

## Tuo Mao: The Operational History Of The People's Liberation Army - Martin Kenneth Andrew

Title: TUO MAO: THE OPERATIONAL HISTORY OF THE PEOPLE'S  
LIBERATION ARMY

Author: MARTIN KENNETH ANDREW

Award: Ph.D 2008

### Abstract

*Tuo Mao* translates literally as 'shedding feathers' but in the People's Liberation Army (PLA) it is the euphemism for removing the last vestiges of Mao Zedong's vision for China's armed forces. Mao envisaged letting an enemy strike deep into China and then be destroyed by a vast militia force using 'People's War'. His vision, to which the PLA only paid lip service, has been replaced by one employing modern combined arms forces, operating modular independent battle groups able to fight on and outside China's land borders, hence the term 'Shedding Mao'. It is the central argument of this thesis that by studying the operational history of the People's Liberation Army, it can be proven that its operational art was forged in the period 1928-1937 and based on the Soviet Union's doctrine of operational theory, continuing to this day. The significance of the thesis is that it revives and updates conventional thinking among external analysts about China's guiding defence policy.

This thesis shows that the doctrine of Active defence has been the overriding concern of the PLA since 1950 and not any form of People's War. Active Defence is based on three basic principles: no provocation of other nations; no bases anywhere on foreign soil; and no seizure of territory. The PLA's articulated doctrine in the 1950s was to 'Protect the North and Defend the South'. In the 1960s this changed to 'Lure the Enemy Deep into the Country' in order to crush him with 'People's War'. In the 1970's, this became 'Prepare to Fight Early and Fight Big'. By using examples of the PLA in battle this thesis shows how the doctrine changed in light of failures in battle. The post-Mao

reorganisation of the PLA to rectify these faults turned it into a modern military force, building on this legacy by transforming itself into a hardened and networked military. The PLA has now reached a stage of its history where it can fully implement its operational art that took root in the theories espoused in the 1920s and 1930s through the Soviet model, and tried to be implemented in the 1950s and 1960s only to be thwarted by the Cultural Revolution. The People's Liberation Army's operational art, this thesis demonstrates, has now come of age.