

THE NATIONAL MANDARIN VISION: A STRATEGIC APPLICATION PAPER ON THE ART OF WAR

BRYANT PHILIPPE SY LEE

ABSTRACT

In 2020, China envisioned that 80% of its population would start speaking in its national dialect, Mandarin. This is a plan envisioned by the Chinese Government in Beijing to culturally and socially unite the population and present a cohesive and strong nation. According to the Chinese government, 70% of its population in China is capable or is currently speaking in different languages including foreign languages and local dialects as well, and only 40% of the rural population are able to speak the Mandarin dialect. This paper aims to formulate a strategic plan patterned after the Art of War to accomplish the set goal as stated before. The paper is restricted to the specific timeframe and as such any social, political and economic changes outside of the timeframe would not be accounted for.

Keywords: *Art of war, Chinese language, Art of War China Language*

In 2020, China envisions that 80% of its population would start speaking in its national dialect, Mandarin¹. This is a plan by the Chinese government in Beijing to culturally and socially unite the population and present a cohesive and strong nation. According to the Chinese government, 70% of its population in China is capable or is currently speaking in different languages and 40% of the rural population is able to speak the Mandarin dialect. These languages not only include foreign languages but local dialects. China as well has numerous local dialects and the government wants to close the gap between different regions and groups of people (“China sets target for 80% of citizens,” 2017).

China is home to a large population² and is divided in 56 ethnic groups. Each ethnic group is known to have developed its own culture and language. The most dominant amongst these ethnic groups is the Han Chinese, which comprises around 92% of the Chinese population. It is documented fact that there is a form of alienation between the Han Chinese and the ethnic minorities within China. Given the large percentage population of the Han Chinese, most of the economic wealth of the nation flows to the Han Chinese. This allowed the Han Chinese to control the government and the policies of the nation. There is also a form of social and cultural alienation as the dominant culture of the Han Chinese has pushed ethnic culture to their small villages and

¹ Specifically Beijing Chinese(Mandarin)

² As of 2017, the population of China is at 1.387 billion

provinces. Overall, ethnic minorities in China do have grievances, especially those in the central and western areas because they tend to perceive themselves as the most disadvantaged in the country. In comparison with the Han majority, the minority groups are less satisfied with their life, feel less happy, are less interested in politics and trust the government less (Shan, n.d.).

This paper aims to formulate a strategic plan patterned after the Art of War to accomplish the set goal as stated before. The paper is restricted to the specific timeframe and as such any social, political and economic changes outside of the timeframe would not be accounted for.

The Altruistic (Taoist) Goal

Before discussing the strategic plan for the Chinese government to reach its goal, assumptions and restrictions must be put in place. This part of the paper would deal with the goal that the Chinese government has in mind but taking to consideration the need to maintain and preserve the different ethnic cultures of the nation. The nuance of the argument falls on the premise that the Chinese population would learn and use the Mandarin language but still be able to use their own ethnic language within their community. The crux of the argument would center around a theoretical educational method on teaching both the national language and the ethnic language simultaneously in class (Wang, n.d.).

To begin with the strategy, the Chinese government must take into account the necessary factors that are present in society. First and foremost, there is apprehension amongst most of the ethnic groups or people in rural areas towards the Chinese government and its policies (Sun Zi's Art of War Ch1: Estimates, here as moral influence/law). This is a political backlash that was created from the centralized economic boom of the Chinese economy, alienating and maltreating ethnic groups. Second, there is the current situation of the nation. For the goal to be met and strategy to be implemented, there must be a sense of peace for education to flourish and progress. (Sun Zi's Art of War Ch1: Estimates, here considered as heaven).³ Also there must be capability and political will and knowledge of the necessary area of engagement (Sun Zi's Art of War Ch1: Estimates, here considered as earth) for the government to implement its strategy. The government should take into consideration on which department, i.e. Ministry of Education (ME) or the Ministry of Culture (MC), capable of leading this task would be headed and the people that would lead it (Sun Zi's Art of War Ch1: Estimates, here considered as command) and finally the legality of the actions to be taken (Sun Zi's Art of War Ch1: Estimates, here considered as the doctrine/law).

³ As a common known fact that in times of political, social and economic peace, education and culture would flourish because the population would focus on these matters rather than militaristic/ martial pursuits.

Given the political apprehension, the government must be able to subvert the emotions of the populations and reassure them of their safety and the preservation of their culture. This is a form of misdirection that is meant to only pacify due to the unknown result in the future. The government may attempt to pacify them by offering many benefits and subsidies that once benefited the Han Chinese as a means to distraction pacification.

The requirements of engaging in this strategy must be met. Educators must be chosen, and lessons and detailed cultural analysis of areas of interests must be completed. Given that education would be the key to achieve the set goals, logistical means must be met, as trainings must be done immediately and deployed in key areas. The educators/teachers must be of great caliber and skill. It is a requirement to be proficient in Mandarin and the language of the area deployed. Furthermore, they must be educated enough to understand cultural norms and traditions of the area. As such, it may be preferable to acquire educators local to the area deployed.

It is best to remember that the goal though is to have 80% of the population to be able to speak Mandarin; ethnic languages must still be preserved. More so, there is a timeframe and deadline to meet. In 2020, the goal must be accomplished. The strategy must be executed in a span of two to three years' time. It is advisable that the government would capitalize on the use of existing infrastructures to save time and capital. Furthermore, if needed, construction in far-flung areas must begin immediately and that

the Chinese government should capitalize on China's fast construction services.⁴ One must take into consideration that the areas where conflict is high, such as Xinjiang and Uyghurs, may not be suitable places to conduct the strategy; as such, a thorough analysis on the political states may be expected.

When it comes to heading this strategy, it is suggested that the Ministry of Education (ME) must work in conjunction with the Ministry of Culture (MC). This system would allow for a cohesive educational system that would lead to the stated goals. Both ministries must be able to consolidate the necessary controlled factors before launching the program.

The success of the program lies in the fact that the populace is willing to learn the Mandarin language. It is important to remember that there must not be any apprehensions between both the government and populace when the strategy is going on. Furthermore, there must be no attempt at assimilating cultures and erasing traditions. The people must be willing to learn and use the national language.⁵

It is good to remember that in the span of two to three years that the strategy would be implemented, a good support system must be in place. Materials, infrastructure, training, educators and

⁴ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/apr/30/chinese-construction-firm-erects-57-storey-skyscraper-in-19-days>

⁵ It is the best political interest that a willing participant is more able to absorb learning and training. An unwilling participant is more likely to go against the learning and training.

the like must be ready and available to be deployed and used. The support system aims at providing and aiding the strategy so it maintains its implementation without delays. While the national situation is still at peace, not to mention the limited timeframe to accomplish the goal, it is advisable that the government would quickly implement the strategy.⁶

On the deployment of the strategy, one must take into consideration the areas of engagement. First and foremost, metropolitan and large-scale cities like Beijing and Shanghai are assumed to have a dominant Mandarin-speaking population. This is due to these areas being the center of commerce and arts, as such having full guidance by the government. Next are the physical capabilities of each individual sent. These individuals are educators and are not as physically trained as athletes or soldiers. Given the possible limitation, it would be suggested as stated before to tap and train educators local to the area since they would be used to the climate of the area. Finally, one should consider the sequence of areas to tap into.

- One option prioritizes proximity from metropolitan areas such as Hebei and Anhui, close to Beijing and Shanghai, respectively. This option focuses on the logistical movement of resources from the origin to outward. Politically, provinces close to metropolitan cities are more likely to be

⁶ With a 2-3 year timeframe and a relatively peaceful nation, it is a good time to implement the strategy while the external factors are as such.

accepting of the policies of the government. To be most effective when resources are low and as such far expansion is difficult.

- Another option capitalizes on existing infrastructures present already within China. Developed areas such as Fujian, and Guangdong, center of Min and Yue dialects, have large complexes meant for education. Politically, provinces that are developed are less apprehensive towards the government. To be most effective when there are enough resources to reach far areas, yet the situation of the nation internally is unstable.
- Another option targets the ethnic areas such as Guangxi, home of Zhuang ethnic group and language; and Xinjiang provinces, for the Uyghur or Turkish language group. This strategy aims at directly educating ethnic groups at a large scale thereby efficiently increasing the number of Mandarin speakers, though this is also risky as the large ethnic population would be apprehensive⁷ towards the strategy. To be most effective there must be enough resources to reach far areas while the national situation is stable at the moment.

It must be understood that there will be external factors that would either help or deter the progress of the strategy. More so, it is understood that there should be a great deal of control over the

⁷and at times violent

internal factors such as hierarchy and logistics of the strategy. To be able to fully understand the means to succeed, there must be a full grasp of the situation and the accumulation of as much information as possible through any means.

With the goal at hand being to preserve ethnic languages while introducing Mandarin to the population of China, education should be the focus of the strategy with cultural sensitivity. The strategy can go in many ways depending on the situation of the nation and the available resources given the current timeframe. It is important to remember that there is a need to understand the internal and external factors contributing to the strategy and the need to be well informed of the culture and situation of the different areas as to avoid conflicts and possible failure.

The Realistic (Legalistic) Goal

This part of the paper would deal with the goal that the Chinese government has in mind and would do anything in its power to achieve it. The nuance of the argument falls on the premise that the Chinese government would manipulate and use its power to achieve its goals may it be through coercion and manipulation. This argument may be described as legalistic and militaristic due to the necessity of force as a means to learn Mandarin. The crux of the argument is found in the means the Chinese government would pursue to achieve its goal.

To begin with the strategy, the Chinese government must take into account the necessary factors that are present in society

similar to the previous strategy. First and foremost, there is apprehension amongst most of the ethnic groups or people in rural areas towards the Chinese government and its policies. This is a political backlash that was created from the centralized economic boom of the Chinese economy, alienating and maltreating ethnic groups. A second factor is the current situation of the nation. For the goal to be met and strategy to be implemented, there must be a sense of peace⁸ for education to flourish and progress; also there must be capability and political will and knowledge of the necessary area of engagement for the government to implement its strategy. The government should take into consideration on which department, namely: the Ministry of Education (ME) or the Ministry of Culture (MC) would head the task and the people that would lead it and finally the legality of the actions to be taken, once the military get involved.

Given the political apprehension, the government must be able to subvert the emotions of the populations as well and reassure them of their safety and the preservation of their culture. Though different from the former strategy, the government does not need to maintain a form of misdirection for the long haul, as there is no need for it in the long term. An easier solution is through the show of force that manages the strategy militaristically and efficiently through state-based powers.

⁸ Peace is understood as a state of control not tranquility and stability.

The requirements of engaging in this strategy must be met. Educators must be chosen, and lessons and detailed cultural analysis of areas of interests must be completed. Given that education would be one of the keys to achieve the set goals, logistical means must be met as trainings must be done immediately and deployed in key areas. Though it is preferred that the population may be won over by the skill and caliber of the educators, this is not the case realistically. The government may need to prepare military forces in key areas to pacify the populace at any given time. Furthermore, government structures must be in place to support the system by means of restrictions and policies.

It is best to remember that the goal though is to have 80% of the population to be able to speak Mandarin. More so, there is a timeframe and deadline to meet. In 2020, the goal must be accomplished. The strategy must be executed in the span of two to three years' time. The former strategy of construction is viable for the cause, yet with limited time span, the government may in conjunction, study its policies as well. There must be an incentive or punishing restriction on those who are able to speak Mandarin and those who cannot, respectively. One action taken could be in the form of opportunities, as it would require the knowledge and use of Mandarin to enter or participate in the workforce or acquire subsidies. Engaging in this action would result in conflict and as such the military and police must be deployed and such conflict actions must be met with a swift response.

When it comes to heading this strategy, it is suggested that the Ministry of Education (ME) must act in conjunction with the central government. This system would allow for a cohesive educational system that would lead to the stated goals. Both parties must be able to consolidate the necessary controlled factors before launching the program.

The success of the program lies in the fact that the populace should learn the Mandarin language. It is important to remember that there must be apprehensions between both the government and populace when the strategy is going on. Whether or not the populace is willing to use Mandarin on their own choice or not, the fact is that they are using it. If assimilation presents the better option, so be it. Any conflict would be met with a swift response from the government.

It is good to remember that in the span of two to three years that the strategy would be implemented, a good support system must be in place. Materials, infrastructure, training, both educational and militaristic, educators and the like must be ready and available to be deployed and used. The support system aims at providing and aiding the strategy towards smooth implementation without delays. While the national situation is still at peace, not to mention the limited timeframe to accomplish the goal, it is advisable that the government would quickly implement the strategy as though force would be used but a pacified state would take time to come in conflict, placing the government that is prepared, at an advantage.

On the deployment of the strategy, one must take into consideration the areas of engagement. First and foremost, metropolitan and large-scale cities, i.e. Beijing and Shanghai, have similar assumptions as stated beforehand. Next are the physical capabilities of each individual sent. These individuals are (1) educators and are not as physically trained as athletes or soldiers; and (2) military personnel, actual military or police that are trained and tasked to control conflict situations. Given the possible limitation, it would be suggested as stated before to tap and train educators local to the area since they would be used to the climate of the area. Finally, one should consider the sequence of areas to tap into.

- One option prioritizes proximity from metropolitan areas such as Hebei and Anhui. This option focuses on the logistical movement of resources from the origin to outward. Politically, provinces close to metropolitan cities are more likely to be accepting of the policies of the government and deployment of troops may be quicker due to the roads present.
- Another option capitalizes on existing infrastructures present already within China. Developed areas such as Fujian and Guangdong have large complexes meant for education. Politically, provinces that are developed are less apprehensive towards the government. Yet again, deployment is also easy though may take longer due to the travel distance.

- Another option targets the ethnic areas such as Guangxi and Xinjiang provinces. This strategy aims at directly educating ethnic groups at a large scale thereby efficiently increasing the number of Mandarin speakers, though this is also risky as the large ethnic population would be apprehensive towards the strategy. Militaristically, this strategy may be difficult as it entails entering rural areas where road and infrastructures are not yet present or heavily forested areas where mobility is restricted.

It must be understood that there will be external factors that would either help or deter the progress of the strategy. More so, it is understood that there should be a great deal of control over the internal factors such as hierarchy and logistics of the strategy. To be able to fully understand the means to succeed, there must be a full grasp of the situation and the accumulation of as much information as possible through any means.

With the goal at hand being to introduce Mandarin to the population of China, education should be the focus of the strategy with the active participation of political and military forces. The strategy can go in many ways depending on the situation of the nation and the available resources given the current timeframe. It is important to remember that there is a need to understand the internal and external factors contributing to the strategy and the need to be well informed of the culture and situation as there is a form of assurance that conflict would emerge and the government may need to find means to pacify it.

The Communist (Deng Xiaoping) Goal

This part of the paper would deal with the goal that the Chinese government has in mind and the philosophical thought *Dengism*⁹ of Deng Xiaoping.¹⁰ The nuance of the argument falls on the premise that the Chinese government would after the greatest trade-off with respect to its actions on implementing the strategy, within the given timeframe.

This strategy would be a compromise of both strategies stated beforehand.

To begin with the strategy, the Chinese government must take into account the necessary factors that are present in society. Similar to the previous strategies, first and foremost, there is apprehension amongst most of the ethnic groups or people in rural areas towards the Chinese government and its policies. This is a political backlash that was created from the centralized economic boom of the Chinese economy, alienating and maltreating ethnic groups. A second factor is the current situation of the nation. For the goal to be met and strategy to be implemented, there must be a sense of peace for education to flourish and progress; also, there must be capability and political will and knowledge of the necessary area of engagement for the government to implement its strategy. The government should take into consideration which department, i.e. the Ministry of Education (ME) or the Ministry of

⁹ An avocation of economical and political pragmatism

¹⁰ A Chinese revolutionary and statesman, the paramount leader of the PRC from 1978 until his retirement in 1989.

Culture (MC) this task would be headed by and the people that would lead it and finally the legality of the actions to be taken.

Given the political apprehension, the government must be able to subvert the emotions of the populations and reassure them of their safety and the preservation of their culture. Different from the former strategies, the government does need to maintain a form of misdirection for the long haul as to prevent the rise of conflict and maintenance of stability. As a backup, the solution is through the show of force and managing the strategy militaristically and efficiently through state-based powers.¹¹

The requirements of engaging in this strategy must be met. Educators must be chosen, and lessons and detailed cultural analysis of areas of interests must be completed. Given that education would be the key¹² to achieve the set goals, logistical means must be met, as trainings must be done immediately and deployed in key areas. It is preferred that the population may be won over by the skill and caliber of the educators, as this is the safest and least costly action. Yet on the case of conflict, the government may need to prepare military forces in key areas to pacify the populace at any given time. Furthermore, government structures must be in place to support the system by means of restrictions and policies, yet must not be detrimental to the population and the state.

¹¹ Though as a nuance, the action must be a defensive stance on pacification, not offensive and forceful.

¹² Least possible cost on the side of the government.

It is best to remember that the goal though is to have 80% of the population to be able to speak Mandarin; ethnic languages may still be preserved¹³ but not at the expense of the goal. More so, there is a timeframe and deadline to meet. In 2020, the goal must be accomplished. The strategy must be executed in the span of two to three years' time. The former strategy of construction is viable for the cause, yet with limited time span, the government may instead study its policies as well. There must be an incentivizing or restricting plan for those who are able to speak Mandarin and not respectively. One action taken could be in the form of opportunities, as it would require the knowledge and use of Mandarin to enter or participate in the workforce or acquire subsidies. Engaging in this action would result in conflict and as such the military and police may be deployed. Yet a more desirable course of action must be more of an incentive than of a punishment as a means of incentivizing and be limited to areas and people within which the strategy would take place.

When it comes to heading this strategy, it is suggested that the Ministry of Education (ME) must work in conjunction with the Ministry of Culture (MC) and with support from the central government.¹⁴ This system would allow for a cohesive educational system that would lead to the stated goals. Both parties must be

¹³ There may be intrinsic value in the preservation of ethnic languages, yet economic growth through a unified language is better.

¹⁴ Though with limited participation as not to engage the strategy in political and militaristic course.

able to consolidate the necessary controlled factors before launching the program.

The success of the program lies in the fact that the populace should learn the Mandarin language.¹⁵ It is important to remember that there must be apprehensions between both the government and populace when the strategy is going on. Whether or not the populace is willing to use Mandarin on their own choice or not, the fact is that they are using it. If assimilation presents the better option, so be it. Any conflict would be met with a swift response from the government though must be avoided as much as possible.

It is good to remember that in the span of two to three years that the strategy would be implemented, a good support system must be in place. Materials, infrastructure, training both educational and militaristic, educators and the like must be ready and available to be deployed and used. The support system aims at providing and aiding the strategy so it maintains its implementation without delays. While the national situation is still at peace, not to mention the limited timeframe to accomplish the goal, it is advisable that the government would quickly implement the strategy as though force would be used but a pacified state would take time to come in conflict, placing the government that is prepared, at an advantage.

On the deployment of the strategy, one must take into consideration the areas of engagement. First and foremost,

¹⁵ Willing participation is the best result but actual learning due to necessity is also rewarded.

metropolitan and large-scale cities, like Beijing and Shanghai have similar assumptions as stated beforehand. Next are the physical capabilities of each individual sent. These individuals are (1) educators and are not as physically trained as athletes or soldiers and (2) military personnel: actual military or police that are trained and tasked to control conflict situations. Given the possible limitation, it would be suggested as stated before, to tap and train educators local to the area since their body would be used to the climate of the area. Finally, one should consider the sequence of areas to tap into.

- One option prioritizes proximity from metropolitan areas such as Hebei and Anhui. This option focuses on the logistical movement of resources from the origin to outward. Politically, provinces close to metropolitan cities are more likely to be accepting of the policies of the government and deployment of troops may be quicker due to the roads present. Engaging in this area would present the least reward since rate of influence of the education of the Mandarin language is low given that provinces near the cities are already at some point educated on the said language.
- Another option capitalizes on existing infrastructures present already within China. Developed areas such as Fujian and Guangdong have large complexes meant for education. Politically, provinces that are developed are less apprehensive towards the government. Yet again, deployment is also easy though may take longer due to the

travel distance. The action may present minimal rewards as other areas, especially developed areas, already have Mandarin language education in its system yet engaging in these areas and presenting an incentivized action in government policies may induce greater rewards.

- Another option targets the ethnic areas such as Guangxi and Xinjiang provinces. This strategy aims at directly educating ethnic groups at a large scale thereby efficiently increasing the number of Mandarin speakers, though this is also risky as the large ethnic population would be apprehensive towards the strategy. Militaristically, this strategy may be difficult as it entails entering rural areas where road and infrastructures are not yet present or heavily forested areas where mobility is restricted. Engaging in this action presents a greater reward given the large conversion of language used in the area, but rate of success is lower.

It is understood that there will be external factors that would be either help or deter the progress of the strategy. More so, it is understood that there should be a great deal of control over the internal factors such as hierarchy and logistics of the strategy. To be able to fully understand the means to succeed, there must be a full grasp of the situation and the accumulation of as much information as possible through any means.

With the goal at hand being to introduce Mandarin to the population of China, education should be the focus of the strategy with the support of political and military force. The strategy can go

in many ways depending on the situation of the nation and the available resources given the current timeframe. It is important to remember that there is a need to understand the internal and external factors contributing to the strategy and the need to be well informed of the culture and situation as there is a form of assurance that conflict would emerge and the government may need to find means to pacify it.

References

- China sets target for 80% of citizens to speak Mandarin by 2020. (2017, 03 April). Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-39484655>
- Shan, W. (2010). Comparing ethnic minorities and Han Chinese in China: Life satisfaction, economic well being and political attitudes. *East Asia Policy*, 2(2), 13-22.
- Sunzi. (n.d.). *The art of war*.
- Wang, G. (2015). Ethnic multilingual education in China: A critical observation. *Working Papers in Educational Linguistics*, 30(2), 51–64. Retrieved from <http://repository.upenn.edu/wpel/vol30/iss2/3>