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## China's Concept of Military Strategy

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Timothy L. Thomas

**ABSTRACT:** China's concept of military strategy is very different from that of the United States. This article examines the various components of the strategic thought of the People's Liberation Army and how its theory of strategy can be applied in contemporary times. Among other things, the article offers US analysts a template for confronting Chinese strategy.

There is an American joke that perfectly explains what Mao referred to as the "essence" of Chinese military strategy:

Vinnie is in jail. His father writes to tell him he wishes Vinnie were home now to dig up the tomato garden. Vinnie writes back not to do that, since that is where he buried the bodies. The next day the FBI digs up the ground and finds no bodies. A day later Vinnie writes, 'under the circumstances, Dad, that was the best I could do.'

Yet very few Americans would recognize in this joke a connection to Chinese military strategy, since the United States view of strategy is so different. Vinnie made someone (the FBI) do something for the agency (look for the bodies) that they were actually doing for someone else (Vinnie and his dad). To get someone to do something for himself that he thinks is in his own interests, but which is actually in your interests, is the essence of strategy, according to Mao.

The United States Armed Forces, according to *Joint Publication 1-02, Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, defines strategy as "a prudent idea or set of ideas for employing the instruments of national power in a synchronized and integrated fashion to achieve theater, national, and/or multinational objectives."<sup>1</sup> This definition is more kinetic than potential (the ideas having been generated) and it envisions employing power as the means to achieve an objective. The definition restricts itself to the use of diplomacy, information, military, and economic means as the employment preference.

The People's Liberation Army (PLA) of China appears to define strategy more broadly and analytically than the US military. The PLA definition has several components as part of its comprehensive nature. While the official definition has changed little over the past twenty years, internal discussions have surfaced about information-age strategy. As a result, Chinese strategy is now a mix of the old and new and, from this author's vantage point, includes the following:

1. Official definitions highlighting Chinese strategy's comprehensive

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<sup>1</sup> US Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, Joint Publication 1-02 (Washington, DC: US Joint Chiefs of Staff, as amended through January 30, 2011), 350.

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- nature and use of analytical judgment (planning and the use of strategic guidelines; remnants from the past play a prominent role)
2. An analytical thought process seemingly more prominently Marxist than before. It examines the strategic environment through the lens of objective reality and applies subjective judgment to manipulate that environment to one's advantage
  3. The use of stratagems integrated with technological innovations. This hybrid combination is paired with specific aspects of an enemy's "intelligence-judgment-decision" process to induce the enemy to make decisions as one would expect
  4. The constant search for a strategic advantage or *shi*, which is also a goal of the Chinese strategic game of *Weiqi* or *Go*. *Shi* is sought everywhere, whether it be with the use of forces, electrons, or some other aspect of the strategic environment
  5. The objective of deceptively making someone do something ostensibly for himself, when he is actually doing it for you.

Each of these items is explained below, along with a few comments from retired PLA officers who specialized in strategy. Together, these various elements of the PLA's strategic template offer analysts a method through which to understand and respond to the Chinese approach to, for example, the cyber environment or the South China Sea. Without the template, analysts are prone to mirror-image Western views of the strategic environment, and thereby develop improper responses to PLA activities.

Over its five thousand year history Chinese leaders have focused on strategic concepts at great length. The 1997 *Chinese Military Encyclopedia*, for example, defines strategy in association with other concepts (strategic cover, strategic concept, strategic target, strategic thought, etc.) some one hundred times.<sup>2</sup> No other topic has had as many entries, not even the entries for Mao (only four or five) or People's War. The 2001 book, *The Science of Military Strategy*, even divided strategists into four groups: power and stratagem, technology and skill, dispositions and capability, and yin and yang.<sup>3</sup> Western analysts do not consider such subgroups. Thus, a multitude of ideas associated with strategic thinking reflect the PLA's historic and focused approach to the topic.

Official PLA definitions of strategy, viewed here chronologically, have varied little over the past twenty years. The first source referenced is the 1991 *PLA Officer's Handbook*. It defines two related concepts, the science of military strategy and military strategy. The former is "the study of the doctrines of the creation and application of rules of stratagems and military strategies in military confrontation."<sup>4</sup> It studies how to use ingenuity to gain advantages at the smallest costs.<sup>5</sup> Strategy is "a general reference for stratagems and military strategy" while military strategy "is the concrete manifestation of the effect of the subjective activities

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2 *Chinese Military Encyclopedia* (Beijing: Military Science Publishing House, 1997).

3 Peng Guangqian and Yao Youzhi, eds, *The Science of Military Strategy*, English Edition (Military Science Publishing House, 2005), 5. The Chinese edition was published in 2001.

4 *Chinese People's Liberation Army Officer's Handbook* (China: Qingdao Publishing House, June 1991), 197. Dr. Gary Bjorge of the Combat Studies Institute of Fort Leavenworth, Kansas graciously made his *PLA Handbook* available for use.

5 Ibid.

of people on material strength.”<sup>6</sup> Subjective guidance, the book notes, plays a decisive role in formulating and implementing strategy.<sup>7</sup>

The 1997 *Chinese Military Encyclopedia’s* definition of strategy is as follows:

The general plans for planning and directing war situations as a whole. That is, based on analysis and assessment of the international situation and the various political, military, economic, scientific, technological, and geographical factors of the two hostile parties, scientifically calculating the occurrence of war and its development, formulating strategic policies, strategic principles, and strategic plans, planning war preparations, and all of the principles and methods followed while directing the implementation of war.<sup>8</sup>

Here the international situation represents objective reality, while the calculating phase would reflect the subjective initiative of the analyst. A proper assessment of the situation and a calculation of a war’s probability (risk assessments?) are made, and plans and principles are integrated to produce an outcome.

One key aspect of modern China’s analytical judgment process is its reliance on Marxist thought. This focus even appears to have superseded some historical legacies, if the authors of the 2007 book, *On Military Strategy*, are correct. They write that, despite the extraordinary richness of China’s ancient strategic legacy, when speaking from a political perspective, the mission and tasks it bears do not represent the interests of the masses of the people. They claim the Communist Party of China has thoroughly altered the political nature of China’s military strategy of several millennia, making it fully representative of the basic interests of all China’s people.<sup>9</sup> However, as will be noted later, much PLA thought is still invested in Sun Tzu.

Chapter three of *On Military Strategy* is titled, “The Objective Environment of Military Strategy.” It is perhaps the book’s most important section, since it directly explains the elements of strategy. Military strategy is defined as consisting of planning and guidance for the situation of military struggles as a whole, which is similar to official definitions. The strategic environment is defined as:

...the important foundation upon which military strategy is dependent for its formulation, the extrinsic conditions upon which military strategy is dependent for its implementation, and the arena upon which the strategic directors are dependent for displaying their talent in planning and skill in directing.<sup>10</sup>

The strategic environment is comprehensive—it includes politics, economics, military affairs, science and technology, geography, etc. and thus represents objective reality.

Authors Fan and Ma state, categorically, “The relationship between the strategic environment and military strategy is a relationship between objective reality and subjective guidance. Properly understanding and

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid., 198.

8 *Chinese Military Encyclopedia*, Volume 3, 699.

9 Fan Zheng Jiang and Ma Bao An, *On Military Strategy* (Beijing: National Defense University Publishing House, 2007), 43.

10 Ibid., 59.

analyzing the strategic environment is the prerequisite for properly formulating and implementing military strategy.”<sup>11</sup> Properly assessing the strategic environment will expose the advantages and disadvantages each side possesses and offer ways for subjective initiatives to implement strategy and create advantages.

Strategic decision-making is accurate when the guidelines it formulates are in line with objective reality, the authors note.<sup>12</sup> The size of combat objectives chosen by decision-makers will determine the length of a war, its scale, and its intensity. Favorable strategic situations must be created.<sup>13</sup> This is an imperative in wars fought under informatized conditions, in which the tempo of war is accelerating; victory will not come in the later stages of a war, but rather in a war’s opening salvo. Whichever side is able to create a key opening engagement in its favor will win the initiative in the overall strategic situation. Therefore, creating favorable conditions before battle, such as establishing a tactical or strategic advantage, is extremely important.<sup>14</sup>

Technology, the authors add, provides new carriers for displaying the true and the false, enabling deception in new forms.<sup>15</sup> Thus, strategy, when tied to modern technology, can elevate traditional strategic tricks to new levels. They also claim system-sabotage will continue to be a key characteristic of modern warfare; C4ISR components will continue to be the main targets of attack; offensive operations will be the main measure through which victory is seized; and capturing and maintaining control will remain an overall focus for combat guidance.<sup>16</sup> Information operations will enable the achievement of strategic objectives “directly met through campaign and even tactical actions in the practice of war.” Thus, the authors appear to be altering the Marxist dictum that “technology determines tactics,” changing it to imply that “technology now can determine strategy.” For example, this could occur through a massive supervisory control and data acquisition (SCADA) attack that debilitates a nation’s electronic infrastructure.

Recent testimony by Admiral Michael Rogers, the US Director of the National Security Agency, should concern all Americans. The *Wall Street Journal* reported:

Admiral Rogers highlighted several threats emerging that will become significant problems in the coming year. At the top of his list are national-states, including China and ‘one or two others,’ that US officials maintain are infiltrating the networks of industrial-control systems, the electronic brains behind infrastructure like the electrical grid, nuclear power plants, air traffic control and subway systems.<sup>17</sup>

China employs stratagems, which are thought processes designed to mislead enemy perceptions, thinking, emotion, and will, to manipulate an adversary to one’s advantage. The PLA relies on the subjective competency of commanders to properly employ stratagems and manipulate

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11 Ibid.

12 Ibid., 149.

13 Ibid., 251.

14 Ibid., 292-295.

15 Ibid., 290.

16 Ibid., 266, 278, 285.

17 Siobhan Gorman, “NSA Chief Warns of ‘Dramatic’ Cyberattack,” *The Wall Street Journal*, November 21, 2014, A2.

objective reality to its advantage. Interestingly, the PLA studies other nations' "intelligence-judgment-decision" processes and then decides what stratagem could be employed against this process to make the system work to friendly (Chinese) advantage.<sup>18</sup> Stratagem developers try to do everything possible to control an opponent's method of intelligence processing analysis. US analysts should often ponder how the PLA may be interpreting the US intelligence cycle to find areas for exploitation. The overall goal of this Chinese action (put the stratagem developer in sync with a specific nation's intelligence cycle) is to "induce" the enemy to make decisions the Chinese want.

Stratagem development under information conditions most likely will involve complex or multiple stratagems incorporating science and information devices; a separate unit instead of individuals would be needed to do the designing. The variables are so great the unintended consequences of an action would require gaming. The idea of complex stratagems reminds one of the Chinese book, *Unrestricted War*. The book's authors recommended the development of cocktail warfare, which they termed a new concept of weapons (as opposed to "new concept weapons," which are directed energy, lasers, etc.) involving the integrated use of several of the 24 methods of war (deterrence, financial, electronic, networks, etc.) at one time.<sup>19</sup> Similarly, in 2008 Dai Qingmin recommended the same idea of simultaneously paralyzing an opponent's financial, transportation, telecommunications, and power system in order to introduce deterrence.<sup>20</sup> Complex stratagem use would do the same, integrating several stratagems to produce an effect. For example, with information technology, a stratagem such as "kill with a borrowed sword" (use of a surrogate) could be combined with "make noise in the east, attack in the west" (fake in one direction with the surrogate, attack somewhere else).

*Shi* is the goal of strategy's objective and subjective aspects: to create and attain an advantage over an opponent after evaluating a situation and influencing it. *Shi* can be found in chapters one, five, six, and ten of the ancient Chinese military classic, *The Art of War*. Chapter six notes that "the military is without fixed shi and without lasting form," implying flexibility in the attainment of a strategic advantage.

Michael Pillsbury, one of America's foremost authorities on the PLA and author of several comprehensive works on Chinese military thought, has uncovered several PLA materials discussing *shi*. He noted:

- *Shi* assesses your side's potential, the enemy side's potential, weather, and geography to identify the moment in a campaign when an advantage can be gained over an opponent. *Shi* is a certain moment in the campaign when you could take the advantage from the enemy;
- *Shi* is created in five ways, through maneuver, posture, position, psychology, and calculations. The timing and speed of creating *shi* in war

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18 Li Qi, "Campaign Stratagem Application under High-Tech Conditions," in Zhang Xing Ye and Zhang Zhan Li, *Campaign Stratagems* (Beijing: National Defense University, 2002).

19 Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui, *Unrestricted Warfare* (Panama City, Panama: Pan American Publishing Company, 2002), 21. This work does not represent official PLA military doctrinal writings, as do the majority of the other sources noted in the text.

20 Dai Qingmin, *New Perspectives on War* (Beijing: PLA Publishing House, 2008), 99.

has changed under conditions of high-tech warfare;

- *Shi* is the moment when it becomes apparent one side can win the war ;
- *Shi* according to the Tang founder used psycho-shi, geo-shi, and shaping-shi;
- *Shi* can be created with stratagems.<sup>21</sup>

A number of other Chinese sources discuss the concept. The Chinese book *Campaign Stratagems* defines *shi* as the combination of the friendly situation, enemy situation, and the environment; the integrated situation that has an impact on the effective performance of military strength; and the sum of all factors impacting the performance of the operational efficiency of both sides.<sup>22</sup> The *Chinese Encyclopedia of Philosophical Terms* explains *shi* as “availing oneself of advantage to gain control, a natural interest.”<sup>23</sup> Chapter five (*Shi*) in Chinese General Tao Hanshang’s translation of *The Art of War* translates *shi* as “posture of the army,” which implies that it is seeking advantage. Tao notes that *shi* is “the strategically advantageous posture before a battle that enables it to have a flexible, mobile, and changeable position during a campaign.”<sup>24</sup>

Thus, the complexity of the term *shi* is apparent from the definitions. Posture of the army, strategic advantage, a strategic configuration of power, the alignment of forces, and availing oneself of advantage to gain control were all used to define *shi*. Whether or not *shi* is the key and defining idea of the *Art of War*, as Roger Ames contends is hard to ascertain; he defines *shi* as strategic advantage. Surely, however, his point is worthy of consideration. Certainly, anyone reading Sun Tzu’s classic will note he often repeated the concept of “attaining an advantage,” especially when determining whether or not to act.

The Chinese strategic game of *Go* is all about attaining a strategic advantage. David Lai has published one of the clearest explanations of the game and its meaning. He notes, in agreement with the points made above, “Both players have tried to develop an advantageous situation that is consistent with Sun Tzu’s third aspect [which is about developing a favorable situation] of *shi*.”<sup>25</sup>

With regard to the essence of strategy, Mao would approve of Vinnie’s response to his father’s letter. Years earlier, Mao provided a similar analogy when he described three ways to make a cat eat a hot pepper: stuff it down the cat’s throat, disguise the pepper by wrapping it in cheese, or grind the pepper up and spread it on the cat’s back. In the

21 This information was taken from a slide presentation by Michael Pillsbury, sources cited are as follows: He Diqing, *Campaign Course Materials*, (AMS 2001); Yue Lan, “High Tech Warfare and Contemporary Military Philosophy,” *Liberation Army Daily Press*, 2000; Guo Shengwei, *Deng Xiaoping’s Military Stratagems* (Central Party School, 2000); Zhang Wenru, *China’s Strategic Culture* (Beijing University Press, 1997); Li Bingyan, *Stratagem and Transformation*, 2004.

22 Zhang Xing Ye and Zhang Zhan Li, *Campaign Stratagems*.

23 Feng Qi, *Chinese Encyclopedia of Philosophical Terms*, Revised Edition, (Shanghai: Shanghai Lexicographical Publishing House, 2001), 1355.

24 Tao Hanshang, *Sun Tzu’s Art of War: The Modern Chinese Interpretation*, trans. by Yuan Shibing (Sterling Innovation, 2007), 44, 124.

25 David Lai, *Learning from the Stones: A Go Approach to Mastering China’s Strategic Concept*, *Shi* (Carlisle, PA: US Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, 2004), 9.

latter case, the cat will lick itself, thinking it is doing something for itself when it is actually doing what you want. This is the essence of strategy.<sup>26</sup>

Interestingly, this same concept is in *The Art of War*, yet scholars rarely refer to it as a key concept. Rather, winning without fighting, knowing the enemy and knowing yourself, and other such key phrases are usually underscored. In chapter six, Sun Tzu notes “how to make the enemy arrive of their own accord—offer them advantage.”<sup>27</sup> The enemy thinks it is doing something for itself, but it is actually doing what you want.

Retired PLA officers have made statements about the concept of strategy that are worthy of consideration. In 1994 Lieutenant General Li Jijun, Deputy Commandant of the Academy of Military Sciences at the time, noted that the new strategic situation or “new objective reality” will require new strategic thinking. He defined grand strategy as “the art and science of utilizing and strengthening the comprehensive power of a nation to realize long-term political goals. The philosophical thinking of the art of war is military dialectics, or military philosophy.”<sup>28</sup> In a 2002 article in *China Military Science* author Wu Chunqiu described grand strategy’s ties to the objective-subjective process. He noted that objective reality, in regard to strategy, is the state of the nation and the world, even cosmic space. This is the context within which the grand strategy decision-makers operate, the strategic environment. The outcome of a war depends not only on the objective material strength of the belligerents, but also on their subjective ability to employ it. It relates to the art of subjective guidance.<sup>29</sup>

Li later wrote that those who formulate strategy do so “against the background of a specific social, historical, and cultural environment and tradition...therefore, in war direction, understanding the adversary’s ideological culture and strategic thinking method is as important as finding out the adversary’s military deployment.”<sup>30</sup> Friendly forces must continue to obtain knowledge “about the objective situation [that] not only exists prior to the establishment of the military plan but also exists after the establishment of the military plan.”<sup>31</sup> Li warns against laying too much stress on previous experience, noting that tradition has a dual nature. It is both valuable for its historical wealth and a danger due to its tendency to exert historical inertia.<sup>32</sup>

With regard to the art of war, Li writes that the use of stratagems and surprise involves the use of uncertainties that cause the adversary to make mistakes. In modern strategy, “such things as ‘ambiguous strategy,’ ‘association without forming alliances,’ ‘mixing negotiation with fighting,’ and keeping the status of ‘no war and no peace’ all belong to the

26 Li Bingyan, “Applying Military Strategy in the Age of the New Revolution in Military Affairs,” *The Chinese Revolution in Military Affairs*, ed. Shen Weiguang (New China Press, 2004), 2-31.

27 Tao Hanshang, *Sun Tzu’s Art of War: The Modern Chinese Interpretation*, 49.

28 Michael Pillsbury, editor, “Notes on Military Theory and Military Strategy,” by Li Jijun, in *Chinese Views of Future Warfare* (National Defense University Press, 1997), 222-224.

29 Wu Chunqiu, “Dialectics and the Study of Grand Strategy: A Chinese View,” *China Military Science*, No. 3 (2002): 146.

30 Li Jijun, “Military Strategic Thinking and Scientific Decision-making,” *China Military Science*, No. 1 (2006): 28-38.

31 Ibid.

32 Ibid.



use of uncertainties in strategy.”<sup>33</sup> Acting in an irregular way and the use of uncertainties are “a conscious act of using stratagems.”<sup>34</sup> Li adds that there is no reason for the PLA to be as transparent as the West. Western nations use transparency as a way to demonstrate strength and impose deterrence. The PLA’s lack of transparency is a means of deterrence, since it becomes ambiguous and unpredictable for potential foes.<sup>35</sup>

Shen Weiguang, the so-called father of information warfare in China, has noted that, while information and network security is an issue of technology, it is above all else an issue of strategy.<sup>36</sup> Some PLA generals, such as retired General Dai Qingmin, note reconnaissance activities have become the prerequisite for winning victory in war.<sup>37</sup> Dai, when he was on active duty and head of an important general staff department with responsibility for communications, noted a thorough reconnaissance strategy helps choose opportune moments, places, and measures not only to establish a strategic advantage, but also to “win victory before the first battle.”<sup>38</sup>

Major General Li Bingyan, an expert in the theory and use of stratagems, compared and contrasted Chinese strategic thought with that of the West; he concluded Easterners have put more emphasis on strategy over the years, while the West has focused more on technology.<sup>39</sup> As a result, China must now combine technology with stratagems. He thus appears to support the view that technology now might determine strategy as well as tactics. Li writes that in ancient China strategists were heavily influenced by two publications, the *I Ching (Book of Changes)* and Sun Tzu’s *Art of War*. Regrettably, in Li’s opinion, this reliance led to total emphasis on trickery at the expense of the use of science and technology.<sup>40</sup> Li writes that the focus on strategy was related to the cultural traditions of the Chinese people. Stratagems are based on the doctrine of changes and change enables the use of strategy.<sup>41</sup> When calculations are made to determine strategy, he added the following method was used:

How dangerous or favorable, broad or narrow, etc. the terrain is, make judgments on the use of terrain; based on those judgments about terrain, determine the holding capacity of the battlefield; based on the holding capacity, estimate the number of troops the two sides could commit. Through these repeated calculations, one can select a strategy.<sup>42</sup>

Under contemporary conditions it would be interesting to apply this methodology to cyber terrain and calculate how a goal could be achieved when factors are adjusted for modern conditions.

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33 Ibid.

34 Ibid.

35 Ibid.

36 Shen Weiguang, *Deciphering Information Security* (Xinhua Publishing House, July 2003), 26.

37 Dai Qingmin, *Direct Information Warfare* (National Defense University Publishing House, 2002), 96.

38 Ibid., 219-220.

39 Li Bingyan, “Emphasis on Strategy: Demonstrating the Culture of Eastern Military Studies,” *China Military Science*, No. 5 (2002): 80-85.

40 Ibid.

41 Ibid.

42 Ibid.

In 2002, Zhang Xing Ye and Zhang Zhan Li edited the book, *Campaign Stratagems*. In the chapter titled, “Campaign Strategy and Objective Conditions,” the following is noted:

During the process of strategic formulation, the relationship between objective conditions and strategies, in terms of philosophy, is the relationship between the objective and the subjective. Objective conditions are the first position and strategy is the second position. Correct strategies come out of objective realities and reflect objective practices.<sup>43</sup>

Colonel Xue Guo’an, Deputy Director of the Department of Strategic Studies at the PLA’s National Defense University, wrote on the topic of traditional strategic thought. First, Xue observed China’s agricultural civilization, where many factors were considered to ensure good crops, fostered macro views when considering strategy.<sup>44</sup> Second, he claimed experience in war allowed strategic planning to include manipulation and eventually the use of stratagems as the origin of strategic thinking.

Xue believes that at the strategic level Westerners appear to focus on power, whereas the Chinese focus on the use of stratagems. Stratagems must function in accord with the overall situation, be planned in advance to supplement limited power, and enable victory. China’s use of a “soft force” stratagem enables it to hide its intentions and avoid decisive battles; to ensure steady development and to reverse unfavorable situations; and to make friends with neighboring countries. China’s geographical location has created a need for stability and tranquility. Further, a soft force can lure an opponent into exhausting his actual strength, thereby changing the overall situational balance. War becomes a rivalry in stratagems (wisdom) over material resources.<sup>45</sup>

Xue identified three problems with the PLA’s traditional thought. First, it is possible some treasure the classics too much, worshipping sages and imbedding a conservative approach that avoids innovation. Second, some attach great importance to doctrine and pay too little attention to science and technology. Strategists of ancient China almost totally ignored military technological factors. Finally, attaching too much importance to land power has come at the expense of sea power. As a result, China is only now catching up in the area of sea power.

## Implications

In conclusion, the most relevant recommendation for US analysts is the imperative to study Chinese military strategy for two reasons: first, through an appreciation of the PLA’s strategic template, to be able to predict and counter their strategies; and second, to learn new ways to understand and apply strategy themselves. Strategy is an ever-evolving concept and should be studied closely for new approaches. Analysts should become familiar with the objective-subjective, stratagem, strategic advantage, and *shi* criteria that can be applied to political, economic, geopolitical, and military fields of study. For example, China’s view of cyber’s objective reality could be understood as knowing there are no rules and regulations to impede intrusive behavior, surrogates hide

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43 Zhang Xing Ye and Zhang Zhan Li, *Campaign Stratagems*.

44 Xue Guo’an, “Characteristics of China’s Traditional Strategic Thought,” *China Military Science*, No. 3 (2010): 116-122.

45 Ibid.

sources of reconnaissance, and weak systems worldwide encourage penetrations. There is no reason to stop reconnaissance activities due to such a lucrative objective reality. Subjectively, packets of electrons can be used as stratagems. Open source Chinese links, for example, note that stratagems such as “looting a burning house” (and stealing property while the house is on fire [that is, weak security]) refers to the illegal use of system files.<sup>46</sup> Many other stratagems work in the same way.

Further, there may well be Chinese institutes in existence now which are studying campaign stratagems to manipulate US financial flows, or to create other disruptive situations, so as to influence the US military’s “intelligence-judgment-decision” paradigm. The United States and its allies must think in terms of the Chinese approach, looking at the strategic environment from the vantage point of disruptive stratagems. It is by understanding differences such as these that analysts will make more reasoned assumptions about Chinese and PLA behavior—and avoid mirror imaging.

There are several additional conclusions US analysts and strategic thinkers can draw from this study of Chinese strategy. First, how to study other nations’ approach’s to and views of strategy remains undervalued. Such analysis allows for an expansion of our comprehension of strategic thought beyond the concepts of prudent ideas or ends, ways, and means. Expanding our limits of strategic thought enables the absorption of a broader method of analysis. Second, clearly China’s ancient strategic thought has applicability even in the digital age. PLA strategy is not outdated and only limited to the thoughts of Sun Tzu and Mao. The use of packets of electrons as stratagems, for example, is a method of thought very seldom considered by US analysts. It combines the old with the new in ways we do not. Active and retired PLA officers continue to adapt and refine their strategic thinking. Third, the close scrutiny of other nations’ strategic theories is vital to unraveling and identifying their long and short term goals. As in cards, chess, *Go*, or other games, one must know what and how one’s rival thinks to develop effective counters. Finally, Chinese strategy is more analytical and holistic, by definition, than its US counterpart. The analysis includes politics, economics, military affairs, science and technology, geography, and other issues, resulting in a prism of thought known as comprehensive national power. The US definition of strategy in *Joint Publication 1-02, Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* is limited to just the four instruments of national power, diplomacy, information, military, and economics. The implication is China does grand strategy, while the US does something far less. Further, the People’s Republic of China has excelled at “how” to do strategy.

Thus, in summary, there are many sound reasons to study the strategic thought of China and other nations. US strategy has worked well through the ages, but as other nations adjust their strategic thought to conform to new input and a different geopolitical context, our strategists need to be aware of these developments and consider adjusting our thinking accordingly.

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<sup>46</sup> Discussion with Mr. Scott Henderson, US expert on Chinese hackers and author of *The Dark Visitor*, a book on Chinese hackers. Mr. Henderson, who speaks Mandarin, accessed an open source Chinese link in 2008 to get this information.