

Interactive Military Modernization in Russia and the PRC

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This paper discusses ongoing military reforms in the Russian Armed Forces (RAF) and the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and tries to determine how these reforms may affect their political relations. It compares the changes in the two countries' armed forces in terms of military doctrines, force posture, weapons development and acquisition, and the use of force or the projected use of force. It asserts that the uneven development in the two military organizations may cause an asymmetry in power relations between these two powers.

Keywords: Russia; China; military; modernization

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In December 1991, Russia emerged on the world stage as the successor state to the most powerful Eurasian power—the Soviet Union. Immediately, the Russian political leadership decided in May 1992 to form its own armed forces to protect the country's national interests, as the new Russian state faced an entirely different, unknown, and more multifarious security environment. Unlike in the Cold War, Russia is not facing a direct large-scale military confrontation with the West. However, it is confronted by many smaller but more diverse security risks within its border and from its neighboring states. In view of this, the Russian Armed

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Forces (RAF) has adopted a new defense doctrine aimed at preparing for low and medium-intensity conflicts.¹ This new doctrine provides for a shift away from a large-scale conventional and nuclear war toward regional conflicts and contingencies.

Incidentally, this military doctrine had been adopted almost a decade earlier by Russia's largest Eurasian neighbor—China. In 1985, the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party ordered the People's Liberation Army (PLA) to prepare for limited wars. This led to the replacement of the old 1949 defense doctrine of a protracted people's war against the superpowers into one geared toward fighting military threats from local and regional powers. For more than a decade now, the PLA has been altering its force structure and operational doctrine from fighting an overall war to incidents related to territorial disputes.² This entails the building of a modern defense force that would have the mobility and flexibility necessary to win or deter small or medium-scale wars.³

This paper analyzes the RAF and the PLA's military reforms. It raises the questions: What are the changes occurring in the two continental states' defense doctrines and armed forces? What were the developments that led to these changes? How are the changes in these two armed forces related? Specifically, the paper analyzes the changes in the two countries' armed forces in terms of military doctrines, force posture, weapons development and acquisition, and the use of force or the projected use of force. It also raises the problem of how the changes in these two countries' armed forces may affect the two states' political relations.

Changing Strategic Doctrine: From Total to Limited War

In its most simple definition, strategy denotes the design and accom-

¹Konstantine Sorokin, "The Creation of Russian Armed Forces," in *Brassey's Defence Yearbook 1993* (London: BPC Wheatons, 1993), 139.

²Harlan W. Jencks, "The PRC's Military and Security Policy in the Post-Cold War Era," *Issues & Studies* 30, no. 11 (November 1994): 70.

³Jing-dong Yuan, "China's Defense Modernization: Implications for Asia-Pacific Security," *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 16, no. 1 (June 1995): 69.

plishment of a plan for the coordination and deployment of human efforts and resources to attain certain objectives. Strategy is similar to a road map enabling one to get from one location to another, or from one situation to the situation one wishes to achieve. Traditionally, strategy is equated with the preparation, conduct, and termination of war. Used within the context of strategic studies, the term refers to the design and achievement of an idea for the coordinated deployment of military resources to achieve certain military and security objectives. Strategy is concerned with making plans for war or waging war,⁴ and attempts to answer the question: "In the face of a specific threat, what is the best we can do given the military forces available to the state?"

During much of the Cold War, both the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China (PRC) adopted the same strategic doctrine of preparing for a total war—first against the United States and later against each other. The Soviet Union's Cold War strategic doctrine was first announced by then-Soviet Defense Minister Marshal Rodion Malinovsky in the late 1950s, who stated the rationale for the development of Soviet strategic forces in view of a world war that imperialist aggressors (the United States and its Western Allies) would unleash.⁵ The doctrine also advanced the notion that any war with the United States would take the form of "nuclear rocket war, and in such a war, the main means of military operation would be nuclear weapons, and the basic means of delivering them to the target would be rockets." In facing a total nuclear war, Soviet strategic doctrine was directed in preparing the military, the economy, and the entire Soviet population for such an eventuality. The Soviet Union saw any war with the West as a war that would be waged not only with nuclear weapons but also by mass armed forces in which millions of people would be involved in running the war economy. Conventional forces were also viewed as valuable, but were considered secondary to the rocket forces in strategic importance. It was accepted that any conventional armed conflict between the

⁴Julina Lider, *Military Theory: Concept, Structure, Problems* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983), 295.

⁵Harriet Fast Scott and William F. Scott, *The Soviet Art of War: Doctrine, Strategy, and Tactics* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1982), 158.

nuclear powers would eventually escalate into a general nuclear war, or that it would only be useful if all nuclear weapons had been exhausted.⁶

Like the Soviet Union, the PRC thought that it would be fighting a total war, first with the United States and later with the Soviet Union. However, unlike the Soviet Union, the PRC did not possess a large nuclear arsenal or the industrial capacity to build a massive nuclear stockpile and the necessary delivery system to carry such nuclear weapons. Deprived of any industrial base to build a nuclear force and mechanized conventional forces, the PRC adopted a highly passive and essentially land-based defense doctrine known as the "people's war." This strategic doctrine aimed to draw any invading forces deep into China's vast interior, grinding them down by a protracted guerrilla war of attrition, and then driving them out with a full-scale conventional military counterattack.⁷ The strategy's main assumption was that war would be fought within China's vast territory, and its conventional armed forces were developed accordingly to meet this exigency—a technologically backward, but massive, highly indoctrinated, and multi-functionally-oriented armed force. Although the PRC had prepared its armed forces for a total war, it relied on a defensive strategic doctrine that provided for mass mobilization, trading space for time, and luring the enemy in deep before drowning him in a "sea of people."⁸

The doctrine of the people's war provided for the creation of a huge, territorial, and lightly equipped army that would lure an invading force into a largely rural base and then disperse the invading force and disrupt its sup-

⁶Rodion Ya. Malinovsky, "Address to the Twenty-Second Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union," *ibid.*, 168; Harriet Fast Scott, "Soviet Military Doctrine in the Nuclear Age, 1945-1989," in *Soviet Military Doctrine for Lenin to Gorbachev, 1915-1991*, ed. William C. Frank, Jr. and Philip S. Gillete (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1992), 181.

⁷June Teufel Dreyer, "Reorganizing and Modernizing the Chinese Military," in *China in the Era of Deng Xiaoping: A Decade of Reform*, ed. Michael Ying-mao Kau and Susan H. Marsh (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1993), 340.

⁸In a way, the PRC's strategic doctrine of people's war embodied many tenets outlined in the pre-1960 Soviet Unified Strategy: a defensive strategy of mass mobilization and luring the enemy in, reflecting the military weakness of a continental state with a weak industrial base. As a military strategy, the people's war was derived from the realities of China in the 1960s (a huge territory, a relatively poor peasant economy, and a huge population). See Gerald Segal, *Defending China* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 245-46; and George Tan Eng Bok, "Strategic Doctrine," in *Chinese Defence Policy*, ed. Gerald Segal and William T. Tow (Hong Kong: Macmillan Press, 1984), 6.

ply links. Therefore, it did not give much attention to the development of technologically-oriented specialized services like the navy, air force, and especially strategic nuclear forces. Influenced by the Maoist ideology of the Cultural Revolution, this doctrine's assumption was that nuclear weapons were "paper tigers" or weapons that were useless in a conflict, since the most decisive factor in war is people. Although the PRC in the late 1950s saw the necessity of a nuclear deterrent, it considered it as a mere supplement and not the main instrument to deal with any military threat. While both the United States and the Soviet Union considered nuclear weapons as the ultimate weapon in a total war, the PRC viewed them as weapons of limited use, or to frighten an enemy. Thus, Chinese nuclear capability remained small in numbers since it took the function of limited deterrence.⁹

In short, during the Cold War, both countries envisioned that they would fight a total war and formulated their respective strategic doctrines for such exigencies. The Soviet Union relied on the massive buildup of strategic nuclear forces, with combined arms providing a supplementary role. On the other hand, the PRC saw itself fighting a mixture of guerrilla/conventional warfare, with nuclear deterrence playing a minor role. The mid-1980s, however, marked a watershed in these two countries' strategic outlook and doctrines. The first country to change its strategic doctrine was the PRC.

Following the PLA's military fiasco in the 1979 punitive border war against Vietnam, the Chinese defense establishment realized its military's inadequacy in conducting limited mobile operations and in coordinating combined arms warfare even against a medium-sized military power like Vietnam. Furthermore, it also perceived that a massive invasion from the Soviet Union was slowly becoming unlikely. The need to defend against a more limited Soviet attack, particularly in North China, became the main strategic concern; thus, the reliance on a huge ground force trained for guerrilla/conventional warfare and equipped with light and obsolete weapons was deemed inadequate in defending North China against highly mo-

⁹Segal, *Defending China*, 248-49.

bile and lethal forces that the Soviets might deploy for some limited military objectives. Moreover, some Chinese strategists began to question the people's war notion of luring the enemy deep into Chinese territory, since the application of this strategic precept would mean surrendering a great deal of territory and losing some valuable military and industrial resources that could affect the outcome of any long-term war against the Soviet Union. Faced with this dilemma, Chinese strategists in the early 1980s began to show keen interest in the U.S. army's idea of the air-land battle—an extremely aggressive and mobile strategy that involves the large-scale use of helicopters, with some configured to destroy enemy tanks and others to land infantry behind enemy lines.¹⁰ These developments marked a subtle revolt against the essentially passive and low technology precepts of the people's war.

The major break in the PRC's strategic thinking, however, occurred in 1985. Concluding that a military balance was emerging between the United States and the Soviet Union, Chinese political leaders saw an emerging strategic stalemate that would discourage any possible Soviet attack on China. From their perspective, the mid-1980s security environment had diminished the possibility of any Soviet invasion of China since the United States would surely respond. This meant that the PLA would not be drawn into any total war in the immediate future, which caused a shift in the PRC's strategic doctrine from preparation for an early and full-scale war to preparation for local and limited wars around China's border.¹¹

For the PRC's military leadership, local and limited wars could take the forms of: (1) small-scale conflicts restricted to border areas; (2) conflicts over territorial seas and islands; (3) surprise air attacks; (4) defense against deliberately launched limited attacks against Chinese territory; and (5) a punitive counterattack launched by the PRC into enemy territory to "oppose invasions, protect sovereignty, or to uphold justice and dispel threats."¹² If any conflict occurs, the PLA leadership assumes that it would

¹⁰See note 7 above.

¹¹Paul H.B. Godwin, "Force Projection and China's National Military Strategy," in *Chinese Military Modernization*, ed. C. Dennison Lane, Mark Weisenbloom, and Dimon Liu (Washington, D.C.: AEI Press, 1996), 70-71.

¹²*Ibid.*, 71.

remain localized, be of short duration, be fought for limited objectives, and be won by the force that can concentrate the most number of units equipped with high-tech weapons capable of rapid and decisive reaction. Confronted by these new yet hypothetical threats, the PLA began to modify its strategic doctrine of people's war. Labelled as "people's war under modern conditions" or the "doctrine of rapid response," this new defense doctrine rejects the central people's war principle, and states that any armed conflict that the PRC might fight in the future will be low-intensity conflicts or local wars far from its economic centers. In a way, this represents an equivalent to the Western notion of forward defense, which emphasizes the value of multilayer defense or zones extended beyond one's territory and maritime borders.¹³

This new strategic doctrine found broader and more direct relevance after the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the possible reduction of the U.S. military presence in the Pacific in the early 1990s. These developments freed China of the strategic constraints under the possibility of large-scale military threats from the superpowers, and allowed full-scale reforms in the PLA. Furthermore, this new strategic environment has presented opportunities for China to concentrate on its regional agenda of resolving its territorial disputes with its neighbors, and has required the creation of a modern and mobile armed force.

With the implosion of the Soviet Union and the fragmentation of the Soviet armed forces in the early 1990s, Russia found it imperative to retreat from a strategic doctrine geared toward total war to one designed for regional or local wars. With the end of the Cold War and the retreat of the former Soviet Union's forces from Central and Eastern Europe, the threat of a large-scale military confrontation with the West became unlikely for the future. Thus, the prospect of a total war involving global nuclear and general conventional military operations is now considered remote and has been pushed down among the lists of priorities, but has been far from

¹³For a comprehensive discussion of the difference between the old people's war doctrine and the post-1985 doctrine of rapid response, see Alexander Chieh-cheng Huang, "The Chinese Navy's Offshore Active Defense Strategy: Conceptualization and Implications," *Naval War College Review* 47, no. 3 (Summer 1994): 7-32.

totally disregarded or eliminated from the list.¹⁴ However, while Russia lacks much of the former Soviet Union's power projection capability and its wider geopolitical interests, it retains a strong influence and interest around its borders. More importantly, it is now faced by smaller, multiple threats aggravated by the less favorable position that it now occupies compared with that of the former Soviet Union. These threats include actual separatist movements as with the Chechnya conflict; conflicts in abeyance such as those in Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and the Trans-Dniester region; conventional military threats emanating from the former Soviet republics, Central-East European states, and the southern rim states of Turkey, Pakistan, and Afghanistan that may present a security threat to Russia individually or in some form of combined "Islamic" irredentism; and conventional military threats emanating from the Far East—either from Japan or China.¹⁵

While Russia remains one of the world's foremost military powers, its armed force is now smaller because of the breakup of the Soviet armed forces. Unfortunately, it faces more diverse military dangers that require complex military responses. For example, separatist or Muslim insurgents cannot be neutralized by a decisive conventional military operation characterized by heavy artillery, tank attacks, and air strikes, while conventional military menaces emanating from the PRC or from Japan would require greater strategic mobility for the Russian forces, since they would have to be redeployed from their European posts to reinforce RAF units based in Siberian and in the Russian Far East. Moreover, China's emerging local superiority in conventional forces and limited nuclear capability has obliged Russia to maintain tactical and strategic nuclear deterrence against the PLA and even possibly against Japan.

In the face of these diverse and many strategic exigencies, Russia came out with a new defense doctrine on November 2, 1993. Unlike the Soviet Union's Cold War defense doctrine, the 1993 doctrine downplays

¹⁴Sorokin, "The Creation of Russian Armed Forces," 138.

¹⁵See Richard F. Staar, *The New Military in Russia: Ten Myths That Shape the Image* (Annapolis: Maryland Naval Institute Press, 1996), 35; and Alexi G. Arbatov, *The Russian Military in the 21st Century* (Carlisle Barracks, Penn.: U.S. Army War College, 1997), 2-6.

the probability of Russia fighting a large-scale mixed nuclear/conventional war. Rather, it provides for the need to prepare for low and medium-scale conflicts in some regions around Russia. The RAF's main objective in any armed conflict now is to localize "the seat of tension and end military operations at the earliest possible stage." Although large-scale conventional wars are not discounted, the current defense doctrine holds "that conventional wars may begin from escalation of local wars and armed conflicts directed against Russia."¹⁶ The shift away from preparation for total war stems from the fact that the 1993 strategic doctrine gives the highest pre-eminence in building security in the "near abroad" area and to the cultivation of friendly relations with the Western powers.¹⁷

The doctrine also enumerates the various forms of local conflicts and the potential sources of military threats to Russia. It mentions territorial disputes; local wars along the Russian borders; attempts to destabilize the Russian Federation and suppression of rights, freedoms, and legitimate interests of Russian citizens in foreign countries; attacks on Russian military installation on the territory of foreign states; and even international terrorism. The doctrine calls for the creation of a highly mobile and flexible force capable of being redeployed within a short time and conducting different military operations in any region where a threat to Russia may arise. A prominent member of the Russian Duma emphasized the need to create this type of military force when he wrote:

It follows from the new military doctrine . . . that planning contingencies are numerous and complex. They include being prepared for wars in the West, South, and East; large-scale and theater-wide operations, or some combinations of these which would make for war on a global scale. Our armed forces must be capable of deterring a potential foe as powerful and sophisticated as the

¹⁶Raymond L. Garthoff, "Russian Military Doctrine and Deployments," in *State Building and Military Power in Russia and the New States of Eurasia*, ed. Bruce Parrott (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1995), 53.

¹⁷Although the new doctrine focuses on Russia's strategic interests in the "near abroad" area, it also makes a veiled reference to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), as it defines expansion of this military alliance as a potential military threat to Russia. Thus, the doctrine still acknowledges the possibility of global conventional/nuclear war. See Robert V. Barylski, "Russian Domestic Politics, Military Power, and the Eurasian State System," in *The Roles of the United States, Russia, and China in the New World Order*, ed. Hafeez Malik (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 142.

NATO Alliance or as primitive as Muslim fundamentalist guerrillas, and being ready to fight effectively against either or both, if need be. It follows that Russian forces have to be ready to counter any hostile invasion of Russian territory, and capable of mounting military interventions in the "near abroad" and beyond when needed.¹⁸

This means that Russia must also develop its armed forces for a wide and diverse range of contingencies. Thus, the traditional Soviet emphasis on offensive military operations based on tank and heavy ground forces backed by tactical and strategic nuclear weapons has given way to a new strategic doctrine that calls for the Russian armed forces to be ready for both defensive and offensive operations to repulse all forms of aggression.¹⁹ Potential threats to Russian security are now seen as escalated local conflicts or disputes between states adjoining the long Russian border. Neutralizing these types of threats will involve, in its first phase, combined operations of air and anti-aircraft forces followed by air mobile and naval forces. In the second phase, ground forces under powerful air cover will engage enemies in intensive combat maneuvers.²⁰

Current Russian strategic doctrine contains similarities with the PRC's doctrine of rapid response. Both doctrines de-emphasize the possibility of global conventional/nuclear war by focusing more on regional wars and local conflicts. Both Russian and Chinese strategic doctrines also look at neighboring states as possible protagonists in future conflicts. The PRC's rapid response is directed against other Asian countries that have territorial disputes with China, while Russia's 1993 defense doctrine regards the former Soviet republics and neighboring Central-East European states as well as the southern states of Iran, Turkey, Afghanistan, and Pakistan as potential security problems. Both strategic doctrines are geared more toward regional strife and represent the two states' retreats from global or superpower contention. Finally, both defense doctrines proclaim the necessity of developing highly mobile and flexible forces that can be deployed within a short time along the long borders of these two Eurasian states.

¹⁸Arbatov, *The Russian Military in the 21st Century*, 8.

¹⁹See Ray Allison, "Military Forces in the Soviet Successor States," *Adelphi Paper*, no. 280 (1993): 22-23.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 23.

Changing Force Structure: From Total War to Limited War

Force structure refers to the notion of how a nation's army, navy, and air force are designed, formed, supported, and deployed. Like defense doctrine, force structure reflects the stream of past decisions and ongoing practices concerning the military establishment, past military doctrines and, to a lesser extent, present ones about the nature of military threats. It also considers the current organizational process, inter-service rivalries, and the type of military action an armed force may launch in any conflict situation.

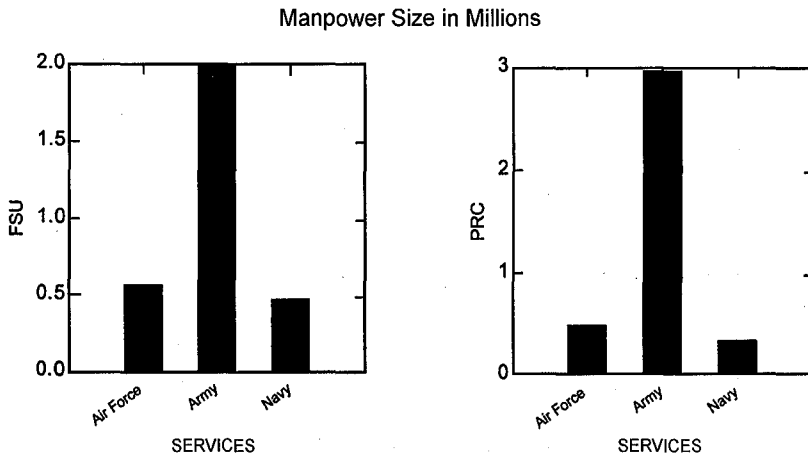
During the Cold War, both the Soviet Union and China built and maintained continental-size or "steamroller" armed forces—which meant that their armed forces were structured and designed around many heavy armored and/or infantry divisions, with the navy and the air force providing logistic, transport, and fire support to ground forces (see figure 1). In response to NATO's adoption of the doctrine of flexible response in the 1960s, the Soviet Union renewed its emphasis on its ground forces by giving them more personnel and equipment, and adding new units to the standard tank and motorized rifle divisions. Much of these resources went to the units of western military districts that would provide the initial conventional forces in case of a war against NATO. On the other hand, faced with the possibility of a Soviet armored blitzkrieg in 1969, the PLA formed several light infantry divisions and expanded its militia or regional forces "to suck the Soviet mechanized armies into their death from the thousand cuts of the people's war."²¹

The adoption of the doctrine of rapid response, however, meant that both continental powers would have to restructure their steamroller armed forces, as the latter would be inadequate for military operations under the following characteristics:

1. Limited type of operations: Any military operation will involve de-

²¹Facts on File, *Changing Orders: The Evolution of the World's Armies, 1945 to the Present* (New York: Facts on File, 1994), 213.

Figure 1
Soviet and Chinese Force Structures During the Cold War, 1985



Sources: International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance, 1985-1986* (Letchworth, UK: Garden City Press, 1985), 21-30, 113-15.

liberate, restrained, and measured use of force to deter any aggression without running the unacceptable risk of a general war;

2. Limited political objectives: Like low-intensity conflict, military operations under this doctrine envisage the use of limited military resources to achieve limited political objectives;
3. War of maneuvers: Military operations under the new doctrine will usually take the form of maneuvers which involve not only movement in relation to the enemy to gain positional advantage, but also moving faster than the enemy in order to defeat him through superior tempo and firepower. In a sense, this new strategy mirrors some tenets of the U.S. air-land battle doctrine—it relies more on mobility, flanking movements, and superior tempo rather than on the application of *schwerpunkt*, or a direct, frontal, and concentrated assault against a stationary enemy position, or attritional warfare. This requires technology, training, and superior communications and mobility rather than mass numbers and direct clashes with the main enemy forces.

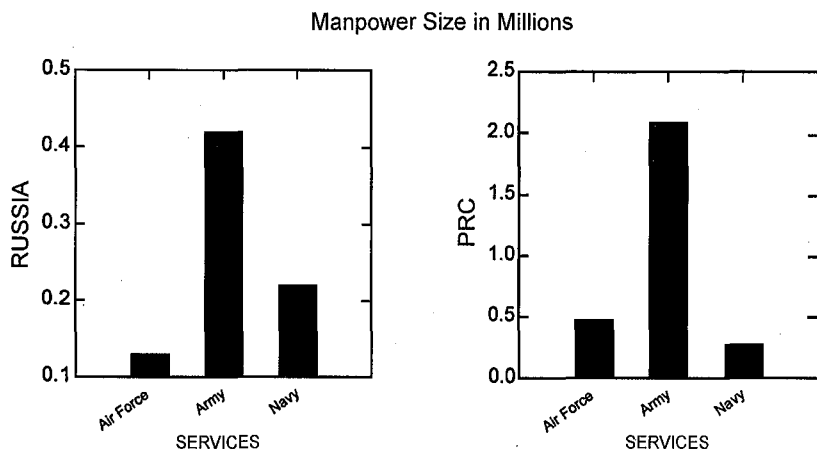
Adjustments to this new strategic doctrine required both the PLA and the RAF to restructure their armed forces to become more "lean, mean, flexible, and technologically-oriented," which demanded the following reforms:

1. Drastic reduction in the size of the active armed forces;
2. The creation of structured ground forces composed of basic forces and mobile or rapid deployment forces. The basic forces will be positioned in forward areas, while mobile forces can be deployed in any regional conflict. The mobile forces will be composed of highly trained airborne and/or special forces while basic forces can be composed of standard armored and infantry divisions. Ideally, the airborne/special force units should be given priority in equipment, training, and personnel while the proportion of armored and infantry units with mobile forces should be reduced;
3. More weight being given to the rapid development of high-tech services, especially the air force, navy, and transport units; and
4. The abandonment of strong, echelon layers of defense within borders in favor of reliance on mobile defense and forces capable of being quickly deployed to any region of the country and even beyond borders. This involves a shift away from passive defense to active defense.

The product of these reforms is an armed force that should have the following attributes:

1. Army, navy, and air force units with a limited number of personnel but in constant readiness for action and deployment in all theaters of operations;
2. Army or ground forces with many units assigned as mobile reserves or rapid deployment forces capable of deployment within the shortest possible time to any region, and which can operate in conjunction with other arms of the armed services to defeat any medium-sized aggression. This entails building a modern defense force that will have the mobility and flexibility necessary to win or

Figure 2
Russian and Chinese Force Structures After the Cold War, 1997



Sources: International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance, 1997-98* (Glasgow, UK: Bell and Bain, 1997), 108-14, 176-79.

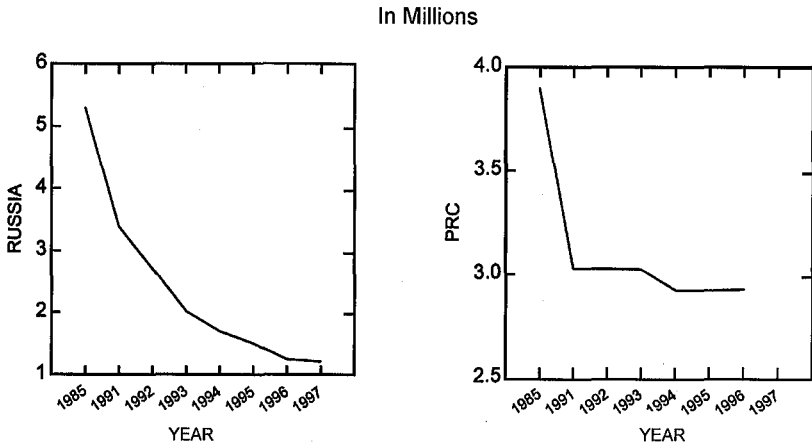
deter small or medium-scale wars;²²

3. Strategic reserves, in the form of several formations backing up drastically reduced basic forces.

A quantitative analysis of the two countries' force structures shows that both the PLA and the RAF are restructuring their services from that of a continental-style armed force to ones geared toward wars of rapid response. While both armed forces have retained their continental feature of being centered on ground forces (see figures 1 and 2), there has been a substantial reduction in their sizes (see figure 3). The RAF has been reduced from its Soviet Union size of four million men to a little more than a million in 1997. On the other hand, PLA force reduction has been more gradual and less drastic than the RAF's case (see figure 3). Both armed forces have also formed and are maintaining a substantial number of mobile forces,

²²See note 3 above.

Figure 3
Quantitative Trends in the Manpower Size of the RAF and PLA, 1985-97

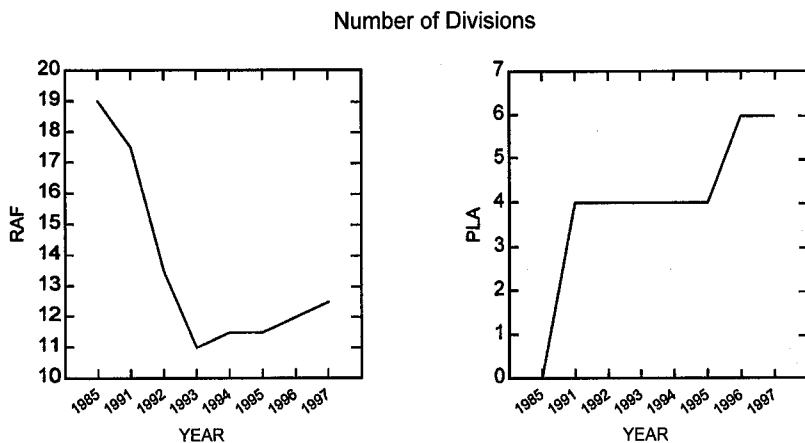


Sources: International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance*, 1997/98, 108-14, 176-79; *ibid.* (1996/97), 113-19, 179-81; *ibid.* (1995/96), 113-20, 176-79; *ibid.* (1994/95), 111-19, 170-73; *ibid.* (1993/94), 98-106, 152-55; *ibid.* (1992/93), 92-101; 143-47; *ibid.* (1991/92), 36-45, 150-53; *ibid.* (1985-86), 21-30, 113-15.

with the PLA building up its mobile forces since the late 1980s from nothing (see figure 4). Before 1985, the PLA did not even possess a single airborne unit or any elite formation. Starting in the late 1980s, however, the PLA began to form rapid response units (RRUs) or "fist" units starting with a nucleus of three battalions. These three battalions have now grown into three light infantry divisions trained for rapid deployment plus a corps of three airborne divisions that can be deployed as part of the RRUs. Russia, on the other hand, has relied on the airborne divisions and Spetnaz brigades it inherited from the Soviet Union, although it has retained only about 50 percent of the thirteen airborne and Spetnaz divisions of the USSR, which can be designated and deployed as rapid deployment units.

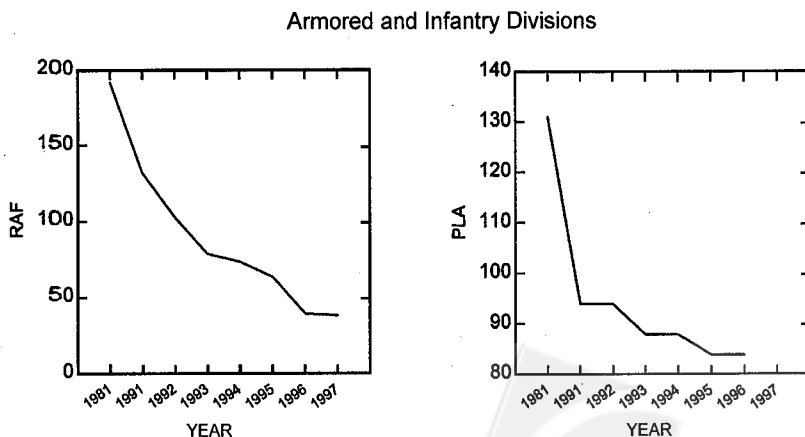
Also noticeable is the reduction of armored and infantry divisions in both armies (see figure 5). The decline in the RAF has again been more drastic, as other former Soviet republics took many Soviet ground units. There has also been an increase in the ratio of rapid deployment units vis-à-vis the basic ground forces that are made up of the conventional armored

Figure 4
Quantitative Trends in the Development of Mobile Units in the RAF and PLA, 1985-97



Sources: Same as figure 3.

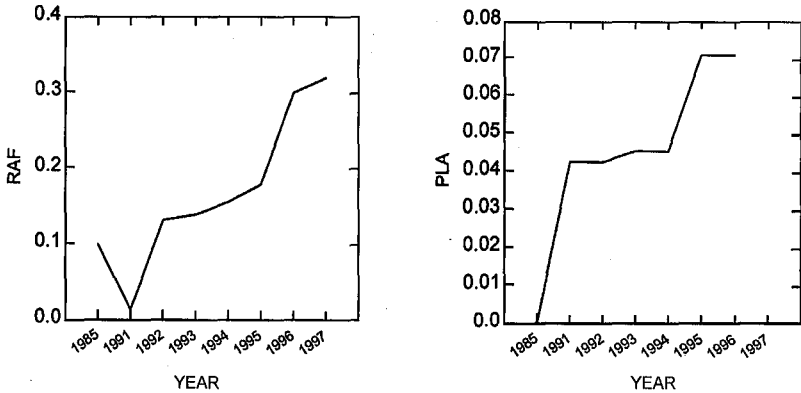
Figure 5
Quantitative Trends in the Number of Basic Forces in the Russian and Chinese Armies, 1985-97



Sources: Same as figure 3.

Figure 6**Quantitative Trends in the Ratio of Mobile/Basic Forces in the RAF and PLA, 1985-97**

Number of Airborne and Special Force Divisions/ Armored and Infantry Divisions

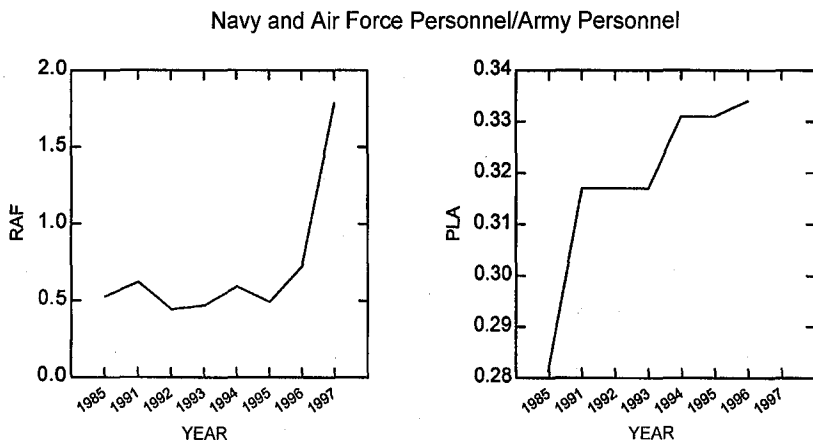


Sources: Same as figure 3.

and infantry divisions (see figure 6). In addition, the size of specialized services has increased, as the ratio of navy and air force personnel over ground forces has grown in both the RAF and the PLA (see figure 7). These quantitative indicators, however, do not give us the real picture of what is happening in the two countries' armed forces. While both the RAF and the PLA are undergoing a restructuring process, the latter's transition is more gradual since it is a result of a calculated and systematic military reform.

The key element in the PLA's reform process is the creation of the RRUs, which are designed to react to internal disturbances and to be deployed to scenes of border fighting.²³ Future deployment of these forces, however, demands the development of the PLA's mobile and offensive capabilities. It is envisioned that the deployment of the RRUs will involve the use of combined air, sea, and land forces along China's periphery. Consequently, the adoption of this new defense doctrine has led to a shift of pri-

²³Jencks, "The PRC's Military and Security Policy," 71.

Figure 7**Ratio of Specialized Forces/Ground Forces, 1985-97**

Sources: Same as figure 3.

ority in the PLA's force structure from its armored and infantry units to its Navy (PLAN) and its Air Force (PLAAF).

The PLAAF is currently building a modern air defense system by extending its range and improving its command, control, communications, and intelligence (C³I) capabilities. It has also improved its maritime surveillance, airborne early warning system, and in-flight refueling capability—all relevant to the military balance in the South China Sea.²⁴ Moreover, the air force is also in the process of developing its combat capabilities through acquisition of advanced fighter planes from Russia. In 1991, the PLAAF received twenty-four to twenty-six Su-27 fighter aircraft and one hundred RD-33 jet engines (used in the supersonic Russian MiG-29) for use in upgrading China's indigenously-produced fighters.²⁵ The PLAAF has also deployed new J-8 II fighters and JH-7 fighter bombers, and constructed a new air base on Woody Islands in the 1990s. These developments have enabled

²⁴Ibid., 72.

²⁵Ralph A. Cossa, "The PRC's National Security Objectives in the Post-Cold War Era and the Role of the PLA," *Issues & Studies* 30, no. 9 (September 1994): 15.

the PLAAF to operate with ease in the South China Sea.²⁶

The PLAN is also modernizing its capabilities and altering its operational doctrine. In late 1989, the PLAN completed a force development study entitled "Balanced Development of the Navy in the Year 2000." The study calls for a naval strategy of "active offshore defense,"²⁷ which emphasizes resolute defense of key areas such as the prosperous coastal cities and aims to move the maritime provinces from the defensive front line to the strategic rear. It provides for the creation of a strategic depth which means extending the defense line into the South China Sea and the Western Pacific; thus, the notion of active defense envisions the transformation of the PLAN from a mere tactical force to a strategic force and the spearhead of the PRC's national defense.²⁸ To fulfill this role, the PLAN has formed a significant naval infantry force, introduced new classes of resupply, amphibious assault, and intelligence-gathering ships, and more importantly, built new generations of principal surface combatants to replace its old ones. Notable among the new generations of surface combatants are the Luhun and Zhanjian-class destroyers and the Jiangwei-class air defense frigates. These newer vessels are designed to give the PLAN more specialized ships to fulfill different functions required by blue-water combat missions, as well as the potential to form aircraft carrier battle groups.²⁹ Recently, the PRC received Russian-made Kilo-class conventional submarines, and there are significant indications in the National People's Congress that the PRC is planning to build two 48,000-ton Kiev-class carriers by the year 2005.³⁰

In contrast to the PLA, the RAF's restructuring has less to do with reforms; rather, it has more been a result of troubled times for Russia. The decline in the Russian economy's growth has radically reduced defense

²⁶Chong-Pin Lin, "The Power Projection Capabilities of the People's Liberation Army," in Lane, Weisenbloom, and Liu, *Chinese Military Modernization*, 114.

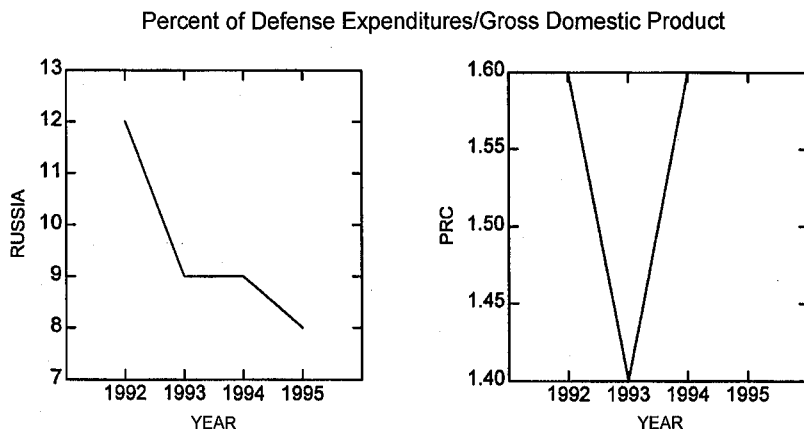
²⁷Jencks, "The PRC's Military and Security Policy," 74.

²⁸Huang, "The Chinese Navy's Offshore Active Defense Strategy," 19.

²⁹You Ji, "A Test Case for China's Defense and Foreign Policies," *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 16, no. 4 (March 1995): 382.

³⁰Sheldon Simon, "East Asian Security: The Playing Field Has Changed," *Asian Survey* 34, no. 12 (December 1994): 1053.

Figure 8
Quantitative Trends in Russian and Chinese Defense Expenditures, 1992-95



Sources: *Strategic Survey 1996/97*, 122; *SIPRI Yearbook 1997*, 203.

spending to the point that resources flowing into the military are much less than during the era of the Soviet armed forces (see figure 8). With the plunge in the defense budget, there have been substantial reductions across all categories of defense spending: research and development, personnel, equipment, and operations and maintenance.³¹ This situation is complicated by the fact that the forces inherited from the Soviet Union were poorly configured and deployed for the strategic needs of mobile and limited warfare. The tank-heavy ground forces it inherited from the USSR are too cumbersome and inadequate for operations requiring flexibility and rapid maneuvers. Thus, there is the concern that the Russian military of the future may evolve into something like the PLA of old: large, technologically backward, and supported by a few hundred vulnerable nuclear forces linked into an inadequate C³I system—in short, ground forces lacking in mobility and poorly trained.³²

³¹See Stephen M. Meyer, "The Devolution of Russian Military Power," *Current History* 94, no. 594 (October 1995): 322-23.

³²Arbatov, *The Russian Military in the 21st Century*, 11.

Although the need for lean, mean, and flexible armed forces—composed of highly flexible and mobile ground forces supported by restructured and high-tech air and naval forces—was recognized as early as 1993, progress in reforming the armed forces has been extremely slow. Other than the general economic decline, many other factors have accounted for this inertia. First, the continuous effort to keep the Strategic Rocket Forces in top shape has been at the expense of conventional forces—which had already suffered a reduction of almost 50 percent in terms of personnel.³³ The second factor is the internal strife within and around Russia. Given these internal security problems, the Border Troops, the Internal Troops, and the Security Services are receiving more conventional military capabilities, manpower, money, and equipment, while the armed forces are last in line for new resources of any type.³⁴ Failure to carry out the necessary reforms has already caused the following problems:

1. Organizational changes to develop more mobile formations suited for operations both within Russia and the "near abroad" areas have not been fully put into effect. Russia now relies on the seven to eight maneuvering divisions (airborne and Spetnatz brigades) it inherited from the Soviet Union. These units, however, lack appropriate transport facilities and necessary support structures (such as propositioned arms dumps) to conduct large-scale and combined arms operations in a war of rapid response.³⁵

2. Restrictions imposed by financial and maintenance factors on flying have eroded the air force's operational capability hours. Only 60 percent of the air assault units are judged to be combat-ready, and it is estimated that by the year 2000, the armed forces will only retain 10 percent of their airlift capability.³⁶

³³This point is stressed by the London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), which observes that "the major threat to the Russian armed forces in 1997 was not military, but financial. . . . Although the military receives nearly 20% of the total federal budget, the money is not being managed properly to continue the reform program; rather, it is being used, at least in mid-1997, to maintain as far as possible the inefficient status quo." See IISS, *The Military Balance 1997/98* (Glasgow, Great Britain: Bell and Bain, 1997), 101.

³⁴Meyer, "The Devolution of Russian Military Power," 324-25.

³⁵Institute for National Strategic Studies, *Strategic Assessment 1997: Flashpoints and Force Structure* (Fort McNair, Washington, D.C.: National Defense University, 1997), 18-19.

³⁶*Ibid.*

3. It is observed that from 1993 to 1994, the air force received only twenty-three fighter aircraft that did not even sufficiently replace planes lost in routine accidents. Although the Russian Air Force declared its requirement for a new fighter plane to replace the MiG-29 and Su-27, scarcity of funds for the full-scale development of new fighter planes is probably a pipe dream, as even the manufacture of helmet and flight suits has been terminated.³⁷

4. Between 1990 and 1995, the navy lost 50 percent of its personnel and ships, and 66 percent of its naval aircraft. The National Defense University's Institute for National Strategic Studies estimates that the navy's losses amounted to about thirteen to fifteen ships each month.³⁸ The losses in men and material have been complicated by the loss of ports and shipbuilding facilities in the Baltic, Ukraine, and Georgia.

Arms Acquisition

Weapons or arms acquisition involves the process of development and production or importation that converts national resources into needed military hardware, and is central to the process of arms modernization. The state's defense policymaking process determines the action channels for the weapons acquisition process. Once the required force structure is determined, this process provides a self-legitimizing goal—a military requirement—for the development and procurement of required weapons systems. The weapons acquisition process, in turn, provides a crucial input that will affect future armed force structure and deployment.

As mentioned earlier, the drastic reduction in Russian defense spending, along with other internal political factors, has affected the RAF's ability to receive the necessary equipment and weapons to improve its mobility and flexibility. With the budget for the procurement of weapons drastically

³⁷See Benjamin S. Lambeth, "Russia's Wounded Military," *Foreign Affairs* 74, no. 2 (March/April 1995): 89.

³⁸Institute for National Strategic Studies, *Strategic Assessment* 1997, 19.

reduced, programs for new weapons have been frozen or abandoned, and the equipment stocks of the forces are now aging and deteriorating, which in turn has increased the costs of repair or maintenance. However, many equipment cannot be repaired because of the need to fund other costs such as housing and other social needs of the armed forces. A case in point would be the 1996 defense budget, which provided for about 51.5 percent for personnel, operations, and maintenance, with only a mere 16.5 percent allotted for procurement.

The reduction in procurement has greatly affected the RAF's general state of health. A good example is the status of the Russian rapid deployment forces. Although the first of the immediate reaction forces has been formed with a nucleus of one motorized rifle and two airborne divisions, its mobility is hampered by the fact that the air force's transport capability is slowly being eroded because of budget cuts. The air force has been unable to update its outdated transport fleet with the new AN-70, and its current transport planes are deteriorating because of the 70 percent reduction in spare parts delivery.³⁹

Like the air force, the navy also suffers from the reduction in spare parts allocation and fuel distribution, as it has decommissioned many of its vessels and aircraft and reduced large-scale exercises. The 1997 edition of *Jane's Fighting Ships* specifically observes that "since 1991 a shortage of funds to pay for dockyard repairs, spare parts and fuel has meant that many major surface ships have rarely been [sent] to the sea and few have operated away from their local exercise area. Since 1996 some ships have been 'selected' to go to the sea but many remained in commission but [are] permanently in the harbor."⁴⁰

As part of its efforts to prepare for a war of rapid response, the PLA has adopted a new arms acquisition program known as the "high-technology national defense strategy." The program is intended to enable the PLA "to fight a modern war under high-technology conditions." The collapse of

³⁹Paul George et al., "Military Expenditures," in *SIPRI Yearbook 1996* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 335.

⁴⁰Captain Richard Sharpe, ed., *Jane's Fighting Ships* (London: Butler and Tanner, 1997), 543.

the USSR, worsening Sino-Western relations since 1989, and American victory in the Gulf War of 1991 have convinced the PLA that fighting wars under high-technology conditions requires superior hardware, sound tactics, and a suitable force structure. Since 1991, enormous efforts have been exerted and funds have been allocated to strengthen high-technology and specialized services in order to create offensive air power and develop a blue-water navy. Table 1 provides a partial list of the PLA's major arms acquisitions since 1991.

Table 1
Major PLA Arms Acquisition Programs, 1991-96

Year	PLA	Air Force	Navy	Total
1991	—	40 MiG-29, 24 Su-27 (Russia)	2 Ka-27 Helix ASW (Russia)	3
1992	—	2 Su-27; 1 Il Beagle bomber; 24 MiG-31; 4 Il-76 Candid transport aircraft; 15 Il-76 transport aircraft; 28 Mi-7 transport helicopters; 8 AN-12 air tankers (all from Russia)	3 30 SA-365N Dauphin Radar	8
1993	Tu-80 main battle tanks (Russia)	1 T6-10 Brushfire fighter plane (Canada)	—	2
1994	—	—	4 Kilo-class submarines (Russia)	1
1995	—	27 Su-27 (Russia); 1 Il-76M Candid transport aircraft (Ukraine)	2 Kilo-class submarines (Russia)	3
1996	—	License to manufacture 120 Su-27 or designated PLA name J-11 (Russia)	6 Search Water AEN radar; 2 Sovremenny-class destroyers (Russia)	3
Total	1	13	6	20

Sources: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, *SIPRI Yearbook*, 1992-96 editions (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992-96); International Institute for Strategic Studies, *Strategic Survey 1996/97* (London: IISS, 1997), 170-71.

Notable among these acquisitions are the heavy transport planes and helicopters imported from Russia and Ukraine which are intended to improve ground force mobility and logistic support. Another significant acquisition is the Su-27 fighters which are expected to improve the PLAAF's air defense and all-weather interceptor capabilities. In addition, Russia has given China the license to manufacture 120 Su-27 fighter planes, which will not only boost the PLAAF's air defense capability but also help overcome the PRC's structural barriers to defense industrial modernization, since this will involve the transfer of technology and industrial equipment and plants from Russia to China.⁴¹ Kilo-class submarines and the Sovremenny-class destroyers have also been acquired by the PLAN, which intends to deploy the former as replacements for the aging Romeo-class submarines which had been in service with the navy since 1962; the latter will be used to supplement the PLAN's Luh-class destroyers, thus reinforcing the navy's growing capabilities in high-sea operations. The importation of helicopters and radar is intended to improve the Luh-class destroyers' anti-submarine capabilities. Although the procurement of foreign equipment and ships does not directly address the PLAN's fundamental task of mounting sustained and coordinated naval operations far beyond China's coast, the new hardware will enhance the navy's anti-submarine warfare system plus its sea-denial and sea-control capabilities.

The PLA's current arms acquisitions, however, are far from adequate in solving China's deficiencies in advanced military technology. Despite the high-profile procurements, the PLA is not a broad-based and balanced multi-service force capable of sustained, joint, and long-range combat operations.⁴² This does not mean, however, that the PLA is still the land-bound, large, and technologically deficient armed forces of the pre-Deng Xiaoping era. Years of sustained reforms and billions of dollars worth of

⁴¹See Susan Willett, "East Asia's Changing Defence Industry," *Survival* 39, no. 3 (Autumn 1997): 110.

⁴²For a thorough and comprehensive discussion of the technological and structural deficiencies of the PLA, see Paul H.B. Godwin, "Military Technology and Doctrine in Chinese Military Planning: Compensating for Obsolescence," in *Military Capacity and the Risks of War: China, Pakistan, and Iran*, ed. Eric Arnett (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 39-60.

arms acquisitions have made the PLA into a powerful regional armed force capable of the following:⁴³

1. Enlarging its defense depth beyond Chinese borders: The air force and navy's high-tech weapons now enable the PRC to deploy its military units and conduct military exercises in areas far beyond China's immediate boundaries, i.e., the South China Sea. With this capability, the PLA has adopted a strategy of forward defense which is intended to deter any possible opponent from China's vulnerable industrial centers along the coast.

2. Conducting preemptive and limited offensive operations to neutralize an imminent threat beyond its borders: The PLA ground forces' increasing mobility, the development of the air force's air defense, ground attack, and transport potentials, and the navy's increasing numbers of surface combatants and submarines have established the PRC's local military superiority over the small neighboring states with which it has territorial disputes.

3. Further development which may allow China to face any super-powers: China's military posturing against Taiwan in March 1996 led to the American deployment of two aircraft carriers to the Taiwan Strait, which led to the realization among the Chinese political leadership that it may have to deal with U.S. military power in the future. With the periodic and sporadic crises in Sino-American relations, the PLA has considered a worst-case scenario of an air or missile surgical attack on PLA facilities without a full-scale military invasion. This has caused Chinese security planners to go back to the drawing board to design a more comprehensive doctrine in dealing with military threats from the major powers. This may involve the introduction of more high-tech weapons for the PLAN and PLAAF and the expansion of the PRC's strategic depth further to the west. This means that in the future, China may be developing the necessary military capabilities to engage either the United States or Russia in a high-tech war.

⁴³You Ji, "A Blue-Water Navy: Does It Matter?" in *China Rising: Nationalism and Interdependence*, ed. David S.G. Goodman and Gerald Segal (London: Routledge, 1997), 72-73.

Use of Force

How the military organization views its role, how its force structure is organized, the military doctrine it formulates, and the weapons it obtains all lead to one consideration—how a state will use force against other states. A state may use force to defend its population, territory, or prestige against other states, or it may use it to back up its diplomacy in persuading other states to comply with its will or alter their behavior. Or it may be used crudely to annihilate or destroy another state as revenge or reprisal. The use of force may take the forms of deterrence, international peacekeeping, low- to high-intensity warfare, reprisals, military assistance to the civil community, and United Nations peacekeeping or peace-enforcement operations.

To summarize, since the mid-1980s the PRC's political and military planners have accepted the assumption that China's future wars will take the form of limited and regional wars. The strategy of rapid response requires the PLA to engage any enemy forces swiftly and decisively at the forward defense lines at the onset of any conflict, which demands the following military reforms: the creation of highly motivated, well-trained, highly mobile, and limited but well-balanced armed forces; acquisition of high-tech weapons; and the development of the potential to inflict maximum damage without becoming bogged down in a protracted conflict. The core of this reform is the formation of rapid deployment ground forces that can be supported by modern and powerful air and naval forces.

Since the late 1980s, China has been conducting several military exercises over its seven military regions to test the PLA's rapid deployment capabilities and combined arms operations in hypothetical border clashes and limited wars.⁴⁴ The London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies observes that the PLA's creation of the "fist" units and its various military exercises "reinforce the trend away from wide-area territorial defence to maneuver formations that can be moved rapidly to deal with either serious domestic emergency or an external threat to China's territorial integrity."⁴⁵

⁴⁴Godwin, "Force Projection and China's National Military Strategy," 72-74.

⁴⁵IISS, *The Military Balance 1996/97* (London: Oxford University Press, 1996), 171-72.

China's opportunities to test its restructured armed force and new strategic doctrine, however, have been constrained by many factors. Although many territorial conflicts are taking place on its southern borders, the PRC has yet to use the PLA in resolving its disputes with the other states in the region. The first major constraint is of a technical nature. The specialized services (the navy and the air force) are still in the painful process of slow modernization. Despite its high-profile acquisitions of submarines and surface combatants, the PLAN is still a very large brown-water navy equipped with aging ships and aircraft as well as many coastal patrol craft and fast attack craft which are useless for blue-water operations. It is also deficient in air defense and anti-submarine warfare; thus, it lacks the capability to provide sufficient aerial protection for any amphibious operations. Furthermore, the PLAAF's limited air-to-air refueling capacity cannot sustain long-range air support to any military operation far beyond continental China. Despite the acquisition of state-of-the-art fighter planes such as the Su-27 Flankers and MiG-29s from Russia, it is estimated that 90 percent of the PLAAF's combat aircraft are obsolete, and it lacks an operational AWACS (Airborne Warning and Control System). Without these capabilities, the PLAAF will have great difficulty in conducting effective air combat operations beyond 300 miles of the mainland. Thus, while the PLA can now inflict great damage on its neighboring states in limited and low-intensity combat operations, it cannot sustain prolonged military campaigns at any great distance from China's borders nor can it hold on its own against a modern conventional military force backed up with nuclear weapons. Commenting on the PLA's overall potential to wage a war of rapid response, an American specialist on Chinese defense affairs notes: "The PLA's rapid reaction capability will be limited . . . until it can develop certain transport and weapon systems. Most importantly, it lacks long-range refueling and airlift capability. Thus, the PLA is now training RRUs with no real capability to deploy them."⁴⁶

The second constraint is the PRC's leadership and the PLA's view of

⁴⁶David Shambaugh, "Growing Strong: China's Challenge to Asian Security," *Survival* 36, no. 2 (Summer 1995): 53.

the world. Despite its territorial problems with its neighbors over the South China Sea islands, Chinese political and military leaders still see the need to foster economic development based on foreign trade and related foreign investment and assistance. Thus, they have emphasized their concern with maintaining a peaceful international environment that assures long-term trade, investment, and assistance flows.⁴⁷ Furthermore, the PRC's defense planners are now facing a difficult dilemma: a strategic doctrine that focuses on limited and local wars along its border and maritime claims in the South China Sea has created the needs for technologies which its military cannot develop and its industrial base cannot produce. The PLA thus relies more on the international market for its required technology and industrial needs for its modernization program.

The third constraint is the Chinese leadership's awareness that the United States still exerts powerful and predominant strategic clout in East Asia, as evidenced by the events of March 1996. In an attempt to intimidate Taiwan during its first direct presidential election, the PLA closed the air and sea lanes around Taiwan on the grounds that it would be conducting a huge military exercise. Alarmed by the PRC's intention against Taiwan, the United States responded with "a brusque and efficient demonstration of military deterrence against the mainland by deploying two aircraft carrier battle groups."⁴⁸ The incident taught the PRC three lessons: its armed forces had difficulties in operating in bad weather; the PLA is still overwhelmed by the U.S. armed forces in power projection capabilities; and the American factor should never be ignored or underestimated in calculating the regional security equation.⁴⁹

⁴⁷See Robert G. Sutter, "China," in *Asian Security Handbook: An Assessment of Political-Security Issues in the Asia-Pacific*, ed. William M. Carpenter and David G. Wienczek (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1996), 135-36; and Ronald N. Montaperto and Hans Binnendijk, "PLA Views on Asia-Pacific Security in the 21st Century," *Strategic Forum*, no. 114 (June 1997): 1-4.

⁴⁸IISS, *Strategic Survey 1996/97* (London: Oxford University Press, 1997), 167.

⁴⁹For insights regarding the future of U.S.-PRC strategic relations and comparative analyses of the capabilities of the U.S. Navy and the PLA Navy, see Ulysses O. Zalamea, "Eagles and Dragons at Sea: The Inevitable Strategic Collision between the United States and China," *Naval War College Review* 49, no. 4 (Autumn 1996): 62-74; and Henry J. Kenny, "The South China Sea: A Dangerous Ground," *ibid.*, no. 3 (Summer 1996): 96-108.

Finally, the armed forces' involvement in any military conflict may affect its peacetime preoccupation—business. Since the 1970s, the PLA has been involved in commercial and business activities, which have dramatically intensified in the 1990s. These peacetime activities have been so successful that analysts believe that the PLA generates revenues equal to the amount of funds it receives from the national budget. Analysts believe, however, that these commercial activities have eroded the PLA's fighting ability and weakened its potential to conduct large-scale military operations involving not only regular forces, but also the elite RRU's.⁵⁰

While the PRC has found itself constrained in applying its new strategic doctrine and restructured armed forces, Russia has tried but failed miserably in its initial test. Since 1993, the RAF has adopted a doctrine of rapid response as part of its preparation for fighting local wars in "near abroad" areas. However, financial problems have prevented Russia from carrying out the necessary reforms to transform the RAF into a lean and mean fighting force, as was clearly shown in the RAF operation in Chechnya.

Despite the formation of rapid deployment forces, the RAF used armored and motorized units that were sitting ducks before the Chechnya fighters' tactic of ambushing armored columns along open highways and roads. Instead of engaging the guerrillas in a war of maneuvers, the Russian forces became road-bound, as they relied on aerial and artillery bombardment and avoided close encounters with their opponents. To avoid superior Russian firepower, the insurgents resorted to the classic guerrilla tactic of irregular combat operations and rapid movements as they picked stationary and vulnerable targets. Consequently, they denied the Russian forces control over a large area of the occupied territory and deprived them of the advantage of superior firepower, as their rapid movements deprived their enemies of any target. Eventually, the guerrillas were able to trap a large number of Russian troops in the city of Grozny on August 6, 1996.⁵¹

⁵⁰See Facts on File, *Changing Orders*, 33; and Ellis Joffe, "The PLA and the Chinese Economy: The Effects of Involvement," *Survival* 37, no. 2 (Summer 1995): 24-71.

⁵¹For details of the Russian military's dismal performance in the Chechnya conflict, see Vladimir Baranovsky, "Conflicts in and around Russia," in *SIPRI Yearbook 1996* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 251-54; IISS, *Strategic Survey 1995/1996* (London: Oxford University Press, 1996), 119-21; and Staar, *The New Military in Russia*, 20.

The war in Chechnya demonstrated that despite the RAF's restructuring process, Russian ground forces were not prepared for regional or local conflicts and had not undergone sufficient general infantry training, particularly special training for small-unit operations and special warfare operations requiring rapid maneuvers. Instead of engaging the guerrillas in an effective low-intensity military operation, they relied on massive firepower from their aircraft and tanks, and in its desperation, the Russian General Staff brought in elite units, including naval infantry forces from as far as the Russian Far East. Moreover, poor coordination between individual units and services was also observed in the RAF.⁵² Thus, instead of ending the war at its earliest possible stages, the Russian military found itself stuck in a protracted local war.

The RAF's military failure in its first test in Chechnya has little to do with its new strategic doctrine, and more to do with Russia's overall economic and political crises. Reductions in the defense budget have prevented the creation of an effective rapid deployment force, while the Russian government's new and unstable mechanisms have prevented any decisive and sustained military operations. Public opinion against the use of force, the lack of a consensus among the political parties and interest groups, and the periodic imbroglios between the parliament and the executive branch have made it difficult for the government to mobilize economic and political resources for the military, formulate a more coherent national security policy, and above all, implement it.⁵³

Conclusion

Current developments in Sino-Russian relations seem to indicate a renewed partnership and cooperation not seen since the early 1950s. Having experienced Western realpolitik in one way or the other since the end of the

⁵²See Stafanie Babst and Herbert Schaller, "The Future of the Russian Military," in *Brassey's Defence Yearbook 1996* (London: BPCC Wheatons, 1996), 33-35.

⁵³Mikhail Tsypkin, "The Politics of Russian Security Policy," in Parrott, *State Building and Military Power*, 33-35.

Cold War, both Russia and China have all the reasons in the world to maintain their rapprochement to a point that it has created uneasiness and even concern among members of the Western Alliance.⁵⁴ With Russian military power at its nadir, the PRC's concern about its once powerful continental neighbor has receded, and both countries have made some progress in resolving their border disputes and forging some arms control arrangements regarding their conventional forces.

The more important aspects of their relationship, however, are the deepening and broadening of their cooperative efforts in defense and the high-technology sector. Russia has agreed to allow China to manufacture about 100 Su-27s, thus paving the way for the wholesale transfer of technology and industrial plants for the production of this state-of-the-art fighter aircraft. Russia has also expressed its willingness to invest in major Chinese projects such as the Three Gorges hydroelectric development projects and in the Liaoning nuclear power deal. These actions suggest that Moscow is committed to maintaining a strong bilateral partnership with Beijing well into the next century.⁵⁵ This relationship is insured by a strategic convergence—both states are uneasy about a post-Cold War world militarily dominated by the United States.⁵⁶

Underneath this iceberg of Sino-Russian entente, however, is a looming asymmetry in power relations. With the end of the Cold War in 1991, both countries adopted a similar strategic doctrine which in effect directs each country's strategic concerns and capabilities against the other. The PRC's doctrine of rapid response and the RAF's new strategic doctrine are designed for possible limited conflict with neighboring states, and geographically, Russia and China are neighbors with a long history of territorial disputes. While the PLA's military program is undergoing slow but gradual modernization, the RAF's efforts to restructure its forces have been ham-

⁵⁴The PRC during the Taiwan Strait crisis of March 1996, and Russia in the face of NATO's eastward expansion.

⁵⁵See James Clay Moltz, "Russia in Asia in 1996," *Asian Survey* 37, no. 1 (January 1997): 90-91.

⁵⁶See Rajan Menon, "The Strategic Convergence Between Russia and China," *Survival* 39, no. 2 (Summer 1997): 115.

pered by economic and political hurdles. Therefore, while the PLA is slowly developing the capability to fight a limited war of rapid response along its borders, the RAF is still reeling from domestic politico-economic problems and its recent defeats at the hands of the Chechnya rebels.

Given the emerging asymmetry in conventional military capability between the two countries, and the PRC's inability to project its power to its southern border because of American strategic predominance in the Pacific, a situation is being created in which the growth of PRC military power in the Eurasian mainland is raising some fears in Russia. Moreover, given that larger Asian territories are now open to Chinese migration, Russia is concerned about the possibility of Chinese irredentism, given that the PLA is slowly achieving conventional offensive superiority along the border of the Transbaikal and maritime provinces of Russia.⁵⁷ This concern has been further intensified by the redeployment of Russian forces to the southern part of Russia, which has led to the general reduction and neglect of Russian forces based in Siberia, Transbaikal, and the Far Eastern military districts. Faced with this dilemma, Russia is trying to appease China by the export of Russian weapons and military technology to the PRC, with the hope that these efforts will be an effective means of restraining or at least constraining the emergence of a hypothetical threat from its largest neighboring state.

Nevertheless, Russian nationalists are already voicing their concern that the PLA's new Russian weapons may eventually be turned against their source. Russian parliament member Alexei G. Arbatov recently expressed his worry that given "its historical location, long history of territorial disputes with Russia, and its current military buildup," Beijing might be encouraged to adopt expansionist policies against Russia and its Central Asian neighbors. Russian security analysts also warn of a Eurasian region that will become "an inviting space for Chinese expansion sometime in the early twenty-first century."⁵⁸ It is still extremely difficult to predict how

⁵⁷See Graham E. Fuller, "A New World Order in Eurasia? Ideology and Geopolitics," in Malik, *The Roles of the United States, Russia, and China*, 38-39.

⁵⁸See Henry Trofimenko, "New World Order and Russian-American Relations," *ibid.*, 62.

this emerging asymmetry in military capabilities will affect Sino-Russian relations. History, however, is full of incidents showing the unfortunate consequences of a situation in which a state does not confront another state's matching power with countervailing power, but with weakness and appeasement.