

# BACKGROUND

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## Winning Without Fighting: Chinese Public Opinion Warfare and the Need for a Robust American Response

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### Abstract

*Over the past decade, the People's Republic of China has exhibited a growing interest in waging asymmetrical warfare. The purpose of this interest is chilling: to enable the PRC to win a war against the U.S. without firing a shot. To this end, the PRC is expanding potential areas of conflict from the purely military (i.e., involving the direct or indirect use of military forces) to the more political. Such expansion will be fueled by manipulation of public opinion, legal systems, and enemy leadership. It is essential that the United States counter the PRC's new soft-power surge not only by rebutting political attacks, but also by taking the offensive and promoting America's positions to a global audience.*

Over the past decade, the People's Republic of China (PRC) has exhibited a growing interest in waging asymmetrical warfare. To this end, the PRC released an initial set of regulations regarding political warfare in December 2003, before updating them in 2010. These "political work regulations" for the People's Liberation Army (PLA) address the importance of waging "the three warfares": public opinion warfare, psychological warfare, and legal warfare.

The "three warfares" represent the PRC's commitment to expanding potential areas of conflict from the purely military (i.e., involving the direct or indirect use of military forces) to the more political. Such expansion will be fueled by manipulation of public opinion, legal systems, and enemy leadership. But unlike more traditional military conflict, the foundation for political warfare must be established during peacetime so as to create beneficial conditions and context for the military conflict and, in turn, precipitate an early end to a conflict on terms favorable to the PRC. Indeed, if waged successfully, political warfare allows one side to win without fighting.

In hopes of being able to alter the strategic context of any future

### KEY POINTS

- In order to avoid being outmaneuvered by a People's Republic of China intent on winning without firing a shot, the U.S. must strengthen its strategic communications, public diplomacy, and media outreach capabilities.
- Over the past decade, the PRC has exhibited growing interest in waging asymmetrical warfare. To this end, it released "political work regulations" for the People's Liberation Army that address the importance of "the three warfares": public opinion warfare, psychological warfare, and legal warfare.
- The "three warfares" represent the PRC's commitment to expanding potential areas of conflict from the purely military to the more political, fueled by manipulation of public opinion, legal systems, and enemy leadership.
- Even today, the PRC is laying the groundwork for soft-power operations. It is therefore essential that the United States counter that influence now while preparing to use its own arsenal of political warfare weapons should a conflict ever arise.

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U.S.–PRC confrontation, the PRC is improving its ability to influence both global and Chinese public opinion. If the United States does not counter Chinese political warfare efforts, it may well find that its access to the Western Pacific is endangered by a lack of regional support—long before American forces even begin moving toward the area. In order to avoid being outmaneuvered by a PRC intent on winning without firing a shot, the U.S. must strengthen its strategic communications, public diplomacy, and media outreach capabilities.

### **Comprehensive Power and Cultural Security**

When the Chinese write about their conception of security, it is often couched in terms of “comprehensive national power [*zonghe guojia liliang*].” This concept argues that a nation should be judged not simply by its military, economic, or diplomatic power, but by a combination of all of three, as well as its scientific and technological base and its cultural influence.

Consequently, the PRC considers many seemingly unrelated activities essential to Chinese security. China’s space capabilities, for example, contribute to Chinese comprehensive national power, not only by placing Chinese satellites and astronauts into space to obvious military and political effect, but also by fostering scientific and technical expertise and enhancing China’s economy. Space

capabilities also serve as evidence of China’s growing technological prowess and scientific, industrial, and military capability and are therefore considered an important element of public diplomacy.

At the same time, however, China’s growing interaction with the rest of the world has given rise to concerns about the PRC’s “cultural security.” In late 2011, Chinese leader Hu Jintao gave a speech in which he noted that on the international scene, one characteristic of the competition in comprehensive national power is the growing prominence of culture: “Many major nations have sought to expand their range of cultural soft-power as a means of increasing core national competitiveness.”<sup>1</sup> As the speech goes on to note, this has meant that “international hostile forces are intensifying the strategic plot of Westernizing and dividing China, and ideological and cultural fields are the focal areas of their long-term infiltration.”<sup>2</sup> The cultural competition is seen not simply as the proliferation of Western videos and entertainment, but as an aspect of ideological struggle.

This question of “cultural security” is fueled by two elements. The first issue is the residue of what the Chinese term “the Century of Humiliation,” during which China was bullied and exploited by foreign powers. There is a concern that, despite its economic rise and growing military prowess, China remains

subject to foreign influences that will undermine its culture. As one Chinese observer has noted, “as an importer of cultural products, ideas, and technologies since the 19th Century, China has every reason to worry about its cultural identity.”<sup>3</sup> China has long demonstrated less confidence in its cultural security and identity than, for example, its Japanese neighbors.

The second issue driving these concerns about “cultural security” is the PRC’s belief that Chinese cultural products are not given a “fair shake.” For example, Chinese articles lamented that Zhang Yimou’s “Flowers of War,” starring Christian Bale and believed to be the most expensive movie yet made in China, was not even nominated for the Oscar for best foreign film.<sup>4</sup> Some believe that this was because of pressure to deny China its due recognition. Conversely, awarding the Nobel Peace Prize to Chinese dissident Liu Xiaobo is seen as using the award to criticize China.

### **The Three Warfares: Winning Without Firing a Shot**

There is a military aspect to the PRC’s focus on public opinion, embodied in the concept of “the three warfares.” Chinese military writings emphasize the importance of influencing global public opinion so as to coerce opponents into compliance without having to go to war and to influence an enemy’s

1. Hu Jintao, “Holding Unswervingly to a Socialist Cultural Development Path with Chinese Characteristics, Strive to Build a Nation Strong in Socialist Culture,” *Qiushi*, January 4, 2012, <http://www.chinareform.net/show.php?id=4976> (accessed October 15, 2012).

2. Edward Wong, “China’s President Lashes Out at Western Culture,” *The New York Times*, January 3, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/04/world/asia/chinas-president-pushes-back-against-western-culture.html>.

3. Xinhuanet, “China’s Cultural Security Lies in Openness and Exchanges,” October 27, 2011, [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/indepth/2011-10/27/c\\_131215084.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/indepth/2011-10/27/c_131215084.htm) (accessed October 15, 2012).

4. “Golden Statuette Can Help Elevate Cultural Appeal,” *Global Times*, February 27, 2012, <http://www.globaltimes.cn/DesktopModules/DnnForge%20-%20NewsArticles/Print.aspx?tabid=99&tabmoduleid=94&articleid=697667&moduleid=405&PortalID=0> (accessed October 15, 2012).

leadership, domestic population, and military in the event of conflict, as well as to garner international support.

Chinese writings suggest that Beijing has accorded ever greater importance to public opinion since the Balkan conflicts of the 1990s, when NATO's aerial bombardment and public diplomacy combined to undermine Slobodan Milosevic—a combination that was equally as effective during the 2003 Iraq war. Indeed, the ability of coalition forces to undermine popular support for the Milosevic and Saddam Hussein regimes, influence global views, and preserve domestic support are seen by the PRC as key factors in the outcome of each conflict.

Such an ability to influence popular will and shape perceptions, according to PLA writings, constitutes political combat styles under informationalized conditions (*xinxi tiaojian xia de zhengzhi xing zuozhan yangshi*). These styles are codified for the PLA in the "People's Liberation Army Political Work Regulations" as the "three warfares": public opinion warfare, psychological warfare, and legal warfare.<sup>5</sup> They employ the range of national resources, including military, civilian, and hard and soft power, guided by the overall military strategy, to secure the political initiative and psychological advantage over an opponent, debilitating one's opponent while strengthening one's own will and securing support from third parties.<sup>6</sup>

## The "Three Warfares"

As noted in a previous Heritage Foundation *Backgrounders* on legal warfare, public opinion warfare is one of the "three warfares" (*san zhan*), the third being psychological warfare.<sup>7</sup> Chinese analyses almost always link these three types of combat together, as they are seen as interrelated and mutually reinforcing. Specifically, the "three warfares" seek to influence the public's understanding of a conflict by retaining support from one's own population, degrading it in an opponent, and influencing third parties.

Public opinion/media warfare is the struggle to gain dominance over the venue for implementing psychological and legal warfare. It is seen as a form of warfare independent of armed confrontation or actual hostilities. Indeed, it is perhaps understood most accurately as a constant, ongoing activity aimed at long-term influence of perceptions and attitudes. One of the main tools of public opinion/media warfare is the news media, including both domestic and foreign entities. The focus of public opinion/media warfare is not limited to the press, however; it involves all of the instruments that inform and influence public opinion (e.g., movies, television programs, books).

Psychological warfare seeks to disrupt an opponent's decision-making capacity by creating doubts, fomenting anti-leadership sentiments, and generally sapping an opponent's will.

Legal warfare seeks to justify a nation's own actions legally while portraying an opponent's activities as illegal, thereby creating doubts, both among adversary and neutral military and civilian authorities and in the broader population, about the wisdom and justification of an opponent's actions.

In essence, both psychological warfare and legal warfare require the use of public opinion warfare in order to have greatest effect. Public opinion warfare and legal warfare require psychological warfare guidance so that their targets and methods can be refined. Public opinion warfare and psychological warfare require legal warfare information in order to be their most effective.<sup>8</sup>

### Public Opinion Warfare: Chinese Definitions

Public opinion warfare (*yulun zhan*) refers to the use of various mass information channels, including the Internet, television, radio, newspapers, movies, and other forms of media, in accordance with

an overall plan and defined objectives to transmit selected news and other materials to the intended audience. It is directed primarily at an opponent's military forces and is intended to complement national political, diplomatic, and military operations.

5. A new edition of the PLA Political Work Regulations was released in September 2010. Xinhuanet, "Newly Established 'Political Work Regulations of the PLA' Are Promulgated," September 13, 2010, <http://military.people.com.cn/GB/1076/52984/12714077.html> (accessed October 15, 2012).
6. Academy of Military Sciences, Operations Theory and Regulations Research Department and Informationalized Operations Theory Research Office, *Informationalized Operations Theory Study Guide* (Beijing, PRC: AMS Press, November 2005), p. 403.
7. Dean Cheng, "Winning Without Fighting: Chinese Legal Warfare," Heritage Foundation *Backgrounders* No. 2692, May 21, 2012, <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2012/05/winning-without-fighting-chinese-legal-warfare>.
8. Liu Kexin, *Study Volume on Legal Warfare* (Beijing, PRC: National Defense University Press, 2006), pp. 18, 34–37.

The purpose of public opinion warfare is to shift the overall balance of strength between a nation and that nation's opponents.<sup>9</sup> Such an impact demands more than just securing exposure for a particular point of view or a set of facts. Rather, the goals are to preserve friendly morale, generate public support at home and abroad, weaken the enemy's will to fight, and alter the enemy's situational assessment. Public opinion warfare is both a national and a local responsibility, and it will be undertaken not only by the PLA, but also by the People's Armed Police.

## Pillars of Public Opinion Warfare

Chinese writings on public opinion highlight certain themes that provide a conceptual starting point and framework that govern all related military operations. These themes include:

- **Follow top-down guidance.** Public opinion warfare must support national political, diplomatic, and military objectives. Its actions must be consistent with the larger national strategy as laid out by the top levels of leadership (i.e., the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee and the Central Military Commission). Consequently, public opinion warfare measures must follow higher-level guidance on content and timing.
- **Emphasize preemption.** In undertaking public opinion warfare, the side that plants its message first enjoys a significant advantage. Chinese analyses of public opinion warfare emphasize that the “the first to sound grabs people, the first to enter establishes dominance (*xian sheng duo-ren, xianru weizhu*).” Essentially, the objective is to establish the terms of the debate and define the parameters of coverage. By presenting its message first, the PLA expects to underscore the justice and necessity of its operations, accentuate national strength, and exhibit the superiority of its forces—all in an effort to undermine an opponent's will to resist.<sup>10</sup>
- **Be flexible and responsive to changing conditions.** Under the unified leadership structure and consistent with the requirements of unified, joint operations, commanders should implement public opinion warfare in a flexible manner, taking into account shifts in the political and military situation. At the same time, these commanders should also tailor their methods with respect to specific operations rather than pursuing a one-size-fits-all approach. Thus, when engaging in public opinion warfare against what the PRC considers “secessionist elements,” for example, it is important to use different propaganda activities, depending on the audience. “One must make distinctions between the more stubborn elements and the general populace.”<sup>11</sup>
- **Exploit all available resources.** Chinese military writings regularly invoke the ideals of combining peacetime and wartime operations, civil–military integration, and military and local unity (*pingzhan jiehe, junmin jiehe, jundi yiti*). This emphasis is especially pronounced in public opinion warfare, as civilian resources for public opinion warfare vastly outweigh military ones. Civilian and commercial assets—news organizations, broadcasting facilities, Internet users, etc.—are seen as an invaluable resource in getting China's message before both domestic and global audiences. Moreover, the use of civilian assets could uncover better techniques and information than might be available through purely military channels.<sup>12</sup>

Within this construct, Chinese writings suggest that, like any other military operation, there are both offensive and defensive components of public opinion warfare. For instance, offensive public opinion warfare seeks to undermine the enemy's will and weaken any external support while garnering friends and allies. In the first Gulf War, the U.S. used its considerable advantage in

9. Academy of Military Sciences Operations, *Informationalized Operations Theory Study Guide*, p. 405; Liu Gaoping, *Study Volume on Public Opinion Warfare* (Beijing, PRC: NDU Press, 2005), pp. 16–17.

10. Yao Fei, “Some Thoughts Regarding Our Military's Anti-Secessionist Public Opinion and Propaganda Policies,” *Military Correspondent* (PRC), No. 5 (2009), [http://www.chinamil.com.cn/site1/jsjz/node\\_22972.htm](http://www.chinamil.com.cn/site1/jsjz/node_22972.htm) (accessed October 15, 2012); Ji Chenjie and Liu Wei, “A Brief Discussion of Public Opinion Warfare on the Web,” *Military Correspondent* (PRC), No. 1 (2009), [http://www.chinamil.com.cn/site1/jsjz/2009-01/14/content\\_1619064.htm](http://www.chinamil.com.cn/site1/jsjz/2009-01/14/content_1619064.htm) (accessed October 15, 2012).

11. *Ibid.*

12. Wang Zijun, Chen Tao, and Mo Jinshan, “Explaining People's Armed Police Public Opinion Warfare Thought,” *Hebei Legal Newspaper*, April 6, 2010, <http://jjuzhan.hbfzb.com/html/article/201004/201046104703823.html> (accessed October 15, 2012).

information dissemination to bombard the Iraqi military and civilian population with various messages that undermined both Iraq's will to fight and the people's faith in Saddam Hussein. In the U.S. war with Afghanistan, Washington employed public opinion warfare mechanisms to create an anti-terrorism coalition, gain support from other major nations, and allay concerns in Arab and Muslim nations.<sup>13</sup>

On the other hand, defensive public opinion warfare is waged to counter enemy public opinion warfare. It entails strong education and news management efforts designed to ensure that the domestic population is not exposed to enemy messages and that, even if they are, those messages will not take root. Defensive public opinion warfare requires prompt, credible responses to enemy criticisms and charges.

This latter aspect can be achieved only through careful preparation of the public opinion battleground in peacetime. That is, there must be extensive research into tactics and methods for undertaking public opinion warfare, understanding potential opponents' psychology and national moods, and the nurturing of public opinion warfare specialists. For this reason, PLA writings consistently invoke the saying, "Before the troops and horses move, public opinion is already underway (*bingma*

*weidong, yulun xianxing*)," emphasizing that the preparation for public opinion warfare must begin far in advance of the actual outbreak of hostilities.<sup>14</sup>

### Public Opinion Warfare in the Second Gulf War

For PLA analysts, the second Gulf War provided a demonstration of public opinion warfare under informationized conditions.<sup>15</sup>

According to Chinese analyses, Coalition public opinion warfare efforts began long before the outbreak of overt hostilities in March 2003. Indeed, one Chinese analysis suggests that the United States was waging public opinion warfare against Iraq at least from the time of 9/11, if not the end of the first Gulf War, constantly demonizing Saddam Hussein and Iraq.<sup>16</sup> Such a protracted period of public opinion preparation acclimatized both the American and global audience to the idea that Iraq posed a threat to the world. Consequently, when President George W. Bush labeled Iraq part of the "Axis of Evil," the ground had been prepared for that characterization to take hold.

Once the decision to go to war had been made, the United States then sought to maintain this early advantage by exploiting its enormous media strength to shape national and global public opinion. According to

Chinese writings, this advantage was heightened because Western media, especially American and British news organizations, were aligned with, if not actively subordinate to, the Anglo-American authorities. In an example of how a nation's own system shapes its perceptions of others, Chinese writings describe the U.S. government as employing CNN and NBC to influence both American and global public opinion in support of the war with Iraq.<sup>17</sup> Other Chinese writings suggest that the American media were complicit in claiming that Saddam Hussein possessed weapons of mass destruction, because they were "under the control of the government and the military [*meiguo meiti you zai zhengfu he junfang de caokong xia*]."<sup>18</sup>

From the Chinese perspective, the "embed" program for journalists was an especially effective means of influencing the global perception. By allowing reporters onto the front lines, it allowed the U.S. to broadcast its operations directly to a global audience, underscoring the power of American military forces. Moreover, Chinese analyses conclude that by incorporating foreign journalists into the program, including ones drawn from China and other nations skeptical of the U.S., American public opinion warriors were able to project an image of objectivity and transparency. If American journalists could

13. Sheng Peilin, Wang Lin, and Liu Ya, eds., *100 Examples of Public Opinion Warfare* (Beijing, PRC: PLA Publishing House, 2006), pp. 162-163, 208-209.

14. Nanjing Political Academy, Military News Department Study Group, "Study of the Journalistic Media Warfare in the Iraq War," *China Military Science*, No. 4 (2003), p. 28.

15. "Informationized conditions" refers to the application of information technologies to all aspects of warfare, including command and control, logistics, weapons, intelligence, etc. In the Chinese view, it is the military aspect of the Information Era, in which technology developments have facilitated the collection, storage, management, analysis, and exploitation of information. Future wars are described by the PLA as "Local Wars Under Informationized Conditions." Xie Zheng, *On Informationized Operations* (Beijing, PRC: Academy of Military Sciences Publishing House, 2006), p. 5.

16. Nanjing Political Academy, "Study of the Journalistic Media Warfare in the Iraq War," p. 28.

17. Fan Gaoming, "Public Opinion Warfare, Psychological Warfare, and Legal Warfare, the Three Major Combat Methods to Rapidly Achieving Victory in War," *Global Times*, March 8, 2005.

18. Liu, *Study Volume on Public Opinion Warfare*, p. 27.

be dismissed as being naturally pro-U.S., it would be harder to make the same accusation against journalists from non-Coalition countries.<sup>19</sup>

Meanwhile, to further support its public opinion warfare campaign, in August 2002, with the help of Iraqi dissident groups and exiles, the U.S. created a satellite television station.<sup>20</sup> Coupled with a military decision to leave Iraqi communications and broadcasting infrastructure intact (unlike in the Balkan conflicts), the U.S.—as perceived by the PRC—was able to transmit a range of false messages and inaccurate information to undermine Iraqi resistance, using both Iraqi and other frequencies.

### **American Strategic Communications and Public Diplomacy Policy**

The PRC's interpretation of basic press coverage reflects a fundamentally different view of the relationship between the media and the government. That the PRC would see the major news networks as adjuncts, never mind agents, of American policy suggests that an underlying Chinese assumption is that the press exists to influence rather than inform the audience. This is obviously a fundamental misreading of the role of the Fourth Estate.

Yet it is ironic that the PRC should express such concern about American public diplomacy, strategic communications, and media policy, given the restrictions and limitations imposed on the ability of the U.S. government to inform as well as

influence global opinion.

*First*, the American strategic communications effort is declining amid a global information explosion. Despite the U.S. Broadcasting Board of Governors' (BBG) 2012–2016 Strategic Plan, which called for such programs as Voice of America and Radio Free Asia to be part of the “world's leading international news agency” by 2016, the BBG's offerings are shrinking. Efforts to reach audiences in Pashto and Dari (key languages in Pakistan), Tibet, and Bangladesh, among others, are being scaled back even as Chinese investment, broadcasts, and overall presence increases in each region.

This decrease in America's strategic communication channels, coupled with the spike in PRC broadcasts, has sparked bipartisan concerns. For example, Representative Zoe Lofgren's (R–CA) recent letter to the BBG questions the decision to consolidate Radio Free Asia, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, and the Middle East Broadcasting Networks, echoing concerns expressed by Representatives Dana Rohrabacher (R–CA) and Nancy Pelosi (D–CA).<sup>21</sup>

*Second*, even these limited efforts are hampered by outdated restrictions, such as the Smith–Mundt Act. The U.S. Information and Educational Exchange Act, first enacted in 1948, was intended to counter Communist propaganda. Specifically, it codified how the United States could engage in public diplomacy, authorizing international broadcasting efforts such as the Voice of America and promoting

cultural and educational exchanges with the rest of the world through the State Department.

Concerned about the potential for governmental misuse of this set of powers, Smith–Mundt prohibited the domestic dissemination of any materials intended for foreign audiences; in short, U.S. public diplomacy was not to be employed where it might feed back to an American audience. While this was viable in an age of radio and TV broadcasts, the rise of the Internet and a global information system effectively stymies most forms of strategic communications and public diplomacy, at least in the context of Smith–Mundt.

Meanwhile, military psychological operations, or what is now termed military information support operations (MISO), are also facing possible budget cuts. In May of this year, for instance, Representative Hank Johnson (D–GA) tabled an amendment to reduce MISO-related funding by nearly one-third.<sup>22</sup> In the face of Chinese public opinion warfare efforts, such massive reductions cripple the U.S.'s ability to influence others.

### **Chinese Lessons and Possible Approaches**

As a result of their observations of the second Gulf War, as well as their own views of the principles of public opinion warfare, PLA analysts now advocate that such warfare must be considered within the larger context of the overall goals of a conflict.

An essential lesson that the PLA seems to have derived from the

19. Nanjing Political Academy, “Study of the Journalistic Media Warfare in the Iraq War,” p. 32.

20. *Ibid.*

21. Representative Zoe Lofgren, letter to Michael Lynton, Interim Presiding Governor, Broadcasting Board of Governors, June 7, 2012, <http://www.usgbroadcasts.com/bbgwatch/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/Rep.-Lofgren-Letter-on-Grantee-Consolidation.pdf> (accessed October 17, 2012).

22. Tom Vandenbrook, “House Panel Calls for Serious Cuts to Propaganda Spending,” *USA Today*, May 17, 2012, <http://www.usatoday.com/news/washington/story/2012-05-17/congress-information-operations-funds/55045982/1> (accessed October 15, 2012).

second Gulf War is that to truly rival the U.S., it must attempt to counter the American advantage in global access and coverage. As one Chinese article puts it, propaganda guidelines should seek to establish news dominance (*xinwen quan*) and information dominance (*xinxi quan*) on the path to obtaining psychological dominance (*xinli quan*).<sup>23</sup> In this regard, the Chinese seem to be committed to developing a much more efficient strategic communications infrastructure. Starting in September 2011, for example, the Chinese Foreign Ministry began to offer daily press briefings instead of the twice-weekly ones that were begun in 1995. Earlier that year, the Defense Ministry began holding monthly press conferences for the first time.<sup>24</sup>

In this context, China's expansion of its global news coverage should be seen as part of the peacetime preparation for public opinion warfare. These developments include the creation of a 24-hour English-language global news service under the aegis of the government news agency Xinhua, as well as the expansion of state-owned China Central Television (CCTV) to a more global presence.<sup>25</sup> Given the concern about shaping public opinion and the belief

that such news organizations as CNN and Fox News are in the service of the U.S. government, it may well be that these new news entities are intended to counter Western news coverage by providing a Chinese view of global developments.

Similarly, although at a more subtle level, the expansion of the Confucius Institutes around the world may be seen as an attempt to alter the world's image of China.<sup>26</sup> These institutes are often embedded within universities or secondary schools and are funded by the hosting institution and the Office of Chinese Language International, which is affiliated with the Chinese Ministry of Education. The Confucius Institutes promote Chinese language training but focus on "providing information about China's education, culture, economy, and society, as well as facilitating research on China."<sup>27</sup>

### Countering the PRC Soft-Power Surge

Chinese security planners are concerned that they are vulnerable to strategic communications and public diplomacy aimed at the general populace. Consequently, Chinese leaders warn about "cultural security" and are intent on

building Chinese "soft power," both as a peacetime response to foreign pressure and as a potential tool in wartime.

America's response to this surge of Chinese "soft power," therefore, must take into account both peacetime and possible wartime applications. American efforts to shape and influence public opinion must be prepared not only to defend the United States by rebutting attacks, but also to take the offensive and promote America's positions to a global audience. Public diplomacy efforts will be essential in both cases.<sup>28</sup>

Like the PRC, then, the United States needs to influence foreign leaders and populations on a daily basis. This cannot be accomplished through momentary, ad hoc efforts; rather, the U.S. must present itself as a reliable source of information, available on a regular basis. The PRC, like other regimes, seeks to limit discussion and avoid the dissemination of information; the American interest is best served by the free flow of information, both in times of peace and in times of war.

In the event of a conflict, though, the U.S. needs to have available additional methods by which it can project American messages to an adversary's population and decision

23. Nanjing Political Academy, "Study of the Journalistic Media Warfare in the Iraq War," p. 30.

24. Yan Weijue, "Ministry to Hold Daily News Conferences," *China Daily*, September 1, 2011, [http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2011-09/01/content\\_13595060.htm](http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2011-09/01/content_13595060.htm) (accessed October 15, 2012); Xinhuanet, "China's Military Diplomacy Boosts Relations with Foreign Forces in 2011: Defense Ministry," January 17, 2012, [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2012-01/17/c\\_131365324.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2012-01/17/c_131365324.htm) (accessed October 15, 2012).

25. Xinhua, "Xinhua Launches CNC World English Channel," July 1, 2010, [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/china/2010-07/01/c\\_13378575.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/china/2010-07/01/c_13378575.htm) (accessed October 15, 2012); Tania Branigan, "Chinese State TV Unveils Global Expansion Plan," *The Guardian* (UK), December 8, 2011, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/dec/08/china-state-television-global-expansion> (accessed October 15, 2012).

26. Helle Dale, "The State Department's Confusion over Confucius Institutes," *The Heritage Foundation*, The Foundry, June 13, 2012, <http://blog.heritage.org/2012/06/13/the-state-departments-confusion-over-confucius-institutes/>.

27. Guo Xiaolin, *Repackaging Confucius: PRC Public Diplomacy and the Rise of Soft Power* (Stockholm, Sweden: Institute for Security and Development Policy, January 2008), p. 32.

28. For an extensive discussion of public diplomacy, see Helle C. Dale, Ariel Cohen, and Janice A. Smith, "How Other Countries Are Using Public Diplomacy to Oppose the U.S.," Heritage Foundation *Background* No. 2698, June 21, 2012, <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2012/06/challenging-america-how-russia-china-and-other-countries-use-public-diplomacy-to-compete-with-the-us>.

makers and rebut efforts to influence American allies and friends, as well as neutral states. In order to meet this requirement, current public diplomacy efforts should be overhauled and expanded. This reform should be a priority for the next Administration.

In the meantime, there are steps that can and should be taken in the near term to show China and the world that the U.S. is serious about competing in the global marketplace of ideas. Specifically, the U.S. should:

- **Demand visa parity for U.S. journalists and public access for U.S. broadcasters.** The PRC has several hundred journalists operating in the United States, most of whom work for state-owned media outlets. Yet Beijing is unwilling to grant reciprocal access to foreign journalists, including Americans. It should be American policy to demand comparable access for American journalists or else to reduce the size of the Chinese presence in the U.S.
- **Fill public diplomacy leadership positions promptly.** The U.S. government needs officials

who are accountable for carrying out a new public diplomacy strategy. The Broadcasting Board of Governors, for example, is currently operating with most of its members still serving on expired terms.

- **Improve strategic communications and public diplomacy training for military public affairs officers.** The Chinese see public opinion as playing a key role in shaping the global and operational environment, and during any military conflict, they likely will strive to influence such sentiment. American military public affairs officers (PAOs) need to be cognizant of this and be suitably trained and prepared both to respond and, when possible, to seize the initiative.
- **Sustain funding for MISO operations.** A review of Chinese assessments of American psychological warfare/MISO operations in recent conflicts indicates that the PLA and Chinese decision-makers in general are very concerned with the West's ability to propagate its message to both

senior leaders and the broader populace in wartime as well as peacetime. For the United States to reduce spending in this area unilaterally, especially when total MISO-related spending is about \$250 million (equivalent to the cost of two F-35 fighters), would seem to be penny-wise and pound-foolish.

## Conclusion

The information era provides unparalleled access to both a nation's leaders and its population. The PRC has made clear that, in the event of a conflict, it will exploit that access to try to influence an adversary in hopes of winning a war without firing a shot. Even today, during a time of peace, the PRC is laying the groundwork for such soft-power operations. It is therefore essential that the United States counter that influence now while preparing to use its own arsenal of political warfare weapons should a conflict ever arise.

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