

THE SCIENCE OF MILITARY STRATEGY

Edited by Peng Guangqian, Yao Youzhi

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Edited by Peng Guangqian
Yao Youzhi

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Foreword

Since the publication of its Chinese version in 2001, *The Science of Military Strategy* has attracted much attention and has evoked positive repercussions in China and abroad. As an academic work, this book reflects the authors' personal views. The aim of our research on military strategy is for containing war and maintaining peace. For the convenience of facilitating academic exchanges, we have organized the translation and publication of the book. We hope the translation is true to the original text of the Chinese version, but it may be less than satisfactory because our academic and English capabilities are limited.

The translators include Pan Jiabin, Zhu Xiaoyang, He Zuokang, Yang Jinghou, Wan Wei, Liu Lin, Chen Yan, Jiang Yuan, Ren Xiangqun, Lu Xue and Deng Nan. Among them, Ren Xiangqun has contributed greatest efforts. Nie Songlai, Pan Jiabin, and Cai Zuming, senior translators, have revised the translated text. We owe the translation and publication of the book to the help of Li Pengqing, Director of Military Science Publishing House (MSPH), Ma Guangwu, Chief Editor of MSPH, as well as the support of the friends in China and abroad. We want to thank all of them for their contributions.

Peng Guangqian
Yao Youzhi
Chief Editors
June 2005

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Part One

Basis of Science of Strategy

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Chapter 1

War, Strategy and Science of Strategy

Science of strategy is the military science to study laws of war, laws of conduct of war and laws of strategic evolution. Its major role is to reveal the essence of war and strategy, and various objective elements having a bearing on the strategy, and the operating functions and inherent laws governing strategic thinking activities and strategic guidance activities in war. Science of strategy lays emphasis on close combination of the historical experience of strategic guidance with the current analysis of strategic circumstances and the prediction of war in future in order to provide a scientifically theoretical basis for making correctly strategic decision and strategic guidance. In deeply studying the science of strategy one has to make clear at first the basic concepts of war, strategy and science of strategy; the status of science of strategy in military art; the basic structure of strategy; and the disciplinary system of science of strategy.

I . Basic Concepts of War, Strategy and Science of Strategy

The advent and development of strategy come along with the development of practice in war.

As a socio-historical phenomenon, war is an outcome of mankind's development to a particular stage. In the remote ancient clan society of human beings, the level of production was extremely low. Within clans the system of public ownership was prevalent and people lived together by laboring and consuming in common. They were in a state of tight solidarity without inherent conditions to breed conflict against each other. The external relations of clan groups were primarily represented by their engagements with the nature. The natural resources were bountiful enough to satisfy the fundamental living requirements of the clans. As a result few contacts were made between clans and there were no outside conditions to flare up conflict between clan groups. However, as the primitive society pushed ahead and the population of clan groups increased, the balance between the material requirements of clan groups and the total quantity of the natural materials for living in their localities was upset. People had to move to other regions, and the movements could always encroach on the economic benefits of the other clan groups, resulting in the earliest form of war of human society. Karl Marx pointed out that as far as the primitive community was

concerned, "War is required for the occupation of the objective conditions for being alive."¹ At that time war was collective activities by all members of the clan group for their production and living requirements. Their purpose was to seize the natural resources instead of occupation or enslavement of other social groups or individuals. As mankind entered the class society the earliest form of war receded gradually from the stage of history. Instead of it war was solely for the purpose of plundering. At that time the old intertribal warfare had already completely "degenerated into systematic robbery on land and sea for the purpose of capturing cattle, slaves and treasure, into a regular source of income."² Since class society formed, war has already lost its direct linkage with the process of production and its aim is to seize not only the natural resources but also material fortunes created by the others, and even the labor force itself. War is the continuance of class politics through violence. It is the highest form of struggle to resolve contradictions between state and state, between nation and nation, and between political group and political group. In general war is a kind of bloodshed politics.

In war, at the early stage of mankind, the fighting duration of warfare was short and temporary, and fighting method was simple with the primitive tools as main combat means, and the two warring parties generally made frontal mass charging and killing in trial of body strength and bravery. The outcome of a war depended on the number of combatants, and their body struggle and courage. Thereby overall war planning and awareness of use of combat methods were not on the agenda as yet. Following development of war practice and accumulation of a long-period combat experience, people were gradually aware of war planning and they step by step sought for various methods to fight and conduct warfare. They began to make different combat deployment and combat operations in accordance with different combat means and necessities. Accordingly there was inception of strategy, and since then strategy has closely linked to war. Strategy in its original meaning is the one fully committed to war. With regard to the concepts successively emerging afterwards such as political strategy and economic strategy, they are merely the derivative terms of the war strategy.

In the five thousand years long history of China, its practice in war was enormously rich. According to incomplete statistics there had been more than 6,000 battles in 4,000 plus years from the 26th century B. C. when Shen Nong Shi (the Holy Farmer) attacked the Fu Sui Tribes (Tribes of Axe and Flint)³ to the end of Qing Dynasty (1644—1911). This figure was more than one-third of the total numbers of the battles that had happened around the world during the same period. In their long-period practice in war the commanders and planners of ancient China's battles not only accumulated rich experience of actual combat but also raised it to the level of rational knowledge, resulting in forming a complete theory of combat and combat

guidance. According to legend in remote ancient times there were one piece of writing on the art of war by Shen Nong Shi, sixteen pieces of writings on the art of war by Yellow Emperor Xuan Yuan Shi, two pieces on the art of war by Chi You Shi and the military theoretic works such as *Book of Army Administration* and *Military Annals* in Shang and Zhou Dynasties. On the basis of a competent scholar's statistics, so far the number of China's military writings seen in various catalogues is as huge as 3,380 plus books and 23,503 volumes leaving 2,308 books and 18,567 volumes to be extant.⁴ More than two thousand and four hundred years ago in the late Spring and Autumn Period *The Art of War* written by the great military mind Sun Wu was an outstanding one of these military writings. It is the first and earliest well-known military classic theoretic writing which has been extant with great influence over the world. It is a milestone marking maturity and great development of ancient China's military thinking. *Sun Zi's Art of War* has so far been admired as the world's "sacred classics of the art of war" and the "originator of the art of war" in the East. In addition, the famous military books include *Wu Zi*, *Sun Bin's Art of War*, *The Methods of the Sima*, *Wei Liao Zi*, *Wo Ji Jing* (Classic of Battle Array), *Tai Gong's Six Secret Teachings*, *Three Strategies of Huang Shi Gong*, *Questions and Replies between Tang Taizhong and Li Weigong* by Li Jing, *Taibai Yinjing* (Book of Positive and Negative) by Li Quan, *The Monograph and Planning of Coastal Defense* by Zheng Ruozeng, *Zhenji* (On Military Training and Operations) by He Liangcheng, *Essentials of Military Classics* by Zeng Gongliang, *Hu Qian Jing* (the Military Treatise) by Xu Dong, *Unorthodox Methods for a Hundred Battles* by Xie Fangde, *A New Book on Military Training* and *A Manual for Military Training* both by Qi Jiguang, *Wu Bei Zhi* (A Corpus of Classified Military Writings) by Mao Yuanyi, and *Illustration of Overseas Countries* by Wei Yuan, etc. Although these Chinese military classics have not yet separated strategy from the traditional art of war and have generally referred strategy to "stratagem", "planning", "contemplation", "estimation", "arranging", "calculation", "secret teaching", "scheme", "tactics" and other terms such as "temple calculation", "temple estimation", "temple competition", "devising plan", "overall plan", "military plan", "martial plan", "general's plan" and "stealth plan", yet in theory they are roughly involved in various main levels of the realm of strategy. Many concepts of strategic thinking with an anciently Eastern tinge appeared in these books such as "subdue the enemy without fighting", "make planning before fighting", "move when stratagem is determined", "Know the enemy and know yourself; and in a hundred battles you will never be in peril", "attack the enemy's alliance and attack his strategies", "befriend distant states while attacking those nearby", "first make yourself invincible and then await the enemy's moment of vulnerability", "examine your preparations closely and fight the enemy cautiously", "be vigilant in peace time", "win victory by surprise", "use force by unorthodox

methods", "provide adequate food to make soldiers strong", "rely for provisions on the enemy", "keep our forces concentrated while the enemy must be divided", and "avoid the enemy's strengths and attack his weaknesses", etc. Even today their strategic thinking still gleams with an abiding light of wisdom and contains profound philosophy with great attraction.

According to the records of *A History of Han Dynasty (Han Shu)*, the Infantry Commandant Ren Hong classified the military strategists of ancient China into four categories: Military strategists of power and stratagem, military strategists of disposition and capability, military strategists of *Yin* and *Yang*, and military strategists of technique and skill. It could be said that these were the first classifications of the military theoretic studies in history. Ren Hong held that "The tactical disposition and strategic capability are like thunder clapping and wind blowing, they launch afterwards but reach the destination at first. Through dispersion and concentration of the troops who have left their native places and in a constant change of combat, they defeat the enemy by light force at quick tempo." "The *Ying* and *Yang* set in motion at an appropriate time. They promote punishment and virtue. Amid the struggle and strike, and in conformity to victory of the five elements, they seek ghost and spirit to their assistance," he added. "The technique and skill are acquired by exercising men's hands and feet to familiarize with and improve the implements. With gradual accomplishment of the mechanism, they have laid the foundations for victory of both offense and defense." And he concluded that the power and stratagem, in particular were "to defend the state by orthodox methods and to use force by unorthodox methods. They make planning before fighting and embrace the tactical disposition and military power involving the *Ying* and *Yang*, and make use of the technique and skill."⁵ Although Ren Hong did not use the term of "strategy", the military strategists of power and stratagem in his explanation of four military strategists of ancient China can roughly be put into the category of contemporary "strategists". The leading position of ancient China in the realm of strategy has been universally acknowledged. *The Soviet Union Military Encyclopedia* (published in 1976—1980) clearly pointed out: "As a part of the activities of supreme command the military strategy was brought forth in the East, and in the slavery states such as India, China, ancient Greece and ancient Roman in remote antiquity." It added: "The first theoretic writings about military strategic problems appeared in ancient times. These writings included China's commander and theoretician Sun Wu's *Art of War* (6th century-5th century B. C.), and the writings of Roman's commander-in-chief Julius Caesar (1st century B. C.), and Roman's historians Sextus Julius Frontinus (C. 35-C. 103 A. D.) and Flavius Vegetius Renatus (late 4th century-early 5th century A. D.) *et al.*"⁶ No doubt *Sun Zi's Art of War* was the earliest one. John Collins, former director of the Institute of Strategic Studies of the U. S Defense University in his book *Grand Strategy* also held

that Sun Zi was one of the “strategic innovators identified” by the world. “The first great mind to shape strategic thought in that setting belonged to Sun Tzu. His thirteen little essays rank with the best of all time, including those of Clausewitz, who wrote twenty-two centuries later. No one today has a firmer feel for strategic interrelationships, considerations, and constraints. Most of his ideas make just as much sense in *our* environment as they did in his.”⁷

It was at least not later than the end of the third century B. C. in ancient China when “strategy” as a military term appeared in public. About 1,700 years ago a historian and scholar of Western Jin Dynasty (265—316 A. D.), Sima Biao (? — 306 A. D.), wrote his monograph of *Strategy*. Though his writing had not been handed down from past generations, fragments of its contents could be seen from some classic books like *A History of the Three Kingdoms* (220—280 A. D.) and *Taiping Imperial Encyclopedia*. Huang Shi, a scholar of Qing Dynasty (1644—1911), collected remains of the lost text and compiled a volume containing eight paragraphs about two thousand plus words. This is the first monograph regarding “strategy” and the earliest application of the term of “strategy” as far as we can find out today. From the content of his writing it can be seen that combat stratagem and methods to command the troops to fight are mainly dealt with. In spite of its difference from current strategy the content of it is generally compatible with current strategy. After Sima Biao in the sixth century, Northern Wei’s Grand General Zhao Jiong (C. 532—599), the lord of Jin Chen, also compiled a book with the title of “Strategy” containing 26 volumes. Its content was absorbed in the military writing category of *Bibliography of Classics in a History of the Sui Dynasty* (*Sui Shu*) and *The Gist of Literature in the General Annals*. In the 17th century at the end of Ming Dynasty (1368—1644) Mao Yuanyi, a Deputy Commander, compiled *The Strategic Studies of Twenty One Histories* collecting the strategic facts of history and data of stratagem and tactics from the Spring and Autumn Period to Yuan Dynasty (1271—1368) numbered 33 volumes containing 613 paragraphs in total. This was a part of his voluminous collection *Wu Bei Zhi* (A Corpus of Classified Military Writings). It can be said that “strategy” has a direct source and a long history in China. Moreover, it has taken a better form of theory and existence.

According to the textual research in the West the term of “strategy” derived from Greek “strategicon”. In history it was said that in the 6th century the Eastern Roman (Byzantine) Empire divided its country into several military regions and designated each region a military commander concurrently managing civil affairs with a title of “*stratego*” meaning “general”. In the year of 580 A. D., Maurice, Emperor of the Eastern Roman Empire (539—620), compiled a military textbook *Strategicon* meaning “Generalship” or “the ways to be a general” particularly used for training the above-mentioned commanders. Modern scholars tend to think this is the first usage