

## UNDERSTANDING CHINA'S ACTIVE-DEFENCE STRATEGY — IMPLICATIONS FOR INDIA AND TAIWAN

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China has a declared '*military strategy*' or '*strategic guideline*' of '*active defence*.' This has been put out in the public domain through its Defence White Papers (DWP) published, commencing 1998. After 1949, the PLA has used the concept of the '*strategic guideline*' to formulate and describe its military strategies.<sup>1</sup> When the PRC was established, the concept of '*strategic guidelines*' provided the basic framework for how to conceive of military strategy. "*The strategic guideline affects army building, troop training, and war preparations.*"<sup>2</sup> China's '*strategic guidelines*' have four components; **(1)** the strategic opponent and the operational target; **(2)** the primary strategic direction; **(3)** the basis of the '*preparation for military struggle*' (PMS), i.e., the form of warfare and form or pattern of operations; and **(4)** the basic guiding thought for the use of military force, i.e., general operational principles to be applied in a conflict.<sup>3</sup>

As a strategic concept, '*active defence*' provides guidance for how to conduct operations when facing a numerically- or technologically superior enemy, that is, when one is on the strategic defensive. Thus, '*active defence*' offers a vision for how to overcome weakness — and not how to conduct operations when on the strategic offensive or when engaging an opponent from a position of overall superiority.<sup>4</sup>

Turning now to the military strategy as per the 1998 DWP, it is germane to look at '*active defence*' from the prism of the "four components of the strategic guidelines framework" (FCSGFW).

### **Defence White Paper – 1998**

China's 1998 DWP stated, "*Strategically, China pursues the defensive policy featuring self-defense and gaining mastery by striking only after the enemy has struck, and adheres to the principle: 'We will not attack unless we are attacked; if we are attacked, we will certainly counter-attack'... China possesses a small number of nuclear weapons, entirely for meeting the needs of self-defense... China upholds the principle of self-defense by the whole people and the strategic concept of people's war, and works hard to enhance the defense consciousness of the whole people, perfect the*

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<sup>1</sup> M Taylor Fravel, "China's Military Strategy Since 1949-Active Defense" (Princeton university Press, New Jersey, 2019), 58.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, 59.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, 60.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, 61.

*defense mobilization system, and intensify the building of the reserve force for defense... On the basis of its existing weaponry, China carries forward and develops its fine traditions. It seeks to adapt to profound changes in the world's military sphere, and makes proper preparations for defensive combat in the situation where modern technology, especially high technology, prevails.*<sup>5</sup>

**Commentary:** In this DWP, neither the strategic opponent, nor the strategic direction were indicated. The PMS revolved around “*gaining mastery by striking only after the enemy has struck*”. The basic guiding thought was that China would adhere to the strategic concept of a “*people’s war*” and a “*defensive policy featuring self-defense*”, and engage in “*defensive combat in a situation where modern technology, especially high technology, prevails*”. It is clear that the 1998 DWP strategy would not be relevant if China was to go to war with India, as the chances of India attacking China first were practically nil and also, India would not have technological superiority. Hence, the ‘*active defence*’ strategy of “*striking only after India has struck*” would not be applicable. China would have the leeway to take the initiative and strike first. Insofar as a Taiwan contingency was concerned, the possible involvement of the United States (US) made this 1998 DWP a workable strategy for China, as China’s weaponry (as existing at that point in time) would not provide it any technological edge over the US. Further, in a Taiwan scenario, China would, *per force*, have to initiate the conflict, if it sought reunification.

## Defence White Paper – 2000

‘*Active defence*’ was described in a nearly similar manner in the 2000 DWP, except that this DWP stated, “...*such defense combines efforts to deter war with preparations to win self-defense wars in time of peace, and strategic defense with operational and tactical offensive operations in time of war.*”

**Commentary:** Once again, China based the execution of this strategy on her existing weapons.<sup>6</sup> Notably, through DWP-2000, China referred to “*self-defense wars in time of peace*” and “*tactical and operational offensive in time of war.*” The phrase “*self-defense wars in time of peace*” seems to bear a strong resemblance to what is now termed ‘*grey zone warfare*’ (GZW). This implied that both India and Taiwan would be prone to possible coercive, very low intensity ‘*active defence*’ tactical operations by China. Further, the word “*win*” made its maiden appearance in the 2000 DWP. Thus, the focus shifted to winning wars as merely opposed to surviving and managing an armed conflict. Importantly, India would remain vulnerable to a pre-emptive military action by China.

<sup>5</sup> China.org, “China’s Defense White Paper: China’s National Defense, July 1998”, <http://www.china.org.cn/e-white/5/index.htm>.

**See also:** Andrew S Erickson, “China Defense White Papers—1995-2019”, <https://www.andrewerickson.com/2019/07/china-defense-white-papers-1995-2019-download-complete-set-read-highlights-here/>

<sup>6</sup> People’s Daily, “China’s National Defense in 2000”, 16 October 2000, <https://en.people.cn/english/features/NDpaper/nd.html>

## Defence White Paper – 2002

DWP 2002 stated, “*China implements a military strategy of active defense. Strategically, China pursues a principle featuring defensive operations, self-defense, and attack only after being attacked. In response to the profound changes in the world’s military field and the requirements of the national development strategy, China has formulated a military strategic guideline of active defense in the new period.*”<sup>7</sup>

**Commentary:** The only change from DWP 2000 was that this military strategic guideline of ‘*active defence*’ was for the new period. The DWP seemed to indicate that there were, indeed, some changes to the strategic guideline, but what exactly these were, was not articulated. The implications for India and for Taiwan remained unchanged from those emanating from DWP 2000.

## Defence White Paper – 2004

This DWP stated, “*...to adapt itself to the changes both in the international strategic situation and the national security environment and rise to the challenges presented by the RMA worldwide, China adheres to the military strategy of active defense and works to speed up the RMA with Chinese characteristics.*”<sup>8</sup>

**Commentary:** The closing phrase, “*...works to speed up RMA with Chinese characteristics*” suggests that China modified the PMS and ‘guiding thought’ components of the strategic guidelines. For India and for Taiwan, the implications remained unchanged.

## Defence White Paper – 2006

Within the ambit of implementing the military strategy of ‘*active defence*’, DWP 2006 stated, “*...the PLA ensures that it is well prepared for military struggle, with **winning local wars under conditions of informationization** and enhancing national sovereignty, security, and interests of development as its objective. It will upgrade and develop the strategic concept of people’s war, and **work for close coordination between military struggle and political, economic, diplomatic, cultural and legal endeavors**, uses strategies and tactics in a comprehensive way, and **takes the initiative to prevent and defuse crises and deter conflicts and wars...** The PLA will establish step by step a modern national defense mobilization system that is centralized and unified, well structured, rapid in reaction, and authoritative and efficient... **Taking joint operations as the basic form**, the PLA aims to bring the operational strengths of different services and arms into full play.*”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> People’s Daily, “China’s National Defense in 2002”, 09 December 2002, <http://english.people.com.cn/features/ndpaper2002/nd.html>

**See also:** Andrew S Erickson, “China Defense White Papers—1995-2019”

<sup>8</sup> China.org, “China’s National Defense in 2004”, December 2004, <http://www.china.org.cn/e-white/20041227/>

**See also:** Andrew S Erickson, “China Defense White Papers—1995-2019”

<sup>9</sup> China Daily, “China’s National Defense in 2006”, December 2006, [https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2006-12/29/content\\_771191.htm](https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2006-12/29/content_771191.htm)

**See also:** Andrew S Erickson, “China Defense White Papers—1995-2019”

**Commentary:** The expression “*local wars*” implied an acknowledgement by China’s leadership that while a full-scale invasion of the Chinese mainland was ruled out the country might have to fight wars on its periphery. However, the geographic expanse encompassed by the word “*local*” remains open to interpretation. Thus, as per this DWP (of 2006), wars with India and with Taiwan could well be interpreted as being ‘*local*’. However, a war over Taiwan could bring into play the entire Western Pacific and whether this could be considered ‘*local*’ is highly debatable. Perhaps the interpretation of the word ‘*local*’ most likely to be correct was that war would not be fought within the Chinese mainland. As far as ‘*informationization*’ was considered, this remains a national level concept in China, used in civilian- as well as military affairs to describe the transition from the industrial age to information age. Wars under ‘*informationized conditions*’ would then refer to the application of information technology to all aspects of military operations. Operations under conditions of “*informationization*” would occur at a high tempo, over a large physical area, simultaneously across multiple domains, and in all weather conditions. Today, such operations are often described as ‘*system of system*’ confrontations.<sup>10</sup> Hence, it is logical to conclude that at this point in time, China’s aim was to upgrade and develop the strategic concept of “*people’s war*”, and work towards achieving close coordination between military struggle and political-, economic-, diplomatic-, cultural- and legal endeavours. Further, China would henceforth focus upon joint operations between its armed forces. A significant aspect of this DWP was that China had articulated its intention of taking the initiative towards preventing and defusing crises and deterring conflicts and wars. This *taking of initiative* was, therefore, a critical change in China’s military strategy and had implications for both India and for Taiwan. Further, the expansion of the term ‘*local*’ to include a large geographical expanse was significant. The 2006 DWP could, therefore, be considered a significant milestone in the development of China’s military strategy.

## Defense White Paper – 2008

On the subject of active defence, DWP 2008 stated, “*Strategically, it adheres to the principle of featuring defensive operations, self-defense and striking and getting the better of the enemy only after the enemy has started an attack.*”<sup>11</sup> Further, DWP 2008 also “...established the military strategic guideline of active defense for the new era, based on winning local wars in conditions of modern technology, particularly high technology.”<sup>12</sup>

**Commentary:** In this DWP, China appeared to be indicating that “*striking after the enemy has started an attack*” was referenced to the strategic level and that pre-emptive actions and offensive operations at the operational level and the tactical one were an intrinsic part of the strategy. The focus, once again, was on “*local wars*” — not only under conditions of “*modern technology*” but also “*high technology*”. The standard by which technology was being assessed had apparently been ratcheted upwards. Further, as the China Daily put it, “...regarding RMA with Chinese characteristics as the only way to

<sup>10</sup> Fravel-China’s Military Strategy Since 1949-Active Defense *ibid*, Chapter 7, 219.

**See also:** Andrew S Erickson, “China Defense White Papers—1995-2019”

<sup>11</sup> China Daily, “Full Text of the White Paper on China’s National Defense in 2008”, 20 January 2009, [https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2009-01/20/content\\_7413294\\_4.htm](https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2009-01/20/content_7413294_4.htm).

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*.

**See also:** Andrew S Erickson, “China Defense White Papers—1995-2019”

*modernize the military, it put forward the strategic goal of building an informationized military and winning informationized wars. Driven by preparations for military struggle, it accelerated the development of weaponry and equipment, stepped up the development of the arms and services of the armed forces, as well as forces for emergency mobile operations, optimized its system and structure, and reduced the number of personnel by 700,000. As a result, its capability of defensive operations increased remarkably.*<sup>13</sup> China's assessment that its capability for "defensive operations had increased remarkably" seemed to indicate that as far as India was concerned, the chances of China taking the initiative to start a conflict were now higher than before.

## Defence White Paper – 2010

This DWP had only a very small portion highlighting 'active defense', which stated, "*China implements the military strategy of active defense of the new era, adheres to the principles of independence and self-defense by the whole nation, strengthens the construction of its armed forces and that of its border, territorial sea and territorial air defenses, and enhances national strategic capabilities.*"<sup>14</sup>

**Commentary:** The phrase "principles of independence" made its first appearance in relation to 'active defense.' What exactly this phrase implied in terms of military strategy remains unclear. On the other hand, the phrase "self-defense by the whole nation" seemed to once again emphasise a modern form of "people's war". Enhancement of "national strategic capabilities" clearly seemed to be aimed at dealing with the US in a Taiwan scenario.

## Defense White Paper – 2013

The 2013 DWP once again dedicated very limited space to "active defense" stating only that "*China's armed forces unswervingly implement the military strategy of active defense, guard against and resist aggression, contain separatist forces, safeguard border, coastal and territorial air security, and protect national maritime rights and interests and national security interests in outer space and cyber space. We will not attack unless we are attacked; but we will surely counterattack if attacked. Following this principle, China will resolutely take all necessary measures to safeguard its national sovereignty and territorial integrity.*"<sup>15</sup>

**Commentary:** In this DWP, the phrases "guard and resist against aggression" and "safeguard border, coastal and territorial air security" were emphasised, and apparently indicated, a growing uncertainty (and consequent insecurity) regarding the possibility of aggression against Chinese territory.

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> State Council of the People's Republic of China, "China's National Defense in 2010", 31 March 2011, [https://english.www.gov.cn/archive/white\\_paper/2014/09/09/content\\_281474986284525.htm](https://english.www.gov.cn/archive/white_paper/2014/09/09/content_281474986284525.htm)

**See also:** Andrew S Erickson, "China Defense White Papers—1995-2019"

<sup>15</sup> State Council of the People's Republic of China, "China's Defense White Paper 2013: The Diversified Employment of China's Armed Forces", April 2013,

[https://english.www.gov.cn/archive/white\\_paper/2014/08/23/content\\_281474982986506.htm](https://english.www.gov.cn/archive/white_paper/2014/08/23/content_281474982986506.htm)

**See also:** Andrew S Erickson, "China Defense White Papers—1995-2019"

## Defense White Paper – 2015

DWP 2015 had the most detailed coverage of *active defence*, and explained its nuances as follows:<sup>16</sup>

- *“China’s military strategy is an overarching guidance for blueprinting and directing the building and employment of the country’s armed forces”.*
- *“China’s armed forces will adapt themselves to new changes in the national security environment, firmly follow the goal of the Communist Party of China (CPC) to build a strong military for the new situation, implement the military strategic guideline of active defense in the new situation, accelerate the modernization of national defense and armed forces, resolutely safeguard China’s sovereignty, security and development interests, and provide a strong guarantee for achieving the national strategic goal of the ‘two centenaries’ and for realizing the Chinese Dream of achieving the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation”.*
- *“The strategic concept of active defense is the essence of the CPC’s military strategic thought. From the long-term practice of revolutionary wars, the people’s armed forces have developed a complete set of strategic concepts of active defense, which boils down to: adherence to the unity of strategic defense and operational and tactical offense; adherence to the principles of defense, self-defense and post-emptive strike; and adherence to the stance that ‘We will not attack unless we are attacked, but we will surely counterattack if attacked’.”*
- *“China’s armed forces will continue to implement the military strategic guideline of active defense and enhance military strategic guidance as the times so require”.*
- *“A holistic approach will be taken to balance war preparation and war prevention, rights protection and stability maintenance, deterrence and warfighting, and operations in wartime and employment of military forces in peacetime. They will lay stress on farsighted planning and management to create a favorable posture, comprehensively manage crises, and resolutely deter and win wars”.*
- *To implement the military strategic guideline of active defense in the new situation, China’s armed forces will adjust the basic point for PMS. In line with the evolving form of war and national security situation, the basic point for PMS will be placed on winning informationized local wars, highlighting maritime military struggle and maritime PMS.*
- *To implement the military strategic guideline of active defense in the new situation, China’s armed forces will innovate basic operational doctrines. In response to security threats from different directions and in line with their current capabilities, the armed forces will adhere to the principles of flexibility, mobility and self-dependence so that “you fight your way and I fight my way.”*
- *Integrated combat forces will be employed to prevail in system-vs-system operations featuring information dominance, precision strikes and joint operations. To implement the military strategic guideline of active defense in the new situation, China’s armed forces will optimize the military strategic layout.*
- *To implement the military strategic guideline of active defense in the new situation, China’s armed forces will uphold the following principles:*
  - ✓ *To be subordinate to and in the service of the national strategic goal, implement the holistic view of national security, strengthen PMS, prevent crises, deter and win wars;*

<sup>16</sup> State Council of the People’s Republic of China, “China’s Defense White Paper 2015: China’s Military Strategy”, 27 May 2015, [https://english.www.gov.cn/archive/white\\_paper/2015/05/27/content\\_281475115610833.htm](https://english.www.gov.cn/archive/white_paper/2015/05/27/content_281475115610833.htm)

- ✓ *To foster a strategic posture favorable to China's peaceful development, adhere to the national defense policy that is defensive in nature, persevere in close coordination of political, military, economic and diplomatic work, and positively cope with comprehensive security threats the country possibly encounters;*
- ✓ *To strike a balance between rights protection and stability maintenance, and make overall planning for both, safeguard national territorial sovereignty and maritime rights and interests, and maintain security and stability along China's periphery;*
  - *To endeavor to seize the strategic initiative in military struggle, proactively plan for military struggle in all directions and domains, and grasp the opportunities to accelerate military building, reform and development;*
  - *To employ strategies and tactics featuring flexibility and mobility, give full play to the overall effectiveness of joint operations, concentrate superior forces, and make integrated use of all operational means and methods;*
  - *To make serious preparations to cope with the most complex and difficult scenarios, uphold bottom-line thinking, and do a solid job in all aspects so as to ensure proper responses to such scenarios with ease at any time and in any circumstances;*
  - *To give full play to the overall power of the concept of people's war, persist in employing it as an ace weapon to triumph over the enemy, enrich the contents, ways and means of the concept of people's war, and press forward with the shift of the focus of war mobilization from human resources to science and technology;*

### Commentary:

(a) In 1997, the “two-centenary goals” were first proposed by the CPC. The first centenary goal was that by 2021, upon the centenary of the CPC, China would transform itself into a moderately prosperous society in all respects and grow its GDP so as to double its per capita income as compared to that of 2010. The second centenary goal is by 2049, the centenary of New China, to build a modern socialist country that is prosperous, strong, democratic, culturally advanced, harmonious and beautiful. In July this year (2023) when the CPC celebrated its centenary, General Secretary Xi Jinping announced solemnly that China had achieved the first centenary goal of building a moderately prosperous society in all respects. Now, the CPC is leading the Chinese people on the journey of achieving the second centenary goal.<sup>17</sup>

(b) DWP 2015 linked ‘active defense’ to achievement of the two centenary goals. Further, it also linked it to “realizing the Chinese Dream of achieving the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.” Incidentally, in September of 1912, Sun Yat-Sen highlighted that “if a country can’t be founded on military strength, it can’t be founded at all.”<sup>18</sup> By highlighting “adherence to the unity of strategic defense and operational and tactical offense”, China has clearly indicated that it is open to offensive

<sup>17</sup> Gmw.cn, “Visual explainer: The two centenary goals”, 26 December 2023, [https://en.gmw.cn/2023-12/26/content\\_37111211.htm](https://en.gmw.cn/2023-12/26/content_37111211.htm)

<sup>18</sup> Liu Mingfu, *The China Dream* (CN Times Books Inc, New York: 2015), 5.

operations at operational and tactical levels. Further, by highlighting “*adherence to the principles of defense, self-defense and post-emptive strike; and adherence to the stance that ‘We will not attack unless we are attacked, but we will surely counterattack if attacked’*”, China seems to have made a distinction between ‘defense’ and ‘self-defense.’ This is an interesting distinction and ‘self-defense’ seems to imply an action after China has been attacked and ‘defense’ could be anything perceived to be a threat. The statement that “*they will lay stress on farsighted planning and management to create a favorable posture, comprehensively manage crises, and resolutely deter and win wars*”, is clearly indicative of the fact that China will take the initiative to achieve a favourable posture. This, in turn, implies that China would not be wary of initiating a conflict. The statement that “*the basic point for PMS will be placed on winning informationized local wars, highlighting maritime military struggle and maritime PMS*” clearly indicates a renewed emphasis on the maritime domain. The statement that “*in response to security threats from different directions and in line with their current capabilities, the armed forces will adhere to the principles of flexibility, mobility and self-dependence so that ‘you fight your way and I fight my way’*”, indicates that China seems to have abandoned the concept of a threat from any one particular strategic direction and reflects a unique Chinese way of war fighting. ‘Integrated combat forces’ are clearly an inescapable imperative for China. The statement that China will “*endeavor to seize the strategic initiative in military struggle, proactively plan for military struggle in all directions and domains, and grasp the opportunities to accelerate military building, reform and development*” connotes a proactive approach, as opposed to what was being earlier a reactive approach (one that would come into play after China was attacked) The statement “*press forward with the shift of the focus of war mobilization from human resources to science and technology*” seems to be an emphatic statement of the goal to achieve technological superiority.

(c) DWP 2015 thus seems to indicate that China will not hesitate to seize the strategic initiative and in all probability initiate conflict if required. The implications for India and Taiwan are all too evident.

## Defense White Paper – 2019

After the detailed explanation provided in DWP 2015, the 2019 DWP only reiterates that “*the military strategic guideline for a new era adheres to the principles of defense, self-defense and post-strike response, and adopts active defense. It keeps to the stance that ‘we will not attack unless we are attacked, but we will surely counterattack if attacked’, places emphasis on both containing and winning wars, and underscores the unity of strategic defense and offense at operational and tactical levels.*”<sup>19</sup> This last phrase highlighting the unity of “*strategic defense and offense at operational and tactical levels* is notable.

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<sup>19</sup> State Council of the People’s Republic of China, “China’s Defense White Paper 2019: China’s National Defense in the New Era”, 24 July 2019, [https://english.www.gov.cn/archive/whitepaper/201907/24/content\\_WS5d3941ddc6d08408f502283d.html](https://english.www.gov.cn/archive/whitepaper/201907/24/content_WS5d3941ddc6d08408f502283d.html)



## Concluding Implications of ‘Active Defence’ for India and for Taiwan

Examination of these public articulations of China’s military strategy of ‘*active defense*’ indicates following salient issues:

- The belief that China will avoid war at all costs and try to subdue the enemy without fighting is probably a myth.
- In the case of both India and Taiwan, a conflict will happen only if China initiates it.
- There are no scenarios wherein, either India or Taiwan, and by implication the United States or its allies, will initiate a conflict over Taiwan.
- The threat of an invasion of Chinese mainland is practically nil and hence, ‘*active defense*’ strategy is clearly now aimed at achieving the ‘*China Dream*.’
- Creating a favourable strategic posture seems to be the aim of China and this would mean relevant activities in all domains.
- Coercive actions of China in the South China Sea (SCS) have been described as ‘*Grey Zone Warfare (GZW)*’. It is implied that China is wary of indulging in kinetic actions against SCS claimant countries and that, somehow, the actions of the China Coast Guard (CCG) and the Maritime Militia are not warlike activities.
- However, the SCS activities of China can be construed to be a part of the ‘*active defense*’ strategy and rather than being GZW, they basically are “*very low intensity active defense tactical operations*.”
- The public articulations of the Chinese military strategy via the DWPs are a clear indication that China is preparing for military actions against both India and Taiwan and the timing of the same would depend upon the strategic situation.
- Further, the more the capability of the PLA increases, the more likely will it be that China will be prone to initiate conflicts.
- The assessment that China would be amenable to ‘*local*’ wars only, with ‘*local*’ being restricted to China’s periphery needs to be discarded.
- ‘*Local*’ wars could cover large geographical expanses, especially in a Taiwan scenario.
- When China articulates that it will not attack unless it is ‘*attacked*’, then, a caution is needed.
- Any adverse action /perceived adverse action against China in any domain, political, diplomatic, military, information, cyber, space, etc., can be perceived as an ‘*attack*’ by China and then corresponding offensive actions against the said adversary may follow.
- These offensive actions could be in any domain including kinetic actions in the military domain.
- It appears that the concept of ‘*People’s War*’ has been updated and can now be taken to mean ‘*Multi-domain Warfare*.’
- The aim to safeguard China’s ‘*development interests*’ imply that China could be willing to take offensive actions at an operational and tactical level, if it perceives any threat to its activities

in any part of the world. This is particularly relevant in the case of India, where the Chinese BRI related activities and projects (especially CEPC) clash with India's sovereign interests.

It is not practical to expect analysts across the world to have access to top secret Chinese military strategy documents. However, whatever public articulations that China has done via the Defense White Papers and the attendant rapid increase in the capabilities of the PLA point to the fact that the so called '*defensive policy*' of China cannot be taken as an unwillingness to engage in combat when it feels the need to do so. '*Active Defense*' was originally meant to be a strategy to fight a superior enemy. However, with the continuing increase of the PLA's capabilities, it is clear that China would be the superior side in any conflict, especially with India. Hence, in all probability, this entire narrative that China would engage in '*defensive operations*' would not be applicable in a conflict against India.

Wars from which China seems to have drawn lessons with regard to high technology (war under informationized conditions) were those in which the US was one of the belligerents. In all these cases, the US was overwhelmingly superior to its adversaries. Therefore, how a war between two near peer adversaries with a matching level of technology will play out, remains unclear so far. Hence, a determination of how China will fight, will continue to evolve. As things presently stand, there appear to be only two credible scenarios in which China could go for a full scale, multi-domain combat, namely, those involving India and Taiwan. In both these cases the conflict will, *per force*, have to be initiated by China. That is what its articulation of the military strategy of '*active defense*' seems to be hinting at.

### ***About the Author***

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