



The Forthcoming Struggles and Wars According to Xi Jinping

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Executive Summary

- * Xi Jinping increasingly bases his policies on the Legalism school best associated with Han Fei.
- * Xi Jinping keeps preparing the PRC for a protracted confrontation, perhaps violent war, with the US. Xi Jinping's US strategy builds on Mao Zedong's "protracted war" doctrine.
- * Given the magnitude of the core and vital Chinese interests in stark contradiction with the US - there is no hope that any Sino-US economic deal will avert a major confrontation. These endemic differences cannot be resolved fully because of the US profound and lingering misunderstanding of China. Indeed, China expects more US provocations rather than conflict resolution.
- * Hence, Xi Jinping ordered the PLA to intensify its training and preparations for war. He also ordered the development and fielding of new weapon systems. The PLA will increase its global footprint including the establishing of new overseas bases.

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Analysis

*A wise ruler, when he makes his laws,
is bound to find himself in conflict with the world.*
- Han Fei (280-233 BC)

*If you wish to urge a policy of peaceful
coexistence, then be sure to expound it in
terms of lofty ideals, but also hint that it is
commensurate with the ruler's personal interests.*
- Han Fei

*Undertakings succeed through secrecy
but fall through being found out.*
- Han Fei

On 4 January 2019, Xu Wei wrote in the *China Daily*, President Xi Jinping sent a congratulatory letter to the opening of the Academy of Chinese History Studies of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. The letter instructed Chinese historians to “improve their research and innovation to better summarize historical experience, reveal patterns and grasp the trend of history.” Xi Jinping emphasized the importance of history. “History is a mirror,” Xi’s letter said, “and drawing its lessons not only benefits contemporary endeavors but also enriches the mind. It is a fine tradition of China, with a civilization of over 5,000 years, to emphasize historical research and its use as a reference.” Given the current challenges facing China, Xi Jinping wrote, the role of history and precedents is becoming increasingly important for decision makers. “It is even more necessary to conduct systematic research into Chinese history and culture and learn more deeply about historical development patterns to adhere to and develop socialism with Chinese characteristics in the new era.”

The opening of the new Academy comes on the coattails of a slew of New Year editorials in the Chinese media stressing the historical continuity and Chinese heritage of the current policies as pursued by Xi Jinping and the Forbidden City. “China will tread its own path steadily in 2019” irrespective of the positions of the US-led West, was the defiant tone of these editorials.

Xi Jinping’s close attention to Chinese history and heritage, particularly of the Imperial era, is clear from his policies and speeches. He is a firm believer in the Legalism school that promotes the powers of the central paramount leader, as well as the importance of “realism” - that is, “realpolitik”. The Legalism school is best associated with Han Fei (or Han Feizi, 280-233 BC). Han Fei and Qin Shi Huang (259-210 BC) - the emperor that adapted his theories - have long been favorites of the Chinese Communist ruling elites. China expert Francois Bougon writes in his 2018 book *Inside the Mind of Xi Jinping* that “Mao [Zedong] unashamedly laid claim to the revolution brought about by the Legalists. Just like the first emperor, he brought about a new, strong regime that wiped the slate clean, drawing a line under two millennia of empire. He described his own leadership as ‘Marx plus Qin Shi Huang’.”

However, the depth of the adoption of, and reliance on, Han Fei and the Legalism school under Xi Jinping are unprecedented. This need not surprise. Modern Chinese intellectuals have long considered Han Fei as the key



to the salvation and modernization of China without losing its unique civilizational heritage, and as the key to overcoming the challenges posed by the sheer size of the land and the populace.

The great Chinese intellectual Lin Yutang (1895-1976) delivered a lecture in October 1930 titled “Han Fei as a Cure for Modern China” in which he argued that China should consider “Han Fei as a modern prophet” whose philosophies should be widely adopted. Han Fei’s hardline realism and pragmatism can solve the endemic problems and address the huge challenges faced by a China seeking modernization and global ascent. Lin Yutang stressed that “the striking modernity of Han Fei is the best reason why” he should be considered the solution for contemporary China.

Indeed, Bougon writes, it is frequently said that “Han Fei is Xi’s ‘favorite philosopher’.” Bougon notes that Xi Jinping frequently cites Han Fei approvingly in support of his own policies. For example, in September 2014, Xi Jinping quoted the following phrase from Han Fei: “When those who uphold the law are strong, the state is strong. When they are weak, the state is weak.”

In a December 2015 article, Kerry Brown concurred that “Xi Jinping’s statecraft is influenced above all” by Han Fei’s teachings. Liu Yunshan, the Party’s chief ideologue, identified “traditional, splendid Chinese history and culture” as a huge asset for official Beijing. The legacy of Han Fei emerges as “one of the sources of legitimacy the Party in the 21st century appeals to. ... Strong laws, hatred of waste, and support for self-effacing bureaucrats promote one prime object for Han Fei: strengthening and preservation of the authority of the ruler. ... Authority is not the best bet, but the only bet for sound governance.” Having studied his speeches and writings to-date, Brown concludes, “Xi Jinping might have done more than glance at the suggestions about the exercise of power and realpolitik given in Han Fei’s writings, and heed the advice about being constantly wary and on guard.”

Growing domestic-economic challenges are facing the PRC. For more than twenty years now, the three engines of China’s economy have been investment, domestic consumption and exports. In 2018, they all suffered substantial decline. Although Xi Jinping stressed the enduring success of the PRC’s “reconstructive reforms” in his New Year speech - Chinese liberal economists urge “averting a potentially devastating economic downturn.” Overall though, the vast majority of Chinese economists concur that the PRC would achieve its stated growth target of 6.5% for 2018. But this would be “the weakest rate in almost three decades” since the average annual growth rate was about 9.7% between 1978 and 2015.

Beijing cannot ignore the slowdown of economic growth - as much because of internal transformations as a result of the trade and tariff war with the US. China is facing environmental problems. The growing shortages of food and water cannot be solved internally and larger quantities of food must be imported. Similarly, there is urgent imperative to import ever growing quantities of hydro-carbons. Local government debt threatens fiscal stability. Local corruption is mainly the result of the emergence of localized foci of self-interests - which, in Chinese history, were the harbingers of warlordism and the fracturing of empires. Most important is the demographic challenge of a maturing China with a small and shrinking number of working-age Chinese. This is the aggregate result of the one-child policies and the markedly improving public medical services (that keep people living longer). There is urgent imperative to readjust the rural population into more efficient food production and the urban population into supporting increasingly automated production. All these profound changes will take years to achieve. Add to this the growing resource allocation to the military/security sectors in order to address the requirements of the ascent of China.



Xi Jinping is therefore preparing the PRC for a protracted confrontation, perhaps violent war, with the US - the New Thirty Years War (2018-2049) in order to consolidate China as the global Hegemon. To succeed, Xi Jinping must conduct a prudent policy balancing threats, capabilities and the cost of victory. According to Katsuji Nakazawa of *Nikkei* of Japan, the tenets of Beijing's "top secret" foreign policy strategy as articulated in late December 2018 stress the approach: "Do not oppose the US. Do not lead Sino-US relations into a Cold War. Open up the market. Do not yield on core interests." Xi Jinping is prudently navigating the Forbidden City and China as a whole in a tumultuous conflict with the US.

In a 10 January 2019 article for *Nikkei*, Katsuji Nakazawa observed that Xi Jinping's US strategy builds on Mao Zedong's "protracted war" doctrine. "A Communist Party source gave a short answer when asked how to read the situation. 'Recall Mao Zedong's way of thinking,' he said. Mao [Zedong], the founding father of 'new China,' expounded a theory of 'protracted war.' Avoid major decisive battles and employ 'mobile warfare' over an extended and fluid front to gradually break the morale and combat effectiveness of the enemy, Mao [Zedong] preached during the Sino-Japanese war that began in 1937. The same strategy is discernible in the current clash with the US. A protracted war with no end in sight puts China at an advantage, thanks to its large population, according to the theory. It also buys the country time to modernize its military. Waging a protracted war is said to require internal stability and strong leadership."

Hence, Xi Jinping's Beijing is looking first at defining new modalities for applying long-term profound solutions before seeking to address each and every issue at hand. In so doing, Xi Jinping is following the teachings of Han Fei: "If a ruler can get rid of private crookedness and promote the public law, his people will become secure, and his state will become well ordered."

On 4 January, the *China Daily* published a broad-brush analysis of the challenges facing China in 2019 and beyond by Hu Yumin, the Vice-Secretary General of the China Arms Control and Disarmament Association. Addressing the domestic-economic issues, Hu Yumin argued that China "is entering a period of adjustments, not economic recession or geopolitical concessions, largely due to the resilience it has built in the decade since the 2008 global financial crisis. Some analysts believe China's period of adjustments, including its transformation from an export-dependent economy to a consumption-and innovation-driven economy, may last about five years."

Because of the strong impact of the trade and tariff war on the Chinese economy and society, official Beijing emphasizes that it is imperative to consider the impact of Sino-US relations - relations that are determined first and foremost by the global ascent of China - on the domestic-economic sphere. The 1 January Editorial of the *Global Times* articulated Beijing's vision of what is next for 2019 including the complex impact of Sino-US relations. "This year, China will face significant internal and external challenges. China-US relations and the endorsement of a bilateral trade agreement are a top priority. ... The complexity of China-US ties transcends any of the relations between great powers seen throughout human history." The adverse impact of the trade and tariff war can be ameliorated through correct domestic reforms. "In order to have a long-lasting influence on relations, China must manage its own affairs better. China must remain dedicated to reform and opening-up and speed up the modernization of its national governance system and capabilities."

This, however, must not come at the expense of the global dynamics associated with the ascent of China. "The Chinese people must be aware that the country has already bid farewell to the era when Beijing's decisions were defined by the whims of international pressure." For the coming year, the *Global Times* Editorial argues, the PRC must persevere on the steady path and median policy seeking to minimize domestic-economic



repercussions from the pursuit of global policies. “In the face of a sudden escalation of the China-US trade conflict throughout 2018, Beijing chose neither a concession nor a confrontation. The country has continued advancing and establishing its position as the world’s second largest economy, maximizing its vitality and cooperation. Undoubtedly, that is China’s lifeline to steady progress in an increasingly restless world.” The Editorial does not expect a profound change of this approach.

Several Chinese and Western experts concur that this policy is beneficial for Beijing. Writing in the 2 January issue of *The Financial Times*, Professor Keyu Jin of the London School of Economics explained how “the trade war with America is a strategic gift for China”. Most important, Keyu Jin noted, is that “the wrangling over trade practices and intellectual property is diverting attention from a deeper and more intractable conflict between the two powers: one concerned with China’s aspirations, its development model and its challenge to US primacy. China is deploying a smart stratagem. By fine-tuning its position and agreeing to make some concessions to the US, it is staving off the possibility of an outright collision. ... This partly explains why China is willing to make more concessions on trade. ... But these compromises are gains in disguise because they are compatible with China’s long-term economic development.”

The key to the success of the Forbidden City’s ability to implement such a sophisticated policy lies in their ability to sustain the support of the Chinese people and the state governance for the policy and its domestic-economic ramifications. Unlike Trump’s Washington, “President Xi Jinping is under considerably less pressure to answer to his domestic constituents and to achieve nominal victories.” Nevertheless, Keyu Jin pointed out, for Xi Jinping, “controlling subversive elements at home is the priority. This means ensuring domestic social stability and averting outright collision with the US. ... For that, [China] needs time and a bit of elbow room. That is why, in the immediate future, the price of concessions on trade and intellectual property seems a price well worth paying.”

Hence, the Forbidden City went out of its way to expedite the first round of bilateral economic negotiations for 2019. Xi Jinping ordered a special gesture that would leave no doubt about the commitment and interest of the highest levels in the Forbidden City. On 7 January, Chinese Vice-Premier Liu He showed up unexpectedly for the opening session of the US-China negotiations in Beijing. Liu He is Xi Jinping’s top economic affairs aide and is in charge of the PRC’s policy and conduct of trade talks with the US. Since this round of negotiations were officially at the “vice-ministerial” level and no US VIPs participated - he was not supposed to attend. Chinese analysts told the *South China Morning Post* that “Liu’s attendance at the talks showed goodwill and Beijing’s commitment to reaching a deal with Washington.”

Indeed, the talks ended on a seemingly positive note. On 10 January, Teddy Ng reported in the *South China Morning Post* that although the “China-US trade talks have laid foundation for [a] deal,” there is “no indication that any agreement was reached during three days of talks in Beijing.” Still, Beijing hopes that “Chinese and US officials will keep in close touch.” The talks “improved mutual understanding and laid a foundation for resolving issues of mutual concern,” he concluded.

What’s afoot is the long-term strategic challenge that ultimately dominates the course and progress of the economic relations and negotiations with the US. The 7 January Editorial of the *Global Times* asserted that the trade and tariffs were secondary factors in the determination of the US negotiations policy. “The fundamental reason for the extensive and bitter trade war lies in China’s rise, which has shaken the US-led global power structure. Stirring up all kinds of uneasiness and impulsiveness, the trade war has resulted in a rather negative tendency for China-US relations, bringing more uncertainties and anxiety.”



Beijing hopes for a compromise in order to calm the brewing face-off. Hu Yumin elaborated in his 4 January article in the *China Daily*. "China has made it clear time and again that it is not a major threat to the US. Instead, as a beneficiary of the existing world order, China prefers to be a cooperative partner or stakeholder in regional and international affairs. Despite rising challenges and difficulties, China will continue making efforts to maintain stable relations with the US and its neighbors, while safeguarding its sovereignty, territorial integrity, and geopolitical interests."

Despite all of Beijing's efforts, the 7 January Editorial of the *Global Times* lamented, Trump's Washington refuses to recognize the logic and prudence of Beijing's approach to both the negotiations and conflict resolution. "No matter how hard, the only choice for both countries is to explore peaceful coexistence while avoiding mutual strategic exhaustion. A win-win result for China and the US seems to deviate from the orthodoxy of games between major powers, but the zero-sum game is even tougher to play." Thus, while Beijing would like to postpone the actual clash with the US - there is little hope for that.

Chinese senior officials and experts point out to the lingering crisis over Huawei as a manifestation of the US adamant refusal to reach genuine agreements with China. On 9 January, writing in the *South China Morning Post*, Professor Christine Loh of the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology warned that "the Huawei case may launch the great China-US technology decoupling." Back on 8 January, Yu Jincui observed in the *Global Times* that "China-US relations are facing unprecedented challenges." The conflict over Chinese high-technology is presently the most bitter and explosive point of contention. The crisis around Huawei has "undermined the two foundations of the relationship, namely economic and trade relations that used to be the ballast of the bilateral relations and the people-to-people exchanges." Yuan Peng, the Vice President of the China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations, concurred and warned further that even "if an all-out cold war or an economic cold war is unlikely between China and the US, a high-tech cold war has actually begun."

Little wonder that Chinese senior officials and experts keep reiterating Beijing's conviction that a compromise on the trade and tariff issues - the US will simply find another point of contention such as the crisis over Huawei. The outcome of the latest round of talks in Beijing, where the US insisted on the "needed structural changes" in Chinese economy before "real progress can be made", confirms this reading of the situation.

Writing in the 9 January issue of the *Global Times*, Shen Jianguang, a chief economist with Jingdong Finance, articulated the lingering worries of the Forbidden City. "China needs to prepare for long-term rivalry with the US even if trade deal is reached," he noted. "If the China-US economic and trade relations, known as the stabilizer of bilateral ties, turn sour, conflicts between the two countries in terms of geopolitics and ideology will intensify quickly." Shen Jianguang warned further that "even if the trade tensions could be eased in the short term, the disputes between China and the US are not just limited to trade issues. Increasing disagreements in terms of cybersecurity, geopolitics and technological competition indicate that the China-US rivalry has spread from trade issues to the science and technology field and through to the economic systems. ... In this sense, China will likely face more conflicts with the US at different levels, and it is essential to be prepared for a protracted war."

The main issue for the Forbidden City, though, is to what extent can Beijing trust policies elucidated, and proposals raised, by the Trump White House. Back on 2 January, while Beijing was pursuing its quest for a compromise, Acting US Secretary of Defense Patrick Shanahan told senior officials at the Pentagon to remember "China, China, China" when formulating the US future threat assessment. Shanahan's statement



raised the alarm in Beijing because it seemed to have confirmed the worst-case analysis and policies advocated by the experts of the Central Military Commission and the People's Liberation Army.

"China should expect more US provocations," reacted the 3 January Editorial in the *Global Times*. The US challenges is emerging as a long-term overriding challenge for the PRC. "A major country's security affairs are usually sorted by importance and urgency, and China may have become the US' most important goal. ... [the US] focuses only on China," while giving up on other foci points, observes the Editorial. "The trade war reflected the hardline US attitude toward China in 2018. Whether Washington will add military pressure on Beijing in 2019 still remains to be seen." However, Beijing should prepare for the worse. "By saying 'remember China,' Shanahan may mean to prevent China narrowing the China-US military gap. The US may conduct more military provocations against China in the Taiwan Straits and the South China Sea."

Despite the looming threat, the *Global Times* Editorial stresses, Beijing must not surrender the historic initiative to Washington. "China needs to hold onto its principles while staying calm. China must understand that Washington is strategically on guard against Beijing. It is trying to stop China's 'expansion' through tactical harassments and warnings." Both Beijing and Washington must be cognizant of the real correlation of forces between the two countries. "China has no capability to infringe on the US, but the country has sufficient power to make Washington pay an unbearable price if the US infringes on China, so as to form a powerful deterrent against the White House." Still, there is urgent imperative for China to accelerate its strategic build-up to face the new US challenge and attention. "When Shanahan shouts 'China, China, China,' Beijing must respond by accelerating construction of a deterrent against the US. China must make good use of deterrence, learning to make others feel fearful without being furious." The PRC should neither rush to war nor accept the US demands, the *Global Times* Editorial concludes. "In the face of strategic US pressure, peaceful development does not mean grin and bear it. Confronting malicious provocation, China must resolutely clarify our attitude, not being afraid to pay some prices, in order to set up rules that all external forces must respect China's core interests."

The 7 January Editorial of the *Global Times* argues that Washington adamantly refuses to recognize and appreciate the self-restraint exercised by Beijing. But this cannot continue for long. "China has been keeping a low-profile facing China-US disputes, but it shouldn't be taken for granted that Beijing is incapable of counterstriking fiercely." The evolving Sino-US relations constitute "an unprecedented challenge" given their multi-faceted crux and the huge stakes for both sides. "All humanity's past experience of relations between great powers are outdated and limited. Beijing and Washington have to explore a new path. The process will be very sensitive. It may even run into short-term and regional excitement. However, both sides do not want to strategically collide with each other, so they must know when to stop before going too far. Even if the US regards China as its No.1 competitor, it needs to plan more carefully how to safely pressure China rather than implement a trade war as if fighting a close encounter." While adamant on not surrendering vital interests and the unfolding ascent of China, Beijing nevertheless is offering Washington an olive branch. "Beijing and Washington are capable of presenting the world with certainty, which will benefit themselves and others. We look forward to ongoing China-US negotiations achieving success."

However, the Sino-US disagreements are so profound and systemic, explained Professor Su Hao of the China Foreign Affairs University in Beijing in a 5 January interview with the Seoul newspaper *Hankyoreh*, that short-term compromises over trade and tariffs will fail to overcome the overall trend. He is convinced that presently, US-China relations are "the worst they've been since diplomatic relations were established." Even though



“Beijing is capable of making numerous concessions” there will be no reciprocity from Washington and the demands will remain “excessive”. Su Hao argues that the crux of the problem lies in the failure of the US to realize the profound changes in the contemporary world. “These days, you can’t simply say that international relations are driven by the US and other Western countries. The US’ influence has waned as the developing countries have made advancements,” he explained.

The PRC is the greatest challenge to the US because it is both a developing country and a powerhouse of modern technology. “The US has redefined China as a ‘rival’ now that it has emerged as the world’s second-ranked economy with major influence,” Su Hao said. The US must suppress China before it could rise and threaten the US-led world order. Therefore, while the US and the PRC “may be able to reach a consensus,” he noted, “structural contradictions could remain in place due to the US’s excessive demands” and they will determine the long-term relations. The PRC and the US “may be able to achieve a temporary agreement through 90 days of negotiation, but they won’t be able to solve all of the issues. Some of the US’ demands are also too unreasonable for China to agree to all of that,” Su Hao explained. “State systems and economic structures are the results of a country’s characteristics and political decisions. Those can’t be changed to meet US demands.”

Ultimately, there is little hope for these endemic differences with the US to be resolved fully, Chinese experts warn, because of the US profound and lingering misunderstanding of China. In his 8 January article for the *Global Times*, Yu Jincui explained that “more efforts are needed to enhance understanding between the two countries. Washington’s China policy is driven by its misperception about China. Since the Nixon administration, the US’ engagement policy toward China had been based on the assumption that through engagement the US can transform China’s internal development and external behavior to the US’ liking. However, the US underestimated China’s capabilities of developing on its own pace while overestimated its ability to shape China. China, in the process of integrating into the international order, has firmly stuck to its own chosen path of socialism with Chinese characteristics and followed an independent foreign policy.” And as China’s heritage-driven ascent is accelerating - the ramifications of the US misunderstandings are becoming increasingly dangerous.

The only way to truly confront challenges of the type posed by the US, Han Fei taught, is by obtaining the raw power of a great state and unassailable military capabilities. These, Han Fei wrote, are the key to the real relations between states. “It is customary with a ruler that, if his state is small, he will do the bidding of larger states, and his army is weak, he will stand in fear of stronger armies. When the larger states come with demands, the small state must consent; when stronger armies appear, the weak army must submit.” There is no issue of right or wrong - but rather of who can and who cannot.

Indeed, a few years ago, observed Paul Pryce in an August 2015 article, Beijing had to endure US pressure due to the disparity of power. “The China threat narrative considers Chinese strategy within a strictly neo-realist prism that supposes conflict will inevitably arise from a shift in polarity in international politics.” Under these circumstances, “Xi Jinping and Xu Qiliang [then the Vice Chairman of the Central Military Commission] can be best understood by consulting Han Feizi. ... It [US policy] indicates to the Chinese political leadership that Han Feizi’s view of international politics endures more than two millennia later - the strong will continue to dictate to the weak, and so the United States will continue to determine the outcome of any territorial dispute in the South China Sea or East China Sea so long as the capability gap with China persists.” Come 2018-9, this is no longer the case. Xi Jinping and the Forbidden City have led the PRC into acquiring military capabilities that



would enable the Chinese to resist US encroachments and threats.

On 4 January, Xi Jinping addressed a key meeting of the Central Military Commission and ordered the PLA to intensify its training and preparations for war. “All military units must correctly understand major national security and development trends, and strengthen their sense of unexpected hardship, crisis and battle.” The PLA must “prepare for a comprehensive military struggle from a new starting point... Preparation for war and combat must be deepened to ensure an efficient response in times of emergency.” There is urgent imperative “for developing a strong military”, Xi Jinping declared.

Xi Jinping started by outlining the ongoing changes in the strategic posture of the PRC. “The world is facing a period of major changes never seen in a century, and China is still in an important period of strategic opportunity for development,” he explained. At the same time, “various predicable and unpredictable risks and challenges have been arising.” The PLA must “be fully aware of the nation’s security and development trends, to strengthen troops’ awareness of crisis and war, challenges and combat, and to make solid and comprehensive preparations for military operations. The People’s Liberation Army and Armed Police Force must focus on improving their combat capability and whatever they do must be for the betterment of their combat readiness in order to accomplish the tasks assigned by the Party and the people.” Xi Jinping instructed that “the military boost strategic and tactical planning so troops can effectively and rapidly respond to possible contingencies.” The PLA must “improve its joint operation capability. New types of fighting forces should be the priority in the military’s development and more realistic combat training must be held.” Realistic and demanding exercises must be conducted. “Regarding combat capability as the only and fundamental criterion,” Xi Jinping ordered that “all work, forces and resources [are] to focus on military preparedness and ensure a marked progress in this regard.”

During the meeting, Xi Jinping signed “a mobilization order for the training of the armed forces”. This is the first order for 2019 and it is dated 1 January. “The armed forces must also strive to strengthen their readiness to respond to emergencies. Commanders must take the lead in studying the art of war and also must be the first to carry out training and exercises, according to the order. Exercises must be conducted based on real combat scenarios and should involve the simulation of complicated situations and the deployment of multiple weapons and equipment from different services,” the order stipulates.

Writing for the PLA’s China Military Online website on 4 January, Liu Jianwei and Wu Xu elaborated on the importance and magnitude of the order. The order just signed by Xi Jinping comes on top an earlier order signed back in 2018. “The second batch of new Outline of Military Training for the Chinese military with a total of more than 900 pieces [=items] was officially released after strict trials and argumentation. ... Editing and revising new Military Training Outline is a major task in building training content and standard systems compatible with the requirements of modern warfare. It is a basic project to promote China’s administration and conduct of military training in accordance with the law and Military Training Outline. The promulgation and implementation of more than 1,600 pieces [=items] of the new Outlines [700 from 2018] is of great significance to comprehensively regulating Chinese troops’ training and improving their actual combat readiness under the new system.”

Meanwhile, starting 1 January, the PLA has been emphasizing the significance and magnitude of the new training and preparing for combat and war. “The Chinese military is expected to ramp up training in 2019, a year of rising geopolitical challenges and several key anniversaries for the People’s Liberation Army,” wrote Liu Zhen in the 8 January issue of the *South China Morning Post*. The 1 January Editorial of the *PLA Daily* stated



that “there was no time for slacking in war preparation”. The entire PLA must focus on “strengthening training and preparation for war” as “the top priorities for China’s military in 2019,” the Editorial stressed. “Drilling soldiers and war preparations are the fundamental jobs and work focus of our military, and at no time should we allow any slack in these areas,” the *PLA Daily* Editorial read. “We should be well prepared for all directions of military struggle and comprehensively improve troops’ combat response in emergencies ... to ensure we can meet the challenge and win when there is a situation.” The new guidelines order as signed by Xi Jinping “applies to all units of the PLA, including troops, academies and armed police,” and is designed to “ensure new challenges are met and battles are won.” On 8 January, the *PLA Daily* Editorial reported that “regiments all over the country had started a series of combat exercises after Chinese President Xi Jinping issued his first commands of the year last week.”

PLA veterans stressed the unprecedented character of the PLA’s expanded combat training and preparations. “During the 20 years I spent in the PLA before I left in 2004, military training to boost combat readiness was always one of our top tasks,” Lt. Col. (Ret) Zeng Zhiping told Choi Chi-yuk of the *South China Morning Post*. “But this is something different. When training and preparation for war is highlighted at the beginning of a year it means this is a plan for the whole year, although we don’t know what the real intention behind the rhetoric is at this stage.” Col. (Ret) Yue Gang emphasized that “Xi’s rallying call to the military was a response to the growing uncertainty over the geopolitical struggle between China and the United States.” He opined that the PLA’s training would become even more intense as Xi Jinping’s military reforms would be implemented. “With total restructuring and constant basic training at the grass roots, bigger, more complex and comprehensive war games are finally possible and this is the time to put the forces to the test,” Yue Gang told the *South China Morning Post*.

The development and fielding of a new generation of weapon systems is also of great importance. Special attention should be paid to the warfighting non-nuclear arsenal. Hu Yumin explained in his 4 January article in the *China Daily* that “due to the constant advances in military sciences and the updated weapons’ programs of the major powers, while talking about the role of nuclear weapons and strategic stability today, we have to consider the non-nuclear factors, too, which include missile defense, precision guided long-range missile systems, hypersonic waveriders, outer space programs and cyber capacity. Which in turn have given rise to the concept of cross-domain deterrence.” Needless to say, that under such conditions, the PRC must not and cannot give up on the quest for attaining hi-tech and scientific-technological self-sufficiency and self-reliance.

Meanwhile, Beijing anticipates a growing role for the PLA in implementing and furthering overall Chinese policies in 2019. On 9 January, Lieutenant General He Lei, the former Vice President of the PLA’s Academy of Military Science and presently a senior strategist at the PLA’s High Command, briefed Party cadres in Beijing. “The Chinese military is an important force in maintaining the world’s peace and stability,” he explained. “The Chinese military is taking more and more international responsibilities. All other countries should view the development of the Chinese military in a correct way. ... The Chinese military has always been committed to safeguarding national sovereignty and security and maintaining world peace.” He Lei stressed that the evolving global strategy and interests of the PRC will require a new level of activism from the PLA all over the world. To address these challenges, “China will consider setting up new overseas support bases for its military if there are such needs,” he said. Under current conditions, “it is possible for China to build new overseas support bases” already in 2019. He Lei noted that “the main role of a Chinese overseas base is to provide logistical support to Chinese units operating overseas, and not to field Chinese military forces in other countries, so people should not over-interpret this matter.” Still, He Lei left no doubt that the PLA’s global



footprint will markedly increase in the coming years.

The overall militarization of China will increase in the coming year. According to senior Chinese defense officials, the PLA will conduct a military parade of “unseen scale” in Tiananmen Square and along nearby Chang’an Avenue on 1 October 2019 - the 70th anniversary of the PRC. Xi Jinping wants the event “to praise the nation’s feats and whip up patriotism” throughout the entire China. Politically, the parade will provide Xi Jinping with the opportunity to publicly reward his stalwart allies by having them stand next to him on the dais of Tiananmen Gate and wave to the saluting troops and passing weapon systems. Internationally, the parade will serve as a reminder to friends and foes alike of the PLA’s growing powers - for a host of new weapons are expected to be paraded - and of the growing resolve of Xi Jinping’s Forbidden City to put them into use should the ascent of China be challenged and its vital interests be threatened. Xi Jinping, the officials concluded, wants the event to reflect the new “will and power” of the rising China.

Thus, in charting the new-old course for the ascent of China as global Hegemon, Xi Jinping increasingly follows the legacy of Mao Zedong in adopting Qin Shi Huang’s tenets of empire building and governance. Back in 1906, the Rev. J. Macgowan published in Shanghai the book *The Imperial History of China: Being a History of the Empire as Compiled by the Chinese Historians*. This is the first history of China on the basis of indigenous sources. In the book, Macgowan elucidates the legacy of Qin Shi Huang - then spelled Shih Hwang-ti. “Shih Hwang-ti was a man of marvellous power and energy of character. He was a true statesman, and with the instincts of a man of genius he was quick to appreciate the enlightened views of the able minister that assisted him in the government of the kingdom. He was the real founder of the Chinese Empire, for he found it a disjointed mass of warring states, and he left it one and undivided as it is to-day.” Xi Jinping follows the legacy closely - expecting to be similarly recognized by history.

Remarks: Opinions expressed in this contribution are those of the author.



About the Author of this Issue

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