

CHINESE STRATEGIC POWER: MYTHS, INTENT, AND PROJECTIONS

Ralph D. Sawyer, Centre for Military and Strategic Studies, University of Calgary

“The ruthless have always won and the benevolent have always failed”
General Chi Haotian

The PRC is changing with incredible velocity, rendering many of the numerous books and analytic papers produced over the last decade virtually obsolete even as they are published. To simply catch a glimpse of China's soul it is necessary to read extensive PRC and PLA websites, numerous government pronouncements and independent reports, a sheaf of academic and technical journals, and a variety of Chinese newspapers on a daily basis. Nevertheless, explaining its explosive growth and analyzing its strategic intentions has become an overpopulated, highly competitive, even acerbic industry, with pundits of every description pontificating upon the immediate and long-term future. Many without any inkling of China's history, topography, or civilization -- not to mention cognizance of the Chinese language and its characters -- readily offer pronouncements based upon theoretical constructs and inherent prejudices.

The China issue has also become highly politicized, virtually intransigent positions having been fervently staked out by numerous self-interested groups including business coalitions, the American Democratic and Republican Parties, a variety of conservative and liberal think tanks, and several government-sponsored research

institutes. Moreover, in the face of government secrecy and highly unreliable information, reports appearing in newspapers and other open-source media have come to assume disproportionate importance irrespective of the author's qualifications. Although down looking sensors can provide remedial data to official agencies, much of the debate is shaped by the media's selection of "hot" topics, whether unrest, resource monopolization, or military build-up, and predicated upon highly selective translations from the Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS) and such dubious sources as Xinhuashe (New China News Agency) and the China Daily.

Observers readily see the China they want to perceive, and envision and vehemently argue the veracity of the China they want to have realized, whether prosperous, repressive, or increasingly democratic. They focus on Shanghai but ignore the hinterland where poverty dominates and projects such as the massive new city of Xin Zhengzhou receive minimal central government support; identify and magnify aspects as the whole, wistfully concluding that a single local election portends an irreversible national trend irrespective of its actual impact; and forecast confrontation and doom because of *suddenly recognized* weapons developments.

Fortunately there are exceptions, including two recent books by Constantine Menges and Ross Terrill that synthesize an enormous wealth of detail, provide an overview of important historical influences, and discuss numerous critical issues. In addition, several specialized studies, particularly those by Michael Pillsbury on indigenous Chinese views of warfare and topical analyses by Andrew Scobell, provide fundamental insights and information. Together with the other works included in the

suggested reading list appended below, they furnish the essential context for the discussion that follows.¹

The draconian secrecy largely responsible for this bewildering range of assessments is frequently attributed to Deng Xiaoping's admonition to "bide our time and build up our capabilities." However, current measures not only continue basic Communist practices, but also mirror the near paranoia displayed by imperial authorities over the centuries. Deng's statement -- actually a common, four character phrase that simply refers to concealing one's strength-- merely caps a lengthy tradition of conscious effort and highly complex pronouncements.

Virtually all the Chinese military writers from Sunzi (Sun-tzu) onward stressed the need for secrecy, pondered its nature, and articulated highly sophisticated measures for its preservation. The latter range from mere silence or actively practicing feints, deception, and misinformation through the penultimate realization of formlessness or venturing into the realm of the truly esoteric to speak about *yin* and obfuscation, shadows within substance, substance within shadows, and ultimately shadows within shadows in highly enigmatic language that puzzles even contemporary PRC study groups.²

For example, a late Ming text known as the *Bingfa Baiyan* (*Hundred Enunciations on Military Methods*) speaks about actively causing misperceptions by according with

¹ Since this analysis is intended for the widest possible audience, a certain amount of fundamental and contextual information has been provided. Conversely, to substantiate certain views and deductions, a number of references to contemporary Chinese language materials are also included. However, rather than striving for tedious comprehensiveness, readily accessible, illustrative materials primarily from *Zhongguo Junshi Kexue*, the influential theoretical journal published by the China Academy of Military Science, from the last three years have been emphasized. (A few articles are also cited from National Defense University's *Guofang*, though the latter's orientation is more toward operational and personnel issues.)

² For further discussion, see "Secrecy and Countermeasures" in Sawyer, the *Tao of Spycraft* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1998). The PRC is widely identified as likely to employ deceptive measures in any actual conflict, though less emphasis has been directed toward their routine use of such techniques. (Sunzi stresses "deception" and the Academy of Military Science published a book entitled *Junshi Qipien* [*Military Deception*], yet it rarely appears as an explicit topic in contemporary PRC military writings.)

the enemy's own "misperceptions" and "obfuscations." In addition, it abstractly explicates the concept of secrecy in terms of "shadows" and creates an all-encompassing, multidimensional theory of "displays" that it characterizes as being similar to hanging two mirrors opposite each other. Accordingly, "shadows have shadows within them, but shadows also have reality within them. Within the real there are shadows, within the real there is reality. Thus reality and shadow complete each other, ever attaining the inexhaustible." Conceptualized in terms of *yin* and *yang*, it asserts that "When you employ *yang* (visible, overt measures) but others still are unable to fathom them, then *yang* is *yin* (dark, covert). When you employ *yin* measures and others are even less able to fathom them, then *yin* measures are *yin*. Thus sometimes one borrows *yang* to implement *yin*, sometimes revolves *yin* to complete *yang*."³

The PRC's emphasis upon secrecy in every aspect of government and public life should not be dismissed as merely another manifestation of the tendencies that characterize elite power groups. Rather than just being the means to be unfathomable and thereby prevent plans from being thwarted, their approach implements the *Art of War's* crucial insight that in manipulating the enemy, secrecy may be employed as a decided combat multiplier: "The pinnacle of military deployment approaches the formless. If it is formless then even the deepest spy cannot discern it or the wise make plans against it. . . . If I determine the enemy's disposition of forces while I have no perceptible form, I can concentrate my forces while the enemy is fragmented . . . and those whom we engage in battle will be severely constrained."⁴

In the Warring States period the *Six Secret Teachings* similarly advised that "the

³ *Yin* is the dark, passive polarity in the dynamic pairing of light (*yang*) and dark (*yin*) that are seen as characterizing all natural phenomena.

⁴ "Vacuity and Substance."

greatest affairs are not discussed and the employment of troops is not spoken about. If your plans are heard about, the enemy will make counter plans. If you are perceived, they will plot against you. If you are known, they will put you in difficulty. If you are fathomed, they will endanger you. In military affairs nothing is more important than certain victory. In employing the army nothing is more important than obscurity and silence. In movement nothing is more important than the unexpected. In planning nothing is more important than not being knowable.”⁵

In the Tang, Li Chuan added: “Obscure the real, cast suspicion upon the doubtful. When the real and doubtful are not distinguishable, strength and weakness will be indeterminable. Be profound like the Mysterious Origin free of all images, be an abyss like the unfathomable depths of the sea.”⁶ Being an essential part of the strategic mindset and core component of doctrine, the very basis for acting in a surprising and unexpected manner and thereby overcoming superior enemies, secrecy thus not unexpectedly demands the strictest implementation.

Just as there is an underlying question as to whether nations are marked by some sort of historical character or tendencies that may manifest themselves in military and other crises, the contemporary relevance of these traditional military and other,

⁵ *Liutao*, “The Army’s Strategic Power.” About the same time (in “Bingluexun”) the *Huainan Zi* advocated formlessness as the best defense against being fathomed because “only those without form cannot be ensnared.” (A complete translation of the *Six Secret Teachings* with extensive historical introduction and notes may be found in Sawyer and Sawyer, *Seven Military Classics of Ancient China* [Boulder: Westview Press, 1993].)

⁶ *Taibai Yinjing*, “Submerged Plans.”

⁷ For a discussion of the introduction and popularity of Clausewitz’s *On War* in China from 1911 onward, see Xia Zhengnan, “Prevalence of Clausewitz’s *On War* in China” (Kelaoseweice “Zhanzheng Lun” Zai Zhongguo te Liuchuan), *Zhongguo Junshi Kexue* (hereafter *JSKX*), 2004:5, pp. 103-115. Contemporary works, such as *Sunzi Bingfa yu Zhanzheng Lun Bijiao Yanjiu* (*Comparative Research into Sunzi Art of War and On War*) published by the Academy of Military Science in 2002, examine the relative importance and appropriateness of the two within the context of China’s strategic and military situation, while Yu Rupo’s *Sunzi Bingfa Yanjiu* (Nanchang: Jiangxi Renmin, 1997) describes the history of the *Art of War* from inception through recent decades. (For a brief overview of the nineteenth century see Yao Yuzhi and Zhao Yiping, “Zhongguo Chuantong Junshi Sixiang de Chenlun yu Shanpian” [“Deterioration and Change in Traditional Chinese Military Thought”], *Junshi Shilin* 2005:11, pp. 38-41. For a more general discussion, see Liu Ziming, *Zhongguo Jindai Junshi Sixiang Shi* [Jiangxi: Jiangxi Renmin, 1997] or Yu Huamin and Hu Zhefeng, *Dangdai Zhongguo Junshi Sixiang Shi* [Kaifeng: Henan Daxue, 1999].)

related historical materials might well be doubted. Moreover, for decades the ruling authorities not only deprecated their value, but even prohibited their perusal, with their mere possession being sufficient provocation to be forced to engage in self-criticism, sentenced to interminable corrective labor, incarcerated, beaten, or even executed. In fact, enamored of the Western military hardware that had managed to surpass the great, indigenous military inventions of earlier centuries, including the crossbow, gunpowder, incendiaries, and proto-firearms, Chinese military thinkers in the 19th and 20th centuries had rejected them while highly esteeming foreign military thought. German, French, Swedish, and especially Russian concepts and tactics all competed for pre-eminence and Japanese instructors were even employed in the 1920s despite earlier conflicts.⁷ These in turn were eventually displaced by Mao's concept of people's warfare prior to the founding of the PRC, initiating a period of relative isolation and conservatism.

However, with Mao's passing and the end of the devastating Cultural Revolution, Western military thought has been rediscovered, though pre-eminence of place is still deliberately accorded indigenous martial writers and theories. Since 1985, coincident with the founding of the National Defense University and the publication of the initial volumes of the great Chinese military corpus (*Zhongguo Bingshu Jicheng*), Chinese military science has been increasingly looking to its own heritage for theories and practices that will enable it to formulate a distinctive military science, one that will allow its practitioners not to just be imitators, second-best in Western thinking and methods, but to surpass Western strategists and be unfathomable while yet incorporating all the latest advances in weaponry, command, and communications.

The PRC refers to this as “military science with unique Chinese characteristics” and “a revolution in military affairs with unique Chinese characteristics.” Although virtually every article discussing these “unique Chinese characteristics” focuses upon indigenous weapons development and phrases the characteristics in terms of martial thought as originally conceived by Marx and more recently formulated and articulated by Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping, Jiang Zhemín, and now Hu Jintao,⁸ historical military studies are not only deemed one of the five divisions of military science, but their importance continues to grow.⁹

The military think tanks include professors of traditional military studies who hold significant posts, often in the strategy department;¹⁰ important historical battles and most of the theoretical writings are regularly included in the core curriculum for officers and serve as the focus for numerous ongoing study groups;¹¹ paradigm clashes are

⁸ In addition to the extensive materials on the RMA with unique Chinese characteristics included in Michael Pillsbury's two volumes, *Chinese Views of Future Warfare* and *China Debates the Future Security Environment*, every issue of *JSKX* includes one or generally more articles on the subject. Among recent examples, the following are typical: Wang Shengkui and Tang Baodong, “Understanding and Consideration on Pushing Forward the Revolution in Military Affairs with Chinese Characteristics” (Guanyu Jiji Tuijin Zhongguo Tese Junshi Biange de Renshi yu Sikao”), *JSKS* 2004:1, pp. 97-105; Fang Yonggang, “The World Revolution in Military Affairs and the Leap-ahead Development of PLA Modernization” (“Shijie Xinjunshi Biange yu Wojun Xiandaihua de Kuayueshi Fazhan”), *JSKS* 2004:1, pp. 106-114; Wu Yujin, “The Revolution in Military Affairs with Chinese Characteristics and the Leap-ahead Development of PLA Weaponry and Equipment” (“Zhongguo Tese Junshi Biange yu Juntui Zhibei Jianshe de Kuayueshi Fajan”), *JSKS* 2004:1, 115-121; Huang Yingxu, “Origin and Development of Strategic Thinking of Revolution in Military Affairs with Chinese Characteristics” (“Zhongguo Tese Junshi Biange Zhanlue Sixiang de Xingcheng he Fazhan”), *JSKS* 2005:2, pp. 82-89; and Ma Gaihe and Feng Haiming, “A System of Systems and the Characteristics of Chinese Revolution in Military Affairs” (“Zonghe Jicheng yu Zhongguo Tese de Junshi Biange”), *JSKX* 2004:2, pp. 96-100. For more focal articles deliberately focusing on Mao's contemporary relevance in new military thought, see, for example, Zhang Shude, “Mao Zedong Thought of International Strategy” (“Mao Zedong de Guoji Zhanlue Sixiang”) *JSKS* 2004:1, p. 16, or Xia Zhengnan, “Essentials of Mao Zedong's Art of War Guidance” (“Mao Zedong Zhanzheng Zhixun Yishu Zhuyao”), *JSKS* 2004:1, p. 39.

⁹ For “The Categories of Military Science” see Zheng Wenhan's article in Michael Pillsbury, *Chinese View of Future Warfare* (Washington: National Defense University, 1998 rev. ed.), pp. 205-212.

¹⁰ Such as Wu Rusong, well known for his vernacular edition of the *Art of War*, and Chen Xiangling, author of *Wujing Qishu yu Dangdai Zhanzheng* (*The Seven Military Classics and Contemporary Military Thought*).

¹¹ It might be noted that the renewed acceptability of historical materials does not entail their indiscriminate use. The lessons that might be derived must accord with Marxist thought and contemporary guidelines – thus the importance of study groups and disseminated formulations – though more innovative thinkers constantly seek “rationalizations” and “justifications” in them. (The idea of “proper understanding” can be seen in a critical assessment of a recent Sun-tzu book by the well known Wu Rusong (with Huo Yinzhang) entitled “Important Issues in Correctly Handling the Study of Sunzi's *Art of War* – Commentary on Lu Yunchang's Recent Study of Sun Wu” [“Zhengque Duidai Sunzi Yenjiu de Jige Zhongyao Wenti – Lun Lu Yunchang *Sun Wu Yenjiu Xintan*”], *JSKX* 2004:2, pp. 60-71.)

pondered for tactical principles and unorthodox techniques;¹² conferences are regularly held on integrating core theoretical concepts into contemporary practice;¹³ articles are routinely included in *Military Science (Junshi Kexue)* and *National Defense (Guofang)*, the authoritative theoretical journals published by the Academy of Military Science and National Defense University respectively;¹⁴ and national figures repeatedly cite, often in distorted fashion, China's military history in discussing its aspirations and intentions.

The traditional Chinese military writings, especially Sunzi's *Art of War*, the *Six Secret Teachings*, *Hundred Unorthodox Strategies*, and *Thirty-six Stratagems*, have

¹² Because of its perceived military inferiority, PRC interest in asymmetric methods and unorthodox concepts is particularly acute. Although classic battles, such as Han Xin's great victories, are emphasized, the late Sung dynasty work known as the *Baizhan Qilue* that has appeared under many titles and in many guises over the last decade is also carefully studied. (For a translation and commentary, see Sawyer, *One Hundred Unorthodox Strategies: Battle and Tactics of Chinese Warfare* [Boulder: Westview, 1996]. For an extended analysis of the theory and practice of the unorthodox, see our *Tao of Deception: Unorthodox Warfare in Traditional and Contemporary China*.)

¹³ International and purely internal conferences on Sun-tzu's thought are periodically held under the auspices of the Academy of Military Science and National Defense University, with some of their findings being reported in the various journals. For example, under the title of "The Study of Sunzi's *Art of War* in Facing the World and the Future," the final *JSKX* issue of 2004 carried some fourteen papers.

¹⁴ The importance of traditional, even ancient, military thought in current PRC military science is widely known, being, for example, mentioned in numerous contexts in Pillsbury, *China Debates the Future Security Environment*. Pillsbury's *Chinese Views of Future Warfare* also includes a translation of Zheng Wenhan's "Categories of Military Science" (pp. 205-212); the amount of historical material in the recently revised edition of the *Zhongguo Junshi Baike Chuanshu (China Military Encyclopedia)* has been greatly expanded; and two or more articles illuminating military history and early writings are found in virtually every issue of *Zhongguo Junshi Kexue*.

Particularly representative examples of the historical articles that have appeared over the past three years include Huang Pumin, "Cultural Features and Spirits of the Times of the Art of War in Qi and Lu of the Zhou Dynasty" ("Qi Lu Bingxue de Wenhua Tezheng yu Shidai Jingshen"), *JSKX* 2003:2, pp. 111-118; Li Teyi, "Tentative Study of the Allied Strategy in Ancient China" ("Zhongguo Gudai Lianmeng Zhanlue Chutan"), *JSKX* 2004:3, pp. 121-131; Wu Rusong and Gong Yuzhen, "Basic Revelations from the Issue of National Security in Chinese History" ("Zhongguo Lishishang Guojia Anquan Wenti de Jiben Qishi"), *JSKX* 2004:4, pp. 115-120; and Chang Wanquan, "Strategies of the Successive Chinese Central Dynasties in Safeguarding State Security" ("Zhongguo Lidai Zhongyang Wangchao Weihu Guijia Anquan de Fanglue"), *JSKX* 2005:1, pp. 98-108. Although discussions of Sunzi's thought in relation to informatization are particularly common, Sunzi related titles run from "'Knowledge' -- Essence and Implications of Sunzi's *Art of War*" [*JSKX* 2003:4, pp. 61-69] through "Sunzi's 'Winning Conception' and Air-space Power of the Information Age" [2004:6, pp. 35-39]. In addition, numerous books are published annually on early Chinese strategy and reviewed in *JSKX*. (For example, "Complete Picture of Chinese Military Thoughts Throughout Ancient and Modern Times -- Commentary on *Outline of Chinese Military Thoughts*," *JSKS*, 2003:1, pp. 152-154, and the succeeding article, "Systematic Summary of the Heritage of Chinese Ancient Strategy -- Commentary on *Chinese Ancient Strategy Series*," *JSKX*, 2003:1, pp. 155-156.)

However, it should be noted that there appears to be an unresolved tension between those who want only the newest theories and weapons and those who see Chinese culture as unique and entailing superior wisdom, planning, and resiliency of spirit. For example, see Liu Bangqi, "View of Military Creative Systems with Chinese Characteristics" ("Zhongguo Tese Junshi Chuangxin Tisi Chutan"), *JSKS* 2004:5, pp. 65-73 or Cheng Baoshan, "Issues on Emancipating the Mind and Creating New Military Theories" ("Guanyu Jiefang Sixiang Chuang Xinjunshi Lilun de Jige Wenti"), *JSKS* 2004:6, pp. 55-59.

also enjoyed astonishing popularity among the populace at large and appear in many formats ranging from vernacular editions through serialized television dramas and comic book versions. Together with episodes from the famous martial novels -- *Water Margin* and *Three Kingdoms* -- their teachings pervade contemporary Chinese consciousness and contribute immeasurably to the Chinese mindset and body of common strategic and tactical knowledge.

PRC Myths

Several pernicious myths fundamentally impact popular understanding of the PRC and professional estimations of Chinese strategic intentions. First and foremost, even a cursory examination of the historical records indicates that China's much proclaimed geopolitical unity was frequently tenuous, that the land was repeatedly fragmented over its three thousand year history. Moreover, rather than a singular civilization, it has frequently been challenged by and always encompassed numerous cultures, religions, languages, and customs, as well as been marked by a multiplicity of beliefs and antagonistic perspectives, however muted. Furthermore, the early high civilization was largely preserved south of the Huai and Yangtze Rivers for several centuries after repeated, so-called "barbarian" incursions led to foreign dominance of the core cultural area north of the Yellow River in the fourth century.

Although the Chinese have long been portrayed as docile and submissive, devoted to agriculture, absorbed in Confucian self-cultivation, and mesmerized by poetry and the contemplation of nature, they have always been highly volatile. Over the centuries at least a dozen major revolts, prompted as frequently by repressive

government measures as simple economic hardship, decimated the populace and destroyed the infrastructure; numerous lesser uprisings collectively claimed millions of additional lives; and almost every locality interminably suffered from brigandage and banditry. Religiously inspired rebellions frequently threatened and sometimes toppled the government as the well known Chinese dynastic cycle played out over the centuries. Among the most famous were the Green Woods, Red Eyebrows, and Yellow Turbans (or Scarves) during the Han; the Shuihu gang (depicted in the famous novel *Water Margin*), Fang La, and Huang Chao Rebellions in the Sung; the Red Turbans at start of the Ming; and the White Lotus, Eight Trigrams (1813), Nian (1852-1868), Small Sword (1853-1855), Boxers (around 1900), and finally the horrific Taiping Rebellion (1850-1864) that resulted in inestimable casualties, all in the Ching.¹⁵ Despite central government efforts to prevent internal threats, several regional commanders and other disgruntled individuals also challenged the established order, including An Lushan in the Tang,¹⁶ Li Zicheng at the end of the Ming,¹⁷ and of course the Communist Party that installed Mao Zedong as emperor. Charismatic leaders rapidly amassed power by exploiting religious elements and attracting hordes of disaffected peasants and disgruntled lower class members, thereby turning local bands of bandits and zealous adherents into vast armies numbering hundreds of thousands within months, particularly when they disbursed the government's treasuries and granaries among the starving

¹⁵ The infamous Taiping Rebellion has an extensive, well known literature, and most of the other uprisings are discussed at least briefly in the various volumes of the *Cambridge History of China* series. They varied widely in scope and motivation, as well as achievements and failures.

¹⁶ An Lushan's rebellion nearly overthrew the Tang and resulted in its military power being dispersed among several powerful regional commanders, setting the stage for the fragmentation and warlordism of the Five Dynasties period. (For an overview, see *Cambridge History of China: Sui and Tang China*.) Perhaps because of such examples, PRC central authorities have long been conscious of the dangers posed by allowing military power to be concentrated among regional commanders.

¹⁷ Li ironically undermined the Ming's fading hopes of surviving the Manchu onslaught. (His career is discussed in the *Cambridge History of China: The Ming Dynasty*, while Li's siege of Kaifeng is analyzed in Sawyer, *Fire and Water: Incendiary and Aquatic Warfare in China* [Boulder: Westview Press, 2004], pp. 294ff.)

populace. Even the Han arose out of hatred of the Qin, a state whose repressive policies were hardly more repressive than the PRC's.

The central government's current paranoia with potential instability; its fear that the visibly accelerating popular unrest might gain expression (rather than any concern with popular unrest itself); and its ongoing suppression of alternative voices and power groups, including the Falun Gong, are clearly founded upon their recognition of this volatility. Moreover, whereas ancient millenarian revolts required weeks or months to develop and their actions were often foiled by coordination and communication difficulties, as evidenced by the Zhengzhou riots at the end of 2004, tens of thousands may be assembled within hours through expeditious use of cell phones, text messaging, and the internet.

A second aspect of this idealized portrait of a cultivated, pacifist oriented civilization has been the identification of its cultural values as primarily, if not exclusively, Confucian, entailing an overwhelming emphasis upon self-cultivation, education, literary achievements, and above all Virtue rather than strife. This is, however, rather ironic because even though the PRC has recently revitalized Confucianism for both internal and external consumption -- internally to re-impose the ideas of submissiveness and self-discipline upon an increasingly turbulent populace, externally to play upon the Western perception of Confucianism as a benign, pacifist oriented doctrine, window dressing in fact for their actual intents -- for nearly fifty years it systematically destroyed Confucianism's teachings and influence, causing basic erosion in both.¹⁸

¹⁸ However, the utility of Confucianism was noted as early as 1994. (See "Future Security Trends in the Asian-Pacific Region" in Pillsbury, *Chinese Views of Future Warfare*, especially pages 98-99.) For a more recent discussion of the role of Chinese culture

Leaving aside the question as to whether the contemporary understanding and depiction of Confucianism doesn't significantly distort the Master's original spirit and intentions, Mencius's subsequent assertion that the truly virtuous man would have no enemies under Heaven followed by the widespread adoption of "Confucianism" by the powerful, self-interested, but generally hypocritical literati who filled the bureaucracy and seemingly regarded military commanders and officials as greater enemies than the "barbarians," certainly contributed to the idea that the civil and virtue have always prevailed over the martial and power.

It is also frequently claimed that China has no martial culture, no appreciation of heroes as in Greece and Rome, and has always deprecated everything associated with power and brute force.¹⁹ Although the historical and literary works written by members of the high culture generally express great admiration only for individuals whose behavior exemplifies Confucian precepts and values, the common people have always esteemed strength, bravado in the face of governmental and social strictures, martial skills, great fighters, and exemplary warriors. Their military heroes have ranged from the purely cerebral such as Zhuge Liang (Chu-ko Liang), the legendary strategist of the Three Kingdoms period, and the Tai Gong (T'ai Kung), reputed architect of the Chou's conquest over the powerful Shang and a battlefield commander at an advanced age, through pure warriors whose prowess carried the field, including Guan Gong, the

in unifying the people see Yang Baoling, "On Cultural Identification and National Reunification" ("Lun Wenhua Rentong yu Guojia Tongyi"), *JSKX* 2005:3, pp. 57-63. Even within purely military circles the Confucian past is being revitalized and appropriated for persuasive purposes. For example, see Chang Wanquan, "Ancient Thought of Military Management in China and Its Inspiration" ("Zhongguo Gudai Zhijun Sixiang ji qi Qishi"), *JSKS* 2004:1, pp. 127-136; and Gao Runhao, "Commanding Troops by Confucianism: Integration of Traditional Military Theory into Confucianism" ("Yi Ru Tong Bing: Ruxue dui Chuantong Pingxue te Zhenghe"), *JSKS* 2003:1, pp. 122-130. Certain well known PLA generals such as Liu Pocheng are even being accorded accolades as Confucian commanders (*Ru jiang*)! (For example, see "Ye Jianying yu Liu Pocheng" in *Junshi Shilin*, 2006:1, pp. 8-18.)

¹⁹ For a brief discussion of this issue, see Ralph D. Sawyer, "Chinese Warfare: The Paradox of the Unlearned Lesson," *American Diplomacy Magazine* (online), autumn, 1999.

irascible Zhang Fei, and even Tang Taizong, second emperor of the Tang, and his fabled horses.²⁰

All of them subsequently became the focus of stories and operas, serialized tales and novels, with Guan Gong even being apotheosized as the god of war and irregularly honored with the Tai Gong as the state's martial patron. (Despite Confucianism's status as the semi-official state religion, their temples even rivaled those for Confucius under the more martially spirited dynasties like the Tang.) Other valiant historical figures such as Li Gang and Yue Fei who futilely fought against foreign onslaughts not only became heroes for all time, but have also been appropriated by the Chinese Communist Party's political education department despite basically being leery of idols not under their control. They and heroes from relatively contemporary clashes ranging from the anti-Japanese and Civil Wars through the Korean and Vietnam Conflicts were, until recently, routinely employed for indoctrinational and motivational purposes.²¹

These traditional heroes are actually marked by a far darker dimension than commonly realized. Zhang Fei was a ruthless fighter while many of the leading Sung dynasty rebels portrayed in the famous novel *Water Margin* impulsively slew servants, women, and children equally with those who offended them in a so-called "righteous" rage. Historically, this sort of dramatically unbounded behavior struck a highly responsive cord among the downtrodden, frustrated, and suppressed, perhaps explaining the eternal appeal of the *yuxia* (*yu-hsia*) or wandering knights, macho bravos

²⁰ Guan Gong, Zhang Fei, Liu Bei, and Zhuge Liang all assume greatly enhanced dimensions in the Ming dynasty novel *Sanguo Yanyi*, translated in full by Moss Roberts as *Three Kingdoms*. The life and adventures of the semi-legendary Tai Gong are examined in the introduction to our translation of the book attributed to him, the *Liutao* or *Six Secret Teachings*.

²¹ For a recent article on the need for military heroes, see Wang Qiandu, "Shouxi Wojun de Yingxiong Mofan," *Guofang* 2005:10, pp. 77-78.

with underworld connections who roamed about in the Han.²² Moreover, beginning with Sima Qian's highly controversial chapter in the *Shi Ji*, there has been a timeless fascination with assassins and the possibility of significantly affecting events and circumstances through singular, violent action that continues to be evident in the two Chinese movies that lionize assassins, the highly improbable *Hero* (starring Jet Li) and *Assassin* (with Gong Li), as well as in a roughly forty part televised serialization of the fictionalized life and career of the famous Jing Ke, whose name became synonymous with "assassin."²³

Although its history has been heavily mythologized, the private pursuit of martial arts, probably initially under experienced though retired military men, may date back to the late Warring States period, though defined schools did not begin evolving until perhaps the Tang or Sung. Largely stimulated by the image of Bruce Li, the ultimate Chinese warrior, defeating the heinous Japanese and other perverse groups, popular depictions that focus upon China's indigenous martial arts traditions, including novels, comic books, movies (perhaps epitomized by *Iron Monkey* and the highly artistic *Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon*), and extended serialized television dramas (such as *Hero*) have proliferated in recent decades and spawned a generation of stars, including Jackie Chan and Jet Li. Coincidentally, the practice of traditional martial arts has surged phenomenally despite the government's efforts to enervate the systems and control the schools, such as by promoting the national art of *Wushu* and transforming *Taiji* (*T'ai-chi*) from a combat system into a sort of slow motion, health giving balancing act. (Only

²² For a translation of Sima Qian's depiction of these figures, see Burton Watson, "The Biographies of the Wandering Knights," *Records of the Grand Historian of China*, Vol. 2 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961.)

²³ For a translation of the chapter, see Burton Watson, "The Biographies of the Assassin-retainers," *Records of the Grand Historian*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993.)

the semi-legendary Shaolin system, having become a national symbol and tourist attraction, seems to have achieved renewed vitality.)

The claim that China “lacks” Greek style heroic depictions and therefore heroic aspirations of course reflects as much about Western prejudices as the absence of such early ceramics with military motifs. Not only would it be more correct to note that pre-imperial ceramics are generally decorated with abstract patterns rather than any form of human activity, such conclusions ignore the fact that the Western Chou routinely had massive bronze cauldrons cast to commemorate campaign victories and inscribed lengthy summaries of the chief actions and exact number of casualties on the interiors.²⁴ Moreover, a few large Warring States vases depict mass naval encounters while recently recovered tomb art often includes military themes.

Traditional belief holds that the legendary sage emperors restored order by forcefully subjugating the evil and chaotic while the Yellow Emperor’s victory over Chi You is famous for his innovative use of chemical fog and metal weapons. The sagacious founders of the Shang and Zhou forcefully overthrew hated tyrants and the early dynasties all conducted campaigns to subjugate contiguous peoples that are highly praised even in Confucian inspired literature. Warfare has generally been viewed as inherent²⁵ and martial rites such as the archery ceremony employed by the Early Zhou to choose high officials, albeit somewhat transformed, were subsequently integrated into ordinary Confucian ritual practices.²⁶

²⁴ For example, two famous bronze vessels known as the Dayu Ding and Xiaoyu Ding commemorate a major early Zhou campaign against the Guifang in the 25th year of King Kang’s reign (1005-978 BCE). The inscriptions note that three enemy chiefs were captured; 4,872 enemy troops were killed; 13,081 made prisoners; and a large number of horses, together with thirty chariots, 355 oxen, and 38 sheep were seized.

²⁵ For a brief discussion, see Ralph D. Sawyer, “Chinese Warfare: The Paradox of the Unlearned Lesson,” *American Diplomacy Magazine* (online), autumn, 1999

²⁶ The archery ceremony is extensively described in the Confucian Classic known as the *Yi Li*.

Given that throughout its history China has unfortunately been wracked by virtually interminable warfare, the existence of this vibrant martial culture should hardly be surprising. Irrespective of the terms applied by sinologists who generally disparage the role and importance of warfare in Chinese history, hundreds of major battles and thousands of known clashes decimated the populace and sundered the land.²⁷ Hardly a year passed without localized conflicts; every decade witnessed major battles and significant incursions from the steppe; and the passing centuries saw major rebellions, external campaigns, foreign invasions, dynastic upheavals, and repeated, fierce clashes among the ruling powers controlling the disparate parts whenever China fragmented, as in the centuries succeeding the Han.

Operational forces soared past 100,000 men as early as the Warring States period; logistical efforts became massive; and the casualties from prolonged engagements horrendous. Contrary to pundits who, on the basis of Sun-tzu's advocacy in the *Art of War*, claim that Chinese forces always fought with "the objective of preservation," the extensive and thorough destruction frequently practiced can only be termed "total warfare." For example, 100,000 troops from Wei reportedly perished at the famous battle of Maling in 341 BCE; 240,000 died at Yique in 295; and 450,000 from Zhao perished at the hands of Qin at Changping in 260 BC. (Even significantly discounting for exaggeration, the numbers are still astonishing.)

Cities that managed to endure year long, bitterly fought sieges in which the inhabitants not infrequently resorted to cannibalism often saw their entire remaining

²⁷ Concise summaries of these battles have been compiled into several massive, two volume dictionaries, and two, roughly twenty volume histories of traditional Chinese warfare have also been written, the *Zhongguo Lidai Zhanzheng Shi* compiled in Taipei in the 1950s and the more recent *Zhongguo Junshi Tongshi* produced by the Academy of Military Science in Beijing at the end of the last millennium.

populaces -- every man, woman, child, and animal -- massacred. Even more startling, despite admonitions to the contrary in the *Art of War* and *Sima Fa (Ssu-ma Fa)*, surrendered troops were frequently slain. Some 400,000 prisoners of those who perished at Changping upon Bai Qi's orders were reportedly buried alive, an act that would haunt him in his last days, and another 200,000 defeated soldiers were butchered at Xiang Yu's behest during the struggle to succeed the Qin. In addition to foraging and plundering as they advanced, withdrawing troops often vengefully destroyed the infrastructure and burned all the provisions, causing misery and starvation that invariably decimated the population. Few commanders heeded Sunzi's advice to "win without fighting" or leave an opening for the enemy to escape. They took the field to seek victory and achieved it without compassion or compunction, frequently destroying whatever might intercede.

Over the centuries increasingly powerful weapons and deadly technologies, including the crossbow, siege engines, incendiary devices, and finally gunpowder were developed and rapidly deployed, increasing warfare's lethality. Poison was first employed in 562 BCE and became commonplace thereafter, often being used to deny water supplies to the enemy. Not unexpectedly, as discussed in our *Fire and Water: Incendiary and Aquatic Warfare in China*, attacks on cities routinely produced casualty rates in excess of 70% once the methods for systematically employing incendiary and aquatic warfare were perfected. To take but one example, at the end of the Ming when Li Zicheng diverted water from the nearby Yellow River to flood Kaifeng, reportedly all but 20,000 of the several hundred thousand inhabitants perished. To this propensity might be added the government's readiness to employ widespread, brutal punishments

to “maintain order,” the wholesale slaughter of millions of political enemies and recalcitrant citizens under the current Communist regime, and the excesses of the Cultural Revolution that saw people tortured, murdered, and dismembered.

Finally, to allay fears and forestall counter-measures, including adversarial strategic alliances, the PRC has embarked on an aggressive program of systematically asserting that their intentions are peaceful, that their burgeoning economic and military power threatens no one. As if in substantiation, they vehemently claim that their entire history, both traditional and contemporary, attests to their pacific intentions and practices, that China never committed aggressive acts against anyone. This is hardly new for such claims were made by Deng Xiaoping long ago, reiterated in a much publicized speech by General Li Jijun at the Army War College in 1997,²⁸ and even published in a recent issue of *Foreign Affairs*.²⁹ Moreover, they have been warmly embraced by American sinologists and tend to be repeated in the West by optimists and various pro-China commentators, among them Henry Kissinger who last year stated that “military imperialism is not China’s style.”³⁰ Consonant with protestations that China lacks military power and the means to achieve any sort of parity for decades, they well accord with the traditional concept of concealing strength and firmness within weakness

²⁸ See “Traditional Military Thinking and the Defensive Strategy of China: An Address at the United States War College by Lieutenant Li Jijun,” *Letort Paper No. 1*, August 29, 1997. (For a representative selection from Li’s writing see “Notes on Military Theory and Military Strategy” in Michael Pillsbury, *Chinese Views of Future Warfare*, pp. 221-231, and for another article by General Li see “Reflection China’s National Security in the Era of Globalization” [“Quanqihua Shidai de Zhongguo Guojia Anquan Sikao”], *JSKX* 2004:2, pp. 38-43.)

²⁹ See Zheng Bijian, “China’s ‘Peaceful Rise’ to Great-Power Status,” *Foreign Affairs*, Sept.-Oct, 2005, pp. 18-24. (It would seem that if the PRC seriously wanted the world to believe that the consequences of its emergence as a surpassing economic and military power are intended to be, and will remain, peaceful, *at a minimum* it would renounce the use of force against Taiwan and allow Tibet to truly become a self-administered zone. More dramatically, it would abandon all claims to Taiwan and conspicuously remove the military threat posed by its missiles, as well as withdraw from Tibet where it has clearly been practicing a policy of cultural, if not ethnic, genocide.)

³⁰ “China: Containment Won’t Work,” June 13, 2005 *Washington Post*. (In the op-ed piece Dr. Kissinger clearly notes that his firm represents the PRC; however, television news interviews rarely advise viewers of this when he provides commentary. (However, his June article does contain some important points.)

and pliancy, as well as the stratagem of “hiding a dagger within a smile,” here raised to the level of grand strategy.³¹ Such an explicit policy is also essential to the inherently contradictory task of disarming wariness while yet establishing tacitly understood deterrence.

However, these assertions are not just distortions but absolute nonsense. Ever since its inception China has continuously and systematically conducted aggressive, externally directed campaigns against contiguous peoples and foreign states.³² In the decades from about 140 BCE to 90 BCE eleven expeditionary efforts, some requiring up to 200,000 men and major cavalry components, vastly expanded the Han empire out into Central Asia by defeating numerous tribes, subjugating a number of minor states, and exterminating others, thereby essentially opening the famous Silk Route.³³ The Tang similarly mounted coordinated campaigns that inflicted heavy casualties and allowed them to temporarily regain much of Central Asia. After the Sung’s futile efforts against the Khitan, the Ming’s vigorous progenitors initiated an aggressive steppe policy in a quest to dominate the Mongols, but were compelled to abandon it in favor of the

³¹ The *Art of War* emphasizes displaying incapability when capable while the concept of comparative weakness is fundamental to much of traditional Chinese military thought, appearing in the *Dao De Jing (Tao Te Ching)* and the *Three Strategies of Huangshi Gong (Huang-shih Kung)*. (For a martial understanding of the *Dao De Jing*, see Sawyer, *The Tao of War* [Boulder: Westview Press, 1996]; for a translation of the *San Lue* or *Three Strategies*, see Sawyer, *Seven Military Classics of Ancient China*.)

The Ming dynasty work known as the *Thirty-six Stratagems* includes thirty-six concrete, generally unexpected and unorthodox measures that may be employed in various military circumstances to suddenly wrest victory, including the relatively simple “hiding a dagger in a smile.” Although the text has attracted significant attention over the past two decades and is found in many popular guises, opinion as to its worth varies among PRC strategists. (For example, see Ren Li, “Contrast and Analyze Sun Zi’s *Art of War* and *Thirty-six Stratagems*” [“Sunzi Bingfa yu Sanshiliu Ji Bianxi”], *JSKX*, 2005:3, pp. 126-132.)

³² As attested by thousands of oracle bones, even the Shang conducted numerous campaigns to subjugate contiguous peoples and frequently annexed vanquished territories. (For two useful English accounts, see Fan Yu-chou, “Military Inscriptions from YH127,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 1989:3, pp. 533-548, and Edward L. Shaughnessy, “Micro-periodization and the Calendar of a Shang Military Campaign” in *Chinese Language, Thought, and Culture: Nivison and his Critics* (Peru: Open Court, 1996), pp. 58-82.

For a more detailed discussion of historic China’s external campaigns see Sawyer, “Preemptive and Punitive Strikes: China’s Campaigns of Aggression,” Society for Military History Conference, Washington DC, 2004.

³³ Accounts of these campaigns as described in the *Shi Ji* may be read in Burton Watson’s translation of selected chapters, *Records of the Grand Historian of China*, published by Columbia University Press. A historical overview may also be found in *The Cambridge History of China: The Ch’in and Han Empires, 221 B.C. – A.D. 220*.

static defensive strategy that produced the Great Wall when an ill-fated expedition saw most of a 500,000 man force lost and the emperor himself captured in 1449.³⁴

The short lived Qin initiated campaigns against the south, particularly in the area now known as Vietnam, and later dynasties continued the effort. However, over the centuries the most egregious efforts were directed toward subjugating the three Korean kingdoms of Koguryo, Paekche, and Silla. Although the Han invaded the Korean peninsula in 108 BCE, gaining a foothold, the major effort occurred between 598 and 668 when numerous campaigns of varying strength that proceeded by multiple land and sea routes and often mobilized 500,000 men or more were mounted. Although temporary conquests were achieved, casualties frequently reached 80% and the Sui dynasty essentially collapsed because of this imperial obsession with dominating the nearby world.³⁵

Not only have these massive campaigns been accorded a prominent place in the official and synthetic histories compiled over the centuries (including the *Shi Ji* and *Zizhi Tongjian* or *Comprehensive Mirror of History*), they are extensively discussed with considerable pride in the twenty volume *Comprehensive History of Chinese Military Affairs* (*Zhongguo Junshi Tongshi*) published under the auspices of the prestigious Academy of Military Science roughly a decade ago. Insofar as the glorious achievements of the great Han and Tang generals are commonly known and widely celebrated, officialdom can hardly claim ignorance. Of course, these conquest expeditions are invariably justified as “defensive” actions that were necessary to

³⁴ For an overview, see the extensive materials in *The Cambridge History of China: The Ming Dynasty* (Cambridge: University Press, 1988).

³⁵ The campaigns are conveniently outlined in *The Cambridge History of China: Sui and Tang China* (Cambridge: University Press, 1979).

preserve the state and ensure its “territorial integrity,” a concept emphasized by Mao Zedong and much discussed in contemporary military journals.

Against apologists who disparage these events as “ancient history,” several recent PRC strikes might be cited. In 1951 Chinese forces invaded and occupied Tibet - - territory that had not only been historically independent, but whose populace had long battled the traditional Chinese dynasties, repeatedly invading and occupying portions along the border over the centuries -- essentially annexing it, whatever fictive special administrative policies have been proclaimed. In 1962 Chinese forces mounted a surprise incursion into India, defeating Indian border forces and seizing extensive terrain that is still retained. And 1979 saw the Vietnam debacle (which the PRC views as a successful castigation) in which massive PRC forces penetrated the border area before being repelled with heavy casualties. On a more minor scale, though it entailed a potential for nuclear escalation, was their incursion into Soviet territory in 1969, euphemistically termed the Sino-Soviet Border War, and the recent occupation of disputed Spratly and other, highly significant islands within 200 miles of the Philippines but nearly 1,000 miles from the China coast that have essentially been converted into stationary aircraft carriers and militarily buttress their claim to the entire South China Sea.³⁶

³⁶ These different campaigns have recently been the subject of several compilation volumes by Washington based specialists in Chinese military affairs: Mark Ryan et al., *Chinese Warfighting: The PLA Experience Since 1949* (New York: East Gate, 2003); Bruce A. Elleman, *Modern Chinese Warfare, 1795-1989* (New York: Routledge, 2001); Andrew Scobell, *China's Use of Military Force: Beyond the Great Wall and the Long March* (Cambridge: University Press, 2003); and Laurie Burkitt et al., *The Lessons of History: The Chinese People's Liberation Army at 75* (Washington: Strategic Studies Institute, 2003).

Brief Core Assessment

Fervent interest in China's strategic intentions has been prompted by a suddenly discernable military buildup that is perceived as not only threatening East Asia's peace and tranquility, the world balance of power, and US interests, but also being configured solely to defeat US military forces.³⁷ The accompanying consternation is clearly prompted by "unexpected" discoveries that have been made after years of unilaterally, but baselessly, deeming the PRC a "friend" and supposedly playing the China card against the USSR. However, Deng and his successors have instead been adroitly playing the American card; both traditional Chinese and early Communist military doctrine stress the maintenance of strong military forces; and while the US enjoyed a decade's designation as a strategic ally, with the demise of the USSR and hard-line views that portended nuclear conflict, it has now reverted to the increasingly publicized position of strategic competitor, imperialist bully, world hegemon, and popularly designated enemy.

Apart from any question as to what prosperous state, for its own self-respect if not security, will not build the maximum military force affordable, the PRC views American cultural expressions, beliefs, and concomitant practices -- particularly America's vociferous commitment to democratic ideals and the aggressive spread of democratic practices -- as fundamentally intrusive as well as directed toward undermining the power of the present, self-interested, ruling elite and the Beijing

³⁷ Visibly increased official concern has recently been strongly expressed by Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld, Secretary of State Rice, and many other officials, as well as codified in the recent *Pentagon Quadrennial Defense Review* and raised in the *2005 Annual Report to Congress*, "The Military Power of the People's Republic of China." However, perhaps more significant than any particular program is the as yet unnoticed but renewed emphasis being given the military in national affairs and a decided shift in journal articles from the economy having priority or the military serving the economy to the need for national strength and the army reverting to a purely combat role. (For a recent articulation, see the lead article in *Guofang's* first issue for 2006: "Zhongguo de Heping Fazhan yu Jianshe Qiangda de Guofang" ["China's Peaceful Expansion and the Establishment of a Strong National Defense"].)

consensus.³⁸ Irrespective of how benignly motivated, virtually every American action is seen as intended to moderate or stifle China's rise, to control and encircle it, and to deny it the long denied "rightful" place as world hegemon, consonant with its previous position before the Manchu occupation emasculated its power and it suffered innumerable defeats at the hands of the industrialized, Caucasian West.

Unilateral US actions in Haiti, Granada, Kosovo, Afghanistan, and especially Iraq, coupled with newly formulated doctrine that not only justifies pre-emptive strikes but increasingly mandates preventative actions against sovereign states, are seen as marking it as a renegade hegemonic power. This isn't simply an exercise in labeling and rhetoric, but a deeply held conviction conjoined with growing fear that the US might even mount a preemptive strike against the missile arsenal aimed at Taiwan, countenance a Taiwanese action with this objective (were it to acquire the weapons), or launch a strike on North Korea in the immediate future.³⁹ At the same time, many in the PRC are convinced that the US is afraid to engage China, while others around the region believe the US would be unable to "win" any such conflict, and might actually be defeated, contributing to their reluctance to support any military efforts.

Conversely, United States criticism of military improvements coupled with assertions that the PRC doesn't face any enemies and repeated demands for greater military transparency have proven particularly infuriating to PRC leadership. From

³⁸ The threats posed by foreign cultures and the general subject of cultural wars are discussed by Wang Shudao in "Modern Cultural Diffusion and National Security" ("Xiandai Wenhua Zhuanbo yu Guojia Anquan"), *JSKX* 2005:3, pp. 64-69. (For a discussion of the important role Chinese culture is seen as playing in unifying the people see Yang Baoling, "On Cultural Identification and National Reunification" ["Lun Wenhua Rentong yu Guojia Tongyi"], *JSKX* 2005:3, pp. 57-63.)

³⁹ For typical discussions, see Wu Xianxiang and Gao Yiqun, "Preemptiveness and US Hegemony" ("Xianfa Zhiren yu Meiguo Baquan"), *JSKX* 2005:1, pp. 134-138; "Meiguo Hewuqi Zouxian 'Xianfa Zhiren'" ("American Nuclear Weapons Tending toward 'First Strikes Control Others'"), *Xiandai Junshi* 2005:12, pp. 34-36; and "2005 Nian Meiguo 'Guofang Zhanlue' Pingxi" ("Analysis of the 2005 'American Defensive Strategy'"), *Guofang* 2005:6, pp. 63-65.

Beijing's perspective several states pose varying but undeniable threats: first and foremost the United States itself, followed by the two powerful entities that straddle it to the north and south, Russia and the latter's longtime ally India; then the smaller yet still potent states of Japan (which many PRC strategists envision as a future, belligerent nuclear power), Vietnam, and North and South Korea. Taiwan is of course a separate issue, while the contiguous Central Asian states, source of predatory raiders and historic conquerors including the Khitan, Mongols, and Jurchen over the centuries, potentially threaten border integrity, particularly if their Moslem populations become further radicalized.

Much is made of the growth of weaponry now capable of threatening US naval assets operating in the Taiwan area, though perhaps their longstanding efforts to project power and control the South China sea and beyond through land based alliances, acquisitions, and seizures (rather than with expensive, vulnerable aircraft carriers that would require a decade to construct) should be regarded as more significant. Aspects that merit attention include the multiplication and deployment of short and intermediate range missiles; basic improvements in missile capability through more advanced targeting systems; the projected nuclear generating program that will provide materials for increased numbers of nuclear weapons; acquisition of increasingly advanced weapons systems and the perfection of indigenous designs (often with the aid of otherwise unemployed Russian and other weapons specialists); purchase and deployment of nuclear and diesel-electric submarines, the latter capable of surreptitiously entering and operating in American littoral waters to coerce or strike any desired target with nuclear missiles; stress upon communications and informational

technologies; revised military doctrine and training; an emphasis upon exploiting space by creating kinetic satellite weapons and high energy lasers;⁴⁰ participation in the Galileo alternative to GPS (though they presumably can still employ the Russian system as well); the acquisition and exploitation of every possible technology as a foundation for leapfrog (“leap-ahead”) weapons;⁴¹ and the nurturing of weapons (including chemical and biological), strategies, and tactics that will enable it balk the technologically sophisticated but net centric dependent US forces.⁴²

Increasing American dependence upon Chinese manufacturing facilities, technological transfers and migration of technological innovation to PRC research and industrial centers, and the further degradation of critical North American manufacturing knowledge and skills are also critical issues. Even more negatively, severe friction is caused by American diatribes on a wide range of issues that China regards as purely internal matters, ranging from condemnations of human rights abuses through pronouncements on the *yüan*'s “inappropriately” or “artificially” high value (despite the current US policy of deliberately allowing its currency to devalue and the horrific

⁴⁰ This interest in the militarization of space and the design of space weapons has been well noted in Western analytical articles. However, for typical PRC discussions see “On Space Supremacy” (“Lun Zhitian Quan”), *JSKX* 2003:2, pp. 18-23 and “Space Strength and New Revolution in Military Affairs” (“Kongjian Liliang yu Junshi Biange”), *JSKX* 2003:3, pp. 59-63.

⁴¹ As an integral part of their revolution in military affairs, the PRC has increasingly stressed the idea of developing and deploying weapons intended to surpass, rather than merely match, the West, thereby skipping the slow and laborious process of generational transition. Although mechanization cannot be avoided, digitization accompanied by weapons that “leap ahead” are envisioned as crucial and new technologies are to be indigenously nurtured in useful fields, such as biological warfare. (Initially mentioned in comments attributed to Deng Xiaoping, as well as being the subject of numerous dedicated articles in *JSKX* and other journals, the idea of “leap ahead” weapons is mentioned in the most diverse contexts. For example, among many, see Lu Jining, “On Deng Xiaoping’s Innovation in Military Theory” (“Luelun Deng Xiaoping Junshi Lilun Chuangxin Huodong”), *JSKX* 2003:1, pp. 34-41; “Remarkable Innovation in the Theory of Military Equipment Development” (“Jundui Zhibei Jianshe Lilun de Weida Chuangxin”), *JSKX* 2003:2, pp. 50-56; Wang Jianmin, “Theoretical Guidance in the Leap-ahead in Army Construction” (“Jundui Xiandaihua Jianshe Lishixing Kuayue de Lilun Zhinan”), *JSKS* 2003:5, pp. 22-32; and Qi Wuzheng, “China’s Artillery Development” in *Chinese Views of Future Warfare*, pp. 173-178.

⁴² There is also a growing consciousness (often triggered by reports of foreign research and plans) of the importance of highly unconventional weapons. Although infrequent, articles have appeared on the topic of weather modification, including “Toushi Meiguo, Eluosi Diqiu Wuqi de Fazhan” (“Revelations of American and Russian Development of Hemispheric Weapons”), *Junshi Shilin* 2005:9, pp. 58-60. Others have pondered (purportedly) non-lethal weapons that also have clandestine applications including energy, heat, and stun weapons, lasers, tranquilizers, and of course computer viruses. (For example, see “Feizhimingxing Qiangxie te Zhuyao Zhonglei” [“Major Categories of Non-lethal Weapons”], *Junshi Shilin* 2005:9, pp. 53-54.

spectacle of the last decade when the Asian currencies collapsed, resulting in untold misery); badgering on opening their import markets; and demands to promote consumption and discourage saving (thereby copying much decried American profligacy and perhaps stimulating a fully self-sufficient state).

At the same time the PRC might well be characterized as a seething cauldron of chaos. Although it no longer seems to be a matter of contemporary interest,⁴³ there are many important factors tending to fragmentation and destabilization. Regional rivalry and outright animosity not only persist, but have even intensified among a populace still significantly fractured according to traditional geographical, cultural, and linguistic lines. Economic inequality and government policies have spawned or exacerbated friction between the inhabitants of prosperous urban areas and the agricultural hinterland; Beijing and Shanghai; citizens and local officials; the rich and poor, powerful and disenfranchised; ethnic and religious minorities; hardliners and liberals; various police and paramilitary agencies; educated and uneducated; the essentially hedonistic youth generation and conservative elders; and the military and techno-bureaucrats, among others.

As well documented in the press and recently acknowledged with official pronouncements by top leadership, the chief issue is the rapidly multiplying, increasingly violent unrest stemming from local power elites clashing with a disaffected, unruly, and frustrated populace. This should hardly be surprising since the PRC is now governed not by a Communist Party constituted along traditional lines, however fictively broad based, but by a slowly expanding, self-interested power group whose nucleus

⁴³ The last serious discussion, compiled in David Shambaugh's *Is China Unstable* [Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 2000], occurred nearly a decade ago.

may once have been orthodox believers, but now increasingly encompasses the newly rich, local and regional officials, significant numbers of upper echelon and professional military officers, prominent industrialists, and speculators. It is this group that will structure China's future, that will decide whether to emphasize external tranquility in order to facilitate internal enrichment or will embark the PRC on a quest for world domination.

Because China's territory and population have always been too vast to control, the government has historically resorted to extreme brutality and forceful measures. Marked by even greater disregard for the basic interests of the populace, officials now openly despise the ignorance and powerlessness of the people and readily allow or resort to whatever measures will keep them subservient, including brutality and thuggery. Although urban denizens at least enjoy a façade of modernity and can generally pursue their pleasures unrestricted except by their financial limitations, peasants and farmers find themselves onerously governed, heavily taxed, and increasingly displaced from the essentially ancestral lands on which they expended years of onerous labor.

They and the numerous workers released by outmoded state enterprises find that the fundamental services formerly provided by their communes and organizations, including basic health care and education, have not only eroded, but disappeared altogether. Lacking any means of redress, they have been mounting increasing numbers of vehement protests that easily erupt into violence. In addition, large numbers of disgruntled military personnel, both retired and active duty, daily see local officials and party cadres conspicuously prospering even as they lack sufficient provisions for a

full stomach. Given their military experience and knowledge of facilities and weapons storage, they comprise a disproportionately dangerous sector of society.⁴⁴

The specter of contemporary social unrest coupled with an acute consciousness of historical tendencies toward violent upheaval compels the government to stress internal security and configure its external actions accordingly. Fear of disorder entangles all aspects of government life and adds critical impetus to the quest for natural resources abroad, not simply to provide the materials for the industrial export engine, but also the basis for increasingly demanded comforts such as air conditioning and the necessary accoutrements of modern (“hedonistic”) civilization, including cell phones and I-pods.⁴⁵ No longer are people willing to follow the examples of extreme frugality vociferously promoted a decade ago, living with a single fifteen watt light bulb, tolerating temperature extremes, or suffering electricity shortages that not only throttle industrial production, but also displace workers into a saturated community of unemployed and underemployed. Chinese Marxist doctrine has long postulated that future wars will be caused by economic clashes and indigenous theory from the Warring States onward has always attributed the inescapable origins of conflict to the friction that results from insufficient products.⁴⁶ To avoid unleashing the forces of chaos, the PRC can only conclude that it must maintain an aggressive posture in the world arena.

⁴⁴ As seen in “Obligations of the Son of Heaven” in the Warring States work known as the *Sima Fa*, China has long been conscious of the distinction between the civil and martial realms, as well as the threat posed by both active and demobilized forces. (For a more recent expression of this concern see Tong Zhikui and Wang Wei, “Tuiyi Shiping Anzhi Cunzai de Wenti yu Duici” (“Extant Questions and Policies Regarding the Settlement of Retired Military Personnel”), *Guofang* 2005:12, pp. 43-44.

⁴⁵ For a recent discussion of the need for natural resources see Chen Po, “On Strategic Resources and State Security” (“Lun Zhanlue Ziyuan yu Guojia Anquan”), *JSKX* 2005:1, pp. 7-15.

⁴⁶ For a succinct discussion of early Chinese ideas on struggle being inherent to the human condition and based upon competition for limited goods, see the commentary to “Preparation of Strategic Power” in Sawyer, *Sun Pin Military Methods* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995), pp. 118-121. (A much expanded discussion will also be found in “Chinese Warfare: The Paradox of the Unlearned Lesson.”)

Intentions and Projections

The Qin Subversive Model

As the Warring States period has been the focus of extensive contemporary scrutiny, the writings documenting it and the immediately previous era known as the Spring and Autumn exert a disproportionate influence on the PRC mindset and modern strategic thinking. Essentially chronicles of unremitting, internecine strife and ever escalating warfare rather than benign portrayals of antique times, they and the era's theoretical military manuals have traditionally been regarded as veritable handbooks of intrigue, pernicious concepts, perverse strategies, and diabolical tactics. Substantial efforts were therefore made across the ages to prevent their acquisition by potential enemies and foreign peoples.

For example, about 29 BCE the emperor denied his uncle's request for a copy of the recently completed *Shi Ji*, China's first synthetic history. A classic that has been assiduously read throughout Asia for over two millennia and significantly influenced the interpretation of early military affairs, it was characterized as being replete with insidious materials, deemed a virtual textbook of plots and subterfuges.⁴⁷ Moreover, it was said "to contain the strategies of the Warring States, the horizontal and vertical alliances, tactical power and deception, and the unorthodox measures employed by tacticians at the rise of the Han."

The Tang similarly denied a Turfan request for China's early writings out of fear that even such innocuous, ancient Confucian classics as the *Shang Shu* (*Book of Documents*), *Shi Jing* (*Classic of Odes*), and *Chun Qiu* (*Spring and Autumn Chronicle*)

⁴⁷ *Han Shu*, "Xuan Yuan Liuwang." (For further discussion, see Ralph D. Sawyer, *The Tao of Spycraft* [Boulder: Westview Press, 1998], pp. 1-3.)

would provide the enemy with vital knowledge about “the martial,” the “conduct of warfare,” and “deceptive methods and stratagems for employing troops.”⁴⁸ The *Zhanguo Ce (Intrigues of the Warring States)*, largely incorporated into the *Shi Ji* and another repository presently being mined for plots and inspiration, was viewed as even more subversive. Such concern not only reflects the rarely admitted realization that early China was marked by duplicity and nefarious action, but also epitomizes China’s penchant for valuing knowledge as the key to effective action.

Covert methods intended to subvert other states, encompassing bribes, rumors, and estrangement techniques rapidly proliferated in the Warring States period. The astonishing success of several plots, particularly three cases in which the replacement of effective field commanders resulted in horrendous defeats (including Changping), so dramatically affected the course of antique history that the lessons continue to be pondered with an eye to immediate application.⁴⁹ However, contemporary PRC strategists have particularly focused on the rise of the Qin -- the powerful but short lived dynasty well known in the west for its vibrant *terra cotta* soldiers -- as a model for emulation.

Initially a small, semi-civilized state on the Western periphery of the Zhou cultural enclave, the Qin survived the ruthless strife of the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods to emerge as the dominant power by manipulating, battling, and subverting the six remaining contenders. The PRC envisions itself in an identical

⁴⁸ *Jiu Tangshu*, “Tufan, Shang.” The *Zuo Zhuan* or *Zuo’s Commentary (to the Chun Qiu)*, being replete with battle descriptions, was also proscribed. Readily available translations of the early classics range from those of the great James Legge completed more than a century ago (but still highly viable and often the only complete versions) through Bernhard Karlgren and Arthur Waley. (Although Legge’s translation of the *Zuo Zhuan* is fundamental, Burton Watson’s selections [*The Tso Chuan*, published by Columbia University Press] provide representative military and strategic episodes. The *Zhangguo Ce* has been translated by J. I. Crump under the title of *Chan-kuo Ts’è*, published by Oxford University Press.)

⁴⁹ In addition to the estrangement examples noted below, these techniques and numerous representative cases will be found in our *Tao of Spycraft*.

situation, the enemy states arrayed to its “east” being the American allies ranging from South Korea down through Japan and the Philippines, as well as Taiwan and finally Australia lying in the deep background. The appearance of US bases in Central Asia are a new fillip, but being still weak and tenuous, are viewed as susceptible to being countered by regional political organizations. However, recent announcements of increased U.S. military cooperation with Indonesia and Vietnam; logistical support from Singapore; growing rapprochement with Mongolia; extensive American military activities in Afghanistan; and Pakistan’s reliability as an ally are all deemed problematic.

Given these geostrategic circumstances and the PRC’s avowed determination to end American hegemony, the multi-faceted Qin approach has appeal as a comprehensive methodology for excluding the United States from the Pacific region. Thereafter, it will presumably be able to dominate the known world, just as in imperial times, through encircling the U.S. with bases in Panama, Cuba, Latin America, Egypt, and other choke points, much as in a game of *weiqi* (*wei-ch’i*) (better known under the Japanese name of *Go*).⁵⁰

Although Qin’s formidable warriors still had to wrest final victory on the battlefield, bribery proved to be the most effective covert practice amidst the lethal circumstances of the Warring States period. When employed as an adjunct to false rumors designed to besmirch and disparage, it ensured the exile or execution of the loyal, meritorious, and wise. It also empowered the highly successful, systematic policy of disinformation and subversion that was implemented by Qin’s persuasive double agents, including the

⁵⁰ Mao Zedong first compared strategy with a game of *weiqi*, while David Lai has recently expanded the analogy with a well known article “Learning from the Stones: A *Go* Approach to Mastering China’s Strategic Concept, *Shi*,” May, 2004. (Constantine Menges includes an imaginative, though not totally inconceivable, eight stage PRC strategy for achieving world domination, elements of which merit consideration.).

infamous Su Qin.

The policy of aggressively employing bribes to facilitate their achievement of world domination was initially proposed after Qin's enemies convened a ministerial meeting for the purpose of forming an obstructive strategic alliance. Believing that "sumptuous entertainments" and an "ostentatious display of gifts" could buy off adversaries and cause potential allies to become estranged from each other because of their divisive interests and the inherent nature of conflict, the king appropriated the enormous sum of five thousand catties of gold for the task. Even before the allotted amount had been expended, the realm's high officials reportedly fell to fighting among themselves.⁵¹

These same measures were reemployed slightly later when the two lynchpin states of Han and Wei were targeted by "the king of Qin who provided Dun Ruo with ten thousand catties of gold. Dispatched eastward, he traveled among the states where he brought Han and Wei's generals and ministers under Qin's influence. Then he went north to traverse Yan and Zhao where he effected the death of General Li Mu. Thus, when the king of Qi paid a diplomatic visit to Qin, the four other states had to follow."⁵²

This laconic account significantly understates the magnitude of the achievements. Li Mu and Sima Shang, the last capable generals remaining in Zhao, had recently repelled several Qin onslaughts, inflicting heavy casualties. They were eliminated by "making generous gifts of gold to Zhao's favored ministers and employing them as turned agents who claimed that Li Mu and Sima Shang wanted to betray Zhao and join Qin in order to receive generous fiefs. Becoming suspicious, the king had them

⁵¹ "Qinyu, 3," *Zhanguo Ce*

⁵² "Qinyu, 4," *Zhanguo Ce*.

replaced before executing Li Mu and exiling Sima Shang. Three months later Wang Jian extensively destroyed Zhao's army through a fervent sudden strike, slew Zhao's commanding general, and captured both the king and his generals. Qin then extinguished the state of Zhao."⁵³ Having failed to learn from the well-known story of Bo Pi who subverted Wu at the end of the Spring and Autumn period, the ministers not only endangered the state, but actually caused its destruction for a few pieces of gold !

About 237 BCE the noted strategist Wei Liaozi then similarly advised the king to systematically employ bribes as a basic tool for weakening the other feudal states and "confusing their plans."⁵⁴ The king concurred and appointed him as an adviser while Li Si, then wielding the government's power, added a lethal dimension. "He secretly dispatched strategists bearing gold and jewels to offer as presents as they wandered among the feudal lords exercising their persuasions. Famous officials in the courts of the feudal lords who might be tempted by material goods were to be entangled with abundant gifts; those unwilling to collaborate were to be assassinated with sharp swords. Whenever his plan to estrange the feudal lords from their ministers proved successful, the king of Qin would then have his expert generals follow up with attacks."⁵⁵

In conjunction with the successful implementation of these subversive measures, the cowering specter of Qin's awesome military power (and their reputation for ferocity) persuaded many states to abandon "provocative" military preparations and adopt policies of appeasement. Whether they failed to perceive the true nature of the threat or

⁵³ *Zhanguo Ce*, "Zhaoyu."

⁵⁴ For a discussion of the incident and a complete translation of the book attributed to Wei Liaozi, see our *Seven Military Classics of Ancient China*.

⁵⁵ *Shi Ji*, "Li Si Liezhuan." The king referred to in the passage is the eventual unifier of all China, the first emperor of the Qin dynasty.

simply feared antagonizing the king of Qin, they not only failed to conclude strategic partnerships, but also inflicted substantial losses on each other by shortsightedly battling among themselves. Sunzi's ideal of "thwarting their alliances" having been realized, the isolated states were then sequentially defeated with comparative ease.⁵⁶

Although assassination is rarely attempted today, a targeted individual may be "removed" by marginalizing, discrediting, framing, blackmailing, or even coercion. (In the contemporary, pro-China environment, insidious terms such as "cold warrior mentality," "warmonger," "out of touch with reality," and bent on "demonizing China" are frequently employed to deprecate anyone criticizing PRC activities and intentions.) The PRC has also come to realize that bribery need not be an outright payment of money or gift of goods, whether to lobbyists, influential officials, or potential spies, but may simply be the lure of access to lucrative markets and special treatment, especially in contrast with denial and exclusion.

Finally, although several examples of estrangement techniques are well known and much studied, perhaps the most famous unfolded at the end of the Spring and Autumn period when Wu Zixu was slandered, marginalized, and finally so discredited by Bo Pi that he was executed. A highly effective advisor whose strategies had largely enabled the state of Wu to defeat their nemesis Chu, Wu Zixu's chief offense had been to constantly warn against the danger posed by Yue, a state they had virtually exterminated. However, Yue's ruler, the famous Gou Jian, unabashedly implemented a

⁵⁶ In "Planning Offensives" Sunzi states: "The highest realization of warfare is to attack the enemy's plans; next is to attack their alliances; next to attack their army; and the lowest is to attack their fortified cities." (For a recent PRC assessment of this principle, see Yao Huaining and Wang Chenqing, "On Sun Zi's Strategy of 'Attacking their Alliances'" ["Ye Tan Sunzi Bingfa de 'Fajiao' Sixiang"], *JSKX* 2004:5, pp. 126-131.) To effect the estrangement of U.S. allies in the Pacific a number of "perverse" techniques from the early writings and traditional manuals including the *Thirty-six Stratagems* may easily be employed, though stirring popular unrest against American forces (such as by having Caucasians dressed as American sailors or soldiers commit sexual offenses, particularly in the Southeast Asian states of Singapore and Indonesia) would be simplicity itself.

thoroughgoing policy of submissive toadying and extravagant gift giving designed to debauch the ruler while undermining his caution and ameliorating his animosity. In addition to corrupting other important ministers and subverting the capable, Yue reportedly engineered a biological plot that decimated Wu's food supply before finally launching a series of invasions that conquered the bewildered king.⁵⁷

Contemporary Enunciations

Even though the vituperative rhetoric long associated with Mao's dictatorship has largely vanished, in recent years several proposals for waging total warfare against the United States have surfaced and received considerable publicity in the PRC and foreign countries, though far less than might have been expected given the staggering implications. Pro-Chinese foreign spokesmen have ardently worked to obscure and marginalize these pronouncements, vociferously and self-assuredly denying that they represent actual PRC strategic thinking. However, they are hardly anomalous and continue to be cited, with approval, in important PRC military journals and online media, as if to reemphasize the far darker reality that lies beneath the current benign facade.

⁵⁷ Although the essentials are found in the *Shi Ji*, the story is dramatically retold in the semi-historical *Wu Yue Chun Qiu* where the subversive program is detailed. Ironically, Wu Zixu had even been responsible for the ruler having ascended the throne. (For an extended account, see the introduction to our *Art of War*; for the subversive program see our *Tao of Spycraft*, pp. 232-243. For a contemporary discussion by a high ranking PRC strategist, see Wu Chunqiu, "The War between Wu and Yueh for Supremacy: Grand Strategy and Strategists" ["Wu Yueh Zhengpa zhi Zhan: Ta Zhanlue yu Zhanluejia"], *JSKX* 2004:2, pp. 72-82 [in English]. The significance of ancient strategies as well as Wu's views and his book *Grand Strategy* are discussed by Michael Pillsbury in *China Debates the Future Security Environment*, pp. 207ff.)

⁵⁸ This and subsequent translations are taken from the FBIS translation of Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui's *Unrestricted Warfare* originally published in Chinese by the PLA in 1999. (Pages 206-207.) Although viewed as a radical work when it first appeared, many of the ideas had previously been expressed, albeit in truncated form. For example, the idea of war in depth is seen in Gao Heng's article "Future Military Trends" (in Pillsbury, *Chinese Views of Future Warfare*, pp. 85-94). Chen Huan also discussed the broadening of the battlefield and elimination of traditional bounds in an article from 1996 that emphasizes paralyzing the enemy's fundamental capabilities. (See "The Third Military Revolution" in *Chinese Views of Future Warfare*, pp. 389-398.) Other articles have concluded there will no longer be a distinction between combatants and non-combatants, including Bi Canggeng's "On the Soft Casualty in Modern Wars" ("Shizhe Xiandai Zhanzheng Ruanshashang"), *JSKX* 2003:5, pp. 122-126, and Niu Li and Wu Jifeng's "On the New Concepts of Chinese Military Strategy in the 21st Century" ("Shilun 21 Shiji Zhongguo Junshi Zhanlue Xinguannian"), *JSKX* 2003:2, pp. 85-90.

Insofar as China has always practiced total warfare, the appearance of a lengthy book by two middle rank military officers entitled *Unrestricted Warfare* in 1999 is hardly surprising. Supposedly a theoretical discussion prompted by the first Gulf War and the ongoing revolution in military affairs, it systematically advocates employing every possible method to wrest victory based upon a realization that traditional forms of warfare have become outmoded and the battlefield no longer artificially confined. According to the authors, future warfare will be fought in many dimensions rather than restricted to any single domain, whether commercial, ecological, or informational: "In terms of beyond limits [unrestricted] warfare, there is no longer any distinction between what is or is not the battlefield. Spaces in nature including the ground, the seas, the air, and outer space are battlefields, but social spaces such as the military, politics, economics, culture, and the psyche are also battlefields. And the technological space linking these two great spaces is even more so the battlefield over which all antagonists spare no effort in contending. Warfare can be military, or it can be quasi-military, or it can be non-military. It can use violence, or it can be non-violent. It can be a confrontation between professional soldiers, or one between newly emerging forces consisting primarily of ordinary people or experts."⁵⁸

Destructive measures targeting the financial sector, communications, and core components of the infrastructure -- especially transportation and the electricity grid -- are envisioned as likely to be particularly effective in severely disrupting everyday life, thereby causing consternation and enervating the will to fight because Americans are perceived as lacking self-discipline, resilience, and the capacity to endure casualties.⁵⁹ (For example, they assert that the "US would rather treat war as the opponent in a

⁵⁹ See, for example, pages 146-7.

marathon race of military technology and are not willing to look at war more as a test of morale and courage, wisdom and strategy.”)⁶⁰ Moreover, in discussing the requisite measures to bring about “social panic, street riots, and a political crisis,” they approvingly cite Sherman’s advance toward Savannah in the Civil War because “it was not in search of combat, it was to burn and plunder all along the way. It was a measure used to destroy the economy in the southern army’s rear area, to make the southern populace and the southern army lose the ability to resist, thus accomplishing the north’s war objective. This is an example of the successful use of unlimited measures to achieve a limited objective.”⁶¹

Noting Sunzi’s emphasis upon tactical flexibility and affirming Machiavelli’s thrust, they further assert that “judging the effectiveness of a particular means is not mainly a matter of looking at what category it is in, or at whether or not it conforms to some moral standard. Instead, it mainly involves looking at whether or not it conforms to a certain principle, namely, is it the best way to achieve the desired objective ?”⁶²

The inclusion of drugs, smuggling, psychological warfare -- a major thematic topic in recent issues of *China Military Science* -- and various weapons of mass destruction ranging from biological through chemical and even nuclear, all to be combined in new ways, indicates that no method of inflicting casualties, disabling the infrastructure, and sowing disorder is to be excluded or neglected.⁶³ In other words, in employing methods intended to destroy the pervasive accord that Sunzi postulated as

⁶⁰ Page 95.

⁶¹ Page 210.

⁶² Page 194.

⁶³ In addition to numerous articles found in virtually every issue of *JSKX*, the 2004:4 and 2005:3 issues contained special thematic sections on the “Theory of Strategic Psychological Warfare.” (The importance of combat spirit, especially the role of PLA superior spirit in defeating enervated enemies even in disadvantageous circumstances, is also frequently discussed in individual articles. For a recent analytic article in English, see Timothy L. Thomas, “New Developments in Chinese Strategic Psychological Warfare,” *Special Warfare*, April 2003, pp. 9-17.)

essential to waging war and quickly seizing what the enemy loves, they fully embrace his advocacy of what might be termed the “ruthless practice of efficient warfare.”⁶⁴ However, they admit that wresting victory in this manner falls somewhat short of Sunzi’s well known ideal of achieving victory without combat.

Their advocacy of deep, interior attacks is of course prompted by China’s comparative weakness in every military dimension except simple strength of numbers. Because it will be fighting from a disadvantaged, inferior position, they believe PRC strategy must focus upon creating localized imbalances -- an old *Art of War* concept -- and exploit asymmetric methods to prevail.⁶⁵ However, the prospects for success are seen as considerably enhanced by the Western dependence upon complex technologies that have numerous vulnerabilities,⁶⁶ Chinese recourse to unique weapons that enable the doomed to suddenly prevail (such as the *sha-shou-jian* or “assassin’s mace”),⁶⁷ and the exploitation of superior wisdom and unorthodox strategies, all

⁶⁴ For a discussion of the “ruthless practice of efficient warfare” – my characterization of Sunzi’s vision -- see the introduction to Sawyer, *Essential Art of War* (New York: Basic, 2005). The critical role of unity is discussed in the first chapter of the *Art of War*, entitled “Initial Estimations,” while the idea of manipulating and controlling others by seizing what they love is briefly articulated in “Nine Terrains” which states “If the enemy is numerous, disciplined, and about to advance, first seize something that they love, for then they will listen to you.”

⁶⁵ For a discussion of Sun-tzu’s key concepts of tactical imbalance and strategic power, see the introduction to our single volume *Art of War* translation, pp. 143ff. The need to employ asymmetric methods has been the subject of considerable discussion in the PRC over the past decade as new formulations come to displace Mao’s concept of people’s warfare and the aggressive defensive. (For a succinct overview of early but increasingly relevant formulations of defeating superior enemies and employing the revolution in military affairs to extend the battle to space and other domains, see Pillsbury, *Chinese Views of Future Warfare*, xxxii-l and the articles that follow, especially Shen Kuiguan, “Dialectics of Defeating the Superior with the Inferior,” pp. 213-219. For a recent, typical JSKX article see Deng Feng, “Dialectical Understanding of the Issues of Defeating a Powerful Enemy with a Weak Force in the High-tech Wars” (“Pianzheng Renshi Gaojishu Zhanzhengzhong Yilie Shengyou de Wenti”), *JSKX* 2004:3, pp. 107-111.)

⁶⁶ “America’s Declining Role” in *China Debates the Future Security Environment* provides an important example of this sort of internal analysis and includes a discussion of the vulnerability of aircraft carrier groups (pp. 83-85). *Guofang* frequently includes articles on U.S. vulnerabilities, many based upon assessments of performance in Iraq and reports of difficulties and failures published in various U.S. military media, including *Defense News*, *Proceedings*, and *Marine Corps Gazette*.

⁶⁷ Although originally a weapon identified with assassins, one equally employed by anyone as a measure of last resort, in dire circumstances, it seems to have been transformed in contemporary understanding into a magical, first strike weapon just the way atomic bombs functioned at the end of World War II. (For an extensive study of the assassin’s mace, see Jason E. Bruzdinski, “Demystifying *Shashoujian*: China’s ‘Assassin’s Mace’ Concept” in Andrew Scobell and Larry M. Wortzel, eds., *Civil-Military Change in China: Elites, Institutions, and Ideas after the 16th Party Congress* (Carlisle: U.S. Army War College, 2004), pp. 309-370. For a broader discussion of “magic weapons” see Lu Jining, “On Deng Xiaoping’s Innovation in Military Theory” (“Luelun

common themes in contemporary military literature.⁶⁸

Triple S: Systematic Sabotage and Subversion

(The following explication is based upon the primary assumption that the continuous, extensive military writings are being consciously studied for ideas, organizing concepts, and operational techniques, and that historical case studies, being the method for discussion from the Tang onward, figure prominently in explicating and even defining principles and doctrine.⁶⁹)

Two classical military writings furnish the impetus and orientation for significant portions of what might be projected as a contemporary program of low-tech, systematic sabotage and subversion coherent with *Unrestricted Warfare*. The first is Sunzi's much maligned chapter on secret agents, the world's first systematic theoretical discussion of the subject of intelligence gathering. Warfare being premised upon accurate information, Sunzi deems the acquisition of sound intelligence fundamental to all other actions. However, rather than just simple information gathering, in his conception many of these agents should be assigned active roles in estrangement, disinformation,

Deng Xiaoping Junshi Lilun Chuangxin Huodong"), *JSKX* 2003:1, pp. 34-41.

⁶⁸ Unorthodox strategies are the focus of our forthcoming book, *The Tao of Deception: Unorthodox Warfare in Traditional and Contemporary China*. For a key example based on historical precedent of the belief that an inferior position can be reversed see Li Hongcheng and Ren Li, "Strategic Application of Weak Yan in Defeating Strong Qi by Transforming Strategic Position" ("Ruo Yan Niuzhuan Zhanlue Taishi Zhansheng Qiang Qi te Celue Yunyong"), *JSKX* 2003:1, pp. 131-137. (Ironically, Qi managed to survive the invasion that reduced it to just two towns and resurge through Tian Dan's cleverly conceived subversive efforts.)

⁶⁹ Their viability is attested to by numerous articles in journals such as *JSKX* and *Guofang*; the ongoing publication of classic military writings, including some very esoteric texts such as the *Taibai Yinjing*, by the PLA press, Academy of Military Science, and others; and contemporary books with such titles as *Relationship between the Seven Military Classics and Contemporary Warfighting (Wujing Qishu yu Zhanzheng Zhanlue)* by Chen Xiangling published by the National Defense University Press in 2003.

bribery, and other subversive practices.

Although rarely discussed in the military journals, the theory and practice of spycraft in traditional China -- the subject of our earlier work, *The Tao of Spycraft* -- continues to form an essential component of contemporary Chinese training programs. In modern practice the PRC relies heavily upon open source information gathered by masses of virtual amateurs -- the many students and businessmen presently in North America -- supplemented by professionals who approach predetermined targets. Armies of the inquisitive siphon off the latest ideas and discoveries for exploitation and development in the PRC; front companies and major PRC entities gain access to proprietary information through a variety of means, including paid informants, defectors, and businessmen and others entrapped by female agents, especially in Asia;⁷⁰ military specialists are targeted, particularly overseas; military manuals and publications are combed for knowledge and weaknesses; and cyber warfare specialists routinely filch vital data and plans through the pervasive internet.⁷¹ Disinformation is also actively practiced, both by official spokesmen and prominent American lobbyists, and academia

⁷⁰ The PRC recently admitted they had established special, highly trained "beauty brigades" to carry out intelligence, counter-intelligence, and subversive functions. (See "Unmasked: The mean machines of a deadly female marine unit," *South China Morning Post*, August 19, 2004.)

⁷¹ Perhaps out of a reluctance to completely abandon Mao Zedong, his outmoded concept of people's war has been reborn as information warfare, as cyber-attacks employing tens of thousands to strike and disable the enemy's informational processing capabilities. (This is seen as well cohering with Mao's famous saying of "you fight your way, I'll fight my way" -- in other words, not accepting conventional methods. However, in this regard, Sunzi has become the real patron saint of informational warfare, including in the U.S.) For earlier formulations of this view see Wei Jincheng, "Information War: A New Form of People's War" (in Pillsbury, *Chinese Views of Future Warfare*, pp. 409-412) and Wang Pufeng, "The Challenge of Information Warfare" (in *Chinese Views of Future Warfare*, 317-326). For a more recent discussion see Chen Yutian et al., "Adapting to the Changed War Forms and Inventing New Ways of Peoples War" ("Shiying Zhazheng Xingtai Bianhua, Chuangxin Renmin Zhazheng Zhanfa"), *JSKX* 2004:3, pp. 102-106. (In the section entitled "Forecasting Future Wars" [*In China Debates the Future Security Environment*] Michael Pillsbury includes material on the three different approaches of people's war, high tech war, and localized war, though there seems to be a hybrid evolving based on the latter two. [Also see Paul H. Godwin, "Change and Continuity in Chinese Military Doctrine: 1949-1999 in *Chinese Warfighting: The PLA Experience Since 1949* (New York: East Gate, 2003), pp. 23-55.]

infiltrated with conducive views and benign portrayals.⁷²

The second impetus derives from the much revered *Six Secret Teachings* attributed to the Tai Gong of early Zhou fame but certainly dating to the late Warring States period. A work that enjoys significant status in PRC military circles, it also appears in many popular guises and formats, including comic book versions, under a variety of titles. Among its sixty chapters are two explosive discussions on clandestine operations that have often been condemned for their perversity and inhumanity. Very much in the tradition of the subversive program undertaken by Gou Jian, the section entitled “Civil Offensive” promulgates twelve effective measures directed toward the ruler but broadly effective for actively subverting any authority figure or dominant power. Most of them involve currying favor, employing coercion, causing disaffection and estrangement, discrediting the capable, marginalizing the wise, generally acting submissive, nurturing licentiousness and dissolution, obscuring the truth, and fostering arrogance and laxity. Using potential profits as a lure and consistently nurturing trust in order to end suspicion and undermine defensive preparations are also focal components. As they are unknown in the West, although they have been translated and discussed in our other works, the “twelve measures for civil offensive” merit reprising in full:⁷³

First, accord with what (the ruler) likes in order to accommodate his wishes. He will eventually grow arrogant and invariably mount some perverse affair. If you can

⁷² The issue of influencing academic institutions and carrying forward cultural warfare was recently discussed in “Strategic Political Work and Strategic Psychological Warfare,” *JSKX* 2005:3, pp. 144-156. (The general reluctance of American Sinologists to criticize PRC behavior and their antipathy to ponder, let alone teach, Chinese military history has already been noted by others as evidence of a virtual conspiracy intended to favorably shape the portrayal of historical events in China. However, the recent overseas proliferation of the Confucius Institutes is a far more overt manifestation of the present cultural offensive.)

⁷³ A complete translation of the *Six Secret Teachings* with a historical introduction and extensive notes may be found in Sawyer, *Seven Military Classics of Ancient China*. Further discussion of the chapter may also be found in our *Tao of Spycraft* in the section entitled “Systematic Programs and Psychological Warfare,” as well as our forthcoming *Tao of Deception*.

appear to follow along, you will certainly be able to eliminate him.

Second, become familiar with those he loves in order to fragment his awesomeness. When men have two different inclinations, their loyalty invariably declines. When his court no longer has any loyal ministers, the state altars will inevitably be endangered.

Third, covertly bribe his assistants, fostering a deep relationship with them. While they will bodily stand in his court, their emotions will be directed outside it. The state will certainly suffer harm.

Fourth, assist him in his licentiousness and indulgence in music in order to dissipate his will. Make him generous gifts of pearls and jade and ply him with beautiful women. Speak deferentially, listen respectfully, follow his commands, and accord with him in everything. He will never imagine you might be in conflict with him. Our treacherous measures will then be settled.

Fifth, treat his loyal officials very generously but reduce the gifts you provide to the ruler. Delay his emissaries; do not listen to their missions. When he eventually dispatches other men treat them with sincerity, embrace and trust them. The ruler will then again feel you are in harmony with him. If you manage to treat his formerly loyal officials very generously, his state can then be plotted against.

Sixth, make secret alliances with his favored ministers, but visibly keep his less favored outside officials at a distance. His talented people will then be under external influence while enemy states encroach upon his territory. Few states in such a situation have survived.

Seventh, if you want to bind his heart to you, you must offer generous presents.

To gather in his assistants, loyal associates, and loved ones you must secretly show them the gains they can realize by colluding with you. Have them slight their work and then their preparations will be futile.

Eighth, gift him with great treasures and make plans with him. When the plans are successful and profit him, he will have faith in you because of the profits. This is what is termed "being closely embraced." The result of being closely embraced is that he will inevitably be used by us. When someone rules a state but is externally controlled, his territory will inevitably be defeated.

Ninth, honor him with praise. Do nothing that will cause him personal discomfort. Display the proper respect accruing to a great power and your obedience will certainly be trusted. Magnify his honor, being the first to gloriously praise him, humbly embellishing him as a Sage. Then his state will suffer great loss !

Tenth, be submissive so that he will trust you and thereby learn about his true situation. Accept his ideas and respond to his affairs as if you were twins. Once you have learned everything subtly gather in his power. Thus when the ultimate day arrives it will seem as if Heaven itself destroyed him.

Eleventh, block up his access by means of the Tao. Among subordinates there is no one who does not value rank and wealth nor hate danger and misfortune. Secretly express great respect toward them and gradually bestow valuable gifts in order to gather in the more outstanding talents. Accumulate your own resources until they become very substantial but manifest an external appearance of shortage. Covertly bring in wise knights and entrust them with planning great strategy. Attract courageous knights and augment their spirit. Even when they are sufficiently rich and honored

continue to increase them. When your faction has been fully established you will have attained the objective referred to as “blocking his access.” If someone has a state but his access is blocked, how can he be considered as having the state?

Twelfth, support his dissolute officials in order to confuse him. Introduce beautiful women and licentious sounds in order to befuddle him. Send him outstanding dogs and horses in order to tire him. From time to time allow him great power in order to entice him to greater arrogance. Then investigate Heaven’s signs and plot with the world against him.

When these twelve measures are fully employed they will become a military weapon. Thus when, as it is said, one “looks at Heaven above and investigates Earth below” and the proper signs are already visible, attack.

The second *Six Secret Teachings* chapter, “Three Doubts,” expounds the preferred method for undermining enemy rulers, concretely expressed in terms of the hated Shang. Although abstract and in need of reformulation for contemporary circumstances, it is considered highly applicable to the power relationship between China and the United States. According to the text, King Wu queried the Tai Gong, saying: “I want to overthrow the Shang but have three doubts. I am afraid our strength will be inadequate to attack the strong, estrange the close supporters within the court, and disperse their people. What should I do?” The Tai Gong then outlined another series of measures that in addition to the usual lures and enticements, techniques applicable both internally and externally to prompt the dispersal of allies, clearly reflect the Daoist penchant for attacking strength by strengthening it to the point it becomes

unstable and develops nodes of vulnerability:⁷⁴

In order to attack the strong you must nurture them to make them even stronger, and increase them to make them even more extensive. What is too strong will certainly break, what is too extended must have deficiencies. Attack the strong through their strength. Cause the estrangement of favored officials by using favorites and disperse people by means of people.

Now in the Tao of planning, thoroughness and secrecy are treasured. You should become involved with them in numerous affairs and ply them with temptations of profit. Conflict will then surely arise.

If you want to estrange their close supporters, you must do it by using what they love, making gifts to those they favor, giving them what they want. Tempt them with what they find profitable, making them ambitions. Those who covet profits will be extremely happy at the prospects and their remaining doubts will be ended.

Now without doubt the Tao for attacking is to first obfuscate the king's clarity and then attack his strength. Debauch him with beautiful women, entice him with profit. Nurture him with flavors and provide him with the company of female musicians. Then after you have caused his subordinates to become estranged from him, you must cause the people to grow distant from him while never letting him know your plans. Appear to support him and draw him into your trap. Don't let him become aware of what is happening, for only then can your plan be successful.

The idea of people's warfare (which still has many proponents in the PRC

⁷⁴ Chapter 36 of the traditionally transmitted *Dao De Jing* states: "If you want to reduce something, you must certainly stretch it. If you want to weaken something, you must certainly strengthen it. If you want to abolish something, you must certainly make it flourish." Similar views are expressed in the *Three Strategies of Huangsi Gong*. (For further discussion of these Taoist concepts in a military vein, see the introduction to our *Tao of War*.)

despite the new emphasis upon local wars under high tech conditions) is actually well articulated in another chapter of the *Six Secret Teachings* entitled "Agricultural Implements." In response to King Wu's question as to whether preparations for war can be neglected in times of peace, the Tai Gong advised that "The implements for offense and defense are fully found in ordinary human activity" and then went on to detail how the various techniques used in farming and building, as well as the relevant equipment, might be employed in warfare (and in fact frequently were in the anti-Japanese campaigns and China's civil war).

The battlefield has changed, but for operations within civil society, far from the front lines, the principle has not. Hacksaws and axes, flares and lighters, metal chains and long aluminum spikes, even rope and superglue, not to mention poisons, acids, and Molotov cocktails (as witnessed in the 2005 Paris riots) as well as the ubiquitous computer are all readily available, arouse no suspicion, and are easily employed to devastating effect.

To the extent that they adopt historical doctrine and model on precedents, what might be termed "Triple S" -- *low-tech, systematic sabotage and subversion* -- may be expected to comprise a key element in PRC war plans. Triple S will be equally applicable whether targeting Taiwan or the United States, although with decidedly different intent. Moreover, insofar as the PRC presently lacks the weapons to launch a massive strike directly against North America, it virtually must resort to the traditional, much espoused concept of unorthodox warfare and employ an army of saboteurs to asymmetrically carry the battle to America's heartland. Not only will it thereby realize the primary objective of disheartening the populace and secondarily incapacitating the

infrastructure and entangling major force components, it will presumably avoid a nuclear onslaught in retaliation.

This approach entails a shift in conceptualization from singular terrorist attacks to the sort of systematic program outlined by the book *Unrestricted Warfare*. American and Canadian security efforts currently focus on weapons of mass destruction, dirty bombs, efforts to poison the water supply, and large explosive devices placed on trains and in crowded buildings, all of which threaten to inflict significant casualties but still remain singular in nature and thus largely circumscribed in impact, of little interest to the populace once they have vanished from the nightly news.

Beyond its immediate effects, a strongly mounted program of Triple S would devastate the economy, entangle the military forces, hinder the supply or resupply of necessary war materials, and -- based upon lessons from recent floods, blackouts, and even gasoline shortages -- produce chaos and provoke widespread social unrest. The mere threat of its actualization could deter the United States and its allies from becoming embroiled in such distant PRC actions as the invasion of Taiwan, an incursion into some contiguous country, the seizure of key islands in the Pacific or South China Seas, or deployment of military forces at key choke points worldwide.⁷⁵

Although explosives such as dynamite may still be readily acquired in rural areas and knowledge of bomb making is widely accessible, intelligently selecting the targets to exploit their inherent destructive potential and readily recognized nodes of vulnerability makes them unnecessary. Instead, as the Tai Gong counseled, the means can be

⁷⁵ Recent journal articles have begun to explore the concept and value of "deterrence." For example, see Zhou Peng and Wen Enbin, "Developing the Theory of Strategic Deterrence with Chinese Characteristics" ("Fazhan Zhongguo Tese de Zhanlue Weishe Lilun"), *JSKX* 2004:3, pp. 19-26 or the thematic article, in English, "Strategic Deterrence," *JSKX* 2004:5, pp. 143-156.

found in everyday items including tools such as hammers, axes, and knives, as well as incendiary devices such as cigarette lighters, roadside flares, and a wide variety of highly flammable substances ranging from conveniently packaged cigarette and charcoal lighter fluid through certain paint formulations and petroleum derivatives.

Very little skill and only moderate courage will be required to wield them effectively, though a basic handyman's experience, rudimentary training in sabotage, or a knowledge of chemistry, mechanical, or electrical engineering would hardly be detrimental. Naturally more sophisticated variants exist, such as the multiple deployment of biological or chemical agents that can be readily produced in localized facilities, but because they require preliminary preparation and entail a greater risk of detection, presumably rank lower in possibility. (Nevertheless, the PRC has recently evinced considerable interest in the use of chemical and especially biological agents, and of course suffered their effects at the hands of the Japanese in World War II.)⁷⁶

These strikes will probably be effected primarily by low level, virtually one time amateur personnel pre-chosen from among the numerous students, tourists, and businessmen temporarily dispersed throughout the country, though a few (particularly illegal) immigrants who have become disgruntled or are amenable to monetary lures, nationalistic persuasion, or outright coercion may also be employed. Only a very small, properly motivated percentage of the 100,000 or more potential agents would be required to undertake actions that could easily be specified and coordinated through individual E-mails or a clandestine website. While some might refuse, be incapacitated

⁷⁶ For example, see Wang Jing and Gao Guangguo, "Biochemical Weapons and State Security" ("Shenghua Wuqi yu Guojia Anquan"), *JSKX* 2005:5, pp. 85-90. Surprisingly, the U.S. army publication *Military Review* recently included a paper by two Chinese authors on the broad issue of biological warfare: Guo Ji-wei and Xue-sen Yang, "Ultramicro, Nonlethal, and Reversible: Looking Ahead to Military Biotechnology," *Military Review*, July-August, 2005, pp. 75-78.

by fear, or simply bungle their attempts, redundancy and multiple tasking coupled with the disproportionate employment of women who would arouse less suspicion -- equally points of traditional doctrine and contemporary practice -- would probably ensure a sufficiently high success ratio to achieve their objectives.

More thoroughly trained agents, including students and tourists who promptly disappeared into the culture and purported diplomatic officials, would be expected to spearhead strikes on complex targets. In accord with historic doctrine and recent enunciation, they would all be expendable from the outset. Moreover, while the PRC has expressed great confidence in the inability of moribund US agencies and the U.S. Congress to respond to a crisis, given that non-immigrant PRC nationals would certainly be detained (after much wrangling about politically sensitive issues and reraising the shadows of World War II internment camps), their possible employment would presumably be limited to the early stages of an overseas campaign or initial moments of open conflict.

However, it may not be necessary for the PRC to employ their own highly visible nationals, particularly for more sporadic, ongoing, low level clandestine actions. As PRC theoreticians enjoy pointing out, every North American city has thousands of criminals, youthful gang members, and religious dissidents that can be utilized for violent protests, sabotage, and other disruptive, guerrilla style activities. However they might be motivated and manipulated, blame could even be shifted onto readily identifiable religious or ethnic groups, thereby preserving the PRC's benign image.

Based upon historical practice and well articulated doctrine, two broad categories of action may be envisioned: those that exploit the latent potential already present in the

environment, and those that can be accomplished by simple, unobtrusive means, that singularly would go almost unnoticed and be quickly forgotten, but en masse will have a devastating effect. Although the first will also frequently seek to release the destructive potential inherent in the infrastructure, massive physical and industrial projects, and dense human practices, they will largely fall into the domain of ecological warfare.

Eco-warfare entails possibilities that range from deliberately destroying the environment's sustainability to biological attacks on crops and livestock. However, it is water's power and dynamic characteristics that provide the most readily exploitable means, just as an early Chinese military writing asserted: "Now water is the softest and weakest of things, but whatever it collides with, such as hills and mounds, will be collapsed by it for no reason other than its nature is concentrated and its attack is totally committed."⁷⁷

As discussed in our *Fire and Water: Incendiary and Aquatic Warfare in China*, the theory and practice of aquatic attacks have adversely impacted Chinese civilization over the past 2500 years, resulting in the brutal subjugation of numerous cities, annihilation of massive armies, and devastating inundation of extensive terrain. Although aquatic attacks were sometimes accomplished by damming streams or diverting rivers, they generally exploited preexisting accumulations of water in lakes and reservoirs, as well as the antique dike system that towers above the countryside and normally protected the populace from the Yellow River. Even though raised river beds are rarely found in North America, the potential for mounting aquatic attacks by

⁷⁷ "Martial Plans," *Wei Liaozi*. (A translation of the complete *Wei Liaozi* together with historical introduction and commentary may be found in Ralph D. Sawyer, *Seven Military Classics of Ancient China*.) The *Dao De Jing (Tao Te Ching)* states: "Under Heaven there is nothing more pliant and weak than water, But for attacking the firm and strong nothing surpasses it, Nothing can be exchanged for it." (Chapter 78 of the traditionally received text, translated per Wang Chen's understanding. For a complete translation and further discussion, see Sawyer, *The Tao of War* [Westview Press, 2002].)

destroying riverside levees still exists. Numerous dams may also be breached, particularly in regions like New England where many were hastily constructed from earth or timbers more than a century ago and have long been neglected.

In many areas flood conditions naturally develop in the spring when melting snow swells the rivers and exerts severe pressure on aged dams. This is precisely the moment that Sunzi would choose to initiate an attack, using any available means to cause a sufficiently large breach to precipitate collapse. Once released, the suddenly unconstrained waters would first act as a destructive ram and then subsequently flood the land. Historical examples and flooding's pervasive impact on New Orleans -- encompassing severe damage to the infrastructure, contamination and destruction of buildings, shattering of the electricity grid, death and displacement of the inhabitants, unemployment, and rampant social unrest -- well indicate why aquatic attacks rank foremost in effectiveness. However, achieving such dramatic effects generally lies beyond the ability of low level agents, though they might be able to disable a pumping system, tamper with controls to open sluice gates, or mount other actions that have disproportionately great effect.

More conveniently and therefore realistically, the power of flowing water may also be exploited by converting assets already found upon rivers such as the Mississippi, St. Lawrence, and Rhine into kinetic and incendiary weapons. Chinese military theory from the Tang onward formulated methods for exploiting both of them, while common historical practice punctuated by pivotal battles such as Chi Bi extends back into the third century Three Kingdoms period. However, Sunzi early on employed water's incredible force as an analogy for his pivotal concept of *shi* or "strategic configuration of

power” by saying that “The strategic configuration of power is visible in the onrush of pent-up water tumbling stones along.”⁷⁸

Absent premature grounding, reasonably strong currents will ensure that any vessel released upstream will be carried along until it collides with random obstacles or pre-chosen targets with considerable momentum, the force of its impact being proportional to the mass and final velocity. Large numbers of vessels loaded with grain, scrap metal, ore, and other bulk materials that are awaiting the arrival of tugs, being grouped for transport, or simply being loaded or unloaded are normally found anchored or lashed to piers along the length of most navigatable rivers. Apart from employing them as rams in an “aim and release” mode, terrifyingly random destruction can be realized simply by severing their tethers. However, if control is maintained, they can be directed against vital targets such as levees, bridge abutments, piers, and loading facilities. Employed in coordinated fashion, they can achieve much greater strategic objectives, such as severing the finite number of rail and road bridges over the Mississippi River, thereby catastrophically disrupting the transport of industrial goods and agricultural products between the eastern and western parts of the US, as well as between the north and south (because the river would be blocked by collapsed bridges, just like the Danube recently).⁷⁹

Fire boats were initially simple affairs, merely derelict boats filled with burning

⁷⁸ “Strategic Military Power.” In “Qi Fa,” the *Guanzi* likens the army’s power to a flood. (For a discussion of the concept of *shih* or “strategic configuration of power” [in my terminology], see our *Art of War*, pp. 143-147. For a recent, expanded study of the concept in Chinese military history, see William H. Mott and Jae Chang Kim, *The Philosophy of Chinese Military Culture: Shih vs. Li* [New York: Palgrave, 2006].)

⁷⁹ It need only be recalled that some 10 years ago a vessel with a disabled rudder crashed into a major New Orleans riverfront development, killing 13 people and causing considerable damage even though it had minimal speed and was not aflame. Over recent decades bridges have routinely been toppled in the southern United States by cargo vessels and barges that have lost control or made navigational errors. Moreover, in 2004, when two vessels collided in the fog below New Orleans, the one that sank blocking all river traffic for several days.

reeds set adrift in the current, but with the development of various incendiary concoctions, including early gunpowder formulations, they became well engineered, floating weapons. Most major rivers have virtually continuous barge traffic carrying highly flammable chemicals and downstream petroleum products such as kerosene and benzene that can easily be employed as fire ships, compounding the disaster when they strike their intended targets. (Recent tank truck and even tire fires have generated sufficient heat to melt steel superstructures, while torches of this magnitude will set any riverside structure afire, including refineries.)⁸⁰ Moreover, once in motion there would be inadequate response time, not to mention coordination and methodology, to stop them, particularly if several vessels were simultaneously released in a limited area, as traditionally conceived and practiced.

Even on the river seizing these vessels would be simplicity itself because of their slow speeds, frequent halts due to congestion, and the general obliviousness of their operators. Even when controlling up to six barges, most tugs have crews of three or less; their operators are often distracted (such as by reading newspapers or watching TV or portable DVD players); and their cabins have laughable security.⁸¹ Furthermore, in an effort to economize transport costs, anywhere from two to six barges are often linked together in tandem. These require extensive space to maneuver, are much more difficult to halt once in motion, and are frequently forced to idly hold position while awaiting sufficient clearance to pass river traffic. A three man raiding party conveyed by small craft and operating in the mode of the night raiders described in the classical Chinese military writings could easily steal alongside these and most other vessels by

⁸⁰ A tire dump fire near Philadelphia melted the superstructure of Route 95 a few years ago and a recent tanker crash in Bridgeport, CT burned so fiercely that the steel bridge over it and the roadway beneath melted.

⁸¹ We have personally seen women operators sunning themselves in bikinis or less, especially on European rivers.

exploiting the cover of darkness or fog, gaining control with only primitive, readily available cold weapons such as axes, knives, and swords, if not handguns and rifles.⁸²

The third well developed form of aquatic attacks, both theoretically and historically, targets essential water supplies.⁸³ Although they may attempt to directly introduce poisons or contaminants, such techniques have limited applicability, being effective only for well defined sources and low flow volumes. More devastating and widely practiced has always been denying a locale's supplies by blocking the source, damaging or severing the conduits, or diverting the flow. This might easily be accomplished in many older North American cities because the systems often incorporate antique, highly fragile cast iron pipes, badly weakened valves, and inadequate or no redundancy. Many also depend upon a variety of aqueducts and oversized pipes to carry water dozens, if not hundreds of miles, and are therefore easily targeted in remote areas. Given their high flow volumes, an easily accomplished minor breach would quickly produce massive collapse and the probable erosion of nearby terrain, requiring a lengthy period to repair.

To take but a single example, it is well known that New York City is supplied by just two ancient aqueducts that run for miles above ground outside the city limits. If they were to be destroyed, not only would they require weeks to rebuild, but the century old supply tunnels under the city would probably collapse due to decades of destructive leakage and cavitation. The specter of a city without water is staggering. Not only would

⁸² See the section on "Special Operations" and "Riverine Warfare" in our *Fire and Water: Incendiary and Aquatic Warfare in China*.

⁸³ Again, for a systematic discussion see our *Fire and Water*. Some of scenarios envisioned for the invasion of Taiwan predict significant subversive activity and numerous, preliminary acts of sabotage that will target the infrastructure, especially the electricity grid and water supplies. See, for example, Denny Roy, "Tensions in the Taiwan Strait," *Survival* 42:1 (spring, 2000), pp. 76-96.

people be unable to cook or flush their toilets, even the smallest fire, being inextinguishable, would grow to an all consuming conflagration. A systematic incendiary attack launched throughout the city at this moment would exponentially increase the devastation, achieving results comparable to earlier New York fires, the catastrophes that historically beset Boston, Chicago, and San Francisco, or even the fire storms seen in Dresden and Tokyo in World War II.

Although the theory and practice of incendiary attacks evolved separately, they have long been intertwined with aquatic warfare in China. Because of fire's terrifying psychological impact and tendency to quickly spread once minimal temperatures are attained, igniting fires is the simplest, most unobtrusive, and potentially most devastating of all the acts of low-tech sabotage that might be contemplated. Particularly accessible targets include forests, industrial complexes, refineries, and various gas and oil pipelines that are clearly marked in many places and can be attacked with a six-foot aluminum grounding rod, flare, and a hammer. A synchronized nighttime effort mounted even by untrained agents employing Zippo lighters (because BICs go out) could easily destroy all the retail gas stations in the United States or Canada. There would be little risk of identification or capture; the attacks could be accomplished with easily concealed means; and the fire response expected to be rapidly overwhelmed.⁸⁴ Moreover, the consternation and economic impact wrought by zero gasoline availability in every aspect of contemporary life, including ferrying children to after school activities, can hardly be imagined!

A number of other target categories suggested by *Unrestricted Warfare* are also

⁸⁴ The unwillingness or inability to rapidly mobilize large numbers of troops to fight the increasingly frequent forest fires plaguing the United States and Canada in their incipient stages, resulting in the extensive loss of valuable resources, is sometimes cited as an example of US government disorganization and unpreparedness.

vitaly important, well within the tradition and mandate of the British S.O.E. and American OSS in World War II. However, as traditional Chinese military theory does not discuss them, they need only be mentioned for the purposes of reader contemplation. Most capitalize on predispositions in the infrastructure and human dependence on provisions, services, and material goods. Railroads are particularly vulnerable, both to disruption and to exploitation as incendiary (and chemical and explosive) delivery systems since they intersect the vital core of most cities. Fully laden tanker trucks and chemical containers represent other readily adopted delivery systems given the catastrophe impact of burning liquids flowing down roads, into underground conduits, and nearby structures. Disrupting the electricity grid, whether by toppling high voltage transmission towers in remote regions with high temperature torches or using cyber attacks, would have extended consequences and wreck great havoc. The extreme ease with which these may be affected and the complacency of potentially explosive, high risk facilities such as the refineries that lie along the Mississippi and are easily breached from the river, are not only astonishing, but also well known. Even aircraft are highly vulnerable to a variety of low technology attacks, including those mounted by crossbows and lasers in close proximity to runways.

Finally, as mentioned, China has a long tradition of lionizing assassins that is frequently coupled with antique Qin doctrine and the rhetoric of justification otherwise seen in the Warring States period. (For example, as depicted in the movies *Hero* and *Assassin*, the state of Yan found itself so severely overmatched that extinction was certain unless it could achieve the radical action of murdering the king of Qin.) Insofar as the PRC still finds itself in an extremely disadvantageous situation militarily,

assassination (or “targeted killing” as it is now termed) may be expected have great appeal, whether for selectively targeting “obstructive” individuals or systematically incapacitating enemy governments. The prospects for such clandestine actions have been substantially enhanced by miniaturized lethal technologies such as rockets and Unmanned Aerial Vehicles and the possibility that their true origins can be disguised by employing third party contractors and high visibility dissident groups.

Employing assassins in a preconceived plan would not only fall into the unorthodox tradition, but be easily accomplished because the physical offices and general movements of Western officials are generally well known, if not much publicized. Absent a betrayal by one of the perpetrators, an attack mounted with nerve agents or small but powerful explosives delivered by remotely controlled means would be virtually unstoppable. Any leadership capable of the racial and cultural genocide reportedly practiced in Tibet and Xinjiang will have little compunction about employing these methods or deploying hundreds of agents to carry out assassinations on command, particularly if undertaken in the wider context of systematic sabotage and subversion.

Extreme Pronouncements

In addition to *Unrestricted Warfare*, a work openly published with identifiable, if otherwise unknown authors, two problematic, heinous speeches presumably intended for internal audiences have recently been circulating. Both unfold dire visions and promulgate astonishingly perverse programs based upon a timeless, ethnocentric view of Chinese historical and cultural superiority, as well as a commitment to territorial

integrity, a longstanding core issue. Nevertheless, they have attracted little attention in the West, critical or otherwise. The first, originally posted on Chinese websites in 2003 and republished again in 2005, including by semi-official Cuban propaganda organs, is generally known under the title “The War Is Approaching Us,” while the second, which appeared in the spring of 2005, is entitled “War Is not Far from Us and Is the Midwife of the Chinese Century.”

“The War Is Approaching Us” asserts that conflict with the United States is inevitable not just because of US hegemonic behavior, but because conflict is the essential nature of diplomatic relationships. Although the author’s approach clearly reflects Xunzi’s idea of the unavoidable competition for limited resources, the author attributes the true formulation of modern diplomatic strategy to Cardinal Richelieu who supposedly “discarded all moral and religious restrictions.” Citing the brutal lesson that must be learned from the internecine conflict of the Warring States period -- that strength is the only possibility since weakness attracts aggression -- he further warns that China’s idea of continual progress being achieved in a peaceful manner is a “hallucination” because “others” are committed to restricting its growth, suppressing its greatness, and continuing the policy of victimization that characterized recent history under the late Qing and the Republic. In order to exercise its “living rights,” after a period of further development China will inevitably have to engage in unrestricted armed conflict to acquire the resources to survive.

The second article commences by reporting an internet survey taken to discover whether the increasingly decadent and westernized younger members of the Chinese populace would ruthlessly exterminate their enemies, whether they would shoot women,

children, and prisoners of war. The author waxes elatedly over the 80% positive response because the question's true intention is claimed to have been to discover whether the people would support a genocidal war waged with biological weapons designed to denude the US and Canada of their populations in one concerted measure, thereby rendering it habitable for the ever expanding Chinese populace. (The use of nuclear weapons is naturally rejected because they would be visible, evoke a nuclear response, and contaminate the land.)

As formulated, the program proposed for achieving ultimate world domination -- not just realizing hegemony over other nations, but being "lords of the earth" and occupying much of the terrain -- doesn't just echo the Nazi's infamous vision, but explicitly adopts the latter's thrust while confidently asserting that the errors that plagued Hitler's regime will be avoided. (In this regard, Confucianism with its emphasis upon self-discipline, self-sacrifice, and submission to authority together with the Party's infallible guidance will supposedly ensure ultimate victory.) Moreover, clearly enamored of North America's open vistas, blue skies, and low population densities, the author blatantly asserts that China is fundamentally entitled to these lands since ancestral Chinese discovered and colonized them many thousands of years ago.

The question invariably arises how these xenophobic diatribes of conquest should be evaluated, particularly since US hegemony and aspirations have been caustically compared with Nazi ambitions to be "Lords of the Earth."⁸⁵ After dismissing the wistful view that they simply represent the ravings of a madman, several possibilities remain ranging from a deliberate fabrication planted by the PRC's enemies, including

⁸⁵ See Michael Pillsbury, *China Debates the Future Security Environment*, pp. 99-102.

the Falun Gong which has publicized and exploited them to their own purposes,⁸⁶ through a deliberately provocative expression formulated by disgruntled military hardliners. The latter gains some credence because they have been identified from inception with the now retired Minister of Defense, Chi Haotian, an old campaigner and well known hardliner.⁸⁷ Surprisingly, considering that this attribution provides an aura of authoritativeness, it has neither been heatedly denied nor grudgingly affirmed.

Apart from a desire to adopt a more self-assertive, if not belligerent, external stance, the articles are clearly prompted by a vision of Party destiny now being endangered by the spread of Western hedonism, pernicious ideas of democratization, growing social disorder, and perceived weakness in the central government. Because, just as Sunzi advocated, national strength is believed to be founded upon unity and internal stability, external aggression is envisioned as creating the requisite cohesiveness for a troubled society. Conflict with the US will not only exploit both the natural and artificially nurtured resentment of generations of Chinese over China's well publicized mistreatment at the hands of the West (and heinous Japanese), it will aid in suppressing internal struggles and strengthening the Party. To further stimulate the people's patriotic zeal, the article boldly pronounces a macho determination to perish in the quest, provided only that the enemy can be destroyed.

Even though the ostensible audience for these articles was presumably influential party members, the embedded assertions of total party supremacy and the virtual irrelevance and expendability of the Chinese people (despite this worldwide

⁸⁶ Given the well attested draconian control exercised by PRC authorities, this seems highly unlikely. Moreover, even if they could be successfully planted, swift removal could be expected.

⁸⁷ Conversely, General Chi's 1996 speech at U.S. National Defense University is far more moderate in tone than might have been expected from the setting. (A translation of the speech, titled "U. S. – China Military Ties," appears in Michael Pillsbury, *Chinese Views of Future Warfare* [Washington: National Defense University, 1998 rev. ed.], pp. 61-67.)

expansion purportedly being undertaken for them, at least taken abstractly) are remarkable. Irrespective of the authorship, and contrary to admonitions in the classical military writings to exercise humanitarian restraint in conflict⁸⁸ and injunctions to fight with the aim of preservation, the ideas expressed in them well cohere with China's historical, virtually routine practice of total war. As noted, armed combat frequently encompassed the enemy's complete destruction, combatants and non-combatants alike, including men, women, children, and animals, whether slaughtered individually by troops wielding cold weapons, or massively by incendiary, aquatic, and starvation measures. Moreover, it is consistent with Chinese doctrine and actual practice to not just tolerate, but willingly suffer high casualty rates to achieve the objective⁸⁹ and thoroughly accords with such well known, supposedly extreme expressions as Zhu Chenhgu's recent declaration of rapid escalation and immediate use of nuclear weapons, as well as earlier, equally aggressive assertions.

Just because humanity has a tendency to readily give credence to protestations of peace doesn't mean these views are neither well formulated nor widely held among powerful cliques within China's dominant authorities. Rather than reacting with the disbelief and denial that characterized the world in the early years of World War II when reports of systematic Nazi atrocities first surfaced and confidently reject such statements as unthinkable aberrations, attention should instead be paid to the

⁸⁸ As in the *Ssu-ma Fa's* "Benevolence the Foundation."

⁸⁹ Although Western generals often evaluated the performance of their commanders by the number of casualties they suffered -- few casualties indicating cowardice and lack of risk taking -- classical Chinese pronouncements are still somewhat surprising. For example, in "Army Orders, II," the *Wei Liaozi* states: "I have heard that in antiquity those who excelled in employing the army could bear to kill half their officers and soldiers. The next could kill thirty percent, and the lowest ten percent. The awesomeness of one who could sacrifice half of his troops affected all within the Four Seas. The strength of one who could sacrifice thirty percent could be applied to the feudal lords. The orders of one who could sacrifice ten percent would be implemented among his officers and troops."

numerous materials being promulgated within China's military science and the PRC's widely ignored genocidal practices in Tibet and Xinjiang in recent decades.

Final Comments

The analyses and conclusions just presented, although based upon historical patterns, antique and contemporary military doctrine, and outright assertions by PRC officials may simply be a concatenation of possibilities with virtually no assignable probability. However, in view of the uncertain role that these beliefs may play within China's web of secrecy, the prudent observer, while hoping they represent a disavowed faction, must ponder the implications. Planning against a people's warfare style implementation of systematic sabotage and subversion effected through low tech means against virtually undefended assets as suggested herein -- whether by the PRC, Iran, Russia, or any other country that has a large number of nationals temporarily in the United States or Canada -- would seem minimal. In the context of Chi Haotian's purported pronouncements, Triple S would be virtually benign.

Even in the unlikely event that the PRC's current leaders are truly committed to a benign course -- rather than simply dissembling, hiding their intentions, and biding their time -- severe internal pressures or perverse external circumstances may compel them to adopt a more belligerent orientation. Moreover, treaties and agreements, apart from being premised on sincerity, presuppose a continuity of intention, yet the Chinese Communist hierarchy has long been plagued by factionalism and lethal infighting so severe that it even resulted in the death of Mao's former comrade, then President Liu Shaoqi. In the face of intensifying social unrest or because of simple dissatisfaction with

the nation projecting a less than awesome image, military or political hardliners may seize power to enforce their demands that the PRC globally assert itself. Apart from immediately manifesting greater aggressiveness toward its archenemy, the localized, growing power imbalance in the Taiwan Straits would probably be quickly exploited, resulting in the invasion of Taiwan and perhaps other military actions in contiguous areas.

The ancient Chinese military writers, even the early Confucians, advised preparing for war despite working and hoping for peace. In view of current circumstances, China's historically attested tendencies, and the tradition of spy craft and deception, the prudent will heed their admonitions by not only planning for preventative and contingent actions, but also implementing self-strengthening and defensive measures. How extensive and aggressive these should be remains a question, but significantly upgrading woeful coastal and homeland security situations in the US and Canada (such as by entrusting the air force and navy with responsibility for operating the airports and sea ports respectively), building strategic alliances, securing operational bases in areas of probable conflict such as the South China Sea, and organizing and training the populace to undertake an active, emergency role appear minimal. It's too late to contain China, which was a foolish and unachievable notion in any event, but virtually every other option needs to be fervently pondered, including a thorough anti-missile defense since nuclear weapons will become an increasingly effective coercive and the dire specter of the PRC unilaterally resorting to them continues to be raised.

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