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# Chinese strategic thinking: developing smart power from millennia-old concepts

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China, which has established itself as second global economic power after the United States since 2010, is taking full advantage of the fruits of its growth to accelerate the modernisation of the People's Liberation Army (PLA). The order of the day is the strengthening of the naval and air forces' projection capacities and the modernisation of its nuclear arsenal<sup>3</sup>, the goal being to ensure the protection of the country's strategic and trade interests in the region and worldwide. This ambitious approach to the simultaneous development of defence assets and economy is justified by an official discourse that is built on both the concept of "peaceful development" (*heping fazhan*) and the Confucian notion of "harmony" (*hexie*). This alliance between the new and the old is a reflection of the very nature of contemporary Chinese strategic thinking. Influenced by ancient concepts, it is also characterised by its dynamic nature and its pragmatism. Paradoxically, the rise of China is its greatest weakness, as it provokes defensive reactions from its neighbours, who are arming themselves and preparing to contain the Chinese giant.

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<sup>2</sup> The opinions expressed herein are the author's alone. They do not reflect the official stances of IRSEM or the French Ministry of Defence.

<sup>3</sup> PERLEZ, "New Chinese Leader Meets Military Nuclear Officers ", in *The New York Times*, 5/12/12.

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The grand classics, such as The Art of War or Thirty Six Stratagems, are a useful legacy for strategists of the 21st century, who reappropriate the traditional key principles of flexibility, the use of force as a last resort, economy of means and equilibrium between the opposing forces. The dynamic that this created seems to have given birth to multidimensional strategic thinking characterised by a subtle balance between diplomacy and coercion, enticement and constraint. In other words, Chinese strategy can today be compared to the American notion of “smart power”. What remains to be determined is the form it takes and the challenges and consequences that are associated with it.

### **1. Persuasion, Enticement And Cooperation**

The appointment of two Chinese economists in July 2011 and August 2012 as Deputy Managing Director of the IMF and executive vice-president and director general of the International Financial Society respectively is evidence of the rise of China within global financial institutions. This rise is also visible at the regional level, in particular in the APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation) and ASEAN +3 (Association of Southeast Asian Nations + China, Japan and South Korea) annual meetings.

Beijing is not afraid to take advantage of its position as permanent member of the U.N. Security Council when it comes to handling international security issues in order to veto certain decisions likely to compromise its interests, or, inversely take part in discussions on questions of a highly strategic nature. The third double veto from China and Russia opposing the UN draft resolution on Syria, 19 June 2012, shows China’s firm stance to protect its economic and trade

interests in the Middle East,<sup>4</sup> while condemning the Western-centred nature of the proposed action.

While its relative energy dependence on Iran explains China's cautiousness in the discussions on Iranian nuclear weapons, it is its privileged relationship with North Korea that has allowed China to play a key role as mediator on several occasions in the informal negotiations on Pyongyang's nuclear programme. This capacity for dialogue is more advantageous than ever, at a time when the Korean peninsula is seeing a significant rise in tensions. On top of souring the traditionally complex relationship between North and South Korea, the recent hardening of North Korea's military policy – demonstrated by the successful launch of the Unha 3 rocket in December 2012 followed by the third nuclear test in February 2013 – sparked heated debate on the international stage.<sup>5</sup> After several fruitless attempts to convince the North Korean regime to abandon its provocative behaviour and belligerent declarations towards South Korea and its allies, newly elected president Xi Jinping finally let it be understood in his opening address at the Bo'ao Forum for Asia on 6 April 2013 that he would no longer be able to diplomatically support China's ally as in the past<sup>6</sup>. The new governing power does however plan to make use of China's historical ties with Pyongyang and its status as a regional power to help reconcile North and South. Although the North Korean leaders appear to be unaware of the concern felt by their traditional ally, the Chinese persuasion strategy towards its neighbours would appear to have already proven successful.

China regularly turns to the concepts of “peaceful emergence” (*heping jueqi*) and “peaceful development” (*heping fazhan*) – which first appeared in 2003 and 2005, respectively – and they have allowed the country to become a heavyweight player in the political and financial landscape of Southeast Asia. The path to peaceful development<sup>7</sup> – free from aggressive connotations, contrary to the notion of emergence – lies in the promotion of global peace and stability through development within China. This development is made possible by an environment that is conducive to multidimensional exchanges, cooperation, peaceful resolution of problems and the construction of a harmonious world while respecting the five principles of

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<sup>4</sup> As the world's top energy consumer since 2010, China imports large quantities of hydrocarbons. According to the American Agency for Information on Energy, the Middle East contributed to almost half of China's oil imports in 2011, with Saudi Arabia and Iran providing 30% alone.

<sup>5</sup> S. TISDALL, J. Mc CURRY, T. BRANIGAN, “North Korea rocket launch prompts international condemnation”, in *The Guardian*, 13/12/12, XINHUA, “China 'firmly' opposes DPRK's nuclear test”, in *ChinaDaily.com.cn*, 12/02/13.

<sup>6</sup> RFI, “*Tension en Asie : le rappel à l'ordre du président chinois Xi Jinping*”, in *rfi.fr*, 07/04/13.

<sup>7</sup> 《中国的和平发展》白皮书 *zhongguo*, (“*de heping fazhan*” *baipishu*) [China and peaceful development], Office d'information du Conseil des Affaires d'Etat de la RPC, Beijing, September 2011. Available at: <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/fra/ziliao/topics/bps/t862178.shtml>.

peaceful coexistence<sup>8</sup>. Coordination, equality and alliances are the keys to Chinese "harmonious diplomacy" (*hexie waijiao*).

Despite the climate of interdependence that has been established between the countries bordering the South China Sea, territorial rivalry and nationalisms seem to have crept in, leaving no room for the shared desire for cooperation. This explains the ambiguous, complex nature of China's policies concerning its neighbours. The adoption of a strategy that wavers between dialogue and threat of confrontation allows China to assess the strategic gains of Asian regionalism and helps construct a system of cooperation favourable to Chinese interests. As well as favouring bilateral negotiations over multi-party discussions, China's leaders do not hesitate to take advantage of the divergence and lack of strategic coherence within ASEAN<sup>9</sup>, as well as the legal vacuum surrounding issues of sovereignty in the South China Sea.

The signature of the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in 2003 did little to end the movement towards a reinforcement of the military capabilities of the South Sea Fleet, and China regularly reasserts its sovereignty across all the island territories of this maritime zone, rich in fisheries resources and hydrocarbons, occasionally accompanying its claims with symbolic actions<sup>10</sup>. Indeed, the non-restrictive nature of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (2002) severely limits its disciplinary scope, giving Beijing plenty of leeway to expand its hold over the region. Going beyond the purely economic aspect, the fierce competition for control of the Pratas Islands and reefs, the Paracel and Spratly archipelagos, the Macclesfield Bank and the Scarborough reef is above all a reflection of the assertion policy employed by the Chinese power and its national sovereignty. While the extent of the economic and strategic issues in Southeast Asia explains the refusal of any concession by the Chinese authorities, Central Asia appears to offer an environment more conducive to cooperation.

Despite showing severe reluctance to commit to a structure for security alliances, China demonstrated great pragmatism by founding the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) in June 2001, with five other Asian states – Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and

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<sup>8</sup> The five principles of peaceful coexistence are: mutual respect for each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and cooperation for mutual benefit, and lastly, peaceful co-existence itself.

<sup>9</sup> Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

<sup>10</sup> Among the most notable symbolic actions are the creation, in December 2007, of a special administrative region that administers the main archipelagos claimed by China in the South China Sea – the capital being Sansha, attached to the island province of Hainan – and the use of the *Jiaolong* submarine in 2011, to symbolically plant a Chinese flag on the seabed of this contested maritime zone. In June 2012, another step was taken with the status of the town of Sansha being raised to prefecture level, with a military command and government agencies being set up there.

Uzbekistan. The domains for cooperation (economy, trade, energy and technology) in this regional grouping enable the development of the provinces located in the west of the country, while exchanges and joint military exercises help develop specific skills in the PLA.

The high level of Chinese investment abroad has created growing interdependence between Beijing and the receiving countries. Ranked highest among the countries that hold U.S. Treasury Bonds, China is today seeking to take control of foreign companies in strategic industries such as oil and mining. Aside from establishing joint ventures and buying out various corporate groups, this thirst for influence can also be seen in the construction of roads and infrastructures, as well as the engineers and technicians it sends to countries such as Angola, Nigeria and Sudan. Furthermore, China's effort to develop economic relations at a global level is also paving the way for cultural influence, as evidenced by the Confucius Institutes being set up in all four corners of the globe.<sup>11</sup>

The development of Chinese "soft power" is not strictly limited to the civilian domain. The APL is another fundamental element of the "global power" policy (*zonghe guoli*) described in 1998 in the first Chinese White Paper on defence. The progressive development of this policy in the six other White Papers published between 2000 and 2011 is a clear indication of China's ambitions for development in every field, providing justification for the current modernisation strategy being implemented in the Chinese armed forces.

The recent development of offshore capabilities in its Navy gives the naval air forces a key role in performing new missions to protect sea traffic routes and participate in world peace and development. In the Western Sahara, in Cyprus (as part of a U.N. peacekeeping mission) and off the Somali coast (as part of the anti-piracy efforts), Beijing is striving to demonstrate its capacity to carry out missions worthy of its status of permanent member of the Security Council. Annual medical assistance operations carried out by the hospital ship Peace Ark in Africa, Asia and Latin America are destined to highlight the principle of harmonious diplomacy that China upholds, as well as the benefits of developing its armed forces. This policy of influence also includes a "military cooperation" aspect, which enables multiple exchanges with foreign armies – mainly through the regular visits and stopovers made by the Zhenghe training ship around the world – but also an increase in the number of annual bilateral and multilateral manoeuvres.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Today, almost 350 Confucius Institutes promote Chinese language and culture in 108 countries and regions of the world.

<sup>12</sup> The "Joint Sea 2012" China-Russia exercises performed in the Yellow Sea, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation's "Peace Mission 2012" in Tajikistan and the 2012 joint manoeuvre organised between China, Australia and New Zealand in Brisbane sent a particularly strong message.

## **2. Active Defense Strategy and Legitimation of the Use of Force**

Despite the efforts made to establish a climate of trust and exchange on the international stage, the reality of external threat risk is what leads China to act pragmatically and preventively by adopting an "active defense" (*jiji fangyu*) strategy. Though armed force remains a last resort, China has opted for a preventive military reinforcement policy, building up its combat, projection, deterrence and intelligence capabilities. While to western eyes, the pairing together of a pacifist discourse with military modernisation may appear contradictory, China sees them as complementary, not unlike the yin and yang.

The publication of the Chinese White Paper on Defence in 2008 was a turning point in the affirmation of this dialectic. Having long sought to minimise efforts to modernise the PLA, China decided to demonstrate greater transparency by proudly displaying its ambitions in the realm of defence, as well as their legitimacy. On top of providing detailed figures on its weapons imports and exports and defence budget for the first time, it presented its defence policy which focuses on building up the IT capacities of the military, rendering it capable of winning any sort of conflict, including asymmetric warfare. Securing borders and the national territory, quantitative and qualitative development of defence tools – in virtue of the principle of "revolution in military affairs" (*junshi geming*) – and the promotion of a self-defence nuclear strategy are other crucial intermediary objectives mentioned in the last White Paper published in March 2011.

In order to effectively meet its evolving security needs, the PLA launched a military restructuring policy in 2003, which targeted a drastic reduction and optimisation of its army personnel,<sup>13</sup> the modernisation of its arsenal and the interoperability of its armed forces. While the current context of heightened globalisation and maritime activity tends to specifically favour sea and air transport, the army maintains a highly strategic role as guardian of land borders and guarantor of the regime's stability. During the last two decades, efforts have been made to build up more efficient rapid response mobile units that are capable of carrying out manoeuvres over long distances, perform deep airland strikes and even intelligence operations. The policy of replacing obsolete materiel, the creation of aviation capabilities specifically for the army and the local manufacturing of modern equipment such as the ZTZ 99 tank also helped strengthen their air-land combat capabilities. Projection assets and field experience of these forces remains relatively limited, and as such Chinese military doctrine relies on the development of mainly air and sea projection capabilities.

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<sup>13</sup> The land component of the PLA, representing 70% of total military personnel, today employs 1.25 million, which is half that of its 2003 strength.

While the gradual commissioning of fourth generation aircraft such as the J-10 and the J-11B helps improve the offensive capabilities of Chinese aviation, the recent successful landing of a J-15 fighter jet on the flight deck of the Liaoning 12<sup>14</sup> aircraft carrier was a symbolic step towards the acquisition of sea-based deterrence capabilities. In response to the reorientation of American security policy in Asia, Beijing feels a need to acquire deterrence assets likely to keep the United States – or any other adversary – out of its influence zone. Located north of the South China Sea, the Sanya naval base could represent the key instrument of its anti-access strategy<sup>15</sup> in the near future, as it appears to be destined to berth the Chinese Navy's future nuclear submarines and seagoing vessels.<sup>16</sup>

The development of the Jin class (type 094) SSBN follows the PLA's second-strike capability reinforcement policy.<sup>17</sup> We must point out that Chinese nuclear deterrence is dependent on local production and the improvement of DF-31, DF-31A and DF-5 type intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM). These weapons, equipped with missile guidance systems and enhanced electronic countermeasure systems, have sufficient reach to strike nuclear-equipped rival powers such as India, Russia and the United States.<sup>18</sup> While Washington's undeniable military superiority puts the Chinese nuclear threat into perspective, some programmes are causing particular concern due to their sensitivity. One example is the current development of a DF-21D type anti-ship ballistic missile (ASBM), capable of striking aircraft carriers in the Pacific.

The definition of China's nuclear position appears to be clearly influenced by its perceptions of American intentions. The continued presence of the 7th Fleet in Asia is a factor of concern, similar to the U.S.' controversial antimissile defence policy. Furthermore, Beijing disapproves of the special terms applied to India in the Civil Nuclear Agreement it signed with the U.S. in September 2008, denouncing a violation of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) by the United States. While the recent success of the Agni V<sup>19</sup> long range ballistic missile tests are an

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<sup>14</sup> REUTERS, "China completes jet fighter test flights on its first aircraft carrier", in The Guardian, 25/11/12.

<sup>15</sup> Refers to the American concept of Anti-Access/Area Denial (A2AD).

<sup>16</sup> In 2008, satellite images from Digital Globe could already point to the presence of two Jin class (type 094) ballistic missile nuclear submarines (SSBN), three Luyang type destroyers and a modern Jiangwei class frigate at this site.

<sup>17</sup> These next generation submarines are undoubtedly intended to carry JL-2 ballistic missiles with a range of 7,400 to 8,000 km. Once operational, they will dramatically increase China's nuclear deterrence capabilities.

<sup>18</sup> According to the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD), the DF-31 has a range greater than 7,200 km, the DF-31A can surpass 11,200 km and the DF-5 can strike a target at a distance of approximately 13,000 km. US DoD, Annual report to Congress, "Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China", 2012, p.43.

<sup>19</sup> AFP, "L'Inde a effectué un tir d'essai de missile à longue portée", in Le Monde.fr, 19/04/2012.

attempt to challenge China's nuclear hegemony over Asia, the development of short and medium range Indian missiles capable of reaching Pakistani and Chinese soil has the potential to awaken old tensions between traditionally rival regions, in particular on the issue of Kashmir, a sensitive territory today shared between the three states. While the Taiwanese issue remains the most likely to instigate change in Chinese nuclear doctrine, sovereignty conflicts in the South China Sea and the complex power relationship in the southern and central parts of Asia are alone enough to justify the deployment of Chinese mobile missile launchers, according to its government.

Although it adheres to the NPT since 1992 and supports nuclear disarmament in conditions of mutual respect and coordination, China has often been criticized for the lack of transparency of its nuclear programme and continual exportation of sensitive technologies to high-risk countries, with Pakistan and North Korea top of the list. Furthermore, China's current rationale, which counterbalances participation in international efforts towards the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons with investment in the modernisation of these same weapons, is cause for doubt over its intentions. As well as justifying the move to modernisation by a desire to catch up on technology advances in the U.S. and Russia, Beijing is attempting to reassure its neighbours by regularly reasserting the purely defensive nature of its nuclear policy and its adherence to the principal of no first use. Being particularly representative of the active defence strategy, this option enables any extreme situation to be avoided. The objective is not to destroy the adversary, but to acquire sufficient military capabilities to deter any attack or respond if necessary. Paradoxically, this defensive stance means China can legitimately resort to force should its "vital interests" (*hexin liyi*) come under threat. For the past few years, China has adopted a firmer stance by reasserting its territorial and maritime claims in the three semi-enclosed seas on its shores. In the South China Sea opposite Vietnam, the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei, in the Yellow Sea opposite North and South Korea and in the East China Sea opposite Japan, the Chinese government uses the historical argument to justify sending patrol ships close to the isles and reefs it considers part of its territory. In order to control the outbreak of violence, the deployment of warships in these high-tension zones is generally forbidden, except in the context of military exercises. However, the increasing tendency to resort to paramilitary units of the Chinese administration hints at the existence of a double-sided defence strategy.

Entirely separate from the navy, the ships of the nine major Chinese surveillance agencies – nicknamed the "nine dragons" – today provide China with boosted coercion assets in the event of fishing disputes or territorial conflict. While this alternative has received much criticism due to its ambiguous nature, the reclassing of certain aging warships as surveillance ships has made neighbouring countries more wary. Furthermore, the regular demonstrations of force by the Chinese navy near Japan's coastal waters and around the disputed archipelagos in the South China Sea – namely the Paracels and the Spratleys – stokes regional tension. This type of manoeuvre, as well as being useful training for Chinese military personnel, highlights the



strengthened combat capabilities of the PLA while brushing aside its weaknesses in aviation and C4ISR<sup>20</sup>. Despite this, the projected image of power fuels the idea of a Chinese threat in the region.

### **3. Regional Reaction to the Chinese Threat**

#### **Prioritizing rearmament**

In order to protect national interests and guarantee their security independence, China's neighbouring countries are striving to develop their own military capabilities. Seen as a force multiplier, the submarine is the weapon of choice in the context of regional rivalry which reigns in the Far East and the Asia Pacific region. Japan, which already owns 16 submersibles, plans to acquire five more diesel propulsion ships between now and 2015<sup>21</sup>. South Korea intends to increase its submarine fleet from 12 to 18 within the same timeframe<sup>22</sup>. Southeast Asia, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia and Vietnam have also joined this submarine race with the aim of enhancing their anti-access capabilities.

This rearmament phenomenon stretches right to the Indian Ocean, as evidenced by the commissioning of New Delhi's first nuclear submarine in April 2012. India's active acquisition policy for submarines, warships and fighter planes can be partly explained by the fear of a possible Chinese intrusion into its influence zone. The gradual strengthening of Sino-Pakistani relations and the multiplication of Chinese investments in numerous foreign ports based on the circumference of the Indian Ocean reflects the growing Chinese hold in the region. In order to boost its credibility opposite the Chinese giant, India is developing its strategic relations with the states that share its interests. This approach follows a widespread cooperation trend as part of the battle against "Chinese expansionism".

#### **Furthered cooperation**

In the past few years, the United States has taken advantage of the calls from its Asian allies to reinforce the presence of its 7<sup>th</sup> Fleet in the West Pacific and deepen strategic relations with Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, Singapore as well as Australia. The recent rapprochement between Washington and Hanoi is a factor of concern for China, which is apprehensive of the possible establishment of American military bases a few hundred

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<sup>20</sup> Computerized command, control, communications, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance.

<sup>21</sup> Japan's Mid-Term Defense Programme 2011-2015, [http://www.mod.go.jp/e/d\\_act/d\\_policy/pdf/mid\\_termFY2011-15.pdf](http://www.mod.go.jp/e/d_act/d_policy/pdf/mid_termFY2011-15.pdf).

<sup>22</sup> International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 2009*, p.397.

kilometres from its coastline. At a time when Russia and Vietnam are laying the foundations of their strategic partnership, the growing involvement of the United States and India in the China seas reveals the possibility of a “military encirclement of China” (*zhongguo junshi baowei*).

### **Could armed conflict break out in the Asia-Pacific region?**

The unifying of several nations confronted with a common threat helps allay fears over the Chinese coercion policy. However, resorting to coercion also has its advantages. By pursuing a strategy of deliberately stoking tension in the China-Japan dispute over the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands, President Xi Jinping is hoping to rally the people through the prism of nationalism. The ultimate goal is to establish its political legitimacy at a time when social problems are mushrooming<sup>23</sup>.

While the outbreak of armed conflict between Beijing and its neighbours would appear unlikely at this time, the general increase of military capabilities in the region and the exacerbation of nationalisms are tension-provoking factors that must not be underestimated. A shift towards high intensity clashes would have destabilising consequences not only for Asian countries, but also for all external actors with economic and strategic interests in the region. This is the case for France, as 67% of its shipping traffic travels through trade routes in the South China Sea<sup>24</sup>. If these routes were blocked, this would directly impact the trade activities of several French companies who source goods in Asia.

While France aspires to a certain level of stability in the Far East and South East Asia due to its permanent presence in the Pacific and Indian Ocean, its market penetration strategy in Asia indirectly contributes to the exacerbation of regional tensions. Military-industrial cooperation between France and China’s neighbouring countries (namely India and Malaysia) is a source of annoyance to China. During the first official visit of Prime Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault in Asia in October 2012, the signing of a strategic partnership between Paris and Singapore was widely criticized, just like the negotiations on the purchase of French military equipment by the Philippines<sup>25</sup>. The major challenge for the coming years will therefore be defining a balanced Asian policy, which is likely to satisfy all of France’s strategic partners, or at least the majority of them. Definitively, the main difficulty is the capacity of the authorities to look beyond the

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<sup>23</sup> The outbreak of highly mediated protests in the village of Wukan in December 2011, the Bo Xilai affair in early 2012 and other repeated scandals are evidence of the growing malaise in Chinese society.

<sup>24</sup> L. VIELLARD, M. ANQUEZ, JP HISTRIMONT, *Vulnérabilités de la France face aux flux maritimes*, CEIS, Paris, January 2012, p.124, available on the French Ministry of Defence website (in French).

<sup>25</sup> N. NOUGAYREDE “*Le tournant délicat de la France vers l'Asie*”, in *Le Monde*, 28/10/12.

economic and trade spheres in order to clearly identify the role that France can play in terms of security in this burgeoning region.

### **Further Reading**

《2008年中国的国防》白皮书 (“2008 nian zhongguo de guofang” baipishu), [China’s White Paper on Defence 2008], Beijing, January 2009.

Available on the People’s Republic of China’s Ministry of Defence website. English version: [http://english.gov.cn/official/2009-01/20/content\\_1210227.htm](http://english.gov.cn/official/2009-01/20/content_1210227.htm)

Biennial publication. With enhanced content and a greater scope than previous versions, the 2009 edition is intended as a symbol of increased military transparency.

《2010年中国的国防》白皮书 (“2010 nian zhongguo de guofang” baipishu), [China’s White Paper on Defence 2010], Beijing, March 2011.

English version: [http://english.gov.cn/official/2011-03/31/content\\_1835499.htm](http://english.gov.cn/official/2011-03/31/content_1835499.htm)

The 2011 and current edition comprises the basic principles of Chinese strategic thinking. It also highlights the measures of trust and the importance of dialogue on borders and maritime security.

**Michel BARR, “Mythe et réalité du soft power de la Chine”, in *Études internationales*, Volume 41, no. 4, December 2010, p. 503-520.**

Available at: <http://www.erudit.org/revue/ei/2010/v41/n4/045560ar.html>

The author gives a concise and exhaustive analysis of China’s “soft power”, focusing on the promotion of its power through culture and language programmes. It reports on the gap between the Chinese understanding of soft power and the sometimes erroneous interpretations of western analysts, which are likely to fuel China’s rise in power and further a sort of self-fulfilling prophecy.

**Anthony CORDESMAN & Nicholas YAROSH, *Chinese Military Modernization and Force Development: A Western Perspective*, CSIS, Washington D.C., July 2012, 226 pages.**

A comprehensive analysis of the development and characteristics of the PLA since 1985. Divided into nine chapters – the armed forces, resources, military doctrine, organization, the three forces, second artillery, situation in the Taiwan strait – the document contains several graphics and summary tables with plenty of information. This western contribution is a perfect accompaniment to the White Paper to help understand the key aspects of Chinese strategic thinking.

**Richard HALLION, Roger CLIFF & Phillip SAUNDERS, *The Chinese Air Force – Evolving concepts, roles and capabilities*, NDU Washington, 2012, 394 pages.**

This groundbreaking study is actually a collection of contributions from esteemed specialists in the field. It offers both an insight into the current situation and the future prospects of the Chinese air force, providing a comprehensive analysis of its organization, doctrine, industry and staff training.

**Edward LUTTWAK, *The Rise of China vs. the Logic of Strategy*, Harvard University Press, USA, November 2012, 276 pages.**

This work offers a prospective analysis in the medium term of the “logic of strategy” currently adopted by China and which relies on the simultaneous development of the national economy and the military apparatus. The author strives to prove that this policy is doomed to failure, mainly by revealing the paradox between China’s rise in power and the gradual formation of a coalition of states to combat its hegemonism.

**Jean-Loup SAMAAAN, *La menace chinoise, une invention du Pentagone?*, Vendémiaire, Paris, October 2012, 167 pages.**

Through a well-documented analysis based on a field study, the author shines a new light on the issue of the Chinese threat, from its theoretical origins to its materialisation in the form of military budgets and the deployment of armed forces in Asia. The question of Taiwan, disputes over the South China Sea, the nuclear issue and key Chinese strategies are illustrated in colour maps.