieve reunification with Taiwan in the 21st Century? Other secondary questions include: (1) How does China’s strategy for complete reunification with Taiwan shape its approach to “informatized warfare” in the Taiwan Strait? (2) How do China’s information capabilities shape its ability to exploit the informational dimension in the Taiwan Strait? (3) How has China used the informational dimension to seek decision dominance over the US within the Taiwan Strait?

This research is significant because it will help military commanders and professionals understand China’s strategy and operations in the informational dimension. The US is focusing on near peer threats, and China is the most capable threat in the Indo-Pacific region. As the world’s second-largest economy, Chinese economic decisions help shape the global economy in the 21st Century.³³ With China’s growing national power, it is vital that the US understands exactly where China is on the competition continuum

³³ The World Bank Group, “Data Bank: World Development Indicators,” The World Bank, accessed February 6, 2022, <https://databank.worldbank.org/source/world-development-indicators>.

from China's perspective. Observing China within a Chinese context prevents the study from making biased assumptions regarding Chinese decision-making.

The following topics organize this literature review: Chinese Grand Strategy, Regional Interests, One China Principle, Chinese Domestic Considerations, PLA, Information Capabilities, and China's Reunification Strategy. This chapter will synthesize relevant materials and ideas that shaped this study. The material will be analyzed and organized thematically to ensure readers are able to follow the focus of this research.

Chinese Grand Strategy

Confucius, Sun Tzu, Karl Marx, and Mao Zedong heavily influence Chinese grand strategy. Studying these four leaders provides a philosophical, historical, political, and military approach to understanding Chinese warfighting and strategy. Understanding Chinese strategy will provide the perspective necessary to identify how China decides to use force and when it is likely to occur. Chinese grand strategy is an amalgamation of Chinese history, theory, and politics. This is not a unique occurrence, but the cultural context differs significantly from Western culture. The Chinese approach to warfare is patient, defensive in nature, and based in realism, while the western approach is impatient, optimistic, and offensively focused.³⁴

It is difficult to separate Chinese thought from Confucian thought. Confucianism is not a religion because there is no mention of the afterlife in any of Confucius'

³⁴ Dr. J.G.D. Babb, "Who Wants an Infowar against 1/5 of Mankind, with Nukes, Military Parity, Civil-Military Fusion, and Home Court Advantage?" (Lecture, Information Advantage Scholars, US Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, KS, April 28, 2022).

Analects. However, Confucius provides China with a code of ethics that prioritizes piety and education. During Confucius' day, warfare consumed China; he believed education, benevolence, and righteousness were keys to building a peaceful society. This desire for peace and righteousness supports the notion of China's view of warfare as a last resort. To illustrate this hesitancy, Confucius' describes the type of person he would want with him in warfare in the seventh book of his Analects "Those who fight tigers with their bare hands, wade across rivers, and are willing to die without regret – I would not want their company. I would certainly want those who approach affairs with fearful caution and who like to lay careful plans for success."³⁵ Confucius' quote also illustrates the Chinese priority of education over valor. While a Soldier may be willing to die for a just cause, an educated man may prevent his death through careful planning. Confucius's position on warfare does not negate the necessity of war, but it does lend perspective to the question of what the PRC and President Xi consider to be righteous and benevolent? Is warfare tolerable if success can be guaranteed? While Confucius focuses on caution and careful planning for the sake of righteousness, Sun Tzu focuses on manipulating the enemy to create the opportunity for an easy victory.³⁶

Sun Tzu provides the historical context of Chinese Warfare. Chinese planners seek Shi by incorporating concepts known as stratagems to develop plans for their military operations. These plans differ from US planners developing Courses of Action

³⁵ Confucius, *The Analects of Confucius: A Teaching Translation*, trans. Robert Eno (Self-published by Robert Eno, 2015), 159, <https://scholarworks.iu.edu/dspace/handle/2022/23420>.

³⁶ Ralph D. Sawyer, trans., *The Seven Military Classics of Ancient China* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, Inc., 1994).

for commanders to decide on the best plan for mission success. Chinese strategies are based on misleading their enemies' thinking processes. While US plans may incorporate manipulation, they are not inherently manipulative. The use of stratagems is an art, not a science, and its sole purpose is to achieve Shi. According to Timothy Thomas, a former analyst at the Foreign Military Studies Office at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, "Outstanding levels of stratagem can ignite an extraordinary energy from the national strength available and turn passive to the active and transfer inferiority to superiority; it can secure the objective of winning by a few and winning superiority by using inferiority."³⁷ This concept is similar to two of Carl von Clausewitz's principles of war—mass, and economy of force—but it pairs them with deception to render success in favor of the Chinese strategist.³⁸ To illustrate the concept, Chinese strategists will synchronize effects at a significant position and time, employing combat power in the most calculated way while ensuring success by deceiving enemy forces of China's intent. These feats can only be accomplished if China has objective awareness of its capabilities and limitations and accurately estimates its adversaries' strengths and weaknesses.

Karl Marx provides the Communist context of Chinese Warfare as seen in the concept "subjective guidance must conform to objective realities."³⁹ Chinese strategists evaluate the strategic environment, known as the objective reality, then use subjective initiative to develop stratagems to achieve Chinese interests. Military practitioners may

³⁷ Thomas, *China Military Strategy*.

³⁸ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Peter Paret and Michael Howard (Princeton, NJ: University Press, 1989).

³⁹ Thomas, *China Military Strategy*.

associate this with ends, ways, and means. The difference is that deception is always incorporated with the “ways.” This strategy does not only apply to military operations, but it is used with all of China’s instruments of national power. However, Marxist ideology may be affected by China’s social dynamic. There is a significant gap between the poor and rich, and communist ideology fails to address this dynamic. This dynamic is unique because China adopts elements of capitalist principles to bolster its economic ambitions while quelling unrestricted individualistic pursuits.⁴⁰ An example of this is the increase in Chinese regulations against successful companies like Alibaba Group Holding and Tencent. The CPC demonstrates how individual success will be marginalized to reinforce socialist ideology in China.

Mao Zedong emphasized the Marxist objective reality and subjective initiative in warfare. Mao expressed the importance of operating within the objective reality in his 1936 work “Problems of Strategy in China’s Revolutionary War.” Mao argues that it is essential for commanders to correctly determine the Chinese strategic orientation, oppose adventurism when on the offensive, and oppose conservatism when on the defensive.⁴¹ Mao’s understanding of warfare considers commanders’ ability to apply strategies subjectively in decisive battle as a determinant for victory. This strategy is predicated on predicted success. Commanders are expected to transition between the offense and defense to obtain a marked advantage over the enemy, as necessary. These transitions are

⁴⁰ Mingfu Liu and Zhongyuan Wang, *The Thoughts of Xi Jinping* (Miami, FL: American Academic Press, 2017).

⁴¹ Mao Zedong, “Problems of Strategy in China’s Revolutionary War,” Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung, last modified December 1936, https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-1/mswv1_12.htm.

made possible by Mao's philosophy of extensive preparation tailored towards specific threats. If the Chinese army is inferior to its opposing enemy force, Mao's strategy would call for a protracted war and campaigns over quick, decisive battles. Again, the importance of patience and the proper conditions for success are emphasized.

Regional Interests: One China Principle

The relationship between Taiwan and China is the CPC's number one strategic issue of concern. The tension between the two nations is no surprise because their current predicament resulted from a civil war 70 years ago. Despite the tenuous relationship, China has endured Taiwan's resistance due to Taiwan's economic success and willingness to work with China economically.⁴² As a result of their willingness to cooperate economically, President Xi is trying to insulate the Taiwan issue from US-China affairs to decrease US leverage on this issue in the bilateral relationship.⁴³ Although communication between Taiwan and China has increased over the years, the domestic disturbance between Beijing and Hong Kong could potentially sour the possibility of progress. With pro-independence officials leading the government in Taiwan, the discussion of reunification is marginalized by uncertainty more than ever before.

In a white paper produced by Foreign Ministry of China, Chinese officials explain the historical context of their claim for the island of Taiwan. After WWII, China, the

⁴² Jonathan Holslag, *China's Coming War with Asia* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2015).

⁴³ Jing Huang, "Xi Jinping's Taiwan Policy: Boxing Taiwan In with the One-China Framework." in *Taiwan and China: Fitful Embrace* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2017), 239-248.

United States, and Britain signed the Potsdam Proclamation, which made the return of Northeast China, Taiwan, and the Penghu Archipelago from Japan's control official.⁴⁴ In 1950, President Truman issued a statement supporting the restoration of Formosa, now Taiwan, to the Republic of China.⁴⁵ Based on the white paper from the Chinese embassy, the PRC is laying claim to agreements between the US and the Republic of China. The fact that China would lay claim to an agreement between the founding government of Taiwan and the US highlights that the PRC never recognized the Republic of China as a separate and sovereign nation. Despite China's interpretation of the agreement, the US established diplomatic ties with the PRC on the 1st of January 1979, an act that officially terminated diplomatic relations with the Republic of China. This is critical because the US has benefited from an unofficial relationship with Taiwan for the last 43 years.

Given the current context, President Xi's goal is to maintain Taiwan's de facto status while using soft power to bolster unification efforts. Based on Taiwan's Ministry of Finance Calculations, Taiwan has conducted \$150.5 billion in cross-strait trade with China, with most of the trade being imports from China. Taiwan has demonstrated its cross-strait strategy prioritizes the economic strength of Taiwan over its ideological struggle with mainland China. Despite the increasing tensions between the two nations, China has steadily increased its economic ties with Taiwan. Prior to the election of the

⁴⁴ Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Kingdom of Norway (PRC), "White Paper--The One-China Principle and the Taiwan Issue," The Taiwan Affairs Office and The Information Office of the State Council, February 21, 2000, <https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/ce/ceno/eng/ztxw/twwt/t110655.htm>.

⁴⁵ Office of the Historian, U.S. Department of State, "Editorial Note," in *Foreign Relations of The United States, 1950, East Asia and The Pacific*, vol. 6 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1954), Document No. 128, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1950v06/d128>.

Taiwanese president Tsai Ing-wen, China had advocates within the Chinese Nationalist Party, mentioning the possibility of reunification as a viable option. The 2014 Sunflower Movement has challenged President Xi's goal. Taiwanese youth witnessed Beijing using force to quell protests in Hong Kong, which bolstered support for the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) and enabled the DPP to win the 2020 presidential election and legislative control. This is important because the DPP is against reunification with the PRC.⁴⁶

Chinese Domestic Considerations

The Chinese domestic situation is precarious in the Xinjiang Province. The CPC has not managed to control the international narrative surrounding its management of the province. This area has the highest concentration of Uyghur Muslims in China. According to a study conducted by Ali Çaksu, a student at Yildiz Technical University in Turkey, the CPC produced several audio clips that described Islam as an ideological illness.⁴⁷ In order to eliminate the threat of violent jihadists, China has placed the Uyghur Muslim population into re-education camps to cure their proclaimed illness. In defense of the CPC's actions, the Chinese government released a clip stating, "We must be clear that going into a reeducation hospital for treatment is not a way of forcibly arresting people and locking them up for punishment, it is an act that is part of a comprehensive rescue

⁴⁶ Robert D. Blackwill and Philip Zelikow, *The United States, China, and Taiwan: A Strategy to Prevent War*, Council Special Report No. 90 (New York, NY: Council on Foreign Relations, February 2021), https://cdn.cfr.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/csr90_1.pdf.

⁴⁷ Ali Çaksu, "Islamophobia, Chinese Style: Total Internment of Uyghur Muslims by the People's Republic of China," *Islamophobia Studies Journal* 5, no. 2 (2020): 175–198.

mission to save them.”⁴⁸ China’s treatment of the Uyghur people has brought about international condemnation. This moral predicament makes them vulnerable to information operations.

The US has recently responded to China’s human rights violations of the Uyghur Muslims in the Xinjiang Province. Beijing hosted the 2022 Winter Olympics and the US chose a diplomatic boycott of the Winter Games. According to the Center for Strategic International Studies, this means “the United States will not send a high-level, official delegation to the Olympics, which would usually be featured in the photo opportunities at the opening and closing ceremonies.”⁴⁹ The Biden administration has cited ongoing genocide and crimes against humanity in the Xinjiang Province as motivation for conducting the diplomatic boycott.⁵⁰ It is estimated that over one million Uyghurs and Muslim minorities have been incarcerated, sterilized, and forced into labor camps.⁵¹

While US athletes were still able to compete in the Winter Olympics, the US used diplomacy as a national instrument of power to embarrass China on the international stage. This decision is in line with the United States and China’s competition continuum

⁴⁸ Çaksu, “Islamophobia, Chinese Style,” 54-55.

⁴⁹ Victor Cha, “The Biden Boycott of the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics,” Center for Strategic & International Studies, January 18, 2022, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/biden-boycott-2022-beijing-winter-olympics>.

⁵⁰ Zolan Kanno-Youngs, “US Will Not Send Government Officials to Beijing Olympics,” *The New York Times*, December 6, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/12/06/us/politics/olympics-boycott-us.html>.

⁵¹ AFP, “US Announces Diplomatic Boycott of Beijing Winter Olympics after China Threatens ‘Resolute Countermeasures’,” *Hong Kong Free Press*, December 6, 2021, <https://hongkongfp.com/2021/12/07/us-announces-diplomatic-boycott-of-beijing-winter-olympics-after-china-threatens-resolute-countermeasures/>.

for influence in the Indo-Pacific region. In response to the US decision to boycott the Winter Olympics, the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs Spokesperson, Zhao Lijian, vowed that "...China will take resolute countermeasures."⁵² The diplomatic communications that occurred during the Olympics were the critical aspect of the games. Chastising the CPC on the international stage compromises the CPC's legitimacy and further complicates China's domestic affairs.

In addition to the international pressure caused by China's handling of its Uyghur population in Xinjiang, China is also under internal pressure from Hong Kong. Despite Hong Kong's ethnically Han Chinese population, their history of British colonial rule gave them different political ideologies from mainland Chinese citizens.⁵³ Because of this, China implemented the "one country, two systems" principle to assert that China is one country with regions that have their own economic and administrative systems. Even though China permits a separate system of governance in Hong Kong, the election of legislative and executive politicians is influenced by mainland China and is not representative of the population. The lack of political representation has led to strong calls for political reform. Hong Kong's citizens sought universal suffrage to ensure the government was elected democratically. These demands were ignored, and young Hong Kong residents started a protest that led to the Umbrella Movement in 2014. The protest did not affect change in the government, and the police forcefully ended the protest.

⁵² AFP, "US Announces Diplomatic Boycott of Beijing Winter Olympics after China Threatens 'Resolute Countermeasures'."

⁵³ Census and Statistics Department Hong Kong, *Thematic Report Ethnic Minorities* (Wan Chai: Government of Hong Kong, December 2017), 182, <https://www.statistics.gov.hk/pub/B11201002016XXXXB0100.pdf>.

Even though the Umbrella Movement failed to change Beijing's influence over Hong Kong elections, it has proven that the "one country, two systems" principle can be volatile and a guise for Chinese control over its regional governments. The CPC has projected a peaceful approach to reunification, while it demonstrated the opposite on an international stage. The Umbrella Movement marked a critical shift in the CPC's relation to its administrative regions. The political environment places the state at odds with society.⁵⁴

This assessment is critical in Taiwan, considering the domestic implications of reunification with China. Over the past twenty years, Taiwan has formed and solidified a thriving democracy. If China was willing to compromise the integrity of Hong Kong's government despite the resistance of its citizens, Taiwan can logically infer that China would do the same if Taiwan reunified with the PRC. After the Umbrella Movement, Taiwan's 2014 election cycle demonstrated a clear realignment with the DPP and Taiwan Independence.⁵⁵ Despite the ideological shift in Taiwan, China's stance has not changed. According to its constitution, China is a "socialist state governed by a people's democratic dictatorship that is led by the working class," and it is trying to incorporate millions of citizens run by democratically elected politicians under its control.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Samson Yuen, "Hong Kong After the Umbrella Movement: Art Uncertain Future for 'One Country Two Systems'," *China Perspectives*, no. 1 (2015): 49–53.

⁵⁵ Jacqueline Vitello and Bonnie S. Glaser, "An Analysis of Taiwan's Nine-in-One Local Elections," Center for Strategic & International Studies, December 1, 2014, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/analysis-taiwan%E2%80%99s-nine-one-local-elections>.

⁵⁶ The National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China, "Constitution of the People's Republic of China," (adopted at the Fifth Session of the Fifth National People's Congress, December 4, 1982), accessed January 7, 2022,

Opposing political ideologies threaten the PRC because its form of government is supposed to be dictated by the people, and its administrative regions do not align with the PRC domestic populace. The CPC believes divergence from its political ideology create opportunities for adversarial nations to exploit China's domestic schisms.⁵⁷

PLA Information Capabilities

China has explored the concept of information operations since the 1990s. The PLA has minimal combat experience and compensates for its lack of experience with extensive studies of other wars. Deng Cheng, a Senior Research Fellow at the Heritage Foundation, argues through studying the first Gulf War, the PLA identified some critical areas of importance: securing dominance within the electromagnetic spectrum, deception, coordination operations among different services, and deep attacks in the rapid attainment of campaign objectives.⁵⁸ After the Gulf War, China realized the need to attack the network that modern armies needed to attain decision dominance. This informatized was not exclusively about attacking enemy networks, but it also involved the use of these command-and-control networks as well.⁵⁹

<http://www.npc.gov.cn/englishnpc/constitution2019/201911/1f65146fb6104dd3a2793875d19b5b29.shtml/>.

⁵⁷ PRC, "White Paper."

⁵⁸ Dean Cheng, "Chinese Lessons from the Gulf Wars," in *Chinese Lessons from Other People's Wars*, ed. Andrew Scobell, David Lai, and Roy Kamphausen (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2011), 329.

⁵⁹ Jason R. Fritz, *China's Cyber Warfare: The Evolution of Strategic Doctrine* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2017).

Network-centric warfare, a US concept, enables the PLA to develop and leverage information advantage. Military practitioners seek to understand and differentiate China's approach to informationization and the US approach to information operations. Jason R. Fritz, author of *China's Cyber Warfare: The Evolution of Strategic Doctrine*, argues that both China and the US are on the same modernization path with distinct philosophical and cultural bases from which to formulate military concepts.⁶⁰ Both nations use network-centric warfare to improve commanders' ability to understand the operating environment and make decisions based on information advantage. In these cases, commanders receive information pertaining to force location, readiness, available courses of action, and environmental considerations at the speed of their modernized networks.

In 2015, China reorganized its Central Military Commission (CMC), the government organization that commands and controls the PLA. Re-organizing the CMC eliminated bureaucratic hindrances to PLA decision-making at the lowest level. Instead of five departments running the PLA, China established 15 different departments, with the Joint Staff Department serving as the command and control center for the PLA.⁶¹ One of the CMC's goals were to eliminate the gaps between tactical and strategic leaders. This approach addresses the Chinese path to systems confrontation and destruction. To facilitate the changes in the informational dimension, the CMC established the PLA Strategic Support Force (PLASSF). The PLASSF organizational structure resembles the

⁶⁰ Fritz, *China's Cyber Warfare*.

⁶¹. "Ministry of National Defense Information Affairs Bureau Official Weibo Releases English Translation of Central Military Commission Organs," China Central Broadcasting Network, January 15, 2016, http://news.cnr.cn/native/gd/20160115/t20160115_521144381.shtml.

same structure as the PLA Army, Navy, and Air Force. The PLASSF's mission is to integrate cyberspace, space, and psychological warfare into joint military operations. With its modified structure and strategic organization, China is improving its ability to target US networks, nodes, and operational frameworks systematically.

China's operational objective is to achieve systems confrontation through fundamentally joint operations across all domains. These joint operations will be both kinetic and non-kinetic while integrating land, sea, air, cyber, electromagnetic, and space forces.⁶² According to a study by John Costello and Joe McReynolds, at the Center for the Study of Chinese Military Affairs at the National Defense University (NDU), the PLASSF is China's lead integrator of information capabilities in space, the cyber domain, and the electromagnetic spectrum.⁶³ The capabilities within the command can be incorporated throughout the operating environment with special emphasis on the information environment. The goal of integrating these systems will be systems confrontation. Costello and McReynolds also state that "The PLA places a strong emphasis on dismantling the adversary's system of systems, with decapitation and paralysis rather than outright destruction being the ultimate objective."⁶⁴ If China can paralyze its enemy's operational networks, it believes that it can achieve decision dominance and cause its enemies to culminate.

⁶² Engstrom, *Systems Confrontation and System Destruction Warfare*.

⁶³ John Costello and Joe McReynolds, "China's Strategic Support Force: A Force for a New Era," China Strategic Perspectives 13, Center for the Study of Chinese Military Affairs, Institute for National Strategic Studies (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, October 2018), 84.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

China's Reunification Strategy

Understanding China's perspective of its options concerning Taiwan reunification will assist with understanding China's approach to information advantage within the Taiwan Strait. In 2006, the United States Marine Corps conducted a strategic assessment of the PRC's strategies to reunify with Taiwan through conflict or coercion. The study used the characterization of a secession of Taiwan from China as an independent variable that will be a predictor of China's willingness to use force against Taiwan. There were three different secession categories applied to the reunification strategy: genuine secession, artificial secession, and non-secession.⁶⁵

Genuine secession would be determined by the Taiwanese people, military, and politics uniting behind Taiwanese sovereignty. This form of secession represents the most significant threat to Beijing because it places Chinese interests against the will of the Taiwanese people. In addition, genuine secession is likely to lead to US intervention and an escalation of force. The US has documented its stance on the Taiwan Strait in the Taiwan Relations Act on the 1st of January 1979. The act declares that it is the policy of the United States to consider any effort to determine the future of Taiwan by other than peaceful means, including by boycotts or embargoes, a threat to the peace and security of the Western Pacific area and of grave concern to the United States.⁶⁶ Opposed to US stance is China's Anti-Secession Law that authorizes the state to employ non-peaceful

⁶⁵ Michael S. Burks, Eric X. Schaner, and Eric M. Walters, "Red Victory in the Strait: An Assessment of PRC Strategic Estimates and Options for Resolving the Conflict with Taiwan," (White Paper, U.S. Marine Corps, Quantico, VA, May 16, 2006).

⁶⁶ Taiwan Relations Act, Public Law 96-8 (January 1, 1979), <https://www.ait.org.tw/our-relationship/policy-history/key-u-s-foreign-policy-documents-region/taiwan-relations-act/>.

means and other necessary measures to protect China's sovereignty and territorial integrity.⁶⁷ Given a genuine secession, China will have the strategic advantage over the US due to the time required to deploy and sustain forces within the effective range of China's Anti-Access/Area Denial (A2AD) capabilities. Regardless of China's ability to strike preemptively, the attack could foster international backlash long-term.

The Marines assessed that China may consider artificial secession to prevent the strategic backlash of a cross-strait attack on Taiwan.⁶⁸ This form of secession is characterized by a weak Taiwanese state that lacks unity between the government and the people.⁶⁹ Under these circumstances Chinese policy supports an approach below armed conflict.⁷⁰ An artificial secession is an ideal scenario for informatized warfare because China will not need conventional forces. The lack of open hostilities/conflict would make it unlikely for the US to mount a significant response and any such response would be difficult to justify to the American public or rally a significant portion of the population to support such an endeavor. In this scenario all the declarations of the Taiwan Relations Act and the Anti-Secession Law can be met while China subverts the authority of Taiwanese leaders. While the artificial secession allows for China to approach reunification without conflict, there are no guarantees of success. According to the China

⁶⁷ Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the United States of America (PRC), "Anti-Secession Law," (adopted at the Third Session of the Tenth National People's Congress, Beijing, March 14, 2005), <https://www.mfa.gov.cn/ce/ceus/eng/zt/999999999/t187406.htm>.

⁶⁸ Burks, Schaner, and Walters, "Red Victory in the Strait."

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ PRC, "Anti-Secession Law."

Aerospace Studies Institute, China lacks the practice of informatized warfare, and the strategic planning and guidance of informatized warfare is still in the exploratory stage.⁷¹ China's incorporation of informationization in the informational dimension could lead to unpredictable results and the potential for failure goes counter to Chinese philosophy.⁷²

The last secession category falls within a non-secession strategic environment. In this context the Taiwanese government is not likely to proclaim secession from China, however their policy and actions will be objectively moving towards independence. Much like genuine secession, China's actions will be shaped by the unity of the Taiwanese government and the people. If significant pro reunification factions exist within the government, China will have the option of coercing the Taiwanese government towards reunification. China could install pro-Beijing leaders and call for the US to pressure Taiwan into acknowledging previous agreements and return to the status quo.⁷³

Summary

Over the past thirty years, China has bolstered its position as a world power by centering its communist ideology, insulating its domestic relations from the world, and investing in the PLA's modernization. China's historic leaders set precedence for soft

⁷¹ Xiao Tianliang, Lou Yaoliang, Kang Wuchao, and Cai Renzhao, "In Their Own Words: Science of Military Strategy 2020," (China Aerospace Studies Institute, Air University, January 2022), <https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/Portals/10/CASI/documents/Translations/2022-01-26%202020%20Science%20of%20Military%20Strategy.pdf>.

⁷² Li-Sheng Kuo, "Sun Tzu's War Theory in the Twenty First Century," (Strategy Research Project, U.S. Army War College, March 30, 2007), <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/ADA470026.pdf>

⁷³ Burks, Schaner, and Walters, "Red Victory in the Strait."

power and manipulation for strategic gains. The PRC's handling of its domestic disputes alludes to a nation concentrated on reclaiming its territory through soft power and a willingness to use hard power as a last resort. China's approach towards reclaiming Taiwan is developing daily, and it will change depending on Taiwan's desire for independence. Taiwan is currently run by an administration opposed to reunification with China, and its citizens have been negatively impacted by China's "One country, two systems" approach on display in Hong Kong. If China is willing to compromise the democratic governance in Hong Kong, then it may do the same in Taiwan to secure the influence of the PRC. Due to internal pressure, the PLA will likely use information operations to facilitate operations below armed conflict with Taiwan. When observing the trajectory of PLA information capabilities, it is estimated that China will strike critical vulnerabilities within Taiwan's military forces and seek a rapid conclusion to the operation.⁷⁴ The primary goal in this scenario is reunification. The method used to answer how China will use information advantage to achieve its political and military interests will be described in the next chapter. The themes identified in the literature review will be applied to the methodology, collection plan, and data analysis.

⁷⁴ Fritz, *China's Cyber Warfare*.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter will describe the method used to approach this study. It will also detail the data collection and analysis processes used to answer the research questions associated with this study. This study seeks to answer the following question: How will China use the informational dimension to achieve reunification with Taiwan in the 21st Century? Other secondary questions include: (1) How does China's strategy for complete reunification with Taiwan shape its approach to "informatized warfare" in the Taiwan Strait? (2) How do China's information capabilities shape its ability to exploit the informational dimension in the Taiwan Strait? (3) How has China used the informational dimension to seek decision dominance over the US within the Taiwan Strait? Through reviewing the literature, the following themes helped shape the method of this study: China's Grand Strategy, China's use of force, China's decision-making cycle, the Strait of Taiwan, and China's domestic considerations. These themes must be reviewed, defined further, and analyzed.

Method

According to Robert K. Yin, the author of *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods*, there are no formulas to determine if a study should be a qualitative case study. Yin argues that if the question the study seeks to explain is related to contemporary circumstances, then a qualitative method will be a relevant approach to

research.⁷⁵ Analyzing China's capabilities in the informational dimension and its impact on US operations in the Indo-Pacific requires qualitative research. This study's research question asks how some Chinese social, political, and military phenomena occur at their core. A quantitative method makes it difficult to answer the research question because it will require control over behavioral events associated with Chinese policies and warfare, and the researcher will have no control over Chinese behavioral events.⁷⁶ If this study were conducted over a more extended period and with more expendable resources for travel, then a quantitative study with firsthand accounts from China and East Asia would be feasible and relevant.

Data Collection

This qualitative study was completed using a multiple case study method to answer the secondary research questions. Although case studies have been associated with amateur researchers, this study addressed these concerns methodically. This study was conducted using sources from the Ike Skelton Combined Arms Research Library (CARL) and its associated academic databases, the Department of Defense, the RAND Corporation, JSTOR, the Foreign Military Studies Office, and Google Scholar. This study will not involve human subjects and will rely heavily on documentation and archival records. Each source that proved to be relevant to the study was recorded into the Zotero research assistant application. The sources were then organized thematically for

⁷⁵ Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods*, 6th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2018).

⁷⁶ Ibid.

further analysis using the multiple case studies method. Figure 1 gives the methodological framework for the data collection process.

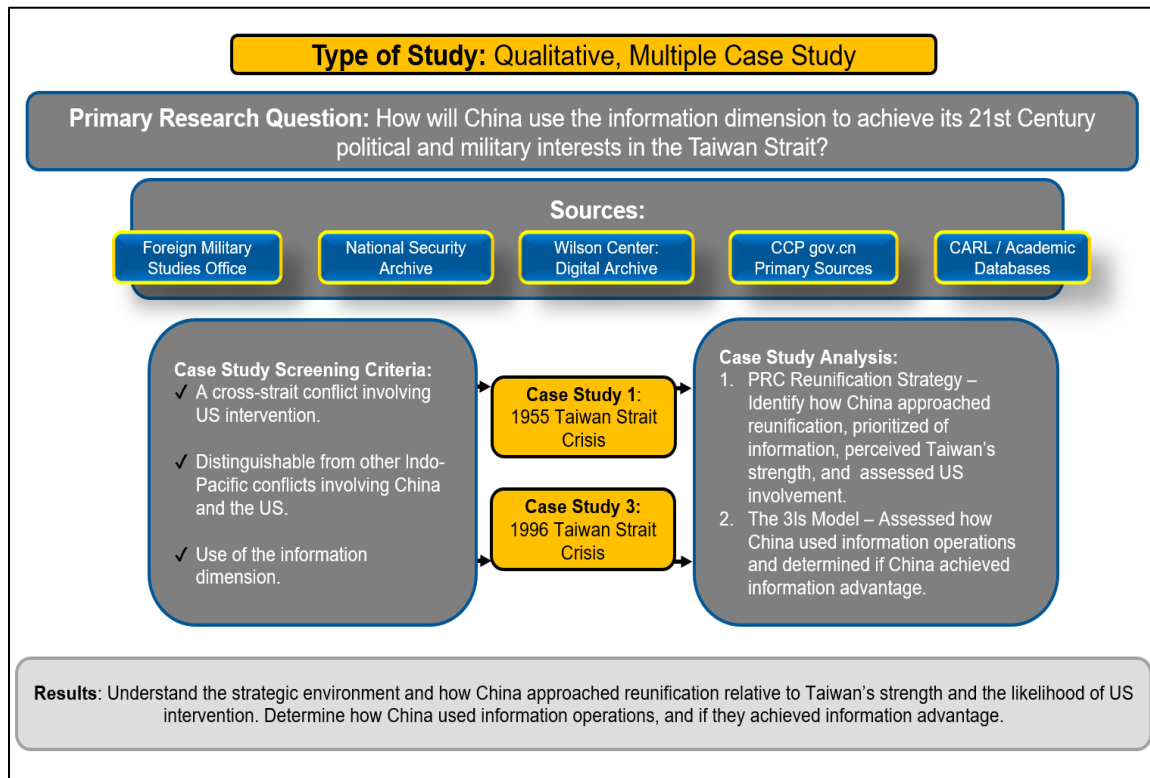


Figure 1. Data Collection Process

Source: Created by author.

The first step in conducting this multiple case study was identifying relevant cases that address the research questions: (1) How does China's strategy for complete reunification with Taiwan shape its approach to "informatized warfare" in the Indo-Pacific region? (2) How do China's information capabilities shape its ability to exploit the informational dimension in the Taiwan Strait? (3) How has China used the informational dimension to seek decision dominance over the US within the Taiwan

Strait? In addition to finding relevant case studies, the researcher had to identify case studies that could replicate one another theoretically. With these cases, the researcher can identify theoretical similarities and differences. Two cases were identified for this study: the 1955 Taiwan Strait Crisis and the 1996 Taiwan Strait Crisis. These cases were selected for their similarity, ability to assess China's decision process relevant to their current operating environment, and China's utilization of information.

Data Analysis

Each case study was analyzed using a theoretical framework and a tool for assessing the operational environment to identify and analyze potential themes related to all three cases. Each case study's strategic environment was analyzed using the PRC's Reunification Strategies.⁷⁷ Each case will be associated with a particular reunification strategy to identify China's approach toward Taiwan. The data will be captured in Table 1.

⁷⁷ Burks, Schaner, and Walters, "Red Victory in the Strait."

Table 1. Data Analysis Chart Using PRC Reunification Strategies

PRC Reunification Strategies	1955 Taiwan Strait Crisis	1996 Taiwan Strait Crisis	Key	
1. Genuine Secession			(Yes)	Observed
Full Scale Invasion			(No)	Not Observed
Main Effort: Military				
Taiwanese Government (Strong/United)				
Likelihood of US Intervention (High)				
2. Artificial Secession Type 1				
Standing Start Limited Invasion				
Main Effort: Information				
Taiwanese Government (Weak/Fragmented)				
Likelihood of US Intervention (Low)				
2. Artificial Secession Type 2				
Decapitation				
Main Effort: Information				
Taiwanese Government (Weak/Fragmented)				
Likelihood of US Intervention (Low)				
3. Non-Secession				
Coercion				
Main Effort: Diplomacy				
Taiwanese Government (Weak/Fragmented)				
Likelihood of US Intervention (Low to Moderate)				

Source: Created by author using data from Michael S. Burks, Eric X. Schaner, and Eric M. Walters, “Red Victory in the Strait: An Assessment of PRC Strategic Estimates and Options for Resolving the Conflict with Taiwan,” (White Paper, U.S. Marine Corps, Quantico, VA, 2006).

The PRC Reunification Strategy demonstrates the options available to China should Taiwan accomplish secession in any form. Using this strategy permits the study to analyze when China is likely to use information as the main effort toward reunification. The variables that characterize China’s options are the type of secession, the need to invade, an instrument of national power as the main effort, the strength of the Taiwanese Government, and the likelihood of US intervention. Once the reunification strategy is assessed, the study can determine what strategic conditions led to China’s use of information as the main effort for reunification. Each case will be evaluated using the 3Is framework to determine how China used information and its ability or inability to achieve information advantage.

After capturing the secession trends identified in each case study, the 3Is Information Advantage theoretical framework is applied. The 3Is theoretical framework was developed using a 2021 Taiwanese analysis of the CPC's psychological warfare strategy and an information advantage concept developed by Eric X. Schaner in April 2022. The author of the Taiwanese analysis, Puma Shen, an assistant professor at the National Taipei University, argues that Chinese information operations must be assessed using the 3Is method to characterize its approach correctly.⁷⁸ The 3Is Information Advantage Assessment model determines how China operationalizes information against Taiwan. The 3Is model assesses four aspects of Chinese operations, direct information manipulation, indirect investment, ideology-driven operations, and the ability to achieve information advantage. Direct information manipulation focuses on China's manipulation of information using propaganda, disinformation, and narratives to achieve their interests in Taiwan. Indirect Investment focuses on how China uses money flow to affect the informational dimension through third parties indirectly. Ideology-driven operations focus on how China exploits Taiwanese groups with a pro-China disposition to bolster Chinese narratives. The ability to achieve information advantage focuses on China's ability to attain system overmatch, a prevailing narrative, and force resiliency. Each case study was assessed using the strategic concepts highlighted by Shen and Schaner, and then the data will be captured in Table 2.

⁷⁸ Shen, "How China Initiates Information Operations Against Taiwan."

Table 2. Data Analysis Chart Using US Army Information Advantage Concept

The 3Is Information Advantage Assessment Model	1955 Taiwan Strait Crisis	1996 Taiwan Strait Crisis	Key	
1. Direct Information Manipulation			(Yes)	Observed
Cognitive Component			(No)	Not Observed
Functional Component				
High-level information manipulation				
Low-level information manipulation				
Connected-level information operations				
2. Indirect Investment: Money Flow				
Cognitive Component				
Functional Component				
Investment in the Taiwanese marketing industry				
Investment to create economic pressure				
Donations to entice citizens to join the network				
3. Ideology-Driven: Human Flow				
Exploit a pro-China ideological base				
4. Achieve Information Advantage				
System Overmatch				
Prevailing Narrative				
Force Resiliency				

Source: Created by author using data from Puma Shen, “How China Initiates Information Operations Against Taiwan,” *Taiwan Strategist*, no. 12 (December 2021): 16, <https://www.pf.org.tw/files/7675/1BB3C76F-A6C9-4356-BF96-53B7A2546F34>; Eric X. Schaner, “MCDP 8, Information: A New Marine Corps Doctrine for the Information Warfighting Function,” *Marine Corps Gazette* (April 2022) 20-24.

By using the two tables above, the study will be able to characterize how the PRC shapes its approach toward reunification with Taiwan while also specifying its use of information during a crisis in the Taiwan Strait.

Summary

This chapter readdressed the purpose of this research study, highlighted the research method, and illustrated and described the data collection process as well as the data analysis process. Through qualitative research, this study seeks to answer how China uses the informational dimension to achieve its 21st Century political and military

interests while also undermining US influence in the Taiwan Strait? A multiple case study method was applied based on the selected research question and referencing Yin's case study literature. The cases identified were the 1955 Taiwan Strait Crisis and the 1996 Taiwan Strait Crisis due to their ability to replicate Chinese activity in a contemporary environment. After selection, each case study was assessed using the PRC Reunification Strategy and then analyzed using the 3Is Information Advantage theoretical framework. Using the output produced by the analysis, the researcher will synthesize the results and report the findings.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS

Introduction

This chapter will analyze the two case studies associated with the Taiwan Strait using the PRC Reunification Strategy depicted in Table 1 and the 3Is Information Advantage Assessment tool. Once each case study is assessed, a comparative analysis of the cases will pull critical information and observations from the data. This study will use the comparative analysis to answer the following questions: How will China use the informational dimension to achieve reunification with Taiwan in the 21st Century? Other secondary questions include: (1) How does China's strategy for complete reunification with Taiwan shape its approach to "informatized warfare" in the Indo-Pacific region? (2) How do China's information capabilities shape its ability to exploit the informational dimension in the Taiwan Strait? (3) How has China used the informational dimension to seek decision dominance over the US within the Taiwan Strait?

Each case will be introduced with the historical context to understand the political interests of China at the time of each crisis. As an explanation building study, data from each crisis will be compared to the theoretical framework.⁷⁹ After all the data from each crisis is assessed individually, the study will evaluate the results from each case in a comparative analysis to identify plausible explanations for China's use of the informational dimension.

⁷⁹ Yin, *Case Study Research and Applications*.

The 1955 Taiwan Strait Crisis

The 1955 Taiwan Strait was not a singular event. It represents the convergence of the culminating events related to the Chinese Civil War and the international complexities of the Cold War. Three key factors led to the events in the 1955 crisis: the Kuomintang claiming rule of China, the US war against communism, and the emergence of the PRC onto the international stage. Each event helped shape China's willingness to enter armed conflict with Taiwan.

The Kuomintang (KMT), the ruling party of the Republic of China (ROC), retreated to the island of Taiwan on the 7th of December 1949, after a protracted civil war and subsequent military defeat by the CPC led by Mao Zedong. The KMT's retreat from mainland China did not prevent Chiang Kai-shek, the KMT leader, from claiming to be the true ruler of China. Despite its apparent loss to the PRC, the international community, particularly the United States, was hesitant to recognize the PRC as the legitimate governing body of China due to its communist roots.⁸⁰ The Korean War exacerbated the strain between the US and the PRC. President Harry S. Truman sent the 7th Fleet to the Taiwan Strait to prevent the PRC from initiating hostilities with the KMT.⁸¹ His reasoning was captured in a statement on the 27th of June 1950:

In these circumstances the occupation of Formosa by Communist forces would be a direct threat to the security of the Pacific area and to United States

⁸⁰ Office of the Historian, U.S. Department of State, "A Guide to the United States' History of Recognition, Diplomatic, and Consular Relations, by Country, since 1776: China," Department of State, accessed March 17, 2022, <https://history.state.gov/countries/china>

⁸¹ "A Brief History of Modern China and Taiwan," Center for Strategic & International Studies, accessed March 10, 2022, <https://www.csis.org/programs/international-security-program/isp-archives/asia-division/cross-strait-security-initiative-0>.

forces performing their lawful and necessary functions in that area. Accordingly, I have ordered the 7th Fleet to prevent any attack on Formosa. As a corollary of this action, I am calling upon the Chinese Government on Formosa to cease all air and sea operations against the mainland. The 7th Fleet will see that this is done. The determination of the future status of Formosa must await the restoration of security in the Pacific, a peace settlement with Japan, or consideration by the United Nations.⁸²

These actions improved relations between the US and the KMT and effectively extended the stalemate between the two Chinese governments. As political power in the US shifted from President Truman to President Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1953, anti-communists influenced the establishment of a mutual defense treaty with the ROC and removal of the 7th Fleet to “Unleash Chiang” onto the PRC.⁸³ President Eisenhower’s decision led to the ROC building combat power on Quemoy and Matsu, one of the first actions to trigger the conflict with the PRC.

While Chiang Kai-shek was sending troops to Quemoy and Matsu, the PRC sent diplomats led by Zhou Enlai to the 1954 Geneva Conference. Zhou Enlai’s goals were to establish the PRC’s position on the global stage and to achieve the PRC’s interest through diplomacy, which he referred to as the “‘Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence’—mutual respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty, non-aggression, non-interference

⁸² President Harry S. Truman, “Statement Issued by the President,” Washington, DC, June 27, 1950, in *Foreign Relations of the United States*, Vol. 7, *Korea, 1950* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1976), <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1950v07/d119>.

⁸³ D. F. Fleming, “Our Brink-of-War Diplomacy in the Formosa Strait,” *The Western Political Quarterly* 9, no. 3 (1956): 535–552; Mutual Defense Treaty between the United States of America and the Republic of China, December, accessed April 18, 2022, <https://web-archiver-2017.ait.org.tw/en/sino-us-mutual-defense-treaty-1954.html>.

in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence.”⁸⁴

Even though the Geneva Conference proved successful, it did not solve the PRC's Taiwan issue. In a telegram to Zhou Enlai, the Premier of the CPC, Mao Zedong expressed that the Geneva Conference did not change US interests in the Taiwan Strait.⁸⁵ Three months after the Geneva Conference, the PRC began shelling the islands of Quemoy and Matsu in response to the KMT's troop build-up.

The Strategic Environment

Based on the data collected, the Taiwanese and PRC's actions closely resembled those of a genuine secession as depicted in Table 3. The strategic environment in the Taiwan Strait during the 1955 crisis was characterized by the PRC initiating a limited attack on Taiwan's claimed territory. The PRC's actions fell short of a full-scale invasion because of its military strength relative to the strength of the Taiwanese Government paired with the commitment of the US Government. The KMT-US relationship threatened the success of a full-scale invasion. With the threat of American intervention high, military engagement ran counter to the Chinese philosophy of Shi.⁸⁶ Without the possibility of success, Mao chose to ignore the prospect of attaining Shi by shelling Taiwan despite the expected response from the US. Mao reveals his fears of inadequacy

⁸⁴ Zhai Qiang, “China and the Geneva Conference of 1954,” *The China Quarterly*, no. 129 (1992): 107.

⁸⁵ CCP Central Committee, “Mao Zedong Telegram, CCP Central Committee to Zhou Enlai, Concerning Policies and Measures in the Struggle against the United States and Jiang Jieshi after the Geneva Conference,” July 27, 1954, <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/111050.pdf?v=043e79705df903e55fb162aee6c6ae75>.

⁸⁶ Thomas, *China Military Strategy*.

in the face of the US military's superiority by comparing the US to a ghost, a being with supernatural strength.⁸⁷ In this case, Shi was not the goal of Mao's military actions; he had other intentions, mainly to diminish US-Taipei relations.

Table 3. 1955 Crisis Data Analysis Chart Using PRC Reunification Strategies

PRC Reunification Strategies	1955 Taiwan Strait Crisis	Key	
1. Genuine Secession	(Yes)	(Yes)	Observed
Full Scale Invasion	(No)	(No)	Not Observed
Main Effort: Military	(Yes)		
Taiwanese Government (Strong/United)	(Yes)		
Likelihood of US Intervention (High)	(Yes)		
2. Artificial Secession Type 1	(No)		
Standing Start Limited Invasion	(Yes)		
Main Effort: Information	(No)		
Taiwanese Government (Weak/Fragmented)	(No)		
Likelihood of US Intervention (Low)	(No)		
2. Artificial Secession Type 2	(No)		
Decapitation	(No)		
Main Effort: Information	(No)		
Taiwanese Government (Weak/Fragmented)	(No)		
Likelihood of US Intervention (Low)	(No)		
3. Non-Secession	(No)		
Coercion	(No)		
Main Effort: Diplomacy	(No)		
Taiwanese Government (Weak/Fragmented)	(No)		
Likelihood of US Intervention (Low to Moderate)	(No)		

Source: Created by author using data from Michael S. Burks, Eric X. Schaner, and Eric M. Walters, "Red Victory in the Strait: An Assessment of PRC Strategic Estimates and Options for Resolving the Conflict with Taiwan," (White Paper, U.S. Marine Corps, Quantico, VA, 2006).

The strategic objectives of the PRC, according to the declassified Special National Intelligence Estimate Number 276, was "designed to irritate US-allied relations and diminish prospects of an anti-Communist coalition in Asia, enhance the prestige of the Chinese Communists among Asian nations, and bring about a deterioration of the US

⁸⁷ Kuisong Yang and Sheng Mao, "Unafraid of the Ghost: The Victim Mentality of Mao Zedong and the Two Taiwan Strait Crises in the 1950s," *China Review* 16, no. 1 (2016): 1–34.

position in Asia.”⁸⁸ While the PRC decided to use its military instrument of national power, these actions were not the preferred route. In a telegram to Zhou Enlai during the Geneva Conference, Mao Zedong revealed that diplomacy and information would be the preferred instrument of national power to achieve their territorial claims.⁸⁹ Mao’s telegram to Enlai further confirms their objectives to break the US-Taiwan alliance and further isolate the US across the Pacific.⁹⁰ The lack of international support for PRC sovereignty prevented Mao’s ability to delegitimize or replace ROC leadership and prevent US intervention.⁹¹ With the possibility of coercion and delegitimization gone, Mao’s options were limited to armed conflict and information operations.

Information Advantage Assessment

The PRC had a small amount of information capabilities in 1955, but it implemented direct information manipulation to achieve its interest. Table 4 depicts the PRC’s information capabilities during the 1955 crisis. The data associated with the 1955 crisis revealed that the PRC impacted the informational dimension by establishing a pro-PRC narrative and using propaganda to justify its actions in Taiwan. Upon noticing that the PRC lost the opportunity to lay claim to Taiwan on the international stage, Mao sought to initiate a propaganda campaign centered on the narrative that “we must liberate

⁸⁸ Office of the Historian, U.S. Department of State, “Special National Intelligence Estimate,” in *Foreign Relations of The United States, 1952–1954, China and Japan*, vol. 14, part 1 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1954), Document No. 276, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1952-54v14p1/d276>.

⁸⁹ CCP Central Committee, “Mao Zedong Telegram to Zhou Enlai.”

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Burks, Schaner, and Walters, “Red Victory in the Strait.”

Taiwan.”⁹² In addition to acknowledging the need for propaganda, Mao highlighted the potential outcome of an effective campaign in his message to Zhou Enlai in 1954:

If we do not highlight this task [liberating Taiwan] now, and if we do not work for it [in the future], we are committing a serious political mistake. The introduction of the task is not just for the purpose of undermining the American-Jiang plot to sign a military treaty; rather, and more importantly, by highlighting the task we mean to raise the political consciousness and political alertness of the people of the whole country; we mean to stir up our people’s revolutionary enthusiasm, thus promoting our nation’s socialist reconstruction.⁹³

Mao’s information goals were not centered on the destruction of opposition forces but on a cognitive war on China’s domestic population, including Taiwan. With a clear way ahead, Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai began a national campaign to “liberate Taiwan.”⁹⁴

⁹² CCP Central Committee, “Mao Zedong Telegram to Zhou Enlai.”

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

Table 4. 1955 Taiwan Strait Crisis Data Analysis

The 3Is Information Advantage Assesment Model	1955 Taiwan Strait Crisis	Key	
1. Direct Information Manipulation	(Yes)	(Yes)	Observed
Cognitive Component	(Yes)	(No)	Not Observed
Functional Component	(Yes)		
High-level information manipulation	(Yes)		
Low-level information manipulation	(Yes)		
Connected-level information operations	(No)		
2. Indirect Investment: Money Flow	(No)		
Cognitive Component	(No)		
Functional Component	(No)		
Investment in the Taiwanese marketing industry	(No)		
Investment to create economic pressure	(No)		
Donations to entice citizens to join the network	(No)		
3. Ideology-Driven: Human Flow	(No)		
Exploit a pro-China ideological base	(No)		
4. Achieve Information Advantage	(No)		
Obtains System Overmatch	(No)		
Possesses the Prevailing Narrative	(No)		
Sustains Force Resiliency	(No)		

Source: Created by author using data from Puma Shen, “How China Initiates Information Operations Against Taiwan,” *Taiwan Strategist*, no. 12 (December 2021): 16, <https://www.pf.org.tw/files/7675/1BB3C76F-A6C9-4356-BF96-53B7A2546F34>; Eric X. Schaner, “MCDP 8, Information: A New Marine Corps Doctrine for the Information Warfighting Function,” *Marine Corps Gazette* (April 2022) 20-24.

The CPC funded propaganda that demonized Chiang Kai-shek, the KMT and American intervention using high-level information manipulation. The CPC targeted its domestic audience with propaganda posters to legitimize its wartime efforts during the 1955 Taiwan Strait Crisis. An example of a 1954 PRC propaganda poster states “Save our Taiwanese compatriots!” illustrating a ROC soldier abusing a Taiwanese man while the island of Taiwan is engulfed in flames and a young woman is visibly distressed.⁹⁵ It can be inferred that the PRC wanted to demonize the KMT and characterize the

⁹⁵ Tao Mouji, “Save Our Taiwanese Compatriots!” ChinesePosters.net, November 1954, <https://chinese posters.net/posters/e15-25>.

Taiwanese people as helpless. This narrative legitimized the PRC's actions and bolstered the will of its people to join the fight. What was critical about propaganda posters like these were their sources. Figure 2 was designed by an artist named Tao Mouji, a designer for the Jiefang Daily newspaper.⁹⁶ According to the US Department of State (DOS), Jiefang Daily is an entity that is "substantially owned or effectively controlled" by the government of the PRC.⁹⁷ This direct connection to the PRC further confirms the high-level information manipulation by the PRC and the use of public institutions to develop the narratives.

Low-level information manipulation was carried out via radio broadcast that could reach ROC soldiers on Quemoy and Matsu.⁹⁸ The PRC aired messages warnings to anyone who "dares to interfere in our internal affairs, they must take upon themselves all the grave consequences of such acts of aggression."⁹⁹ There were no available documents or resources that spoke to the effect of said broadcast, and there were no public records of Soldiers vacating their posts during the PRC's campaign. This study only identified reports that mention the impact of uncertainty around American intentions towards the

⁹⁶ "Tao Mouji (陶谋基)," Chinese Posters Foundation, accessed March 18, 2022, <https://chinese posters.net/artists/taomouji>.

⁹⁷ "Designation of Additional PRC Propaganda Outlets as Foreign Missions - United States Department of State," last modified October 21, 2020, accessed April 18, 2022, <https://web.archive.org/web/20201021173438/https://www.state.gov/designation-of-additional-prc-propaganda-outlets-as-foreign-missions/>.

⁹⁸ CCP Central Committee, "Mao Zedong Telegram to Zhou Enlai."

⁹⁹ Office of the Historian, U.S. Department of State, "Special National Intelligence Estimate."

defense of the offshore islands.¹⁰⁰ The PRC aimed to exploit the impact American indecision had on the morale of the ROC soldiers located at Quemoy and Matsu during the crisis.¹⁰¹ The radio broadcast in mainland China served a different purpose. Instead of demoralizing its audiences on the offshore islands of Taiwan, the PRC used its radio broadcast and its operators to “educate” mainland China.¹⁰² Kings College in London described a radio listening session in a project tailored toward Mao’s era:

During group listening sessions, students, villagers, or workers congregated a radio and listened to the latest updates on China’s situation. Afterwards, local leaders guided the group through a discussion of the topics covered, which could be about how to advance a domestic campaign, such as marriage reform, or could be related to China’s Cold War allies and foes.¹⁰³

Much like their high-level information manipulation, the PRC’s low-level information manipulation was primarily a cognitive operation. The PRC’s broadcast had no formative component that would indirectly impact their adversary’s operations outside of demoralizing their troops.

There were no opportunities for the CPC to infiltrate Taiwanese marketing campaigns with PRC propaganda. Indirect Investment in Taiwanese industry was impossible to assess because the PRC had not established economic ties with Taiwan. The lack of economic ties and the PRC’s weak economy made it challenging to

¹⁰⁰ Office of the Historian, U.S. Department of State, “Special National Intelligence Estimate.”

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Covell Meyskens, “Radio (收音机),” Mao Era in Objects, 2019, <https://maoeraobjects.ac.uk/object-biographies/radio/>.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

weaponize their economy against the Taiwanese.¹⁰⁴ With a looming famine on the horizon, the PRC had no economic leverage to sustain a network of pro-PRC supports on the island of Taiwan.

The 1955 Taiwan Strait Crisis data proves that the PRC did operate within the informational dimension, but it did not achieve information advantage. No evidence supports the claim that the PRC's propaganda campaign via all its media outlets established a system overmatch with the Taiwanese and American systems. The ROC also had an anti-communist propaganda campaign that expressed Chiang Kai-shek's desire to conduct a count-offensive onto the mainland.¹⁰⁵ The study could not prove either campaign's ability to penetrate their targeted audience. US intelligence proved that the PRC could muster the support necessary to conduct an "amphibious lift to overwhelm within a few days after the commencement of an assault any one of the Nationalist [ROC] islands."¹⁰⁶ The "Liberate Taiwan" narrative was effective at rallying domestic support which would enable the PRC to generate and deploy the forces necessary to assault ROC controlled territories.

The 1996 Taiwan Strait Crisis

By 1996 the US and most UN nations shifted diplomatic recognition from the ROC to the PRC. The One-China principle set the tone for the Taiwan Strait, and the

¹⁰⁴ Xin Meng, Nancy Qian, and Pierre Yared, "The Institutional Causes of China's Great Famine, 1959-1961," *The Review of Economic Studies* 82, no. 4 (2015): 1568–1611.

¹⁰⁵ Office of the Historian, U.S. Department of State, "Special National Intelligence Estimate."

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

One-China policy normalized US relations with the PRC. The PRC and the ROC have benefitted from billions of dollars in cross-strait trade and investment.¹⁰⁷ The developing cross-strait relations made the possibility of reunification more practical. However, cross-strait relations worsened when the US congress compelled President Clinton to “welcome a private visit by President Lee Teng-hui to his alma mater, Cornell University.”¹⁰⁸ The PRC responded to this incident by conducting live missile tests near Keelun and Kaohsiung, two of Taiwan’s most vital seaports.¹⁰⁹ The CPC perceived Lee’s visit as an existential threat to the PRC’s legitimacy.

Relations soured further as the CPC witnessed growing calls for independence by Taiwan authorities during the 1996 elections. The 1996 candidates consisted of two Taiwanese secessionist tickets, one PRC loyalist ticket, and one candidate on a Buddhist ticket. Lee Teng-hui, the anti-PRC front runner, outwardly spoke against reunification with the PRC. The PRC initiated war games during the election and launched more missiles near Taiwan to intimidate the Taiwanese residents from voting on a secessionist ticket.¹¹⁰ The US President sent two carrier groups to the Taiwan Strait to deconflict and

¹⁰⁷ “Q&A on Comrade Jiang Zemin’s Eight Propositions,” Taiwan Work Office of the CPC Central Committee, Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council, January 1, 2003, http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/zt/jzmtzbxzz/jqa/201103/t20110309_1778283.htm.

¹⁰⁸ Expressing the Sense of the Congress Regarding a Private Visit by President Lee Teng-hui of the Republic of China on Taiwan to the United States, H. Con. Res.53, 104th Cong (1995-1996), <https://www.congress.gov/bill/104th-congress/house-concurrent-resolution/53/text>.

¹⁰⁹ Chen Qimao, “The Taiwan Strait Crisis: Its Crux and Solutions,” *Asian Survey* 36, no. 11 (1996): 1055–1066.

¹¹⁰ Mike Chinoy, “Chinese Premier Urges US Not to ‘aggravate’ Situation,” *CNN*, March 17, 1996, http://www.cnn.com/WORLD/9603/china_taiwan/17/.

prevent a forced reunification.¹¹¹ The crisis ended with the PRC and ROC reconciling and the US advocating the one-China policy in the interests of Taiwan, the PRC, and the US.

The Strategic Environment

During the 1996 Taiwan Strait Crisis, the strategic environment closely resembles an artificial secession as depicted in Table 5. The PRC stopped short of initiating a limited invasion and chose to delegitimize the actions of Taiwanese authorities. The PRC initiated its anti-secession campaign immediately following US approval of President Lee Teng-hui's visit to Cornell. The PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) issued a statement warning that "relations may 'retrogress' and cause 'severe damage' to relations."¹¹² An article from *People's Daily* shortly followed the PRC's statement, a PRC-controlled media source, reiterating the key points from the statement, accusing the US of violating PRC sovereignty and claiming the PRC's willingness to defend its national interest.¹¹³ The PRC's actions were in line with maintaining the "One China, two systems" narrative to discredit President Lee prior to the election. The ROC's political environment was resilient; there was limited potential for outside influence. However, multiple parties vying for control of Taiwan fragmented Taiwanese politics. The PRC

¹¹¹ Qimao, "The Taiwan Strait Crisis."

¹¹² Paul H. Godwin and Alice L. Miller, *China's Forbearance Has Limits: Chinese Threat and Retaliation Signaling and Its Implications for a Sino-American Military Confrontation*, ed. Phillip C. Saunders (Fort Belvoir, VA: National Defense University Press, 2013), <http://www.dtic.mil/docs/citations/ADA584671>.

¹¹³ Ibid.

aimed to influence the campaign by delegitimizing the “Taiwan independence” narrative and assisting a pro-PRC candidate in winning the election.

Table 5. 1996 Crisis Data Analysis Chart Using PRC Reunification Strategies

PRC Reunification Strategies	1996 Taiwan Strait Crisis	Key	
1. Genuine Secession	(No)	(Yes)	Observed
Full Scale Invasion	(No)	(No)	Not Observed
Main Effort: Military	(No)		
Taiwanese Government (Strong/United)	(Yes)		
Likelihood of US Intervention (High)	(Yes)		
2. Artificial Secession Type 1	(Yes)		
Standing Start Limited Invasion	(Yes)		
Main Effort: Information	(Yes)		
Taiwanese Government (Weak/Fragmented)	(No)		
Likelihood of US Intervention (Low)	(No)		
2. Artificial Secession Type 2	(No)		
Decapitation	(Yes)		
Main Effort: Information	(Yes)		
Taiwanese Government (Weak/Fragmented)	(No)		
Likelihood of US Intervention (Low)	(No)		
3. Non-Secession	(No)		
Coercion	(Yes)		
Main Effort: Diplomacy	(No)		
Taiwanese Government (Weak/Fragmented)	(No)		
Likelihood of US Intervention (Low to Moderate)	(No)		

Source: Created by author using data from Michael S. Burks, Eric X. Schaner, and Eric M. Walters, “Red Victory in the Strait: An Assessment of PRC Strategic Estimates and Options for Resolving the Conflict with Taiwan,” (White Paper, U.S. Marine Corps, Quantico, VA, 2006).

The likelihood of US intervention was high, not in line with an artificial secession. However, China’s main effort was to use the informational dimension to prevent secession without entering armed conflict with the US or Taiwan. When the PRC initiated its show of force exercises, its leadership published control measures to avoid escalation. The data shows that China permitted the Xinhua News Agency to announce the exercise three days before firing any missiles. Xinhua released the following announcement on March 5, 1996:

The Chinese People's Liberation Army will launch [missiles] from March 8, 1996 to March 15 [near Taiwan]...For the sake of safety, the Chinese government requires the governments and regional authorities of relevant countries to notify ships and planes in their own countries and regions not to enter the above-mentioned waters and airspaces during this period.¹¹⁴

This announcement was critical because two of the landing areas for the exercise were within 20 nautical miles of the ports that support 80% of Taiwan's trade.¹¹⁵ All of the PRC's actions supported the CPC's narrative, which was antagonistic towards Taiwanese independence and US involvement in cross-strait affairs.

Information Advantage Assessment

The PRC utilized direct information manipulation, indirect investment, and ideology-driven information operations during the 1996 Taiwan Strait Crisis as depicted in Table 6. The PRC integrated all aspects of its information operations into the narrative against Taiwan's independence. The PRC conducted direct information manipulation through the PLA, United Front, propaganda department, and PRC-affiliated media branches. Indirect investment played a vital role in the PRC's narrative penetrating the perspective of the Taiwanese populace. Pro-PRC politicians and religious groups gave the PRC an ideological base to launch connected-level information manipulation.

¹¹⁴ China Media Group, "Smoke of Gunpowder Stuns 'Taiwan Independence' - the Beginning and End of the Southeast Coastal Exercise (Part 2)," *CCTV*, accessed April 21, 2022, <https://www.cctv.com/lm/655/32/39507.html>.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

Table 6. 1996 Taiwan Strait Crisis Data Analysis

The 3Is Information Advantage Assessment Model	1996 Taiwan Strait Crisis	Key	
1. Direct Information Manipulation	(Yes)	(Yes)	Observed
Cognitive Component	(Yes)	(No)	Not Observed
Functional Component	(No)		
High-level information manipulation	(Yes)		
Low-level information manipulation	(Yes)		
Connected-level information operations	(Yes)		
2. Indirect Investment: Money Flow	(Yes)		
Cognitive Component	(Yes)		
Functional Component	(Yes)		
Investment in the Taiwanese marketing industry	(Yes)		
Investment to create economic pressure	(Yes)		
Donations to entice citizens to join the network	(Yes)		
3. Ideology-Driven: Human Flow	(Yes)		
Exploit a pro-China ideological base	(Yes)		
4. Achieve Information Advantage	(No)		
Obtains System Overmatch	(No)		
Possesses the Prevailing Narrative	(No)		
Sustains Force Resiliency	(No)		

Source: Created by author using data from Puma Shen, “How China Initiates Information Operations Against Taiwan,” *Taiwan Strategist*, no. 12 (December 2021): 16, <https://www.pf.org.tw/files/7675/1BB3C76F-A6C9-4356-BF96-53B7A2546F34>; Eric X. Schaner, “MCDP 8, Information: A New Marine Corps Doctrine for the Information Warfighting Function,” *Marine Corps Gazette* (April 2022) 20-24.

The PRC used direct information manipulation characterized by high-level information manipulation. The information campaign was planned, resourced, and controlled by the CPC. When Lee Teng-hui visited Cornell, he triggered an immediate response from the PRC in the informational dimension. On the 6th of June, the MFA spokesman Shen Guofang described Lee’s visit as a “grave affair” and warned that the PRC would “react further.”¹¹⁶ Within two days, the *Xinhua News* and *People’s Daily* began reiterating the talking points raised by the MFA. The narrative at this moment asserted that the only Chinese diplomats permitted to engage an international audience

¹¹⁶ Godwin and Miller, *China’s Forbearance Has Limits*.

are official members of the PRC. After issuing warnings and statements for over a month and a half, the PRC conducted missile tests to reinforce its stance on “peaceful reunification and one country, two systems.”¹¹⁷

The United Front Work Department of the Central Committee of the CPC (UFD) carried out high-level information operations. The PRC activated the Taiwan Affairs Office (TAO), a subdivision of the UFD, that oversaw all cross-strait affairs ranging from media, politics, and trade.¹¹⁸ The TAO had observable connections to the *China Daily*, a news platform that propagated the PRC’s narrative directly to Chinese and Taiwanese audiences. The *China Daily* received indirect guidance and financing from the MFA, the parent organization of the UFD, and direct guidance from the TAO.¹¹⁹ These organizations took high-level narratives and spread them to connected-level and low-level parties to promulgate the “One China Principle.” The data supports the fact that the PRC’s direct information manipulation sought cognitive change within the minds of the Taiwanese, not functional change in Taiwan’s ability to operate within the informational dimension.

The PRC’s most indirect means of operating within the informational dimension in 1996 was its economic relations with Taiwan. The PRC opened itself up to trade with

¹¹⁷ “The One-China Principle Is the Foundation and Premise for Unification,” Taiwan Work Office of the CPC Central Committee, Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council, January 30, 1996, http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/zt/jzmtzbxzz/jiang/201101/t20110105_1676848.htm.

¹¹⁸ “Organizational Settings,” Taiwan Work Office of the CPC Central Committee, Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council, accessed April 24, 2022, <http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/jgsz/>.

¹¹⁹ “About,” *China Daily*, accessed April 24, 2022, https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/e/static_e/about.

Taiwan in 1981, achieving \$460 million in trade.¹²⁰ By 1996, cross-strait trade reached over \$23 billion.¹²¹ This amount of cross-strait trade allowed both nations to influence each other's narratives. However, Taiwanese business owners veered toward an anti-secessionist economic policy to improve economic relations with the PRC. By 1997, the PRC represented 60% of Taiwan's outbound investments.¹²² This level of dependency made Taiwan vulnerable to economic coercion because its economic interests were inextricably tied to the PRC's economy. Though the potential for Taiwanese businesspeople to become pro-PRC political agents existed, no evidence supports that it occurred.¹²³ The data supports economic interests in the Taiwan Strait centered on a continuation of the status quo because conflict across the strait negatively impacts both economies. While the PRC's goals were to impose a cognitive bias towards reunification, economic relations bolstered a desire antithetical to the "One China Principle."

Non-economic exchanges deepened the cross-strait relations and granted the PRC an ideological base. Both folk religion and Buddhism offer increased opportunities for mainland Chinese and Taiwanese people to interact directly. These interactions occurred even when official parties restricted travel across the strait.¹²⁴ Religious institutions represented a threat and an opportunity for the PRC. If the entities received indirect

¹²⁰ Nancy Bernkopf Tucker, ed., *Dangerous Strait: The U.S. – Taiwan – China Crisis* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2005).

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ralph N. Clough, *Cooperation or Conflict in the Taiwan Strait* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1999).

support from the PRC, they were likely to support its narrative.¹²⁵ Even if the religious groups and politicians were against complete reunification, their social and financial ties to the PRC would incite anti-secessionist rhetoric.

Despite the PRC's efforts to eradicate the idea of Taiwan's independence through direct and indirect information operations, its efforts proved to be ineffective during the 1996 crisis. More information supporting Taiwanese independence was penetrating mainland China than Taiwan in 1996.¹²⁶ Proof that China's information campaign was unsuccessful was the election of President Lee Teng-hui, the Taiwanese independence front runner, during the PLA's live-fire intimidation exercises. The PRC's actions in the informational dimension led to heightened Taiwanese resolve.

Publicly available data does not support the PRC achieving information advantage in 1996. While the PRC's information mechanism is vast, spanning from senior officials in the CPC down to the local religious leader, it did not accomplish system overmatch in the Taiwan Strait. The PRC's capability to penetrate external targets has proven ineffective and counterproductive. The data does not support the PRC achieving the prevailing narrative because this conflict ended with the PRC laying claim to Taiwan, Taiwan continuing to believe in its independence, and America adhering to the "One China Policy."

¹²⁵ Shen, "How China Initiates Information Operations Against Taiwan."

¹²⁶ Hong Junhao, "Penetration and Interaction of Mass Media between Taiwan, Hong Kong, and the Mainland China: Trends and Implications," in *Dynamics & Dilemma: Mainland, Taiwan and Hong Kong in a Changing World*, ed. Chung Tsungting Yu Bin (Hauppauge, NY: Nova Science Publishers, Inc., 1996), 263.

Comparative Analysis

A comparative analysis of the 1955 and 1996 Taiwan Strait Crises revealed that the PRC and Taiwan are trending toward a strategically ambiguous environment. Both the PRC and Taiwan exhibit strength and unity around their own political ideology and express a willingness to enter armed conflict if that ideology is disregarded. In addition to cross-strait interests, the US has a vital interest in the PRC and Taiwan reunifying peacefully.¹²⁷ This dynamic limits China's options to conducting a full-scale conflict with Taiwan and the United States or achieving reunification through an information campaign. Given China's ideological approach to warfare and the trend toward building the "One China" narrative, information operations, specifically high-level narratives, will likely be the priority.

The two cases reveal the importance of Taiwan's growing national identity and that identity plays a crucial role in narrative penetration. There was little to no penetration in 1955 because the KMT had no relations with mainland China. In 1955, propaganda was primarily targeted at the US and the KMT, displaying the Taiwanese people as weak and harmless.¹²⁸ The political climate of Taiwan shifted in 1996. Taiwan was amid a political revolution, and attitudes were trending towards Taiwanese independence.¹²⁹ This dynamic hampered the PRC's ability to connect with Taiwanese citizens in a way that did not negatively impact their perception of the PRC within the informational

¹²⁷ Taiwan Relations Act.

¹²⁸ Mouji, "Save Our Taiwanese Compatriots!"

¹²⁹ Chen Qimao, "The Taiwan Strait Crisis: Causes, Scenarios and Solutions," in *Relation Across the Taiwan Strait: Perspectives from the Mainland China*, ed. Suisheng Zhao (Washington, DC: The Atlantic Council of the United States, 1999), 109-143.

dimension. In both instances, the PRC used military options to affect the informational dimension, and in both cases, it led to an increase in Taiwanese resolve and US involvement. By 1996, the PRC narrative was opposed to the growing calls for democracy in Taiwan.

In both cases, the PRC sought information advantage in the informational dimension through indirect information manipulation. The same news organizations used to fulfill PRC information operations in 1955 were used in 1996. The difference is that the PRC and Taiwan had been exchanging billions of dollars in trade by 1996, which is different from the 1955 case.¹³⁰ Deepening economic relations with the PRC places Taiwan at risk of economic coercion. With strong economic ties, the PRC could bolster its narrative by investing in pro-PRC politicians and market products sourced exclusively in mainland China.

The PRC progressively prioritized information operations from 1955 to 1996. In both cases, US ability to exert force in the Taiwan Strait was challenged in the informational dimension. The PRC used the “One China” narrative to legitimize its actions and delegitimize US involvement. In 1955, the narrative was “liberate Taiwan,” and the 1996 narrative was “peaceful reunification, one country, two systems.”¹³¹ In 1955, Mao’s decision to shell Quemoy and Matsu ran counter to the tenets of Chinese theorists, but he justified his actions by initiating a hasty information campaign. In 1996,

¹³⁰ Tucker, *Dangerous Strait*.

¹³¹ “Wang Yonghai: Implement the Eight Propositions and Vigorously Promote the Process of Peaceful Reunification,” Taiwan Work Office of the CPC Central Committee, Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council, January 30, 1995, http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/zt/zyhszl/speech/location/201101/t20110123_1725673.htm.

PRC leaders had elaborate mechanisms that supported the “One China” narrative. The “One China” narrative united the actions of the CPC, news outlets, and the PLA with the intent to coerce Taiwan into reunification.¹³² Instead of entering armed conflict, the PRC chose to deliberately use a show of force that coincided with the narrative crafted by the CPC and promulgated by *Xinhua News*, *People’s Daily*, and pro-PRC citizens/entities within Taiwan.

From 1955 to 1996, the PRC improved its ability to weaponize information, evidenced by its ability to operate in the space between armed conflict and competition. The PRC’s narrative went from justifying attacks on Taiwan in 1955 to less than lethal influence operations during the Taiwanese elections in 1996. The PRC garnered a similar response from the US in both crises. BBC characterized the US response as “...the biggest display of US military power in Asia since the Vietnam War.”¹³³ While US actions did not demonstrate the PRC’s success in the informational dimension, they highlight the PRC’s ability to influence US actions without entering armed conflict.

Summary

A thorough analysis of the data from the 1955 and 1996 Taiwan Strait Crises revealed the value the PRC places in a well-crafted narrative. Though the two incidents differed in cause and execution, the PRC’s emphasis on information operations was similar. In both cases, the CPC believed that the legitimacy of its nation was at stake and recognized that its military strength was not comparable to the US military. The PRC

¹³² China Media Group, “Smoke of Gunpowder Stuns ‘Taiwan Independence’.”

¹³³ BBC, “Taiwan Flashpoint,” *BBC News*, accessed March 26, 2022, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/spl/hi/asia_pac/04/taiwan_flashpoint/html/us_role.stm.

chose armed conflict with the KMT in 1955. Its 1996 strategy did not require conflict and avoided further escalation. Operating in strategic ambiguity allowed the PRC to develop alternative paths toward reunification with Taiwan. The first was delegitimizing Taiwanese authorities by depicting their pursuit of independence as aggressive and opposed to international order. The second was creating distance between the US and Taiwan by improving cross-strait economic relations and avoiding armed conflict. Information operations helped address these aims, but the success of the operations remains in question. The PRC's information capabilities have evolved, but only to maintain cross-strait relations and prevent US involvement in CPC reunification efforts.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECCOMENDATIONS

This chapter will provide the findings relevant to the research questions associated with this study. It will also provide recommendations for further study. This study seeks to answer the following question: How will China use the informational dimension to achieve reunification with Taiwan in the 21st Century? Other secondary questions include: (1) How does China's strategy for complete reunification with Taiwan shape its approach to "informatized warfare" in the Taiwan Strait? (2) How do China's information capabilities shape its ability to exploit the informational dimension in the Taiwan Strait? (3) How has China used the informational dimension to seek decision dominance over the US within the Taiwan Strait?

China's Approach to Information

The PRC's approach to the informational dimension is concentrated on its narrative. The PRC's narrative is developed by the CPC, sustained by its economy and private industry, and enforced by the PLA. The CPC's narrative is predicated on the vulnerability of its political ideology. The "One China Principle" does not leave room for dissenting ideologies or an independent state within its sovereign territory. Legitimacy is the CPC's primary focus when operating in the informational dimension. Economic development and international relations empowered the CPC's narrative because they made Taiwan and the international community dependent on the PRC's success. The military is not the CPC's primary vehicle for implementing information campaigns in the

Taiwan Strait. However, military options are used as a supporting effort for information operations within a Taiwanese context.

After the conclusion of armed conflict with the KMT, Mao fought for the legitimacy of the CPC. The CPC committed to ending the “Century of Humiliation” through a reclamation of China’s territory. This is the foundation of the “One China” narrative. The PRC will not regain its dignity until all of China’s claimed territories are reunified. In 1955, the CPC constructed “liberate Taiwan” propaganda to legitimize armed conflict with Taiwan. This campaign was unique because Mao emphasized the time needed for a proper information campaign to saturate the national conscious.¹³⁴ Mao knew that his information campaign’s effectiveness would be limited if the CPC waited any longer. Given the time and the limited options to exercise informatized warfare, Mao chose to pair propaganda with the shelling of Quemoy and Matsu. The propaganda produced by the CPC targeted domestic audiences to bolster support for the “liberate Taiwan” narrative and to motivate civilians to contribute to the fight.¹³⁵ This case highlighted the PRC’s limited span of control within the informational dimension. Mao understood the need to fight within the informational dimension despite his limited information capabilities. His attack on Taiwan in 1955 was not a full invasion, it was a demonstration of the CPC’s will to reunify China. From the outset of the crisis, the PLA’s actions supported the narrative.

By 1996, the PRCs economic strength and cross strait relations enabled innovative approaches to information operations. The advent of mass media enabled the

¹³⁴ CCP Central Committee, “Zedong Telegram to Zhou Enlai.”

¹³⁵ Mouji, “Save Our Taiwanese Compatriots!”

CPC to push its “One China” narrative through unofficial channels. The CPC indirectly controlled the media outlets. The indirect approach to information manipulation is characteristic of the CPC’s approach to maneuvering within the informational dimension. During the 1996 crisis, the PRC was leading an information campaign on multiple fronts using all of its instruments of national power. It targeted the US via PRC leadership statements, official statements from the MFA, PLA exercises and mass media condemning US violation of the “One China” principle on the international stage.¹³⁶ The US policy towards Taiwan and the PRC was tested and proven effective as the situation returned to the status quo, despite the PRC’s efforts. While the PRC used diplomacy and military to support its information campaign against the US, its economic ties and played a significant role in the CPC’s approach to the information operations in Taiwan.¹³⁷ China’s economic viability put it in a position to coerce Taiwanese businessmen and politicians’ opinions toward the Chinese narrative.

Chinese Reunification Dictates Informatized Warfare

The PRC’s guiding policy for dealing with the “Taiwan Problem” is its 2005 Anti-Secession Law that formalizes its approach to Taiwan’s reunification. The document prioritizes “reunifying the motherland” peacefully and if all options are exhausted, employing “non-peaceful means and other necessary measures to protect China’s sovereignty and territorial integrity.”¹³⁸ Informatized warfare offers the PRC a

¹³⁶ Godwin and Miller, *China’s Forbearance Has Limits*.

¹³⁷ Tucker, *Dangerous Strait*.

¹³⁸ PRC, “Anti-Secession Law.”

range of options below armed conflict. The Taiwan Strait Crises trended away from armed conflict and progressively incorporated more types of information operations as technology evolved. In the 1996 crisis, the PRC used PLA exercises to intimidate Taiwan. This effort backfired and led Taiwanese citizens to oppose the PRC's narrative.¹³⁹ This strategic failure helped shape the contemporary soft power approach the PRC took towards Taiwan. Instead of engaging the Taiwanese people through direct information manipulation as seen in 1955, the PRC used connected-level information operations to further develop its strategy. Taiwanese citizens were exposed to biased content and reports that align with the PRC's narrative, and pro-PRC conspiracy theories.¹⁴⁰

Exploitation of the Informational Dimension

While the CPC has maintained a steady presence within the informational dimension, the results of its efforts have not met its end state, reunification with Taiwan. Immediately following the Taiwan Strait Crises, the PRC managed to maintain the status quo with the US and improve cross-strait relations. By 1996, the PRC's 2.9 million PLA forces lacked the capabilities necessary to compete with the US.¹⁴¹ Limiting escalation

¹³⁹ Edward L. Dreyer and June Teufel Dreyer, "Chapter 3: The Chinese People's Liberation Army's Perception of an Invasion of Taiwan," in *The Chinese People's Liberation Army's Perception of an Invasion of Taiwan* (Washington, DC: Contemporary US-Asia Research Institute, 1996), 321-350.

¹⁴⁰ Shen, "How China Initiates Information Operations Against Taiwan."

¹⁴¹ Eric Heginbotham, Michael Nixon, Forrest E. Morgan, Jacob L. Heim, Jeff Hagen, Sheng Li, Jeffrey Engstrom, Martin C. Libicki, Paul DeLuca, David A. Shlapak, David R. Frelinger, and Burgess Laird, Kyle Brady, Lyle J. Morris, *The U.S.-China Military Scorecard: Forces, Geography, and the Evolving Balance of Power 1996-2017*

with Taiwan during each crisis bought the CPC time to improve its approach. The PRC's willingness to continue developing its information operations outweighed the risk associated with agitating the status quo, entering armed conflict with Taiwan, and international scrutiny. In 1955, the PRC initiated a hasty propaganda campaign that generated the domestic support for the narrative. This campaign invoked the PRC's national pride, and effectively targeted the KMT.¹⁴² By 1996, the PRC's operations within the informational dimension developed and expanded. The CPC had internal and external information campaigns that had varying degrees of success, but these efforts did not cease after the military exercises ended in 1996. The CPC continued to expand its operations in Taiwan and the international community. In the midst of a crisis, the PRC expanded its position within the informational dimension with the implementation of these six techniques:

The government issued instructions demanding that foreign publicity be reinforced with the adoption of the following six techniques: (1) boosting external publicity through the Internet; (2) expanding external cultural exchanges by unifying exchanges and external publicity; (3) making the external cultural industry more competitive and influential, thereby making cultural publicity more attractive; (4) adopting a more positive attitude toward foreign media and reporters; (5) strengthening external publicity activities by studying the market mechanism for external publicity items, and promoting moves abroad by Chinese media; and (6) making concentrated efforts to publicize important issues on a priority basis.¹⁴³

(Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2015), https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR392.htm.

¹⁴² CCP Central Committee, "Zedong Telegram to Zhou Enlai."

¹⁴³ Aayama Rumi, "Chinese Diplomacy in the Multimedia Age: Public Diplomacy and Civil Diplomacy," (Working Paper 16, Contemporary Asian Studies Program, Waseda University, December 2004), 13, <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/286945462.pdf>.

After the 1996 crisis the CPC improved its ability to influence the informational dimension via the internet, incorporating cyber operations to further achieve its interests.¹⁴⁴

Obtaining Shi via the Informational Dimension

There is a continual goal of creating a strategic advantage or shi on the battlefield, in diplomatic relations, geostrategic settings (through considerations of numerous factors, such as distance attenuation, etc.), supply chains, and any area in which China has an interest. A strategic advantage is the goal of any manipulation of the strategic environment, and it is probably the most important Chinese concept to keep in mind.¹⁴⁵

No evidence supports that the PLA has obtained shi within the Taiwan Straits because the CPC would have exploited the opportunity in line with Sun Tzu's Art of War theory. The informational dimension as it relates to the Taiwan Straits is "contentious terrain" that does not guarantee success for the PRC. Sun Tzu's Art of War theory suggests "On contentious terrain do not attack."¹⁴⁶ When applying this theory to the CPC's approach to the information dimension, the gradual pursuit of shi is justified. The PRC has not acted hastily in its pursuit of dominance in the Taiwan Strait. Since the inception of the PRC the CPC has perpetually expanded support for its narrative. Advocacy of the "One China Principle" has not given the CPC shi over the US in the Taiwan Strait, however US policy permits the CPC freedom to use information

¹⁴⁴ Rumi, "Chinese Diplomacy in the Multimedia Age."

¹⁴⁵ Thomas, "The Chinese Way of War," 2.

¹⁴⁶ Sun Tzu, *Sun Tzu: Art of War*, trans. Ralph D. Sawyer (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, Inc., 1994), 153.

operations.¹⁴⁷ The Taiwan Relations Act safeguards a peaceful reunification of the PRC and Taiwan.¹⁴⁸ Uninterrupted development within the informational dimension allows the CPC to pursue its interests without risking US involvement and conflict with Taiwan. Unless the US changes its stance on ambiguity and peaceful reunification, the CPC will continue to magnify its approach toward reunification through information operations.

Implications for the Army

The CPC will not accept Taiwanese independence and it will continue to pursue peaceful reunification. Despite those facts, the 2005 Anti-Secession Law authorize the use of force if “possibilities for a peaceful reunification should be completely exhausted.”¹⁴⁹ The PRC has practiced patience since the US implemented the One China policy in the 1970s, and the CPC has not alluded to a reunification deadline. This is important because the strategic environment in the Taiwan Strait is trending toward a genuine secession. The current ruling party of Taiwan is the DPP. The DPP’s national website has a “Resolution on Taiwan’s Future” that states “Taiwan is an independent and sovereign state. Changes in the status quo of independence should be decided by all residents in Taiwan via a referendum.”¹⁵⁰ While the DPP is not the only representation of Taiwanese political ideology, it presently represents the highest office in Taiwan.

¹⁴⁷ Taiwan Relations Act.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ PRC, “Anti-Secession Law.”

¹⁵⁰ Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), “Part 3. Resolution,” (ratified at the 2nd Session of the 8th DPP National Congress on May 8 and 1999), <https://www.dpp.org.tw/en/upload/download/Resolutions.pdf>.

President Tsai Ing-wen, a pro-independence politician, has won her second election which indicates the political climate in Taiwan is leaning towards independence.

On the 23rd of January 2022, Taiwan reported thirty-nine PLA Air Force aircraft in its air defense identification zone, the largest incursion since 2021 when Taiwan reported 148 Chinese aircraft in the same air space.¹⁵¹ These incursions are a demonstration of the CPC's ability and willingness to use military force to reunify Taiwan with mainland China. While incidents such as these continue, the US has remained dedicated to its Taiwan policy and supporting the status quo. If the US decided to abandon strategic ambiguity in relation to Taiwan, the PLA will use system confrontation to disrupt the ability of the United States to respond to a PLA invasion of Taiwan. In this scenario, the PLA will likely use direct information manipulation targeting US operational networks, logistics nodes, civilian and commercial entities.¹⁵² The goal would be reunification without total war. Although the PLA is fully capable of launching a full-scale invasion of Taiwan it is still unlikely.

A PLA limited scale invasion involving information operations and special operations to force capitulation and eliminate Taiwan's national will to resist is the most likely course of action. The PLA has the capability to conduct a large-scale computer network exploitation against key Taiwanese broadcasting and communications nodes

¹⁵¹ Ben Blanchard, "Taiwan Reports New Large-Scale Chinese Air Force Incursion," ed. Gareth Jones and Susan Fenton, *Reuters*, January 24, 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/taiwan-reports-new-large-scale-chinese-air-force-incursion-2022-01-23/>.

¹⁵² Fritz, *China's Cyber Warfare*.

simultaneously.¹⁵³ This type of cyber-attack would enable the PLA to initiate a disinformation campaign convincing the Taiwanese citizens that the government has conceded, and the US has refused to act. At the same time, PLA special forces would initiate a precision strike against Taiwan's leaders and operational networks.¹⁵⁴ The combined effect of this operation would lead to reunification without a significant loss of life or US involvement.

The US Army will not serve a major role in this strategic environment if the US maintains its One China policy. The potential for US military involvement is less possible if it is preoccupied by other strategic priorities or the national will is against armed conflict in the Taiwan Strait. As a proponent of the one China principle, the US risks the reputation of isolationist in the midst of trying to "...modernize our [US] long-standing alliances, strengthen emerging partnerships, and invest in regional [Indo-Pacific] organizations..." in the face of an emboldened PRC.¹⁵⁵ The 2022 US Indo-Pacific Strategy will counter the PRC narrative that isolates US influence in the Indo-Pacific region by aligning interests in the region. Success will be predicated on the strength of US partnerships and the ability to operate in the space below armed conflict.

The US can improve the Indo-Pacific Command's ability to compete and fight within the informational dimension by integrating information related capabilities much

¹⁵³ Fritz, *China's Cyber Warfare*.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ U.S. President, *Indo-Pacific Strategy of the United States* (Washington, DC: The White House, February 2022), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/U.S.-Indo-Pacific-Strategy.pdf>.

like a combined arms operation.¹⁵⁶ To accomplish this task all stakeholders including US officials, partner nations, and joint force commanders must develop a platform or system of platforms capable of tracking ongoing events, accurately modeling the informational dimension, and wargaming a wide variety of possible outcomes in support of information operations.¹⁵⁷ This platform will generate shared understanding and enable joint force commanders to integrate information capabilities like cyber, electronic warfare (EW), psychological operations (PSYOPS) and public affairs as needed. For example, commanders can pair cyber and psyops to counter China's narrative in Taiwan and public affairs to inform the American public, while using the platform to assess how those actions impacted the informational dimension. As opposed to incorporating information capabilities individually during conflict, commanders can use these capabilities to shape the theater across the conflict continuum. Partner nations will also play a critical role in developing situational awareness and accomplishing different effects in the informational dimension. Our partners' policies dictate actions in the informational dimension differently. While our policy may restrict information operations, our relationships may enhance information operations. An example of how our partners enhance information operations was demonstrated in a July 19, 2021, White House Statement:

Our allies and partners are a tremendous source of strength and a unique American advantage, and our collective approach to cyber threat information sharing, defense, and mitigation helps hold countries like China to account. Working collectively enhances and increases information sharing, including cyber

¹⁵⁶ James R. McGrath, "Twenty-First Century Information Warfare and the Third Offset Strategy," *Joint Force Quarterly* 82 (3rd Quarter 2016): 16-23, <https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Media/News/News-Article-View/Article/793229/twenty-first-century-information-warfare-and-the-third-offset-strategy/>.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

threat intelligence and network defense information, with public and private stakeholders and expand diplomatic engagement to strengthen our collective cyber resilience and security cooperation.¹⁵⁸

Recommendation for Future Study

This study focused on China's approach to information operations within Taiwanese context. A subsequent quantitative study on the effect of the CPC's narrative on the American populace is warranted. One theme from this research is the PRC's information campaign to isolate the US from the domestic Chinese and Taiwanese citizens. Now that the PRC has deliberately taken the last 30 years to study foreign audiences and improve their foreign communications, it is probable that their information campaigns could have unforeseeable effect on US citizens. The recommended study can assess military and civilian citizens to identify peculiarities between the two groups. To accurately assess this problem, the researcher will need to identify the PRC's narrative for American citizens. Then the researcher will need to identify entities directly and/or indirectly controlled by the CPC that distribute the PRC's narrative to American citizens. Once the researcher has the PRC narrative and its American sources, they can survey American citizens on their support for the narrative and their trust of the PRC controlled entities. This recommended study should identify, "what percentage of American citizens or military service members support the CPC's narrative and trust CPC controlled entities operating in the US?"

¹⁵⁸ The White House, "The United States, Joined by Allied and Partners, Attributes Malicious Cyber Activity and Irresponsible State Behavior to the People's Republic of China," The White House Briefing Room, July 19, 2021, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/07/19/the-united-states-joined-by-allies-and-partners-attributes-malicious-cyber-activity-and-irresponsible-state-behavior-to-the-peoples-republic-of-china/>.

Another recommended study would ask, “how China uses the informational dimension to influence American citizens against US interests?” This study could explore how China uses information to shift American interests away from Taiwan. Much like the CPC’s efforts in Taiwan, the researcher can use the 3Is method to gain an understanding of how China is manipulating information to achieve its interests.¹⁵⁹ There will be some variance in the approach given the fact that CPC has no interests for conflict with the US. The researcher will also have to identify a theoretical framework for assessing the CPC’s understanding of the US strategic environment in relation to Chinese interests.

Conclusion

Between 1955, when the PRC began hostilities in Taiwan, and 1996, when its methods evolved, the CPC dramatically improved its use of the informational dimension. Over the course of the PRC’s existence, it initiated limited propaganda campaigns, established economic ties with the ROC, and influenced the US to support its “One China” narrative. During the first crisis, the CPC’s primary objective was domestic unification, behind the idea that Taiwan reunification was vitally important to Chinese dignity. This objective was made possible because Mao initiated an information campaign geared toward revolutionizing the Chinese people.¹⁶⁰ By 1996, the CPC expanded its use of information by capitalizing on the \$29 billion in trade with the ROC.¹⁶¹ With this new economic power, the CPC could influence political ideologies in

¹⁵⁹ Shen, “How China Initiates Information Operations Against Taiwan.”

¹⁶⁰ CCP Central Committee “Zedong Telegram to Zhou Enlai.”

¹⁶¹ Tucker, *Dangerous Strait*.

Taiwan to support a pro-PRC narrative. By limiting the need for armed conflict, obtaining international recognition as the ruling party of China, and developing economic viability, the CPC has avoided US intervention.

China did not dominate the informational dimension during the 1955 and 1996 Taiwan Crises. However, domination was not the CPC's end state. Operating within the informational dimension was exploratory and opportunistic. The CPC used all its means to support the "one China" narrative, and the PLA enforced the principle whenever Taiwan declared independence. It is plausible that the PLA will not initiate an invasion in Taiwan prior to an effective information campaign that justifies and initiates the attack. The PRC has always learned from its negative experiences and successes with information operations. It will continue to expand its operations as information capabilities increase and the information discipline grows.

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