

**LUDOVIKA UNIVERSITY OF PUBLIC SERVICE**

**Doctoral School of Military Sciences**

**János Gyula Kocsi:**  
**China's Military Responses to the Challenges of the 21st Century**

Author's Summary of the Doctoral (PhD) Dissertation

**SHORT THESIS**

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## **1. Introduction of the scientific problem, justification of the research's relevance**

China, as an economic and military power, is considered a relatively unexplored area from a Hungarian perspective, and it is also seen as a field yet to be discovered from a military science standpoint. The main research problem is based on China's mysterious, often misinterpreted or erroneous perception in the international context. Therefore, the formulation of the problem itself is also considered complex, as there are still many unanswered questions regarding the country, both internationally and domestically.

The continuous economic and security policy challenges occurring in the world significantly influence the foreign and domestic political situations and military behavior of individual countries. This change is also markedly reflected in the military domain. In addition to the economic and military dominance of the United States, China (with its 1.43 billion population, making it the second most populous country in the world after India, and also one of the fastest-growing economies) could play a decisive role in current conflict situations.<sup>1 2</sup> Based on these, I formulate the scientific problems as follows:

- China does not actively participate in managing local or global armed conflicts in the world's hot spots, unlike NATO. What could be the reason for this?
- In the past 10-15 years, China has been carrying out continuous and large-scale military developments. What is the reason for this rapid and comprehensive military and technological development? What is China really preparing for?
- On what doctrinal principles do they plan to apply their armed forces? Can a unique Chinese approach and mindset be identified in military theories?
- As a great power, China faces numerous regional and global challenges that influence its political and military decisions. What are these challenges, and how do they impact China's political and military strategies?

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<sup>1</sup> The information is based on the 2023 World Population Data Sheet from the U.S. Population Reference Bureau (PRB). Source: [World Population Data Sheet 2023](#). (Accessed: March 16, 2024.)

<sup>2</sup> The information is based on nominal GDP data from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Source: [International Monetary Fund](#). (Accessed: May 12, 2024.)

## 2. Research hypotheses

I have defined the following research hypotheses:

- 1) The structure and capabilities of the Chinese armed forces are shaped by the power interests of the Chinese Communist Party. The military system operates according to the expectations, not the guidelines, of the Communist Party, which acts as the omnipotent political leadership, based on a predetermined central directive (strategic concept). Consequently, China's military expenditures are expected to continue increasing in the coming years, driven by growing internal and external (regional and global) security challenges and the expansion of China's economic and political influence.
- 2) In the 21st century, China's role in international foreign and security policy has changed. While before the turn of the millennium, attention was focused on the United States, NATO, and the Russian Federation, it has now shifted, largely due to the Russo-Ukrainian war. However, alongside its economic expansion, China is rapidly developing its armed forces, enhancing its power projection capabilities. Simultaneously, it strives to stay away from open international conflicts, which I believe it does to primarily secure a more stable and effective A2/AD (Anti-Access/Area Denial) response capability in the Asia-Pacific region and globally, thereby gaining decisive influence.
- 3) China continues its cyber espionage activities, which may further intensify in the future. The information obtained through cyberattacks allows China to become more competitive in various industries, particularly in information technologies. Additionally, China is one of the world's largest targets for cyberattacks, making the preservation of cybersecurity and the improvement of resilience against cyber threats crucial. Therefore, it continues to develop its military cyber attack capabilities, including cyber warfare units and infrastructure.
- 4) The military development process initiated by China in recent decades will continue, but its outcome could provoke strong reactions from neighboring countries (India, Vietnam, Japan) that are militarily strong and not allied with China, as well as from special administrative regions (Taiwan, Hong Kong), significantly limiting China's regional goals.

### **3. Research objectives**

I have defined the following research objectives:

- I will examine the doctrinal and strategic principles of the People's Liberation Army of China, particularly in the context of the Communist Party's guidelines. In this framework, I aim to uncover the unique features of Chinese military thinking and understand how it aligns with global military strategies.
- I will identify and analyze China's most significant regional and global security challenges. I will examine how these challenges impact China's political and military decisions, as well as how they influence the country's foreign policy and international positioning.
- I will investigate the factors behind China's military and technological developments, including the significant armament and modernization programs it has implemented. My goal is to uncover the strategic objectives behind these developments and to understand what China might be preparing for with these actions.
- I will evaluate why China refrains from active military participation in global conflicts and how this affects the global balance of power. To this end, I will analyze the evolution of China's foreign and military strategies, with a particular focus on the Asia-Pacific region.
- I will demonstrate that—apart from regional diplomatic conflicts and displays of force in the South China Sea—China is firmly avoiding open international confrontation and military engagement while simultaneously significantly increasing its power projection capabilities.
- I will analyze China's cybersecurity strategy, particularly with regard to cyberattacks and the development of cyber warfare capabilities. I will examine how these strategies contribute to China's increasing global influence and the challenges other countries must face in this context.

### **4. Research methodology**

In my research, I employed observation and analysis methods, relying on historical experiences and substantiated by facts, to analyze the theories related to the topic, relevant strategic and doctrinal documents, reports, and other scientific sources related to the subject. I largely focused on processing and analyzing international (English and Chinese) literature,

including strategic primary documents, studies, analyses, publications, and Hungarian sources, comparing them. The applied research builds upon existing and proven results in the field of security policy, highlighting new research opportunities.

As follows:

- Primarily, I performed content analysis of literature and printed secondary information sources such as books, scientific articles, journal articles, encyclopedias, lexicons, conference proceedings, dissertations, and other expert evaluations and studies that are directly related to or closely connected to the topic.
- Secondly, I analyzed information related to the research topic available on the internet and other electronic databases.
- I organized and scientifically processed the knowledge I acquired during my foreign studies.
- The consultations with recognized experts in the field, particularly integrating discussions with my former Chinese mentors and the experts they recommended, played a significant role in supporting my work.

I consider the research topic to be underexplored from a Hungarian military science perspective, thereby assessing my work as a gap-filling contribution. The research I conducted is applied research, as one of my main goals is to demonstrate practically useful results after completing the analytical research. For qualitative analysis, I primarily relied on relevant international secondary information sources; however, to present and analyze the rapidly unfolding global security policy events currently occurring worldwide, it was essential to also utilize internet sources. A unique feature of the dissertation is that it includes the Chinese characters and their pinyin transcriptions<sup>3</sup> for certain Chinese terms, which I believe facilitates the easier interpretation and searchability of certain principles and expressions for those who may have deep linguistic knowledge but have not previously engaged in in-depth military or security policy issues. The pinyin transcription of the Chinese characters is provided in parentheses.

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<sup>3</sup> Pinyin transcription 汉语拼音 (hanyu pinyin wenzi) is a phonetic syllabary of the Chinese language, based on the standardized method of transcribing Chinese written language into the Latin alphabet, which is internationally used. This system facilitates the learning of the language, particularly playing a crucial role in practicing correct pronunciation. Source: [Pinyin](#). (Accessed: May 10, 2024.)

Due to the complex nature of the topic, which encompasses multiple aspects, it is necessary to delineate the research area; therefore, the dissertation briefly covers the history of the People's Liberation Army of China 中国人民解放军 (Zhōngguó Rénmín Jiěfàngjūn) (hereinafter: PLA or Chinese armed forces), as well as the theoretical framework that defines the research perspectives. Due to the interdisciplinary nature of the research topic, I also make peripheral references to various other areas, such as economic or policy issues, but these serve solely to facilitate deeper understanding. Given the in-depth analysis, I am compelled to repeatedly use the names of certain organizations, countries, and institutions; therefore, to keep the essential content concise, I decided to introduce and use abbreviations. As my research focuses on China as a specific country, it is often necessary to repeatedly refer to the Chinese state, and frequent repetition is essential for clear interpretation, especially in the absence of an appropriate Hungarian abbreviation.

Given that the topic covers a very broad research area, I approach the investigation using the principle of a prospective approach, thus I believe it is essential to delineate the research topic in terms of time and space. My historical review of the research extends only from the founding of the Chinese Communist Party (hereinafter: CCP or Communist Party) in 1921, and the analyses cover the post-Cold War period until the conclusion of the research. Accordingly, the Chinese-relevant events of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict are analyzed up to this date, after which they are mentioned in passing and listed in the dissertation. This applies to other chapters of the dissertation as well; however, since new news and scientific publications emerge daily in the research field, I believe that incorporating these up to the closure of the dissertation only increases the timeliness of the research results.

Due to the interdisciplinary nature of the topic, there are areas such as demographic, environmental, and climate issues, whose detailed examination I do not undertake for the reasons mentioned above. My research and the derived results are interpretable within the framework of both international and domestic security and defense policy studies.

## **5. Brief description of the research by chapter**

In the section before the chapters of my dissertation, I addressed several important topics that laid the foundation for the goals and methodology of my research. In the introduction, I presented the relevance and significance of my research topic. China's growing global presence,

as well as its military and economic power, have a significant impact on international security policy, which made it necessary to conduct a detailed examination of the country's military strategy and responses. In this section, I also discussed my personal motivation, which stems from my previous studies related to China and my military experience.

Next, I focused on defining the scientific problem and the relevance of the research. I found that China's international perception is often mysterious, misinterpreted, or erroneous, which made the research particularly justified. My goal was to uncover the driving forces behind China's military developments, foreign policy strategies, and participation in international conflicts, and to understand how China responds to the challenges of the 21st century.

I also developed research hypotheses, several of which were aimed at examining how the power interests of the Chinese Communist Party influence the country's military strategy, what drives the growing military developments, and how these align with China's global strategy.

The objective of my research was to conduct an in-depth examination of the doctrinal and strategic principles of the People's Liberation Army of China, as well as to explore China's regional and global security challenges and cybersecurity strategy. Additionally, I sought to understand why China refrains from active military participation in global conflicts and how this affects the global balance of power.

I also placed great emphasis on detailing the research methodology. I selected my analytical methods based on historical experiences and facts. In my research, I primarily relied on international literature, particularly English and Chinese sources, and took into account the proven results of the field of security policy. I conducted my research with an interdisciplinary approach, considering military, political, social, economic, and cybersecurity aspects.

I continued with a review of the literature, where I provided a detailed overview of the sources that formed the basis of my dissertation. I paid special attention to the most important international and Hungarian literature related to the military analysis of China.

Finally, I presented the structure of my dissertation, briefly summarizing its organization. The dissertation consists of four main chapters: the presentation of the theoretical



framework, the history and functioning of the People's Liberation Army of China, the analysis of China's security challenges, and the examination of the military responses to these challenges. These preliminary sections provided the necessary background and direction for my research, defining the goals and methodology.

For the detailed description of the chapters, I proceeded as follows:

In the first chapter, I laid the theoretical foundations of my research, which define the conceptual and methodological framework for analyzing China's security challenges. Here, I examined the concept of security challenges, particularly focusing on their gradation and intensity. Additionally, I focused on the interpretation of modern security, where I analyzed security not only through military but also through political, social, economic, environmental, and informational sectors. Furthermore, I analyzed the differences between regional and global security challenges, and in particular, I examined the regional security complex theory in the context of China, which provides an interdisciplinary approach to the security situation of the region.

In the second chapter, I discussed the history and organization of the People's Liberation Army of China (PLA), with particular attention to the relationship between the military and politics. Here, I analyzed the connection between the PLA and the Chinese Communist Party, including the correlations between political control and military strategies. I also conducted a detailed analysis of the role of China's White Papers as strategic documents that define the operation and development directions of the armed forces. I examined the organizational structure of the PLA, its officer training system, and the methods of ensuring political loyalty.

In the third chapter, I examined China's internal, regional, and global security challenges. Regarding internal security challenges, I paid particular attention to analyzing the situations in Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macau, Xinjiang, and Tibet, including the examination of political tensions and instability. In terms of regional security challenges, I analyzed China's border disputes and territorial conflicts, such as those with India, Bhutan, Vietnam, and the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands. Among global security challenges, I focused on the military aspects of the "Belt and Road Initiative," China's relations with Russia in the context of the Russo-Ukrainian war, and China's activities in cyberspace. Finally, I conducted a detailed analysis of

the relationship between China and the United States, as well as NATO, examining China's global role and challenges.

In the fourth chapter, I examined China's military responses to the previously identified security challenges. First, I analyzed the changes in Chinese military doctrines, with particular attention to the regulations from 1993, 2004, and 2014, highlighting the directions of doctrinal development. Following this, I examined the development strategies of the Chinese armed forces and their global power projection capabilities, including the effectiveness and objectives of the military developments implemented by China. Finally, I discussed in detail China's Anti-Access/Area Denial (A2/AD) strategy and its development directions, which play a significant role in China's defense strategy and territorial defense capabilities.

## **6. Summary of conclusions and scientific results**

Based on the comprehensive analysis, it is evident that China's role in international security is highly complex and multifaceted, determined by a variety of factors. China's economic expansion and growing political influence are impacting the international security landscape. China's political and military decisions, as well as internal social and demographic changes, directly or indirectly affect internal, regional, and global security situations. Understanding the security challenges facing China requires analyzing these complex factors. This includes understanding the Chinese political system and internal social processes, analyzing Chinese economic growth and social changes, and evaluating Chinese military and defense policy guidelines. Understanding these challenges not only promotes a deeper understanding of Chinese politics and society but also contributes to strengthening global security and maintaining the stability of the international system. The sectoral theory provides a more comprehensive picture of the circumstances and factors affecting the country's security and how they fit into the international system. However, it should be noted that analyzing China's security situation is a very complex and challenging task. This is partly due to the lack of accessible information, the unique characteristics of the Chinese political system, the rapidly changing international situation, and the internal social and demographic changes mentioned above. Therefore, it became necessary to complement the aforementioned examination framework with the cyber sector. Nevertheless, evaluating the threats identified by China as endangering the country remains crucial for understanding and managing the global security situation and, if you will, for drawing the correct global lines of power.

The relationship between the United States and China is particularly important for the development of global political tensions. In recent years, the competition and tension between the two countries have become increasingly intense, especially in trade, technology, and military areas. The future development of the relationship between these two major powers will also be crucial for the future stability of the global system. It is also important to note that China's vast and growing influence in the global economy is a significant source of risk. Its global economic and foreign policy influence, along with its technological advancement, allows it to exert significant influence over international systems, power relations, and alliances, including critical infrastructure, data protection, and cybersecurity. This presents significant challenges to the international community. The various regional conflicts analyzed in detail in the chapters above also significantly affect China's geopolitical position, such as its strained relations with Taiwan, Hong Kong, the Uighur minority, and the people of Tibet, as well as border and territorial disputes with India, Bhutan, Vietnam, and the Philippines. These conflicts often clash with the interests of neighboring countries and other major powers, creating a continuous potential for conflict.

In response to the above, China implemented significant changes in its military doctrines at the beginning of the 21st century to adapt to the changing international environment and technological advancements. These new doctrinal principles are closely linked to military development and transformation, as they define the direction and priorities of modernization. Thinking has shifted from traditional doctrines based on massive ground forces to network-centric warfare, which places greater emphasis on modern technologies, precision weaponry, information gathering, IT, and communications. In this context, technological innovation has become central to military development. This is supported by the development of artificial intelligence, robotics, and hypersonic weapons/systems with the goal of enhancing the efficiency and combat capabilities of the armed forces. A crucial part of this is the overall increase in military power projection capabilities. This includes the development and modernization of the navy, maritime air force, and marine corps. Furthermore, China is building artificial islands in the South China Sea to extend its maritime presence and influence. There are several reasons for this. First, the extended use of maritime forces is part of the doctrinal concept of active defense; second, in the absence of a sufficient number of aircraft carriers, these forward bases play a strategic role in offensive operations; and third, these rapid "territorial acquisition" steps can have a significant deterrent effect on potential adversaries.

I firmly believe that it can be stated that China, in accordance with the goals set forth by the Communist Party in strategic documents, aims to build a modern military force by 2049 that is capable of addressing regional and global challenges and supporting the country's power interests militarily.

Based on the above, I consider the following as the scientific results of my dissertation:

1. I identified the regional and global influencing factors that directly or indirectly impact China's security stability. By adapting and supplementing Buzan's sectoral theory in five dimensions, I demonstrated that an interdisciplinary approach is necessary to analyze China's security, defense policy, and military capabilities, with a focus on the military and political sectors.
2. As a result of examining the structure, key segments, and roles within the People's Liberation Army of China, I projected the potential future development directions of the Chinese armed forces and deduced how these serve the direct strategic and indirect party expectations/requirements. In my dissertation, I proved that the People's Liberation Army of China is not just a military organization but a fundamental instrument of the Chinese Communist Party's political power. My analysis revealed that the operation and development directions of the armed forces are closely intertwined with the political objectives of the Communist Party, with the primary goal of ensuring internal stability and maintaining the Party's power. This new approach contributes to a deeper understanding of the close relationship between politics and the armed forces.
3. Through a comparative analysis of relevant strategic documents that define security and defense policy, I uncovered the connections between them and demonstrated that they form a coherent whole and determine the doctrinal literature located at lower levels in the hierarchy of the document system.
4. By examining the strategic documents, military doctrines, and defense developments together, I proved that, in addition to acquiring global economic influence, China aims to play a dominant role in the future power architecture with a clearly power-projection capable military force and by employing soft power tools and techniques.
5. I confirmed that the security rivalry between China and the United States fundamentally transforms the global balance of power. In my analysis, I pointed out that China's strategic moves, aimed at limiting the U.S. military presence in the Asia-Pacific region,

could have significant long-term effects on international security and create new geopolitical realities.

6. In my dissertation, I proved that China's development of A2/AD (Anti-Access/Area Denial) strategies is not only relevant for regional security but also has global implications, particularly for the United States and its allies. I consider it a new scientific result that I demonstrated how, through the application of A2/AD strategies, China not only protects its own security but also actively restricts the military maneuverability of other major powers in the Pacific region, thereby strengthening its regional dominance.

## **7. Recommendations and potential applications of the research results**

In my research, I provided a comprehensive overview of China's security policy concepts and doctrinal principles. This has made the security, defense policy, and military aspects of China's broader economic and foreign policy strategic actions more understandable. Due to the interdisciplinary nature of the researched area, it can aid further scientific research on China in related fields. Although from an economic perspective, the country's economic rise and power ambitions are a very commonplace aspect of global politics. There is hardly a week without some scientific or popular article being published on this topic. However, military research is available in very limited numbers due to the restrictive factors discussed in the dissertation, as much of it contains classified information. Given Hungary's role within the NATO alliance system, it is essential to incorporate the results of research and scientific analyses concerning the Chinese armed forces into doctrinal principles.

The results I uncovered in my analysis can contribute to Hungary better assessing the various aspects of Chinese military power and influence, and, based on this, shaping its own foreign policy strategy. Furthermore, it can help professional decision-makers better understand China's military strategy, priorities, and potential threats. This could enable them to make more effective defense-strategic and diplomatic decisions. The information revealed in the dissertation can assist in interpreting the latest news regarding China's military activities in international communications. This may encourage further in-depth research into specific sub-areas of the topic for those interested in the subject.

The results of my research could highlight Chinese military technologies and developments that align with military strategic priorities. This can help assess our own defense

capabilities and determine which areas require further development or collaboration. The results I have proposed as recommendations will undoubtedly necessitate the broader dissemination of the issue, making it essential to address these topics in detail based on the data currently available. I hope that my completed research will serve as a useful pillar in this endeavor. Moreover, I hope that the publications I have produced during my doctoral studies, summarizing partial results, will also induce further research. The research results can be utilized in education. Given the primarily military and security policy mechanisms described in the research, it may be necessary to reconsider or reform the approach to this area. This work can be greatly supported by the explanatory diagrams, maps, and charts used in my dissertation.

I primarily recommend my dissertation to students, researchers, and experts studying China, whether in military science, security policy, or other scientific fields. I hope that my work will be of use to my fellow students and researchers interested in the topic and that it will adequately enrich Hungarian military scientific research. The new insights can contribute to a deeper understanding of the subject and raise new questions that may be crucial from the perspective of Hungarian defense and security interests. Additionally, the new information may assist military and security professionals, including those at the Strategic Defense Research Institute of the Eötvös József Research Center at the National University of Public Service, the Military National Security Service, as well as researchers, students, and doctoral candidates interested in the topic. This could facilitate the transfer of knowledge and the development of educational materials, particularly in the fields of international studies, security, and defense policy, as well as in military leadership master's programs, senior military leadership, and doctoral training.

## **8. Publications by the author in the topic**

1. "The Response of the Chinese Military to the Hong Kong Riots." In: *The Doctrinal Basis of Joint Warfare*, National University of Public Service, Budapest, 2020.
2. "The Impact of the War in Eastern Ukraine on Russian-Chinese Relations." In: *Current Issues and Scientific Research Results in Military Sciences*, Ludovika University Press, Budapest, 2021.
3. "The Appearance of Hybrid Warfare Elements in the China-Taiwan Conflict." *Military Science Review*, Vol. XI, No. 3, 2018, pp. 86-94.

4. "Some Areas of Preparing Modern Military Power from the Perspective of Chinese Forces." *Military Science Review*, Vol. XI, No. 4, 2018, pp. 83-92.
5. "Internal Security Challenges in China: Current Situation in Xinjiang Province, Inner Mongolia, and Tibet." *Military Science Review*, Vol. XIV, No. 3, 2021, pp. 69-87.
6. "The Significance of the Establishment of the United States Indo-Pacific Command for U.S.–China Relations." *Military Engineer*, Vol. XVII, No. 1, 2022, pp. 193-201.
7. "Reinterpreting the 'Red Button': The Relationship Between Technological Development and Information Operations in China." In: *Military Science and the 21st Century Conference Proceedings*, Budapest, 2019, pp. 130-141.
8. "The Impact of Chinese Products on the Development of Improvised Explosive Devices Emerging on the International Battlefield." *Zborník prednášok trhacia technika*, 2020, pp. 79-89. ISBN: 9788089914081.

## **9. Professional-academic curriculum vitae of the author**

Captain János Gyula Kocsi was born in Kisvárdá, Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County. He completed his secondary education at the MH Béni Balogh Ádám Military High School in Győr. After obtaining his high school diploma, he continued his studies at the Zrínyi Miklós National Defense University, majoring in military leadership. In 2010, he achieved second place at the Autumn Institutional Student Conference of the Zrínyi Miklós National Defense University, and in the spring of 2011, he won a special prize from the Joint Forces Command at the XXX National Scientific Student Conference with his research work.

In 2011, he successfully completed his undergraduate degree in military leadership with excellent evaluations. Following this, he served as a platoon commander at the MH 5th Bocskai István Infantry Brigade. From 2013, he served as a practical instructor at the Department of Joint Operations at the Faculty of Military Science and Officer Training of the National University of Public Service. In 2017, he earned a Master of Arts degree in China Studies from Zhejiang University in China and obtained the HSK 3 language certification in Chinese. In 2019, he served as an operational advisory officer in the NATO RSM TAAC-North Afghanistan. Throughout his teaching career, he participated in KÖFOP and other research projects. In 2020, he completed the Tactical Staff Officer Course at the Faculty of Military Science and Officer Training at the National University of Public Service.

Since 2017, he has been serving as a university assistant lecturer at the Department of Joint Operations at the Faculty of Military Science and Officer Training of the National University of Public Service. During his work and doctoral years, he regularly participated in organizing domestic and international exercises, preparing university teaching materials and notes, as well as contributing to several research projects, the results of which he published.