IMT School for Advanced Studies, Lucca

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Chinese Strategic Culture: Origin, Organization, Operationalization, and Evolution of the People's War Doctrine.

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By Sergio Miracola 2018

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To Sergio Siclari, a real intellectual father.
To my mother, the best person on earth.
To my brother, the best friend I have.

Contents:

Acknowledgements

I have always been fascinated by the study of strategy and how it is conducted when is related to culture. Trying to find the way a specific country behaves militarily, besides being, of course, a challenge, represents, then, a fundamental intellectual objective. Esploring the strategy-cum-culture dimension represents the quintenssensial achievement a scholar could gain both for academic reasons and policy-oriented aims. As Sun Tzu clearly stated, knowing the enemy is the most important asset in warfare and it requires a lot of patience, sensitivity, and rationality.

As an undergraduate I tried to develop, first of all, a deeper knowledge of warfare; its characteristics, its operational aspect, and its philosophy. After that, as a graduate student pursuing my MA in international relations, I desired to investigate the cultural adjustments within the American army during the application of the counterinsurgent operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. After completing my MA thesis, I then decided that it was now the turn to investigate the strategic culture of another big competitor of the international system: the People's Republic of China.

During my doctoral experience I travelled a lot, searching all the Chinese military elements that could have strengthened my theoretical assumptions. King's College London helped me to find more the operational assets of Chinese strategic culture, while Peking University allowed me to increase my language expertise and the major cultural-philosophical dimension of Chinese strategic culture. In all, the four years spent both in Italy and abroad for the completion of my PhD project have been challenging, stimulating, frustrating, and, above all, fascinating.

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Publications

Books

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Articles in Peer-Review Journals

- Xi Jinping's Military Doctrine Between Tradition and Innovation, *Geopolitica*, Vol. VII, n. 1, 2018 (forthcoming).
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Presentations

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25-27 June, 2015, panelist at the VIII edition of SGRI annual conference (Italian Standing Group on International Relations), "Disentangling Subsystem Dynamics. The Search for Peace and Cooperation," Trento, Italy. Paper presented for the panel "East Asia Goes Global": *Chinese Maritime Strategy and the US-China relations: Thucydidean Trap or Chinese historical legacy?*

23-26 June, 2016, convener and speaker for the Panel "Military Transformation in East Asia" at the IX edition of the SGRI annual conference, "Exploring Foreign and Security Policy in International Relations," Trento, Italy. Paper presented: *The Evolution of Chinese People's War Doctrine in the Twenty-first Century*.

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14-16 Sept., 2017, speaker for the panel: "Deconstructing China's Belt and Road Initiative: ideational, institutional, and societal dimensions" at SISP (Società Italiana di Scienze Politiche – Italian Society of Political Science) conference, University of Urbino, Italy. Paper to be presented: *The Sino-Indian Confrontation under the One Belt One Road Infrastructural Project.*

Abstract

Why has it become so difficult to understand and eventually predict Chinese foreign policy strategy at the military level? In Strategic Studies, and especially in Political Science, experts emphasize the employment of rationality in states' foreign policy formulation. However, the international relations reality proves to be, very often, quite different than predicted. In this scientific uncertainty, strategic culture paradigm provides a more comprehensive understanding of states' strategic behavior in foreign policy. However, when it comes to China, the current literature on Chinese strategic culture has been adopting a dichotomous approach; that is, trying to demonstrate whether offensiveness or defensiveness constitute the fundamental nature of the Chinese strategic culture. My research goes beyond this debate by looking specifically at the Chinese military strategy *per se* and, specifically, which strategy really connects to – and therefore defines – the overall Chinese strategic culture. Hence, my research demonstrates how People's War doctrine represents a fundamental asset of Chinese strategic culture. To prove this, I will use a three-level analysis which looks at the civil-military relations, strategic design, and tactical dispositions. Moreover, in order to better classify the centrality of people's war in Chinese strategic culture, I will provide an extensive historical analysis of the doctrine through four major case studies: the first one deals with the doctrinal formulation occurred during the Warring States period, where ancient strategists started to assemble the embryonic doctrines of what today can be called asymmetric warfare, by looking at the implementation of flexibility and mobility. The second process analyzes the Tang dynasty, which represented an important turning point in Chinese history, paving the way for the creation of the Chinese modern era. The third case study deals with the Maoist Civil War, where people's war found its comprehensive definition and application. In conclusion, the last dimension

analyzes the evolution of people's war doctrine, during the advent of the fifth generation of leadership. This last case study represents an important historical asset because of the radical Chinese military transformation occurring in the last ten years coupled with the international technological developments. During this period, in fact, it becomes central to identify the development of Chinese cyber warfare techniques and the establishment of maritime militia which, I will argue, represent, both doctrinally and technically, an evolution of the people's war doctrine.

Introduction

Trying to understand other states' way of waging war has always represented a very difficult but also fascinating task. Even more interesting if we try to understand why some states plan and think of strategy the way they do. The paradigm of strategic culture helps us to find a way.

In the summer 2013, president Xi Jinping and president Obama met at Sunnylands in California in order to discuss and solve some problems related to the Chinese cyber attacks that targeted American firms. Two immediate questions came to my mind: why has China conducted an extensive cyber warfare? And how was it conceived, planned, and executed? While researching the appropriate answers to these questions, I came across many interesting and possible explanations. However, I felt that something was still hidden inside the "Chinese box" and that looking at it, only superficially, would not have helped. Using strategic culture as an scientific paradigm opened up new and unexplored boundaries that could not simply be based on the analysis of contingent phenomena.

In this research I have, therefore, decided to analyze Chinese way of warfare by not only using the strategic-culture paradigm, but also proposing a new theoretical framework that could help other scholars advance the study of other states' way of fighting. In other words, this new paradigm, in my opinion, had to combine complexity with generality, that is, putting together specific independent with dependent variables with the objectives to illustrate, in depth, the nature of strategic culture, while also making it into a generalized model that could also be replicated. Therefore, the independent variable was represented by the Chinese strategic culture per se, while the People's War Doctrine, which reflects the strategic culture represented the dependent variable. And in order to extrapolate the Chinese way of warfare from the historical evolution of its military and political system, I decided to develop my research by using a three-level model that would have analyzed the civil-military relations, the strategic design, and the tactical disposition that clearly highlight where strategic culture is and how a specific military doctrine comes out of it.

It became extremely important then to dig into Chinese past, explore its military and strategic thought, understand how Chinese, as ruling elite in connection with their social background, conceived security both at home and abroad, in order to draw a complete conclusion over the Chinese way of conducting military operations.

Therefore, one immediate objective of my research has been to intercept the traditional elements that have historically influenced the Chinese way of warfare. This is because, while it seems clear that

"contemporary Chinese strategic thought was to an important degree influenced by ancient traditions in philosophy and statecraft, [however], yet to this point very little systematic work had been done on isolating exactly what elements of this tradition had persisted and how."[1]

But approaching history, sometimes, can be a challenging task, due to its vastness both in terms of sources to deal with and the complexities surrounding the historical periods. When looking inductively to the evolution of Chinese history, I decided then that in order to develop a sophisticated, comprehensive analysis of Chinese strategic culture, the focal point of my research should have been based on the evaluation of the political environment surrounding specific turning points in Chinese history. And this mainly for two reasons: the first one was related to the inevitable and evident nature of those periods; being the historical turning points means that these historical eras radically changed the political, social, and military spectrum of the entire civilization, dramatically altering the future, while also, apparently canceling the past. The second reason is related to the first one and refers to the fact that these historical turning points per se, due to their radical nature, represented, inevitably, very unprecedented contexts, one very different from the other, therefore breaking the historical continuity that has often characterized vast segments of Chinese history as well as other country's history.

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[1] Alastair Iain Johnston, *Cultural Realism*, 1st ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1998), p. xi

According to this theoretical approach, I decided to concentrate my study on four very different case studies: I started my analysis the Warring States period, since it represented one of the most important epoch in Chinese history, due to its radical transformation of the political, social, and military assets.

The second period under investigation looks at the Tang dynasty; it represented another relevant turning point, since through the Tang, China started to enter into modern era, much earlier than its Western counterparts. This, therefore, means that the Tang dynasty laid the foundations for the institutional development of subsequent dynasties – at the cultural, political, and military level – both in China and abroad. For example, Japanese political system was critically influenced by the Tang system, and the bureaucratic examinations, that would have represented one of the defining features of Chinese political culture, started to be designed and implemented during the Sui-Tang, culminating, then, in what is now recognized as the Ming bureaucratic examination system.

The third period, the Maoist civil war, represents in itself one of the most radical shifts in Chinese history. Bringing down the imperial system and establishing a communist regime is, in itself, an extremely radical shift worth studying incessantly.

Finally, the fourth case study, more recent, also represents an important shift in Chinese politics, that is, the advent of the fifth generation of leadership of which Xi Jinping is the first representative. But in this last case study, the focus is not only to this generation of leadership, but also to the

geopolitical and technological context which forced the Chinese leadership to embrace a new military transformation, pushing the institutional system apparently towards a new and radical paradigm.

Having set the four historical turning points, my analysis, then, tried to investigate what military doctrine better responded to the Chinese strategic culture. Through an extensive study of Chinese primary resources and Chinese and Western secondary resources, I found out that some elements tended to be repeated with a fascinating continuity even in those cases where the adoption of other military doctrines would have been more profitable. These elements were: deception, flexibility, use of stratagems, total people's mobilization through nationalistic campaigns (with different levels of degree according to the different historical periods), civil-military interdependence, advocacy of military asymmetric strategy, centrality of the people with respect to technology, and finally the theorizing of active defense. All these features, in fact, could find a coherent theoretical encapsulation only if we look at that doctrine that would have been defined, during the twentieth century, as the People's War Doctrine.

Chapter 1
Chinese Strategic Culture and the Value of People's War

"Ignorance of strategic culture and its impact has been and remains the primary cause for misperception and miscalculation."[2]

The analytical objective of this chapter is to set a new methodological design to identify the central elements that characterize Chinese strategic culture. Specifically, my objective is to show that in order to speak of the existence of a strategic culture we need to focus – historically, politically, philosophically, and, of course, militarily – on a state's main military strategy. Military doctrine, I argue, reflects the core of strategic culture. Therefore our analysis should focus on the edification of a specific military doctrine. In this chapter, I seek to explain why China exhibited a historical preference for the application of People's War Doctrine and why Chinese policy-makers have relied – at crucial historical turning points,

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[2] Carl G. Jacobsen, "Conclusion", in *Strategic Power: USA/USSR*, Carl G. Jacobsen ed. , 1st ed. (London: Macmillan Press, 1990), 503-506.

including today – on this the main doctrinal framework in their overall strategic thinking.

Three relevant books published by the Chinese academia as well as the military widely discussed the centrality of the People's War Doctrine in today's Chinese strategic thinking. Unlike journal articles or other typical works on Mao Zedong which dealt, among other things, with the famous notion of People's War, these three books represent the unique effort to shed light on this widely discussed military – as well as strategic – concept. In one way or another, the notion of "People's War" played a central role in Chinese strategic formulation, especially in the last eighty years, that is, since the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War in 1937. Published over a period of almost twenty years in 1992, 1997, and 2011, these books reflect the persistence, in academic and military circles, of the common strategic denominator: People's War Doctrine.

The first book, published in 1992, right at the end of the Cold War, with the title *On People's War*,[3] seeks to offer an overview of the historical application of the people's war in Chinese history, with only one chapter dealing with the people's war in the West. Before analyzing (in the subsequent sections) its overall methodological and theoretical approach, it is worth noting that this book tried to bring to light the roots and core characteristics of the doctrine. The objective of the author, Guo Weitao, is to illustrate its historical validity and, above all, its cultural significance in

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[3] Wei Tao [伟涛] Guo [郭], *On People's War [Renmin Zhanzheng Lun - 人民战争论]* (Beijing [北京]: Defence Military Press [jiefangjun chubanshe - 解放军出版社], 1992).

Chinese history. By tracing the application of people's war since ancient times, its overall objective is to illustrate how people's war represented a tactical as well as strategic tool that China had employed with regularity. As stated in the preface, "studying and researching the Maoist thought on People's War, transmitting and developing his thought on People's War is our common mission. The western bourgeois class relied on the book *On War* for which they expressed pride. We should have our own theory of warfare, which cannot be anything else except the theory of People's War."[4]

The third book published in 2011, with the title *The Overall War of People's War*,[5] along with the first one, highlight the relevance that Mao's People's War Doctrine for contemporary strategic affairs. Unlike the first one, the third book's objective is to project Mao's doctrine to the future, especially to the unexplored field of cyber warfare, because of the increasing uncertainty over the future of strategy. The basic questions the author tries to answer are: "what shall we rely on in order to face challenges? What shall we rely on in order to coalesce people's hearts? What shall we rely on in order to win wars? According to the author, in order to answer those questions, it is important to think over Mao's thought, because "China is the homeland of Sun Tzu's *The Art of War*, the homeland of Mao Zedong's thought, and it is the homeland of People's War."[6]

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[4] 人民战争论, p. 3

[5] Xiansheng [宪生] Meng [孟], *The Overall War of People's War* [*RenMin ZhanZheng Zheng Ti Zhan* – 人民战争整体战] (Beijing [北京]: Defence University Press [Guofang daxue chubanshe – 国防大学出版社, 2011).

[6] 人民战争整体战, p. 5

These two books, therefore, made me raise the following question: why is People's War Doctrine still deeply analyzed and debated? When it came out, the first book was not directly related to a specific military or international crisis context that could have justified its publication by the military press. In 1992, under the leadership of Jiang Zemin, China was still pursuing the policies and the guidelines Deng Xiaoping had established since Mao's death in 1976. The book had stepped in years before the outbreak of the Third Taiwan Strait Crisis in 1995-96.

A slightly different story surrounds the third book, since it clearly stated that its argument aims at identifying China's new strategic environment coming out of United States' invasion of Iraq and the progressive transformation of the international system as well as the strategic thinking.

However, in order to properly answer that question – that is, why People's War is still analyzed and debated – there are other important reasons surrounding the strategic and doctrinal importance of People's War Doctrine. All states, in all different historical periods, commonly develop their own military and strategic manuals in order to explain their political environment and the efficient strategic means to be employed in geopolitical disputes. For example, in 1997 the National Defense University published a book (which represents one of the three textbooks under examination) which illustrated how to fight militarily a more powerful opponent. Under the title

Contemporary Strategy of Using the Weak to Win Over the Strong,[7] this book clearly tried to provide the Chinese government with apparently "new" strategic guidelines in order to face the military challenges in world affairs. That part of this theoretical explanation had laid on the 1995-96 Third Taiwan Strait Crisis, which pushed the Chinese government to rethink its overall strategic commitment in East Asia, especially with the presence of the United States. Therefore, even if this book does not explicitly deal with People's War Doctrine, it nevertheless considers, indirectly, People's War strategic principles as the central theme of its argument.

Moreover, it resembles more a policy guide book which, even if less affected by government propaganda, ends up reaching the same theoretical conclusions of the previous two books mentioned above: the author argues that there is a traditional military policy that conditions Chinese overall military calculations in terms of military strategic planning; something that we need to analyze in order to understand where this tradition came from, and how it still exerts a relevant role in Chinese strategic approach to warfare.

My objective is to identify historical features as well as legacies through the application of the strategic culture paradigm, that is, the theoretical framework that highlights how a state behaves militarily according to its cultural heritage. This chapter identifies the elements characterizing this theoretical approach to military strategy. I also present a new methodological structure in order to better demonstrate how strategic

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[7] Lei [磊] Jiang [蒋], *On Contemporary Strategy Of Using The Weak To Defeat The Strong [Xiandai Yi Lie Sheng You Zhanlue - 现代以劣胜优战略]* (Beijing [北京]: Defence

culture plays a relevant role in conditioning the shape and application of military strategy. This chapter is organized as follows. The next section deals with the main current literature on strategic culture, trying to understand the current debate and where it fails: the correct understanding of how a state behaves militarily, rather than focusing, as the current literature does, on a state's grand strategic behavior. The second section goes a step further by analyzing and dissecting the current literature on Chinese strategic culture. Finally the last section sets up a new methodological approach to the definition and operationalization of strategic culture.

1.1 What is Strategic Culture?

The objective of this section is to present the current debate on strategic culture, what it means, how to measure it, and therefore how to implement it. This section looks at both political science and military history literature, since they influence each other and sometimes one literature branch presents some elements that are not covered by the other and vice versa.

1.1.1 Where Strategic Culture Comes from

University Press [Guofang daxue chubanshe - 国防大学出版社], 1997).

Strategic culture, in its current terminology, has been treated in general by the IR paradigm of constructivism. It developed as a response to realism, especially against its "ahistorical, non-cultural … framework for analyzing strategic choices"[8] and its inconsistency in explaining why specific outcomes occurred in world politics,[9] especially since "many strategists, in fact, appear to have what T.E. Lawrence called 'a fundamental crippling incuriousness' about their adversaries." And this has represented "a very noteworthy characteristic in an activity [the strategic thinking] in which the ostensible aim is to produce rational policy."[10]

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[8] Alastair Iain Johnston, "Thinking About Strategic Culture", *International Security* 19, no. 4 (1995): 35. Johnston, moreover, highlights the fundamental theoretical problem affecting both realism and strategic culture. While the former's problem is "to explain differences in strategic behavior across strategic cultures when structural conditions are constant," the latter's one is "to explain similarities in strategic behavior across varied strategic cultures."

[9] Colin Gray, one of the most famous scholars dealing with strategic cultural analysis, clearly articulated the importance of strategic culture by demonstrating why it "can make sense of those material factors which realist beliefs are utterly unable to decode." In order to prove this, by discussing the case of the German rearmament leading to the outbreak of World War II, he posited three fundamental historical questions: "what would a general, acultural, theory of strategy have told us about German rearmament in the 1930s? … what is Germany acquiring? … what does Germany intend to do with it?" Clearly, as he pointed out, the realist paradigm could not coherently respond to the third question. Colin S. Gray, "In Praise Of Strategy", *Review of International Studies* 29, no. 02 (2003): 294.

[10] Ken Booth, *Strategy And Ethnocentrism* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1979), p. 26. Moreover, Colin Gray, on the same line, has highlighted how important "cultural intelligence" is in explaining "the intellectual and moral context within which decisions will be made." In terms of military affairs, he has clearly stated that, since it is much easier "to count tanks and missiles than it is to grasp the cultural assumptions of an alien society … both sides have no choice other than to function in cultural ignorance as best they are able." In order to avoid these types of problems, the military circles have been adopting the so-called "Principles of War," one of which "asserts the utility

For example, one of the common fallacies of neorealism that constructivism, and therefore, strategic culture tackles is the inability to explain how states generate military power. In fact, "neorealists estimate the power of states on the basis of resources, but give scant attention, if any, to the *process* whereby states produce military power."[11]

Two additional theoretical problems of the realist research tradition, moreover, deserve further scrutiny. One refers to the realist theoretical assumptions about the rational actor paradigm, while the second concerns the rational logic governing the balance of power theory. While being

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of maintaining the 'initiative … [by] operat[ing] within his decision cycle, his OODA … so that he is never able to wage the kind of war he might prefer.'" However, as Gray himself highlighted, this type of military philosophy works well in those cases where the political objective is the complete overthrow of the enemy. In other cases, characterized by more limited political objectives, this model, void of the cultural element, could not work at all. He pushed the argument over the importance of culture even further by analyzing, through a counterfactual approach, how the Sino-Japanese confrontation during WWII could have developed, had both parties carefully analyzed their adversary's strategic culture. One specific conclusion is that war could have ended much earlier, had the Japanese understood that attacking Pearl Harbor would have triggered US total war commitment, and had the US studied the high value Japan put on honor, therefore avoiding those military strategies that then would have directly targeted it, creating an uncontrollable spiral effect. Colin S. Gray, "Out Of The Wilderness: Prime Time For Strategic Culture", p. 20.

[11] Theo Farrell, "Culture And Military Power", *Review of International Studies* 24, no. 3 (1998): 407, original emphasis. As Farrell himself pointed out, the only exception to this fallacy within the realist school of thought is represented by Barry Posen, *The Sources Of Military Doctrine* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984). In his work, Posen created a model for understanding the process through which states organize for war.

stimulating theories,[12] they did not last the challenge of history.[13] For what concerns our research topic – that is, the use and implementation of

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[12] When it comes to the conceptualization of the rationality paradigm, "In strategy, rationality is usually conceived in an instrumental sense. It is concerned with means, not ends. Rationality is 'choosing to act in the manner which gives best promise of maximising one's value position on the basis of a sober calculation of potential gains and losses, and probabilities of enemy actions.'" This implies that "calculations will be made consciously and correctly, that they will be based on accurate information, and that decisions will be made coolly, with a clear head." However, we all know how difficult it is to implement such a "rational" way of thinking. Unfortunately, history has clearly showed us that "when decision-makers calculate what is likely to give 'best promise' of achieving a particular end their reckoning is culture-dependent." The "'best promise' only makes sense in terms of a particular set of values, which in turn have their roots in a particular culture." Ken Booth, *Strategy And Ethnocentrism*, pp. 63-64. Among the most famous works that employ rationality as the central paradigm for their theoretical design, see: Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, *The War Trap* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981). In this book, which represents a useful representative of this theoretical model, even if quite innovative in its own right, the author traces the quantitative pattern that leads to the rationalist decision of the policy-maker – what he calls the "expected utility theory of war" – whether or not engaging in combat operations. At first, it seems a quite convincing argument, since he widely applied a quantitative approach, however, it failed to explain the real cultural reasons that led to war that the quantitative database could not explain. On the same line, in another book – edited by the same author, Bruce Bueno de Mesquita and David Lalman, *War And Reason* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992) – the argument tries, this time, also to investigate the domestic elements that characterize a state's recourse to war. However, again, the deep bias towards the relationship between rationality and war affected their argument, leaving out again the domestic variables that could explain a state's decision to go to war: "The domestic version of the game [offered in the book] is indistinguishable from any other model in which policy makers' choices of what demands to make are somehow constrained or exogenous. In the end, the policy process in this model, whether *realpolitik* or domestic, is still very much the 'black box' for which third-image explanations have been criticized in the past." Michael Gilligan, "War And Reason: Domestic And International Imperatives By Bruce Bueno De Mesquita And David Lalman (Book Review)", *Journal of International Affairs* 48, no. 2 (1995): 650. Another relevant book, Thomas C Schelling, *The Strategy Of Conflict* (Cambridge:

Harvard University Press, 1960) clearly explains how rationality guides any type of actor's behavior by implementing the game theory puzzle. Game theory clearly represents a valuable mathematic and interactive model which received a wide and deserved attention. However, the cultural variables that historically pushed states to behave differently with respect to the stylized models' outcome are completely left out, therefore critically undermining the overall strategic behavioral explanations. For what concerns the famous balance of power theory, one clear example of this logic has been offered by Kenneth N Waltz, *Theory Of International Politics* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Pub. Co., 1979). His work stands as the pioneer on the subject of neorealism and the rational attitude towards balancing in international relations.

[13] However, still in the same theoretical field, the balance of power theory received a wide criticism through the work of Paul Schroeder, "Historical Reality Vs. Neo-Realist Theory", *International Security* 19, no. 1 (1994): 108-148. He highlighted how the implementation of the theory of balance of power was actually applied in very few historical cases, and still more as a indirect system rather than a rationalist calculation. Moreover, other relevant realist works actually moved beyond the balance of power theory suggesting that in history the opposite actually occurred, something that has been defined as bandwagoning. See for example, Randall L. Schweller, "Bandwagoning For Profit: Bringing The Revisionist State Back In", *International Security* 19, no. 1 (1994): 72-107. The balance of power theory has also been challenged by the famous "balance of threat" theory elaborated in Stephen M Walt, *The Origins Of Alliances* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987). Moreover, within the same theoretical paradigm, other realists demonstrated that actually in history we can find more often the manifestation of the so-called "hegemonic stability," that is, the assumption that in history states do not necessarily oppose the progressive manifestation of a world hegemon, since hegemony actually helps create a peaceful and more prosperous international system. This theoretical assumption not only clearly contradicts the core realist assumptions of self-help and balance of power, but actually it demonstrates to be one of the few theoretical strengths of realism, since even historians tend to agree on the scientific validity of the "hegemonic stability." For realist works related to this topic see: Robert Gilpin, *War And Change In World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981). In Gilpin's book we can find the first theorization about the creation of empires and what are the processes that might lead to an overall systemic change, which pass through the so-called hegemonic war, also illustrated in Robert Gilpin, "The Theory Of Hegemonic War", *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 18, no. 4 (1988): 591-613. Another relevant work highlighting the theory of hegemonic stability – especially when it come to its effects on world trade – is Stephen D. Krasner, "State Power And

strategic culture – rationality has failed to explain specific behavioral patterns that seemed to be, at the first glance, contradictory or even irrational. For example, one case in point is the use of the *kamikaze* tactic during World War II and how it had been deeply criticized in strategic terms.[14] The failure to understand its real strategic nature is the result of the application of the so-called rationality which "can prevent an individual or group from seeing (or seeing as acceptable) certain options which might nevertheless be rational in an objective sense."[15] Therefore, in such an

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The Structure Of International Trade", *World Politics* 28, no. 03 (1976): 317-347. For the political stability under hegemony see: William C. Wohlforth, "The Stability Of A Unipolar World", *International Security* 24, no. 1 (1999): 5-41. For an historical analysis of this theory see: Ronald Findlay and Kevin H O'Rourke, *Power And Plenty* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2007). Within the "hegemonic stability" field of research, other scholars demonstrated how even strategic culture could explain the creation and ultimate acceptance of hegemony. Conceived as a political system mainly concerned with the "production of legitimacy," Bradley S. Klein argues that the American hegemony is not simply based on military capabilities, but also on the ability to project a cultural model that other countries find convincing and easily internalized. Bradley S. Klein "Hegemony And Strategic Culture: American Power Projection And Alliance Defence Politics", *Review of International Studies* 14, no. 02 (1988): 133-148. Other works, instead, talking about how alliances work, demonstrated that actually alliances were created not with the objective to counterbalance a hegemon, but to actually better control the other members of the alliance itself. See Paul Schroeder, "Alliances, 1815-1945: Weapons Of Power And Tools Of Management", in *Historical Dimensions Of National Security Problems*, Klaus Knorr ed. , 1st ed. (Kansas city: University Press of Kansas, 1976), 227-262.
[14] Victor Davis Hanson, *Carnage And Culture* (New York: Doubleday, 2001).
[15] Ken Booth, *Strategy And Ethnocentrism*, p. 64. Moreover, the author, as in the case of kamikaze, warns against the possibility to "mistake rational for reasonable behavior. Not all rational behavior might be thought to be reasonable: more often than not, 'reasonable' behavior is that which we ourselves … are used to." In the strategic cultural studies, this distinction has been constantly mentioned in order to clarify the relationship between rationality and behavior. On this basis, also Colin

uncertain world politics context, it should be remembered the one too-often-forgotten "cardinal tenet of strategy"[16]: "知彼知己者，百战不殆 [*zhi bi zhi ji zhe, bai zhan bu dai*] "[17] "Know the enemy and know yourself; in a hundred battles you will never be in peril."[18]

However, a closer look at the notion of rationality demonstrates that, if employed with theoretical care, it might not be completely antagonistic to the concept of strategic culture: "indeed, strategic culture is compatible with notions of limited rationality (where strategic culture simplifies reality), with process rationality (where strategic culture defines ranked preferences or narrows options), and with adaptive rationality (where historical choices, analogies, metaphors, and precedents are invoked to guide choice). But the

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Gray underlines the fact that the problem that we are encountering is related to the content of rationality, that is, "with its reasonableness in our encultured view, not with the process which purposefully connects means with ends. The suicide bomber is a rational person. But, to us, he or she is not a reasonable one." Therefore, according to Gray, such a specification of the relationship between rationality and behavior underlines the assumption that the "culturalist perspective is not at odds with a realist one," since "we are all 'cultural creatures.'" Colin S. Gray, "Out Of The Wilderness: Prime Time For Strategic Culture", *Defense Threat Reduction Agency Advanced Systems and Concepts Office* (2006): 12.

[16] Ken Booth, *Strategy And Ethnocentrism*, p. 16.

[17] Sunzi et al., *Sun Zi* (Beijing: People's China Pub. House, 1995), p. 13-14.

[18] Sunzi, and Samuel B Griffith, *The Art Of War* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971) p. 82-84. For an analysis of the reasons why this dictum still plays a relevant role in contemporary strategic thought see: Colin S. Gray, "Out Of The Wilderness: Prime Time For Strategic Culture", pp. 17-20. For a critical analysis of the difficulty of collecting information on one's enemy, see: Robert Jervis, *Why Intelligence Fails* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010).

strategic culture approach does seem potentially incompatible with game rationality."[19]

"It is hardly going too far to say that strategy as it has been narrowly and traditionally conceived is international relations with many of the complexities taken out."[20] Complexities that, once being eliminated from the overall theoretical analysis, might trigger three types of mechanisms which critically affect one's perception over another state's strategic attitude. They are: ethnocentrism, the mechanism through which a state projects onto the opponent one's own way of thinking about strategic and international affairs;[21] "intolerance of ambiguity … the idea that individuals are unable to recognize the contradictory characteristics of a situation, and are reluctant to suspend judgment while examining the evidence"; and finally "cognitive dissonance [which] is concerned with the ways in which we try to increase

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[19] James G. March, "Bounded Rationality, Ambiguity, And The Engineering Of Choice", *The Bell Journal of Economics* 9, no. 2 (1978): 590-592 in Alastair Iain Johnston, "Thinking About Strategic Culture", p. 34.

[20] Ken Booth, *Strategy And Ethnocentrism*, p. 24.

[21] In this case, Ken Booth raises an important issue about the relationship between strategy and ethnocentrism. He stated, in fact, that: "The strategic paradigm contains an in-built ethnocentric perspective arising out of the nature of its practical aspects and because of the assumptions and ideology which inform its analytical and theoretical approaches. The grip of ethnocentrism is strengthened by a range of other factors, which affect individuals to a greater or lesser extent. Amongst the main factors are the psychological make-up or disposition of those who are part of the profession, the training received by strategists, and the climate of opinion in which most if not all strategist work and think. Together these factors mean that strategy as an activity attracts ethnocentric attitudes, as a discipline it fails to make newcomers aware of the problem, and as a profession it is pervaded by above-average pressures toward conformity. Not surprisingly, therefore, ethnocentrism is the natural condition of strategy." *Ibid.*, p. 28.

our comfort with the decisions we have taken. Individuals do not like the psychological discomfort which comes from having 'dissonant' thoughts, images or attitudes. Consequently they employ a range of techniques to reject or avoid discrepant 'cognitions.'"[22]

However, on the other hand, "perhaps more serious in its consequences has been the tendency of some so-called statesmen and some so-called diplomatic historians to make the opposite mistake: they have conceived international relations with the military factor largely taken out."[23] Because of these extreme approaches that did not provide a comprehensive methodological design – not only necessary for understanding states' strategic culture, but also for providing a normative model that could be replicated – many scholars tried to overcome these theoretical obstacles by offering valid alternatives.

For example, in terms of rational strategic planning, Graham Allison, in his famous book, *Essence of Decision*, clearly explained how the American strategic approach during the Cuban Missile Crisis resulted more in organizational, bureaucratic, therefore internal, compromise rather than a direct result of a strategic rational thinking by the American policymakers.[24] However, his design failed to provide a coherent theoretical direction for why that historical outcome had happened. In other words, his book emphasized

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[22] *Ibid.*, p. 25.
[23] *Ibid.*, p. 24.
[24] Graham T Allison, *Essence Of Decision* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1971). For an introductory explanation of Allison's model see his previous article: Graham T.

the role played by the analytical framework of the organizational and bureaucratic model, in order to investigate American policymaking. However, at the end of his argument we cannot really understand, in the end, how the American strategy was really created and then implemented, let alone the fact that "bureaucracies have their own cultural idiosyncrasies" that are worth being investigated.[25] Besides this clear lack of depth in theoretical design, his contribution, nevertheless, is important because it illustrates how domestic politics still plays a relevant role in foreign policy strategic formulation and that cannot be therefore underestimated as the realist theory of unitary-state emphasizes.[26]

A different story surrounds another book, written on the same topic, by Jutta Weldes.[27] This book is important because it highlights the value of culture in strategic thinking. She discusses, from a constructivist point of view, how the US clearly built its own national interests concerning the Soviet presence in Cuba. By asking a clear research question – "How do we get from the Soviet missile deployment in Cuba to the Cuban missile crisis?" – she demonstrates that it was how the US constructed its vision of the

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Allison, "Conceptual Models And The Cuban Missile Crisis", *Am Polit Sci Rev* 63, no. 03 (1969): 689-718.

[25] Ken Booth, *Strategy And Ethnocentrism*, p. 65.

[26] For detailed critical analysis of Allison's work see: Ole R. Holsti, "Essence Of Decision: Explaining The Cuban Missile Crisis By Graham T. Allison (Book Review)", *The Western Political Quarterly* 25, no. 1 (1972): 136-140 and Barton Bernstein, "Essence Of Decision By Graham Allison, Philip Zelikow (Book Review)", *Foreign Policy* 114 (1999): 121-126.

[27] Jutta Weldes, *Constructing National Interests: The United States And The Cuban Missile Crisis* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).

Russian foreign policy posture and strategy that clearly triggered US intervention. It was the result, in fact, "of a 'strong national conviction.' This 'strong national conviction,' this 'visceral feeling' about the U.S. national interest in the Cuban missile crisis, resulted from a socially and discursively constructed common sense. It was the product of the postwar U.S. security imaginary and of the well-developed template it provided for representing the world of international politics and the place of the United States in it." [28]

Therefore "the constant, numbing repetition of the same stock phrases and descriptions … contributed to the reception of these representations as common sense." Phrases like "the Soviet Union is bent on world domination" characterized the American "security imaginary,"[29] that is, "a set of ideas about entities that populated the international system as well as relations among them. The postwar American security imaginary depicted the United States as the defender of freedom, while appeasement, Soviet duplicity, the creeping subversion of international communism, and the Cuban revolution were figured as threats. Security imaginaries clarify who we are and who our enemies are and how and why they threaten us."[30]

This demonstrates, in other words, how other intervening factors, like cultural traits, determine the conduct of a state's foreign policy or even a

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[28] McGeorge Bundy, *Danger And Survival* (New York: Random House, 1988), p. 413, in Jutta Weldes, *Constructing National Interests: The United States And The Cuban Missile Crisis*
[29] Jutta Weldes, *Constructing National Interests: The United States And The Cuban Missile Crisis*, pp. 226-227

military conduct. The example of the Cuban Missile Crisis, as well as other theoretical designs that I will explain in the following pages, highlights the importance of domestic variables in shaping the strategic behavior of a state. In other words, "the original insight behind constructivism is that meaning is 'socially constructed' … In a socially constructed world, the existence of patterns, cause-and-effect relationships, and even states themselves depends on webs of meaning and practices that constitute them."[31] As an additional evidence of this argument, Jeffrey Legro explained

[30] Aaron Belkin, "Constructing National Interests: The United States And The Cuban Missile Crisis By Jutta Weldes (Book Review)", *The American Political Science Review* 95, no. 4 (2001): 1048.

[31] Ian Hurd, "Constructivism", in *The Oxford Handbook Of International Relations*, Christian Reus-Smit and Duncan Snidal ed., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 300, 305. This theoretical specificity about constructivism is quite relevant because it underlines its success in the past thirty years. This success is expressed, as the author points out, by the fact that "other approaches have come to recognize the socially constructed content of some of the concepts [the constructivists] use. The goods of realist competition, for instance, include status, prestige, reputation, and hegemony, all of which make sense only in terms of either legitimated power or shared understandings. They are, therefore, the stuff of constructivism as well. This has had the result of blurring the boundaries between the approaches, making them hard to define in exclusive terms." (p. 313) The last issue that the author had raised – that is, the progressive blurriness among the different theoretical approaches in IR – affected part of the constructivist theoretical development to the extent that there have been several attempts to combine constructivism with other paradigm. One of these is exemplified by the work of J.Samuel Barkin, "Realist Constructivism", *Int Studies Review* 5, no. 3 (2003): 325-342, which tries to explain why realism and constructivism are not totally antithetical. While another one, James Fearon and Alexander Wendt, "Rationalism V. Constructivism", in *Handbook Of International Relations*, Walter Carlsnaes, Thomas Risse and Beth Simmons ed. , 1st ed. (London: Sage, 2002), 52-72, tries to discuss what are the areas of theoretical convergence between realism and constructivism. In another work, John Glenn, "Realism Versus Strategic Culture: Competition And Collaboration?", *International*

how constructivism conceptualizes the nature of ideas: "ideas are not so much mental as symbolic and organizational; they are embedded not only in human brains but also in the 'collective memories,' government procedures, educational systems, and the rhetoric of statecraft."[32]

An additional limit of realist logic of self-help inevitably paved the way for constructivism, since as it has been neatly summarized by Alexander Wendt in a famous statement: "500 British nuclear weapons are less threatening to the United States than 5 North Korean nuclear weapons." The idea behind this assumption is that states do not automatically activate balancing or do not adopt defensive measures whenever any state in the international system is believed to embark on a military program. And this has to do with the basic idea that "the British are friends and the North Koreans are not." [33]

Constructivism's main objective is therefore to demonstrate how ideas and beliefs help shape any state's overall projection of its own involvement in world affairs. Constructivism, therefore, tries to shed light on the always debated and apparently unexplainable states' behavior. In other words, "constructivism 'views culture as an evolving system of shared meaning that governs perceptions, communications, and actions …. Culture

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Studies Review 11, no. 3 (2009): 523-551, the objective is to search for a common theoretical ground between the strategic cultural paradigm and the newly established neoclassical realism which, in opposition to neorealism, tries to shit again the focus more towards the domestic factors that shape a state's interests and ultimately its behavior.
[32] Jeffrey Legro, *Rethinking The World* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2005).

shapes practice in both the short and the long term. At the moment of action, culture provides the elements of grammar that define the situation, that reveal motives, and that set forth a strategy for success.'"[34]

Nevertheless, talking about behavior, inside the constructivist research tradition there is a quite fortunate, even if debatable, paradigm that is developing quite fast thanks both to its explanatory power and, above all, its originality: strategic culture.

The need to develop this paradigm emerged during the Cold War, when policy-makers started to wonder if there were a clear and distinctive Soviet way of fighting. Therefore, this paradigm, as a consequence, immediately reflected onto the constructivist approach, which, until that moment, mainly dealt with states' behavior at the international level. As a consequence, a direct response to the realist monopoly on the field of security studies, "constructivism and culturalism [which represent a collateral field of study of constructivism] [started to be] both concerned with the impact of norms on international security … For constructivists and culturalists, ideas are not merely rules or 'road maps' for action, but rather ideas operate 'all the way down' to actually shape actors and action in world

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[33] Alexander Wendt, "Constructing International Politics", *International Security* 20, no. 1 (1995): 71.
[34] Valerie M Hudson, *Culture & Foreign Policy* (Boulder, Colo.: L. Rienner Publishers, 1997), pp. 28-29 in Jeffrey S. Lantis, "Strategic Culture And National Security Policy", *Int Studies Review* 4, no. 3 (2002): 97. One clear work that uses constructivism to explain another state's behavior, therefore identity is: Ted Hopf, *Social Construction Of International Politics*, 1st ed. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002).

politics. In other words, when ideas are norms, they not only constrain actors, but also constitute actors and enable action."[35]

And it is action that we should investigate, rather than simple and general attitudes of foreign policy. On these terms, in fact, "strategic culture becomes a generator of preferences, a vehicle for the perpetuation of values and preferences, and a force of action in the revitalization and renewal of these values."[36] One of the first attempts to actually define and build an overview on the application and significance of strategic culture has been represented by Thucydides' *The Peloponnesian War*. Thucydides' work also

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[35] Theo Farrell, "Constructivist Security Studies: Portrait Of A Research Program", *Int Studies Review* 4, no. 1 (2002): 49-50. In his article, Farrell illustrates the debate over who are really constructivists in comparison with culturalists. The constructivists are defined as those scholars that "concentrate on the social structure of state action at the level of international system." Culturalists, on the other hand, "also examine how norms shape the security behavior of states." According to this differentiation, then, simplifying to the extreme, we can assume that constructivists are more theoretically involved with what occurs at the international level, competing with realism: "what matters most for realists is the material structure of world politics. States do what they have the power to do. For constructivists, states do what they think most appropriate." On the other hand, culturalists are more concerned with the norms operating inside the state and which, in turn, shape the conduct of military and security policies. In other words, "culturalists discover norms in operation when they look inside the state." According to this dichotomous distinction, strategic culture, then, derives from the culturalist methodology, since it "has shown how state action regarding military force is shaped by beliefs collectively held by policymakers and political elites (strategic culture) and by military officers (organizational culture)." For simplicity, however, in this chapter I will be dealing with strategic culture as a single paradigm with connections with the overall theoretical spectrum of constructivism, instead of working theoretically to distinguish strategic culture as a direct product of culturalism. My approach is mainly concerned with the central theoretical assumptions that ideas and norms matter. And for both constructivism and culturalism this holds true.
[36] Jeffrey S. Lantis, "Strategic Culture And National Security Policy," p. 104.

highlighted the importance of understanding the adversary's strategic culture, even if this had been indirectly highlighted. The Greek historian dedicated lots of space to the analysis of the Athenian vs. the Spartan way of war.[37]

Culture, moreover, because it is "the most important source of the moral factors that are central to the nature of war as well as to the character of wars,"[38] has been included into one of the most important works on war and strategy. Clausewitz's *On War*, for example, while dealing with the nature of war and its political meaning stated that "war is thus an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will." It is important to understand what he meant by the word "will." He continues his analysis by saying that "the will is itself a moral quality" which, along the material elements, constitute the two fundamental aspects of the nature of war. However, while "the physical seem little more than the wooden hilt, … the moral factors are the precious metal, the real weapon, the finely-honed blade."[39] This demonstrates how important immaterial factors are in explaining the conduct and the nature of war; elements that help distinguish a state's true strategic culture.

Shifting the debate to the contemporary era, another valuable contribution towards the analysis and implementation of strategic culture has

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[37] Thucydides., Franco Ferrari and Giovanna Daverio Rocchi, *La Guerra Del Peloponneso* (Milano: Biblioteca universale Rizzoli, 1985). On the biased use and interpretation of Thucydides' strategic and political thought see: Laurie M. Johnson Bagby, "The Use And Abuse Of Thucydides In International Relations", *International Organization* 48, no. 01 (1994): 131.
[38] Colin S. Gray, "Out Of The Wilderness: Prime Time For Strategic Culture", p. 16

been represented by Gray's work, which reopened the debate on the importance of culture for the field of strategic studies. Dealing with the seven classic strategic doctrines of the Cold War – such as deterrence, limited war, arms control, flexible response, nation-building/counterinsurgency, crisis management, and controlled escalation – Gray highlighted how those doctrines proved to be inefficient in dealing with the nuclear Soviet-US confrontation. And their inefficiency can be traced from the fundamental problems characterizing the overall American approach to foreign policy, that is, the application of a mirror-image type of strategy: what clearly worked for the US – it was believed – should have worked for the USSR.[40]

Works that tried to highlight the behavioral specificity of a state at the military level had already existed. However, they usually belong to the category of military history. Just to cite a few, for example, the edited volume on *Chinese ways in Warfare*,[41] Liddell Hart's famous book *The British Way*

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[39] Carl von Clausewitz, Michael Howard and Peter Paret, *On War* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 77

[40] Colin S. Gray, "What Rand Hath Wrought", *Foreign Policy*, no. 4 (1971): 122, 124. On the same line, a couple of years later Gray's article came out, in 1976 Adda Bozeman, in her article, challenged the idea that the international violence of that time was the direct result of the economic underdeveloped conditions of the newly independent states which increased instability at the global level. As she herself asserted, it has been a big shortcoming the fact that "no allowance was made for the possibility that war-related phenomena might be, perhaps even predominately, aspects of locally prevalent values, images, traditions and mental constructions." Adda Bozeman, "War And The Clash Of Ideas", *Orbis* 20, no. 1 (1976): 77 in Rashed Uz Zaman, "Strategic Culture: A 'Cultural' Understanding Of War", *Comparative Strategy* 28, no. 1 (2009): 71.

[41] Edward L Dreyer, Frank Algerton Kierman and John King Fairbank, *Chinese Ways In Warfare* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1974).

in Warfare,[42] Ruth Benedict's *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword,*[43] or Russell Weigley's *The American Way of War*[44] clearly contributed to the development of an historical methodology targeting the cultural variable at the military level.

1.1.2 Strategic Culture Within the Political Science Debate

Within the field of political science, we encountered one of the first attempts to conceptualize this paradigm. It is during the '70s that scholars tried to investigate how to define strategic culture. Snyder's work on Soviet military-strategic conduct represented the first direct attempt to this process. Snyder's work still represents an important contribution for the field of cultural studies applied to security and strategic affairs, because it has been the first one to coin, in the field of social sciences, the term of "strategic culture." In an article for RAND Corporation in 1977, while discussing the nature of Soviet military conduct, he explained the significance of strategic culture in the following terms: "as the sum total of ideas, conditioned emotional responses, and patterns of habitual behavior that members of a national strategic community have acquired through instruction or imitation and share with each other with regard to … strategy." Following this

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[42] Basil Henry Liddell Hart, *The British Way In Warfare* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, Eng.: Penguin Books, 1942).
[43] Ruth Benedict, *The Chrysanthemum And The Sword*, 1st ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2006).

definition, he carried on stating that through his paper he would have investigated "the body of attitudes and beliefs that guides and circumscribes thought on strategic questions, influences the way strategic issues are formulated, and sets the vocabulary and conceptual parameters of strategic debate."[45]

According to his definition, with which I generally tend to agree, strategic culture, therefore, should represent a collection of ideas that can be transmitted (besides being internalized) and that carry a deep meaning for the community involved in the strategic planning. Hence, this contributes to make the state's policy environment quite "unique." In fact, as he correctly stated "individuals are socialized into a distinctively Soviet mode of strategic thinking. As a result of this socialization process, a set of general beliefs, attitudes, and behavioral patterns with regard to nuclear strategy has achieved a state of semipermanence that places them on the level of 'culture' rather than mere 'policy.'"[46] However, he does not specify how the development, transmission, and socialization of ideas work, which, in order to be operationalized into a concrete strategic culture must include three important factors: history, geography, and external shocks.[47] Neither he

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[44] Russell Weigley, *The American Way Of War* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973).

[45] Jack L Snyder, *The Soviet Strategic Culture* (Santa Monica, Calif.: Rand, 1977), pp.8-9

[46] *Ibid.*, p. v.

[47] The three variables listed above are particularly relevant, because allow researchers to critically intercept the crucial elements contributing to shape a specific strategic culture. For example, in David R. Jones, "Soviet Strategic Culture", in *Strategic Power: USA/USSR*, Carl G. Jacobsen ed. , 1st ed. (London: Macmillan

Press, 1990), 35-49, the author highlights how Soviet strategic culture cannot simply be analyzed by looking at the Marxist-Leninist ideology, but it would be wiser to look also at the historical traditions of Imperial Russia which are intertwined with the historical external shocks. Specifically, "the assumption is that thanks to unique historical and geographical circumstances, particular nations have had to face defence problems that are 'uniquely defined'" (p. 35). Therefore, in the Soviet case, neglecting other important variables "does little justice to a collective Russian memory of war that extends back beyond the Mongol and Swedish-German invasions of the mid-1200s" (p. 36). As a matter of fact, as the author emphasized, even if Soviet-Russia decided to embrace the revolutionary ideology of Marxism-Leninism – which was supposed to be exported abroad – "[with] the proclamation of the goal of 'Socialism in One Country' at home, earlier patterns reasserted themselves. Like their forebears, Stalin and his compatriots now became increasingly obsessed with perceived threats along their state's periphery" (p. 43). Therefore, "for this reason, any discussion of a specifically 'Soviet' strategic or military culture must begin by recognizing that, despite the strident claims about its 'newness', it is as deeply rooted in the Russian past as it is in any dogmatic proscriptions of the founders of the official ideology" (p. 35). On the same line of argument, Booth reminds us why the Soviet Union decided to embark on a huge military buildup:

"This calculation [the huge army buildup], in turn, will be affected by the values, interests, priorities, problems, requirements and capabilities of the state leaders. In this respect the terrifying history of the country is particularly relevant. Little imagination is needed to understand this, and it is hardly surprising that Soviet leaders have always been hyper-sensitive to threats and matters of security. the Russian people have a deep fear of war. for its part the soviet military establishment has good reason to remember with horror the failure of 1941, and the need to prevent its reoccurrence. To all soviet people. Whenever they were born, World War II remains 'only yesterday'. We learn feelings from history, as well as facts, and these learned responses help to determine a group's reaction to certain stimuli and its commitment to certain ideas and interests." Ken Booth, *Strategy And Ethnocentrism*, p. 66

Related to this topic, it is quite interesting to note that even some neorealist articles reached the same conclusions of Jones's. In William C. Wohlforth, "The Russian-Soviet Empire: A Test Of Neorealism", *Review of International Studies* 27, no. 05 (2001), the author argues that "the primacy of the security problem; the influence of geopolitics on identity and domestic institutions; and the causal salience of

clarifies whether this "new" concept could be helpful in conceptualizing a state's long-trend military-strategic behavior nor does he explain how, therefore, the presence of a strategic culture produces a specific military doctrine. But this ambiguity on the real meaning of strategic culture and one of its direct outcome – strategic military doctrine – belongs to his general understanding of what strategic culture really is: that is, not – as he said – "a rigid code of behavior. Rather [it] suggests that the evaluation of the rationality of alternative courses of action *in a specific situation* will reflect, in part, stylistic and cultural predispositions."[48] In fact, as outlined also by Johnston, the expression "patterns of habitual behavior" and Snyder's general understanding of strategic culture raise some problems, one of

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socialization and adaptation to external pressures" characterized Russia and then Soviet military expansion. Besides the debatable nature of expansion, three crucial common elements that make both arguments converge are: the centrality of geography (here intended as topography) and its direct effects on strategy, the continuous security dilemma shaped by the geographical proximity of enemies, and finally the internal, domestic variables that conditioned Russian-Soviet strategy.
Besides the geographical and domestic elements, another condition that has not been duly analyzed is the role of the external shock, either in the form of invasion by a foreign actor – whose invasion forces the victim state to reevaluate its own strategic and military doctrine – or in the form of geographical proximity which encourages the interested actor to emulate the perceived more sophisticated military technology or doctrine of the neighbor player. For a clear analysis of the role of external shock and how it works, see: Theo Farrell, *The Norms Of War* (Boulder, Colo.: L. Rienner Publishers, 2005). Moreover, for a deep understanding of the reasons why specific technologies were, then, emulated by other states, see Emily O Goldman and Leslie C Eliason, *The Diffusion Of Military Technology And Ideas* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2003). This book is a sophisticated analysis on how and why specific technologies were also implemented by other states. Moreover, it also explains how geographical proximity – because of its interrelated cultures – explains why specific technologies found full implementation.

which refers to the impossibility to effectively "measure [strategic culture's] effects on behavior and how to determine its explanatory value vis-à-vis noncultural explanations."[49]

Another issue with Snyder's argument is his reference to the presence of "strategic subcultures" within the overall strategic-cultural framework. He defines it as "a subsection of the broader strategic community with reasonably distinct beliefs and attitudes on strategic issues, with a distinct and historically traceable analytical tradition, with characteristic institutional associations, and with more or less distinct patterns of socialization to the norms of subculture."[50] This definition does not help us understand what a subculture really is – that is, who are the institutional representatives of this subsection, let alone what role it plays in shaping the overall strategic culture. Nevertheless it is helpful because it illustrates the fact that strategic culture is not simply something that exists out there, but it is also something that is present and negotiated among institutional bodies. Moreover, Snyder tried to provide a general understanding of the existence of a subculture in USSR by looking at what he terms a "dualism in Soviet strategic thinking, with one tendency – embodied in certain members of the political leadership and the research institutes of the Academy of Sciences – emphasizing deterrence, and the

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[48] Jack L Snyder, *The Soviet Strategic Culture,* p. 40.
[49] Alastair I Johnston, *Cultural Realism* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995), p. 6
[50] Jack L Snyder, *The Soviet Strategic Culture,* p. 10.

other – embodied in the military and perhaps in other elements of the political leadership – stressing war-fighting concepts and capabilities."[51]

More than a decade after his paper came out, Snyder himself proposed again a general evaluation of strategic culture. However, this time, he seemed to be more critical towards the applicability of strategic culture to explain the peculiarities of a state's strategic behavior. He, in fact, highlighted the uncertainty about the explanatory potential of strategic culture by stating that "as a rule, culture is an explanation of last resort. Cultural explanations tend to be vague in their logic, with causes that are quite distant in time and sequence from their purported consequences. Often, culture is a residual level that is affixed to 'explain' outcome that cannot be explained in any more concrete way. Thus, culture, including strategic culture, is an explanation to be used when all else fails."[52]

According to his later approach, Snyder assumes that other methods are more valuable in explaining specific outcomes in state behavior. Organizational theory, "objective differences in the structure of [states] external or internal circumstances, structure of the decision-making, and "different factor endowments" such as technology could all better serve the objective of analysis. However, three issues are worth mentioning: first, when it comes to the very last element that he included among those variables that could better explain strategic behavior, he stated that "high-

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[51] *Ibid.*
[52] Jack Snyder, "The Concept Of Strategic Culture: Caveat Emptor", in *Strategic Power: USA/USSR*, Carl G. Jacobsen ed. , 1st ed. (London: The Macmillan Press, 1990), p. 4.

tech USA may be encouraged by its comparative advantage into pursuing SDI visions, whereas low-tech USSR may respond with cheaper offensive countermeasures."[53] However, he himself, in the previous work of 1977 highlighted the importance of not falling into the "technological determinism," and its associated effect, "mirror-imaging" since, as he clearly stated:

> "faced with [analytical] frustration, many analysts retreat to the technological-determinist view that there is a natural logic inherent in weapons of mass destruction that will become apparent to anyone who gives serious thought to the problem … It would be a mistake … to assume that Soviet doctrine is a mirror image of 'American' doctrine. deduction from technology alone cannot resolve any of the interesting questions about Soviet attitudes toward controlled nuclear conflict. One must return to an inductive attack on Soviet-specific data."[54]

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[53] Jack Snyder, "The Concept Of Strategic Culture: Caveat Emptor", p. 5

[54] Jack L Snyder, *The Soviet Strategic Culture,* pp. 5-7. This aspect has a crucial significance for the overall understanding of strategic planning. In another of his work, in fact, Snyder demonstrated very well how the technological nature characterizing the political environment right before the outbreak of the Great War did not put a premium on the offensive. However, the continental powers, such as France, Germany, and Russia – contrary to the guiding features of technology, which emphasized defense, implemented an offensive strategy. In his *The Ideology Of The Offensive* (Ithaca [N.Y.]: Cornell University Press, 1984), he clearly demonstrated, by looking at those three state-actors' civil-military relationship, how the domestic variables, especially the growing relevance of the military, actually contributed to the development of offensive strategies which, as already mentioned, ran against the overall technological potential, which emphasized defensiveness. The focus on domestic politics, especially the civil-military relation, is a fundamental aspect of strategic culture. In fact, with the due exceptions, he clearly stated in Jacobsen's book (p. 9) that in *The Ideology of Offensive* he wanted to keep the concepts but not the label of strategic culture. For an overview of his thought on the so-called "cult of the offensive" and its application on the political environment of the '80s, see: Jack

The second issue is related to those elements that he named as "organizational" factors. While it is correct that organizations operate in a specific manner, it is even truer that organizational structures, specifically at the institutional level (but also the private sector might present the same features), are inevitably embedded in their own cultural environment that, besides shaping the organization itself, definitely shapes its functioning and its spirit. Just to cite an example: even if China and Soviet Union had almost the same institutional organizations – since they were both communist – it is even more evident that their functioning and their respective strategic logics were completely different, with few converging elements.

Finally, the last issue is related to the identification and the definition he offered in the second work. It is not totally clear what role the external environment should play, or if it plays it at all. And what he really means by the phrase "objective difference in the structure of [states] external or internal circumstances." Snyder's works, therefore, moved from the initial attempt to actually design a new and different way to evaluate foreign as well as strategic behavior to an already consolidated literature on domestic politics based on the analysis on how its bureaucratic structures condition

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Snyder, "Civil-Military Relations And The Cult Of The Offensive, 1914 And 1984", *International Security* 9, no. 1 (1984): 108-146.
For what concerns the inspection of what "technological determinism" really is and how it should be studied, especially in relation to the social and political institutions trying to implement the technological development, see: Merritt Roe Smith and Leo Marx, *Does Technology Drive History?* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1994).

the foreign as well as strategic decision-making.[55] This is clearly exemplified in his words, when he stated that "culture … did not figure in [my] original argument about Soviet strategic culture. Rather [I] sought to explain differences of strategy in terms of specific differences in the domestic or international circumstances confronting the strategist of different states, not in terms of a generalized difference in their political cultures."[56] But it is this type of methodology – that is, domestic structural theories – that makes "scant room for cultural norms to exert an independent effect."[57]

However, one of the central problems that, somehow, frustrated his attempt to conceptualize a widely recognized difficult paradigm – such as the strategic culture – should be found in two distinct elements. The first is his narrow use of the term and his emphasis on the need to rely on a "sociology of strategy" rather than "anthropological excursions. However, it is

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[55] Jack L Snyder, *Myths Of Empire* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991). In this work, in fact, Snyder conceptualizes the way internal politics works in order to produce expansionist endeavors. He elaborated his reasoning by looking at two process making: the first one is related to the coalition politics theory, through which he analyzes the distribution of power at the domestic level. Distribution that then gives rise to different types of political regimes with consequential different types of expansionist policies. This, moreover, is related to the degree of industrialization which explains the overall industrial development of a country, with deep effects on the domestic politics and how it exploits the internal degree of development for its own power. The second process is related to the political narratives – the "strategic myths" – that the leadership builds in order to justify expansionist policies. This last point is quite relevant since, as he demonstrates, sometimes the leadership ends up believing in its own narrative – through internalization – to the extent that it finds itself entrapped in its own rhetoric that impedes the natural process of learning.
[56] Jack Snyder, "The Concept Of Strategic Culture: Caveat Emptor", p. 4

not clear how sociology would advance the cause of understanding, or avoid an 'anthropology of strategy' since, as every good sociologist knows, 'The socio-psychological map of the world may be thought of as largely reducible to a cultural map.'"[58] Consideration that even Bernard Brodie advanced, when he underlined that, in history, good anthropology has led to a good strategy and that, conversely, "bad anthropology contributed to bad strategy."[59]

The second consideration concerns Snyder's narrow focus on the Soviet "nuclear strategic culture."[60] In fact, "his nuclear orientation means that important dimensions of strategic culture are ignored." This is mainly because "a national strategic culture will be most constrained by technological and other imperatives at the nuclear level, for it is here where the strategic condition ('imposed rationality') is at its most rigid."[61] In other words, the basic assumption is that while it is absolutely necessary to avoid technological determinism, it is also quite evident that nuclear weapons radically altered the strategic calculations of the states, creating a "rigid" strategic environment where alternatives are progressively shrinking. "In

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[57] Paul Kowert and Jeffrey Legro, "Norms, Identity, And Their Limits: A Theoretical Reprise", in *The Culture Of National Security*, Peter Katzenstein ed. , 1st ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), p. 461

[58] Charles Manning in Ken Booth, *Strategy And Ethnocentrism* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1979), p. 13 cited in Ken Booth, "The Concept Of Strategic Culture Affirmed", in *Strategic Power: USA/USSR*, Carl G. Jacobsen ed. , 1st ed. (London: Macmillan Press, 1990), p. 128.

[59] Bernard Brodie, *Strategy In The Missile Age* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1959).

[60] David R. Jones, "Soviet Strategic Culture", p. 36

responding to the imperatives of power, and of the symbolism of military technology, the United States and the Soviet Union, along with other nations, tend to converge in forces and doctrines. The longer two adversaries compete, the more parallel the perceptions of the rivalry tend to become … Therein the elements of convergence; the game was the same, and there was convergence in the definition of condition (i.e. MAD), yet not in rules, attitudes and symbols."[62]

However, even in the presence of a such technological rigidity other scholars did not give up in trying to define strategic culture in the overall nuclear environment, since "no less important differences also arise within the field of nuclear strategy."[63] That being said, the major works dealing with the strategic-cultural elements in the nuclear field belong to Colin Gray, who has been extensively discussing about the fundamental idea of strategic culture and its theoretical application. Talking about the American way of war, for example, he defined strategic culture as "modes of thought and action with respect to force [that derive] from perception of the national historical experience, from aspirations for responsible behavior in national terms, and from all of the many distinctively American experiences (of geography, political philosophy, and practice – i.e., civic culture – and way of life) that determine a U.S. citizen."[64] Extending the overall logic, and

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[61] Ken Booth, "The Concept Of Strategic Culture Affirmed", p. 123.
[62] Carl G. Jacobsen, "Conclusion", pp. 504-505.
[63] Ken Booth, *Strategy And Ethnocentrism*, p. 81.
[64] Colin S Gray, *Nuclear Strategy And National Style* (Lanham, MD: Hamilton Press, 1986), p. 36

therefore importance, of strategic culture, while discussing, this time, the Soviet/Russian national style in strategy, he goes on saying that

> "it is important that the Soviet Union be as well comprehended in the West as possible. Soviet strategic policy cannot be likened to as loose gun carriage on a rolling deck … it is not eccentric, irrational (either in local Soviet or in classic Clausewitzian terms), or even particularly mysterious in its driving motivations and its goals. However, it is different from U.S. policy; it cannot usefully be approached in familiar American terms; and many Western policy errors of the past forty years could have been avoided, or reduced in scope, if a proper respect had been paid both to Soviet cultural uniqueness and simply to the plain facts of local Soviet conditions."[65]

Gray's understanding of strategic culture is quite relevant at least for two reasons: the first one derives from his acknowledgement of the importance of history. Also Snyder in his works highlighted it, however, Gray clarifies that history should be evaluated by looking at its long term projection, that is, "older antecedents, deeper historical and cultural roots extending as far back as [in the American case] the Seven Years' War."[66] The second reason concerns the emphasis, among other things, on the role of geography and political philosophy that fundamentally exerts a deep

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[65] *Ibid.*, 65. For a comparative analysis of the American and Soviet strategic culture see his additional article: Colin Gray, "Comparative Strategic Culture", *Parameters* 14, no. 4 (1984).
[66] Alastair I Johnston, *Cultural Realism*, p. 7

influence on a state's strategic behavior. Features that have been totally neglected in the past works.

However, Gray's argument presents two relevant issues that do not help build a deeper and sophisticated model of strategic culture. The first one is related to his emphasis on political culture, considered to be the origin from which strategic culture originates. This is not totally true, or at least it requires a clarification to be fully grasped. It is true that several scholars use political culture in order to explain specific institutional behavior,[67] but using

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[67] One of the clearest definitions of political culture states that: "Political culture consists of assumptions about the political world … that focus attention on certain features of events, institutions, and behavior, define the realm of the possible, indentify the problems deemed pertinent, and set the range of alternatives among which members of the population make decisions. Political culture, then, is a short hand expression for a 'mind set' which has the effect of limiting attention to less than the full range of alternative behaviors, problems, and solutions which are logically possible. Since it represents a 'disposition' in favor of a range of alternatives, by corollary another range of alternative receives little or no attention within a particular culture. Most people in any culture, therefore, will take for granted a particular course of action or consider only a few alternatives, that they choose for a restricted set will, for most of them, remain below the threshold of consciousness, because they seldom encounter individuals who take for granted quite different assumptions." David J. Elkins and Richard E. B. Simeon, "A Cause In Search Of Its Effect, Or What Does Political Culture Explain?", *Comparative Politics* 11, no. 2 (1979): 127-128 One of the great works that employs the theory of political culture is represented by Thomas U Berger, *Cultures Of Antimilitarism*, 1st ed. (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003). Notwithstanding its well structured theory of antimilitarism, however, his overreliance on the idea that political culture ultimately shaped Japan's and Germany's repulsion of a warlike mentality is flawed, since his approach underestimates the role played by external shocks, in this case World War II, in shaping another country's strategic culture. For another contribution on the role of political culture, see: Peter J Katzenstein, *Cultural Norms And National Security: Police And Military In Postwar Japan*, 1st ed. (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1996).

it in order to explain strategic behavior I think it is inappropriate, mainly because strategy is a combination of several other factors that do not simply respond to the institutional structure of the state involved in strategic planning. He himself, in the same pages, mentioned the importance of geography, for example, as one of the determinants of strategic culture, without, however, putting enough emphasis on it. In fact, he stated how the US, because of its "continental insularity and abundant defense mobilization potential," did not invest into a proper strategic thinking process. "Necessity is the mother of invention," the author argues, to the extent that the US did not actually experience such a necessity at the strategic level. Therefore according to the author the US, until 1945, lacked a coherent military strategy, simply because the circumstances did not allow so. Notwithstanding the fact that, according to the author, the US from 1945 onwards developed multiple military strategies, he still asserted, however, that the apparently "astrategic U.S. tradition … continued into the nuclear age, although it took different forms."[68] But, this is not historically accurate.

The second issue is related to the strategic content of his reasoning. As Allison's model or Snyder's work on the myth-making process fail to fully grasp the substance of strategy and how it is conceptualized into a concrete operational and doctrinal behavior, the same applies to Gray's. If we are talking about strategy, then a different type of argument should be implemented. If his research objective is to demonstrate the unique American way of war in connection to the nuclear technology, then it is

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[68] Colin S Gray, *Nuclear Strategy And National Style*, pp. 45-47

important to actually understand the inner logic of American strategy; its intimate nature. However, he ended up analysis American politico-military attitude which is something else and that does not represent a real strategic culture. He simply states that, since 1945, the American strategic logic has shown a list of beliefs which include: "a belief in the essential goodness of one's cause, hence a reluctance to wage wars for goals that are controversial in terms of enduring American ideas of justice, hence too a view that wars were aberrations from a natural rational order; a basic optimism about triumph and inevitable victory, hence expectations for total victory in war; a sense of omnipotence derived from a history of successfully fought wars; and a sense of unlimited resources that should be applied with overwhelming effect against an enemy, hence a reluctance to expend many human lives in pursuit of victory."[69]

Gray's vision of American strategy not only is partial, but it also shows a caricature that does not find a neat historical relevance. Some of those assumptions are correct. However, the overall argument does not survive the test of history. For example, since its foundations, the United States had fought many wars, most of which fought voluntarily for political reasons, so they were not conceived as "aberrations." The idea of being sensitive to casualties in war, it can be inferred, paves the way for the heavy reliance on technology (at least in principle). The American involvement in World War II is a case in point. There is a vast literature that debates the real reasons for

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[69] Colin S. Gray, "National Style In Strategy: The American Example", *International Security* 6, no. 2 (1981): pp. 26-29 in Alastair I Johnston, *Cultural Realism*, p. 7

building the atomic bomb. Was it really an instrument to end quickly the war in order to avoid deploying more troops on the ground (therefore incurring in more casualties), or was it an attempt, in a time of war, to show to the Soviets the huge material and technological capability that the United States was able to create? Should it not be forgotten, in fact, that at the time of the drop of atomic weapons on Japan, in the summer of 1945, the war in Europe had already ended and between the United States and the Soviet Union embryonic cold-war-type of frictions started to emerge. Moreover, the desire-to-avoid-casualties logic did not even stand the test of the subsequent American military involvement. The case of the Korean war in 1950 or the far too traumatic Vietnam war in 1964-1975 seem to portrait a rather different picture with thousands and thousands of casualties, let alone the recent American involvement in Afghanistan and Iraq from 2002 to 2014.

The same issues are also present in his analysis of the Soviet strategic culture, even if in this second case he reached very important theoretical ideas. Dealing first with the issues, even in this case, it is not clear what the Soviet military strategy really is. Paradoxically, Snyder's 1977 work, with all its limited framework on strategic culture, at least targeted what that strategy would be, that is, a unilateral nuclear deterrence, conducted through offensive and preemptive actions. This gives strategic culture a more prominent role and explanation, since it Gray's analysis mainly deals with the overall politico-military attitudes, without clearly explaining how those attitudes were translated into specific strategic postures in military affairs.

That being said, his attempt represents a valuable research on the causes that deeply affect the Soviet national style in strategy. One highly appreciated aspect is the geographical feature that plays, according to the author, one of the central roles in shaping Russian/Soviet foreign policy: "the wellsprings of Soviet official thought and behavior may be sought in geopolitics (the response of the Great Russian people to a very hostile physical-economic and political-military environment), in ideology (Holy Russia and Pan-Slav Russia assuming the mantle of vanguard of the international proletariat in execution of the 'historic mission' of spreading socialism worldwide, and so on), or in a somewhat vulgar realpolitik." Moreover, Gray, unlike the other earlier strategic culture analysts, was one of the first to emphasize how Soviet behavioral evidence also emerged "from writings, from behavior in other military-diplomatic respects, from the technical details of Soviet military deployment, from exercises, and from Soviet/Russian strategic-political culture."[70] In other words, he acknowledged the importance of not only domestic factors, like ideology for example, but also pragmatic aspects that are relevant for the preservation and transmission of specific behavioral attitudes, such as writings (widely incorporating all those documents ranging from academic papers to official strategic planning) and proper military exercises, which are quite relevant for increasing the understanding of the value of the tactical aspect of a state's strategic culture. On this point, in fact, Gray is quite committed to go to a deeper level of analysis in order to really understand how such a Soviet

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[70] Colin S Gray, *Nuclear Strategy And National Style*, pp. 67, 71

behavior manifested itself. Specifically, he stated that "Soviet statecraft, a malign mixture of Great Russian imperialism, Leninist opportunism and millennialism, and vulgar realpolitik, is capable of almost any tactical diplomatic maneuver (or terroristic act – recall the abortive 'Bulgarian' plot to kill the Pope)."[71]

Therefore all these elements, according to the author, should explain the inner logic of Soviet security attitude, which, according to geographical problems and historical legacies, is fully committed to the maximum exploitation of territorial aggrandizement, mainly because military experience shaped the Russian history first and the Soviet history after[72] to the extent of making the Soviet policymakers "no observable sensitivity to what western commentators term 'the security dilemma.'"[73] However, the author, while greatly contributing to the overall understating of the elements that helped shape Russian and Soviet strategic attitude, fails to create a coherent model

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[71] *Ibid.*, p. 76

[72] On the same line, Gray cited one the efficient explanations on the issue of Russian tendency to fulfill territorial aggrandizement by Richard Pipes:
"Russia's traditional expansionism and the militarism to which it gave rise were primarily caused by economic factors … there is a tragedy in the vicious circle that permeates Russian history: poverty calls for conquests; conquests demand a large military establishment; a large military establishment saps the productive force of the country, perpetuating poverty." Richard Pipes, "Militarism And The Soviet State", *Daedalus* 109, no. 4 (1980): 5-6 in Colin S Gray, *Nuclear Strategy And National Style*, p. 73
Building on Pipes analysis, Grays asserts that "the Russian/Soviet empire – like, for example, the Roman, the British, and the Austro-Hungarian empires – has chosen to seek enhanced security through expansion. At root, the motive has been defensive in character ." p. 79
[73] Colin S Gray, *Nuclear Strategy And National Style*, p. 74.

that could have distanced itself from the successive works of neorealism that used the same geographical factors in order to explain Russian/Soviet realpolitik. [74] While the latter, in fact, uses these elements in order to explain high levels of militarization of the Russian/Soviet society which in turn affect world political stability, the former failed to address the key issue surrounding this context: how to demonstrate that those geographical and, therefore, historical features were internalized into a coherent set of strategic behavioral norms. In other words, Gray's argument fails to answer the following question: was the territorial aggrandizement option the only preferred strategic condition with respect to others which might have been apparently more profitable according to a pure cost/benefit calculation?

This question and its related answer do not only put face to face strategic culture and neorealism. It also provided the framework for the, so-called, third generation of the strategic cultural studies. Conceptualized by Ian Johnston, the '90s represented – methodologically – the advent of the third generation of strategic cultural paradigm in opposition to the first and the second, which belonged respectively to the early and late '80s.

The first one encompassed all the works mentioned above, specifically Gray's and Synder's. Those works, which mainly tried to analyze the American and the Soviet way to nuclear strategy, focused on the "unique

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[74] On this issue, see n. 34 and the idea of creating the realist constructivism as a way to combine these apparently different types of methodological and theoretical approach. While it is true that there are attempts towards this kind of unification of the two paradigms, strategic culture to be appreciated for its intellectual explanatory

variations in macro-environmental variables such as deeply rooted historical experience, political culture, and geography." This approach, continues Johnston, while innovative in its own sense, lacked the ability to critically analyze the presence of a strategic culture within a state's strategic choices. First of all, the major problem concerns the definition of the paradigm. By including all different variables together, such as "technology, geography, organizational culture and traditions, historical strategic practices, political culture, national character, political psychology, ideology, and even international system structure," first generation scholars ended up creating an "extremely unwieldy" concept, since all those variables represent "different classes of inputs; each could stand by itself as a separate explanation of strategic choice." Moreover, besides the mere definitional problems, Johnston highlights where the critical aspect of the analysis lies: "the first generation implied that strategic thought led consistently to one type of behavior." However, "how does one evaluate a strategic culture where thought and action seem inconsistent with each other?" Failing to properly answer this question led to an oversimplified definition of strategic culture, which tended to assume that one country possesses one strategic culture, missing the value of the counter-evidence.[75]

The second generation mainly concerned those works which highlighted the conflicting nature of strategic culture with actual behavior. Throughout these works, strategic culture has been considered as a simple

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capability should be considered as such, without possible combinations with other paradigms.

ideological framework, under which concealing real action; "strategic culture is seen as a tool of political hegemony in the realm of strategic decision-making; it establishes 'widely available orientations to violence and to ways in which the state can legitimately use violence against putative enemies.'" In other words, the so-called second generation's scholars argue that strategic culture is used instrumentally in order to make a "culturally and linguistically acceptable justification for operational strategy, and to silence or mislead potential political challengers." [76] One of the typical arguments related to the instrumentality logic has been the idea that within states there might be an "armament culture,"[77] which played as an "instrumental in maintaining the importance of a weapons culture that served to perpetuate the hegemony of Western interests."[78] The idea of instrumentality in this field is quite relevant, since "the armament culture is able to rearrange symbols

[75] Alastair Iain Johnston, "Thinking About Strategic Culture", p. 36-37.

[76] Bradley S. Klein, "Hegemony And Strategic Culture: American Power Projection And Alliance Defence Politics", *Review of International Studies* 14, no. 02 (1988): 136 in Alastair Iain Johnston, "Thinking About Strategic Culture", p. 39. Other scholars reached the same conclusions. For example, Lawrence Freedman argued about the nature of the "narratives," defining them as "compelling story lines which can explain events convincingly and from which inferences can be drawn … narratives are [therefore] designed or nurtured with the intention of structuring the responses of others to developing events, they are strategic because they do not arise spontaneously but are deliberately constructed or reinforced out of the ideas and thoughts that are already current." Lawrence Freedman, *The Transformation Of Strategic Affairs* (Abingdon: Routledge for the International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2006), p. 22.

[77] Robin Luckham, "Armament Culture", *Alternatives* 10, no. 1 (1984): 1-44.

[78] Rashed Uz Zaman, "Strategic Culture: A "Cultural" Understanding Of War", 78.

and meanings in order to harmonize opposites and to justify war through the symbols of peace."[79]

This generation's argument is not without merits however. One of its central pillars is to emphasize that "elites are cognitively predisposed to maintain the status quo."[80] Therefore,

> "strategic culture is best characterized as a 'negotiated reality' among elites … the record of past behavior for many countries also shows that leader choose when and where to stake claims of strategic cultural traditions and when and where to consciously move beyond previous boundaries of acceptability in foreign policy behavior. Contemporary scholarship contends that elite behavior may be more consistent with the assertion that leaders are strategic 'users of culture' who 'redefine the limits of the possible in key foreign and security policy discourse."[81]

However, even the second generation suffers from the conceptual problem which puts strategic culture in opposition to actual behavior. Even if, as Johnston argues, it is true that strategic culture is used instrumentally in order to achieve specific political objective, on the other hand, it is still not clear "from the literature whether we should expect the strategic discourse to

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[79] Robin Luckham, "Armament Culture", in Rashed Uz Zaman, "Strategic Culture: A "Cultural" Understanding Of War", 78.

[80] Jeffrey S. Lantis, "Strategic Culture And National Security Policy", *Int Studies Review* 4, no. 3 (2002): 107.

[81] Consuelo Cruz, "Identity And Persuasion: How Nations Remember Their Pasts And Make Their Futures", *World Politics* 52, no. 03 (2000): 275-312 in Jeffrey S. Lantis, "Strategic Culture And National Security Policy", p. 107.

influence behavior. Instrumentality implies that decision-making elites can rise above strategic cultural constraints which they manipulate, [however] elites, too, are socialized in the strategic culture they produce, and thus can be constrained by the symbolic myths which their predecessors created."[82] Supporting this argument, in fact, undermines the overall role of culture. While it is absolutely true that culture has been, and still is, used and manipulated for "popular persuasion", on the other hand, it should be emphasized that "communities do not deliberately construct their cultures, strategic and other. Those cultures emerge and change as a kind of natural phenomena. They are the ever evolving product of the many efforts peoples make to explain their past, understand their present, and anticipate their future." For example, even extreme cases like Hitler, Stalin, or Osama bin Laden responded to some specific cultural guidelines: "dedicated ideologues, culturalists in the fullest meaning of the word. Those men simultaneously were (and are) sincere ideologues, yet were able to behave tactically in ways that appeared to contradict their deepest beliefs when it was expedient to do so."[83]

Therefore the second generation's literature disregards the two fundamental levels of strategic cultural functionality: the first one concerns strategic culture's ability to be "the prime mover of thought, judgment, policy and all that follows therefrom." Secondly, strategic culture "must always be

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[82] Alastair Iain Johnston, "Thinking About Strategic Culture", p. 39-40
[83] Colin S. Gray, "Out Of The Wilderness: Prime Time For Strategic Culture," pp. 14-15

present as an actual, or potential, influence on our decisions and behavior."[84]

Finally, the third generation tried to offer new theoretical way of thinking about what strategic culture really is and what it can demonstrate. Specifically, the third generation's approach to the study of strategic culture, according to Johnston, tried to separate strategic culture and behavior in order to make the theory of strategic culture falsifiable. That is, by providing those elements that are deemed cultural, the analyst should be able to identify them more clearly than other non-cultural variables, such as technology, organization, and evaluation of external threat, which, at the same time, exert some influence on states' behavior and whose outcomes could easily be in clear opposition to the cultural outcomes. By relying on the second generation's theoretical assumptions, they assert that "strategic culture may not have a direct independent and societal-specific effect on strategic choice."[85] The third generation's scholars, moreover, "explicitly exclude behavior as an element, thereby avoiding the tautological traps of the first generation." In other words, by so doing, strategic culture, it was believed, could clearly stand out as an independent variable, since this new approach would be "more narrowly focused on particular strategic decisions as dependent variables." In order to achieve this result, Johnston argued that the "sources of these cultural values are, unlike the first generation, less deeply rooted in history, and more clearly the product of recent practice and

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[84] *Ibid.*, p. 14
[85] Alastair Iain Johnston, "Thinking About Strategic Culture", p. 33.

experience." This implies that culture is allowed to vary. Moreover, in order to develop a "more rigorous and more eclectic" approach, the third generation asserted that most of the works' definition of strategic culture belonging to this group "do not vary dramatically from those found in political culture, organizational culture, or the first-generation work on strategic culture."[86]

According to this consideration, Johnston relies on two extra works that, according to him, belong to the third generation approach: Jeffrey Legro's and Elisabeth Kier's study on military issues and the importance of culture. These types of analyses are conducted more through the lens of organizational culture. Legro's work,[87] in fact, not only "allows for variation in both cultural and noncultural variables," but he also envisages the idea that "culture is rooted in recent experience, and not in deeply historical practice as posited by the first generation."[88] Specifically, Legro's work tried to investigate the importance of cooperation during the execution of three of the most morally-debated military actions taking place during World War II: submarine warfare targeting commerce, targeting of civilians, and chemical warfare. In doing so, he applied three different types of approaches such as realism, institutionalism, and organizational culture. Among these ones, he concluded his reasoning by stating that organizational culture seem to have the upper hand over the other two variables, since explanations based on domestic elements could help shape the theoretical framework within which

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[86] Alastair I Johnston, *Cultural Realism*, pp. 18-19
[87] Jeffrey Legro, *Cooperation Under Fire* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995).

states decide to cooperate. Defined as "the beliefs and the customs that dominated the military services of states," organizational culture, therefore, represents the crucial asset that explains states' behavior in world politics.[89]

In addition to Legro's work, also Kier's book[90] on war planning is considered by Johnston one of the best examples of the third generation's theoretical sophistication. Her work clearly illustrates how the international structural constraints cannot be accounted for the French and the British way of planning war during the interwar period. In fact, while the international structure favored offensive planning, the French, contrary to the expectations, planned for a defensive military posture. Why? Simply because, as Kier greatly contributed to explain, the strength of culture in shaping an overall military planning did not seem to have been affected by the external environment. Specifically, her work's methodological approach to the identification of culture focused on three levels of ideas, beliefs, and norms. "The first and broadest level concerned values about the nature of international politics and warfare. The second concerned the relationship between the military, the state, and society, and the third concerned internal organization, technology, and officer-soldier relations."[91] However, she does not explain what was the fundamental military doctrine of France at that time (defining it simply as defensive in nature is not sufficient) and what were the

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[88] Alastair Iain Johnston, "Thinking About Strategic Culture", p. 41
[89] Jeffrey Legro, *Cooperation Under Fire*, p.
[90] Elizabeth Kier, *Imagining War* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997). See also her article on the same topic Elizabeth Kier, "Culture And Military Doctrine: France Between The Wars", *International Security* 19, no. 4 (1995): 65-93.

fundamental cultural-historical elements that contributed to shape that type of behavior.[92]

On the same basis, other works, belonging to the third generation, reached both similar and different conclusions. Stephen Peter Rosen, for example, while analyzing how the combination of the military and the organizational cultures shaped India's strategy, defined strategic culture in the following terms: "strategic culture includes the beliefs and assumptions that frame … choices about international military behavior, particularly those concerning decisions to go to war, preferences for offensive, expansionist or defensive modes of warfare, and levels of wartime casualties that would be

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[91] Alastair I Johnston, *Cultural Realism*, p. 19

[92] In another but parallel work, Kier tries to develop a deeper understanding of the actual military doctrine that France adopted in the interwar period, but again two problems are still relevant: the first one concerns what she described. As she put it: "an integral aspect of the French army's excessively defensive doctrine before World War II was the concept that the French termed the *methodical battle*. Instead of allowing for initiative and flexibility, la bataille conduite ensured tightly controlled operation in which all units adhered to strictly scheduled timetables." This, however, is a merely tactical asset and does not represent the strategic doctrine that France might have adopted. Secondly, again, we do not understand what are the historical elements that shaped that type of military behavior. It is totally comprehensible that her research objective was mainly related to the investigation of the interwar period, however, one central component – probably the most challenging – of the concept of strategic culture is the necessity to intercept the historical roots leading to specific military-strategic policies and her focus on French military organizational culture does not help either. However, This second problem is partially attenuated by the objective of her research, that is, the "focus on *political military subcultures* – that is, civilian policy makers' beliefs about the role of armed force in the domestic arena," including also the "state's experience with the military in the state-building process." Elizabeth Kier, "Culture And French Military Doctrine Before World War II", in *The Culture Of National Security*, Peter Katzenstein ed., 1st ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), pp. 194, 201, 203 (original emphasis).

acceptable."[93] Even if this definition does not mention the key element characterizing strategic culture – that is, the creation and implementation of a specific national strategic doctrine – it represents one of the clearest definition of the objective of analysis. This is because strategic culture, in order to be measurable and consistent, need to rely on the study and evaluation of those elements that affect the way a state thinks of war and its overall strategic nature

Another work, instead, that cannot be included into the generational divide made by Johnston even if it belongs to the major publications that came out in the '90s, seems to offer a deeper perspective on the conceptualization of strategic culture, that is, the evaluation of its major tactical and strategic component. Yitzhak Klein, in fact, offered two different definitions of strategic culture: on one hand, he defined strategic culture as "the habits of thought and action" while on the other, being more specific this time, says that strategic culture represents "the set of attitudes and beliefs held within a military establishment concerning the political objective of war and the most effective strategy and operational methods of achieving it."[94]

However, although being more analytically refined, the so-called third generation of strategic-cultural approach failed to demonstrate what strategic culture really is and how it operates within a state. On this basis, I

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[93] Stephen Peter Rosen, *Societies And Military Power* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), p. 12 in Jeffrey S. Lantis, "Strategic Culture And National Security Policy", p. 105.
[94] Yitzhak Klein, "A Theory Of Strategic Culture", *Comparative Strategy* 10, no. 1 (1991): 3-23.

would like to advance three criticisms. First of all, the too narrow approach to the study of strategic culture. It is true that by expanding the objective of enquiry the risk of explaining everything and nothing is high, but it is, nevertheless, in this broader research setting that we should concentrate in order to come up with a clear understanding of what strategic culture really is. At least for two reasons. On one hand, it is important to understand that "different security communities and subcommunities tend to exhibit in their strategic thought *and behavior* patterns that could be collectively termed cultural," while on the other, it should be remembered that "strategic culture finds expression in distinctively patterned styles of strategic behavior." While it is theoretically understandable why third generation's scholars try to separate strategic culture from behavior at the same time this scholarship "is seriously in error in its endeavour to distinguish [them] … Strategic culture should be approached both as a shaping context for behaviour and itself as a constituent of that behaviour."[95] In fact, in most of the researches based on the identification of a state's specific way of behaving both at the political

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[95] Colin Gray, "Strategic Culture As Context: The First Generation Of Theory Strikes Back", *Review of International Studies* 25, no. 1 (1999): 50. As Gray pointed out in his article, Johnston's work on the definition of strategic culture, though very rigorous, does not help analyze the existence and operationalization of strategic culture. The separation of culture and behavior is like "a doctor who sees people as having entirely separable bodies and minds." Therefore, we need to start from one specific assumption: "strategic culture is not only 'out there', also it is within us; we, our institutions, and our behaviour, are the context." *Ibid.*, 53

and strategic level, "norms are invoked as context effects, affecting the interests that inform policy choices."[96]

Nevertheless, on the context-type of culture, one crucial aspect should be pointed out: while being a fundamental aspect that clearly helps conceptualize the value and operativity of strategic culture, it also shows, however, its weakness in dealing with the "causal properties of other non-cultural variables." If strategic culture is a context and if material variables, as Gray argues, also seem to exert an influence on behavior then a theoretical conflict emerges: are the material variables "operating without a context? Or can we talk of many other contexts? In order to solve this problem it would be wise to adopt a "'context all the way down approach' whereby strategic culture continually constitutes and fives meaning to material factors."[97]

Even Johnston acknowledges this problem, especially at the definitional level. He pointed out, in fact, that third generation's definition of strategic culture does not allow scholars to actually understand why "particular choices are finally made." All scholars dealing with strategic culture agree that this paradigm constraints policymakers' range of options. However, with all its associated problems, first generation's scholars

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[96] Ronald Jepperson, Alexander Wendt and Peter Katzenstein, "Norms, Identity And Culture In National Security", in *The Culture Of National Security*, Peter Katzenstein .ed., (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), p. 66

[97] Stuart Poore, "What Is The Context? A Reply To The Gray-Johnston Debate On Strategic Culture", *Review of International Studies* 29, no. 02 (2003): 281-282; see also Colin S. Gray, "In Praise Of Strategy", *Review of International Studies* 29, no. 02 (2003).

seemed to be more confident in understanding what these limited options were and which ones were then to be employed. Third generation scholars' approach, instead, gets stuck into this process. Their focus on the idea that strategic culture can only limit some options and that cannot actually shape behavior puts them in a dead-end process; their approach does not allow scholars to understand how and why one specific option – within a limited set of choices – would be finally implemented into actual behavior by a particular state. Put it differently, as Johnston stated: "where does the preference-ranking that governs choice among these limited options come from?"[98] Strategic planning combined with culture should be the answer, but another problem associated to Johnston's argument is his compartmentalized vision of strategy. However, "strategy can have many dimensions, of which one is the cultural" and "although each dimension … can be discussed in isolation, all dimensions function synergistically to constitute the strategy whole."[99]

Even Johnston, in a subsequent publication, seems to agree with this last evaluation by rejecting the Goldstein-Keohane approach[100] which he had employed in his famous book dealing with the analysis of Chinese

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[98] Alastair Iain Johnston, "Thinking About Strategic Culture", p. 43

[99] Colin Gray, "Strategic Culture As Context: The First Generation Of Theory Strikes Back", p. 55

[100] Judith Goldstein and Robert O Keohane, *Ideas And Foreign Policy*, 1st ed. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993). Goldstein and Keohane's approach mainly referred to the idea of testing culture in international relations by putting materialist approaches into the equation, simply because they argued that there are some types of behaviors which are "idea-less" and that respond more to interests defined in terms of power as the realist paradigm advocates.

strategic culture. He stated that in order to understand behaviors that might run against specific cultural frameworks, it is not convenient to pit "cultural model against a 'pure' materialist power maximizing realist model." Instead, if we are dealing with the methodology that treats ideas all the way down, "then rival hypotheses were not materialist versus ideational ones (since the former is ontologically and epistemologically problematic), but ideational ones."[101]

Paradoxically, all this uncertainty comes directly from the way Johnston himself conceptualized strategic culture. By relying on, and paraphrasing, Geertz's definition of religion, Johnston defines strategic culture as "an integrated 'system of symbols (e.g. argumentation structures, languages, analogies, metaphors) which acts to establish pervasive and long-lasting strategic preferences by formulating concepts of the role and efficacy of military force in interstate political affairs, and by clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the strategic preferences seem uniquely realist and efficacious.'" This definition is then broken down into two major parts: the first one, which he defines as the central paradigm, comprises the "basic assumptions about the orderliness of the strategic

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[101] Alastair Ian Johnston, "Strategic Cultures Revisited: Reply To Colin Gray", *Review of International Studies* 25, no. 3 (1999): 520-521. Johnston, moreover, raises an important issue in the identification and study of a state's strategic culture: how to explain the "deviant" behavior that occurred in a previous time. "By conceding, if accidently, that behavior at time *t* can be separable from an *a priori* strategic culture it becomes obvious that there are other, non-strategic culture (though quite possibly still ideational, e.g. individual subjective beliefs of individual decision-makers; the strategic ideology of a subclass of society, the strategic ideology of transnational actors) variables that help explain this 'deviant' behavior."

environment, that is, about the role of war in human affairs (whether it is inevitable or an aberration), about the nature of the adversary and the threat it poses (zero-sum or variable sum), and about the efficacy of the use of force (about the ability to control outcomes and to eliminate threats, and the conditions under which applied force is useful)." The second part, instead, "consists of assumptions at a more operational level about what strategic options are the most efficacious for dealing with the threat environment."[102] Unfortunately, the way Johnston conceptualizes strategic culture increases the level of confusion over the strategic cultural manifestation, simply because according to his way of reasoning, culture does not seem to have a determining role, but it seems a simple contextual variable. In fact, by looking at his definition and the first part composing strategic culture (the central paradigm), it is not clear where we can trace strategic culture. If we analyze how a state perceives the enemy and how it thinks of the efficacy of the use of force, we are not really looking for those elements that characterize a state's strategic culture, simply because this way of evaluating it pushes the focus on perceptions and on strategic evaluations that are conditioned by external factors. The first element – looking at the role of war in human affairs – might represent a valuable element from which extrapolating strategic culture. However, the way he frames it (whether it is inevitable or an aberration) shifts the debate to another level which, I believe, would distance ourselves even more from the conceptualization of strategic culture. This is because war is an institutional aspect of world

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[102] Alastair Iain Johnston, "Thinking About Strategic Culture", p. 46

affairs and even state formation. Therefore, believing that by looking at the way humans react to the use of force we can trace the existence of a consolidated strategic culture is not sufficient. And this has to do with the fact that strategic culture does not – and cannot – deal with the research over a state's defensiveness or offensiveness in military affairs (trying to analyze strategic culture by looking at whether a state thinks of war as inevitable or as an aberration follows exactly this path). Moreover, another important aspect is related to the unclearness surrounding his understanding of the importance of history. His main idea is to look at sources that are "less deeply rooted in history," however, the "central paradigm" that, according to him, should play a critical role in defining a state's strategic culture, is the place – as he mentioned – where shared information "comes from deeply historical sources."[103]

Moreover, his theoretical model tends to overlap with the realist one over states' behavior. Looking at a state's perception of zero-sum or variable sum goes exactly towards the realist framework, which is often at odds with the strategic-culture paradigm. This shortcoming, as I will show in the following section, undermined his theoretical design of Chinese strategic culture.

Secondly, the idea of focusing on issues that are less deeply rooted in history might end up undermining the explanatory power of the strategic cultural variable, since, in order to explain how the strategic culture

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[103] *Ibid.*, p. 46

paradigm operates, the "cultural" component requires a deeper historical commitment, rather than a less rooted one.

Finally, the idea that strategic culture might get closer to the organizational culture and similar field of research would not increase the scientific complexity of the doctrine. Instead, this approach would likely undermine the overall concept of strategic culture, since, it should be remembered that the study of the organizational culture does not and cannot immediately translate itself into strategic culture. The former, in fact, is very specific and looks at detailed institutional frameworks, while the latter's objective is to understand what is the overarching element under which the state, in its almost entirety, tends to conform. In fact, it is not a coincidence that even Johnston himself is quite aware of this problem, that is, the attempt to trying to build an idea of strategic culture by relying on the organizational cultural approach:

> "a … problem concerns the use of organizational culture as a key independent variable in strategic choice. The third generation work shares the first generation's belief that ideational or cultural variables indeed have an observable effect on behavior. In doing so, however, it neglects a key strain in the second generation of organizational culture literature that posits that symbolic (cultural) strategy may not have any causal effect upon operational doctrine. Some of the third generation literature safely avoids the problem because the dependent variable *is* behavior and not foreign policy or strategic doctrine statements. But in some instances, military doctrine is the

> dependent variable, and this raises the under-explored question whether declared and operational doctrines are different."[104]

This has represented the common problem shared by many strategic culture scholars. However, it should be pointed out that in order to clearly understand the value and the conceptual strength of strategic culture "we need to distinguish among: (1) public culture, (2) strategic culture; and (3) military (organizational) culture." Therefore, this implies that strategic culture should be analyzed in its own right.[105]

Still in the nineties, other scholars investigated the depth of the cultural and ideational factors in IR, whose works opened up the development of a new generation of strategic cultural scholars. By keeping Johnston's generational divide, we can therefore consider Peter Katzenstein's edited volume on national security culture as the precursor of a fourth generation of scholars whose works came out in the early decade of the twenty-first century. His book tried to shed light on the different ways of conceptualizing culture both at the domestic and international level. The book's objective was to offer "a sociological perspective on the politics of national security. It argues that security interests are defined by actors who respond to cultural factors." It highlighted how "the cultural-institutional context of policy on the one hand and the constructed identity of states, governments, and other political actors on the other" combine in order to create what we now define as a specific cultural way that characterizes

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[104] *Ibid.*, p. 42

states' behavior both at the domestic and international level. However, this project, while adding more knowledge into the overall debate of culture and its explanatory power, does not target only the cultural elements that characterize a state's cultural framework leading to a specific behavior. Katzenstein's book directly engages simultaneously with the study and application of norms, identity and culture.[106]

The plurality of methodological engagements that Katzenstein provided paved the way for this fourth generation of scholars, whose major objective was to reconsider the theoretical value of the strategic cultural paradigm. This generation's theoretical effort can be divided into two groups: the first one is mainly characterized by those scholars who lost "faith" in the explanatory ability of strategic culture. They have been conducting extra research in order to understand how to strengthen strategic culture by lowering its centrality while mixing it, at the same time, with other theoretical models. The second group of this generation, unlike the first one, while also trying to modify the strategic cultural paradigm, did not lose "faith" in it. Therefore they are mainly concerned with the possibility to strengthen the strategic cultural paradigm by working on the paradigm itself, without invoking the support of other external theoretical models.

In the first group of scholars, some advocated the possibility to combine methodologically strategic culture and neoclassical realism, since

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[105] Colin S. Gray, "Out Of The Wilderness: Prime Time For Strategic Culture," p. 10
[106] Peter Katzenstein, "Introduction: Alternative Perspectives On National Security", in *The Culture Of National Security*, Peter Katzenstein ed., (New York: Columbia University, 1996), pp. 2-6

the latter reevaluated the importance of the domestic variables necessary to explain specific foreign policies and strategic behaviors. According to John Glenn strategic culture, because of its vast methodological approaches, should be understood in detail before actually advocating a theoretical combination with neoclassical realism. He defined strategic culture as "a set of shared beliefs, and assumptions derived from common experiences and accepted narratives (both oral and written), that shape collective identity and relationships to other groups, and which influence the appropriate ends and means chose for achieving security objectives."[107] Therefore he articulated the existence of a total of four different conceptions of strategic culture: "epiphenomenal strategic culture; a conventional constructivist conception; a post-structuralist conception and an interpretive conception." Among these four major schools of thought only the first two, he argues, have a theoretical design that could increase the methodological combination with neoclassical realism. And this has to do with the fact that those two conceptions "attempt to establish generalizations by identifying repetitive patterns of state behavior and identify causal variables/intervening variables responsible for such regularities." The other two conceptions, instead, while being in opposition to the overall realist methodology, "may provide solid empirical information from their rich historical case studies." And this has to do with their approaches which "do not seek to establish law-like generalizations

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[107] John Glenn, "Realism Versus Strategic Culture: Competition And Collaboration?", p. 530. As he stated, this definition is a modified version of that one offered by Thomas Mahnken, "United States Strategic Culture", *The Defense Threat Reduction Agency* (2008).

from their work."[108] Glenn's approach, therefore, helps understand that when dealing with the strategic culture paradigm, the ability to find regularities and generalizations in history represents the most relevant aspect of a research based on the identification of a state's strategic culture.

A more critical evaluation of the applicability of the strategic cultural paradigm came from Christopher Twomey. He argued that strategic culture fails at explaining the actual behavior of states simply because of its "overdetermined predictions." Strategic culture Twomey argues, stands as a middle ground between the theoretical designs concerned with the analysis of "organizationally derived military culture" and other ones dealing with "variation in national identity that depend on constructed, ideational sources."[109] However, his criticism does not take into consideration that even when dealing with "organizationally derived military culture," the historical roots leading to the formation of a specific type of military organization are still missing in this type of research. Therefore, it is important to take into consideration the value of historical regularities which lead to the establishment of specific institutional forms of military organization and strategic attitude.

However, one of Christopher Twomey's central criticisms deserves particular attention. It refers to the role played by historical shocks in shaping specific behaviors. Snyder and Gray argued that one of the explanations of

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[108] John Glenn, "Realism Versus Strategic Culture: Competition And Collaboration?", p. 531
[109] Christopher P. Twomey, "Lacunae In The Study Of Culture In International Security", *Contemporary Security Policy* 29, no. 2 (2008): 338-339

the Soviet way of conducting warfare is related to its geographical constraints and historical experiences, that is, the constant invasions that it had undertaken which, in turn, explain Soviet propensity towards aggressive and preemptive actions. Twomey argues that this represents "a common trait and not one that seems particularly unique." For example, "the current American 'predisposition' to offensive and preemptive, or rather preventive, war [is] the result of a single attack of moderate scale [9/11]." So if two very different historical experiences led apparently to two "similar historical tendencies at this level of military grand strategy … the utility of the strategic cultural approach must be questioned."[110]

Twomey's argument seems sound. However, a closer look actually demonstrates the opposite. 9/11 attacks even if did not represent the classic "invasion," exerted, nevertheless, a powerful effect on American security perceptions similar to those effects that might have been caused by an actual invasion. Therefore, the role of external shocks is significant and it should be taken into consideration when dealing with strategic culture.[111]

Alan Bloomfield, following the same pattern, criticizes strategic culture for being conceptualized "*too coherently*" and for suggesting "too much strategic-cultural *continuity*." The latter refers to the tendency to advocate that a strategic policy "never changes" and when it does strategic

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[110] *Ibid.*, p. 345

[111] For a significant analysis of the value of the external environment shaping a state's strategic attitude see: David Andrew Graff, *The Eurasian Way Of War* (New York: Routledge, 2016). In this book the author demonstrates that both the Byzantine

culture fails "to *theorize* adequately about how or why it did so." The former, on the other hand, is related to the fact that strategic culture, according to the way it has been conceptualized so far, "contains no contradictory elements" implying that "all aspects of strategic behavior of a state will always be consistent with its strategic culture." This criticism is connected to the overall argument, shared also by Johnston, that strategic policy can be separated from the strategic behavior: "'policy means strategic decision-making in relatively long-term contexts – like strategic doctrines found in National Security Strategy reports – while 'behaviour' means more short-term strategic decisions, like those made by the president (perhaps in the so-called 'Situation Room') during a crisis."[112]

While this argument seems coherent, this view faces two problems. The first issue is the attempt to separate policy and behavior. These two elements are, most of the time, so intimately intertwined that distinguishing them is quite impossible. We can reach this objective at the definitional level, but not at the theoretical level. For instance, a president in an hypothetical "Situation Room" is likely to set off an operative stage which responds to preexisting strategic guidelines shaping direct military actions. The second problem, the continuity issue, while being real, misses the central argument of strategic culture: the ability to identify what really are the central feature a

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and the Chinese world converged in their strategic attitude due to the same type of threat that they were facing.

[112] Alan Bloomfield, "Time To Move On: Reconceptualizing The Strategic Culture Debate", *Contemporary Security Policy* 33, no. 3 (2012): 437-439

state's way of thinking and waging war. The continuity asset represents the strength of strategic culture rather than its weakness.

Bloomfield's final remarks, therefore, explain the necessity to go beyond the positivist-interpretivist dichotomy, symbolized by the Johnston-Gray debate, by illustrating the importance to cultivate strategic culture through the implementation of multiple coexisting subcultures that, according to the author, not only would increase the explanatory potential of strategic culture but would also frame when and why a different type of behavior emerges.[113] However, the subculture approach is not new and even if valuable it might end up explaining something different, such as organizational cultures. However, strategic culture implies the need to focus on the strategic level of analysis. Only at this level of analysis can we understand a state's overall thinking about war even when dealing with the non-conformist behavior.

Jack Snyder, the father of the term strategic culture, returns to the debate over the role of culture in the study of warfare, showing profound similarities with the arguments raised by those scholars belonging to this fourth generation. This time he relies on the anthropologists' analysis of culture in order to build a framework that combines the two antagonistic variables: anarchy and culture. "A rich body of research on war by anthropologies suggests that ideas and culture are best understood not as autonomous but as embedded in complex social systems shaped by the

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[113] Alan Bloomfield, "Time To Move On: Reconceptualizing The Strategic Culture Debate", 454.

interaction of material circumstances, institutional arrangements, and strategic choices, as well as by ideas and culture." The idea, therefore, is to create a "more promising approach [which] would integrate the material, institutional, and cultural aspect of social change, drawing on the insights of theories of complex systems."[114]

For the major works belonging to the second group (that is, those scholars who contrary to the first group are trying to strengthen the strategic culture paradigm), the central idea is to strengthen the paradigm by looking at its overall functioning without mixing it up with other models. David Haglund, for example, traces where strategic culture comes from and highlights its importance in understanding world politics with respect to the structuralist explanations of international relations. He argues that strategic culture to be fully knowledgeable can be divided into groups: one is strategic culture as a context, through which we can discern national historical behavior and national character and identity. The other is strategic culture as cognition which, by relying on its direct cognate concept of political culture, develops "its salient quality in the dimension of symbolism."[115] This explanation is quite relevant since it illustrates not only the importance of strategic culture, but it also clarifies why merely relying on political culture proves to be insufficient for a clear understanding of strategic culture.

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[114] Jack Snyder, "Anarchy And Culture: Insights From The Anthropology Of War", *International Organization* 56, no. 1 (2002): 7, 9
[115] David G. Haglund, "What Good Is Strategic Culture? A Modest Defence Of An Immodest Concept", *International Journal* 59, no. 3 (2004): 502.

Within this second group, there is also the Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA), a research agency operating within the US Defense Department, whose central investigation, in the recent decade, has been – and to a certain extent still is – to find ways to make the strategic cultural paradigm stronger. Among them there is Gray's work, which I have already discussed at length.[116] Other works tried develop strategic culture even further, mainly because of its sometimes ambiguous definitional nature. Jeannie Johnson, summing up the works and the major ideas of the DTRA conferences, discussed how to strengthen strategic culture by highlighting which variables should be included into the theoretical framework.

Organizational culture, though valuable, cannot claim to be the valid alternative to the strategic culture because of its sophisticated methodology. Organizational culture, like it or not, is part of the overall strategic culture. Johnson goes a little bit further by arguing that strategic culture (as an overall framework) encompasses three levels: national culture (considered here as a context), national policy processes (understanding who is in charge and what are the mechanisms for policy implementation), and finally organizational culture. That being said, however, in order to define the value

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[116] Colin S. Gray, "Out Of The Wilderness: Prime Time For Strategic Culture", *Defense Threat Reduction Agency Advanced Systems and Concepts Office* (2006): i-30.

of strategic culture she argues that it is important to focus on the value of national culture.[117]

National culture, in turn, is the combination of four different variables: identity (*a nation-state's view of itself comprising the traits of its national character, its intended regional and global roles, and its perceptions of its eventual destiny*); values (*in a cost/benefit analysis, the material and/or ideational factors which are given priority, and selected over others*); norms (*accepted and expected modes of behavior*); perceptive lens (*beliefs (true or misinformed) and experiences or the lack of experience, which color the way the world is viewed*). These four variables should be useful because they capture in a synthetic way all the different variables that play a role in the definition of a national culture: "inputs such as geography, history, access to technology, experience with regimes types, religious traditions, etc., *create* identity, values, norms, and a group's perceptive lens."[118]

Nevertheless, I do not fully support Johnson's argument for two reasons: the first one concerns the lack of those variables which could help identify a state's military doctrine. The third variable that she presents (norms) could work, however, it is not clear how we can use it to achieve our goal (identification of a national military strategy). As a consequence, relying on history is still a fundamental condition for achieving the expected result.

Secondly, while being particular difficult to distinguish what are values with respect to identity and perceptive lens, all these variables that

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[117] Jeannie Johnson, "Strategic Culture: Refining The Theoretical Construct", *Defense Threat Reduction Agency* (2006), pp. 8, 9, 10

she presented seem to restate what the second generation of scholars have already argued, that is, the use of symbols and rhetoric as a fundamental part of a state's strategic culture. We need to move beyond this.

As I tried to survey strategic culture literature through this long section, it seems clear that most of the approaches attempted so far fell short to grasp its theoretical essence: what a state's military strategy is and why that particular strategy has been adopted. In other words, the objective of a coherent theory that explains strategic culture should be to highlight why a state decided to adopt a specific strategic attitude and therefore what are the cultural traits that helped shape that specific strategy, making it the core of the overall national strategy. But before explaining my overall methodological approach that attempts to structure a coherent theoretical framework, it is now the time to turn to investigate the relevant western and Chinese literature on Chinese strategic culture, which represents the topic of this research.

1.2 Chinese Strategic Culture

In this section I will present the major works which contributed to explain Chinese strategic culture. I will also present and discuss their major pitfalls which did not contribute to acquire a deep knowledge of Chinese strategic culture. Some of the shortcomings that I will present resemble

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[118] *Ibid.*, pp. 14-15 (original emphasis)

those of the previous works which have been illustrated in the previous section. For what concerns us here, the present section will highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the strategic cultural literature dealing specifically with China. Hence, the objective of this section's analysis is to demonstrate where the current literature has failed in demonstrating what Chinese strategic culture really is and where it is necessary to intervene, theoretically, in order to deepen our understanding of Chinese strategic affairs.

The Western literature on Chinese strategic culture, contrary to expectations, is not very wide. One of the central obstacles is, for sure, the lack of linguistic skills which undermine any serious study on Chinese strategic behavior. Those scholars with Chinese proficiency dedicated their energies, instead, to the field of military history[119] which, in our discussion (especially in the subsequent chapters), will play an important role; especially considering that their topics get very close to any serious attempt to study Chinese strategic culture. Along this approach, the other relevant literature dealing with China's behavior both in foreign policy and strategic affairs is the analysis of leadership and how this political establishment

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[119] David Andrew Graff, *Medieval Chinese Warfare, 300-900*, 1st ed. (London: Routledge, 2002); Mark A Ryan, David Michael Finkelstein and Michael A McDevitt, *Chinese Warfighting*, 1st ed. (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 2003); Bruce A Elleman, *Modern Chinese Warfare, 1795-1989*, 1st ed. (London: Routledge, 2001); Kenneth Swope, *Warfare In China Since 1600*, 1st ed. (Aldershot, Hants, England: Ashgate, 2005); Peter Allan Lorge, *Warfare In China To 1600*, 1st ed. (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005); Hans J Van de Ven, *Warfare In Chinese History*, 1st ed. (Leiden: Brill, 2000) one of this book's merits is to have highlighted the historical and theoretical inconsistency of the Chinese defensive attitude perspective.

regulates Chinese institutional behavior.[120] Moreover, there is also a vast literature which tries to investigate Chinese foreign policy by looking at domestic/bureaucratic politics.[121]

One of the pioneers of the investigation of Chinese behavior at the strategic level is John Fairbank's edited work *Chinese Ways in Warfare*.[122] In his work we can find one of the clearest effort to define the strategic elements that characterized Chinese way of waging warfare from ancient times to the late sixteenth century. His work is based on a historical account of how China waged war, therefore its ultimate objective was not to define a clear profile of a general, comprehensive Chinese military conduct in history.

However, despite providing a wealth of information on how the army was drilled, its structure and hierarchy leading the army, the book does not present the Chinese way of war, meaning the fundamental doctrinal and strategic features that tend to persist over time. The book lacks a full analysis of the Chinese strategic culture in the period under investigation. Only in the introductory chapter can we find some sort of general ideas about the major characteristics of the Chinese way of warfare, but the author fails to take that information into account for further evaluation and elaboration. Fairbank stated that "[China] is … a striking examplar of the

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[120] David M Lampton, *Following The Leader*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014); Feng Huiyun Feng, *Chinese Strategic Culture And Foreign Policy Decision-Making*, (London: Routledge, 2007).

[121] David L Shambaugh, *Modernizing China's Military*, 1st ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

[122] John K. Fairbank, *Chinese ways in Warfare*, p. 1.

new art of militant mobilization for defense."[123] Moreover, he emphasized the Chinese preference for "defense [over] offense and [which, in turn,] stresses the exhausting of an attacker or the pacification of a rebel as less costly than their extermination." Chinese leaders emphasize "attritional warfare over offensive warfare with the goal of annihilating the enemy."[124] Strategic asset which translated itself also in other contexts such as, for example, the military confrontation with the maritime enemies against which Chinese strategists applied the same concept which shaped their land strategy: 坚壁清野 (*jianbi qingye*) "strengthen the walls and clear the fields;" that is, an attempt to concentrate all material resources, such as food, manpower, etc, inside the city walls in order to "starve out the attackers."[125]

Military Culture in Imperial China[126] tried to fill the empirical gap left by Fairbank and represented the attempt to connect the depth of history with political science. The book even tried to articulate a new way of defining military culture (a coterminous meaning to strategic culture) and how that reflected itself into the different aspects of the overall Chinese imperial military structure:

First, military culture refers to a discrete, bounded system of conduct and behavior to which members of the military are

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supposed to adhere, made of written and unwritten rules and conventions as well as distinctive beliefs and symbols. Second, military culture can mean strategic culture (in Chinese *zhalüe wenhua*), which involves a decision-making process that transcends the specific behavior of military people and involves instead the accumulated and transmitted knowledge upon which those involved in making strategic choices, from both the civil and military side, base their arguments, validate their positions, and examine a given situation. Third, military culture can be understood as the set of values that determine a society's inclination for war and military organization. In this sense, for instance, Sparta may be seen to had had a more developed military culture than Athens. Some societies develop a special preference and readiness for militarylike, often aggressive behavior that becomes embedded in a number of civil institutions, from education to financial administration. Certain paramilitary associations (such as the Boy Scouts) and the militarization of certain aspects of social life in some societies … can also be ascribed to a military culture infusing society at large. Fourth, military culture may refer to the presence of an aesthetic and literary tradition that values military events and raises the status of those who accomplish

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[126] Nicola Di Cosmo, *Military Culture In Imperial China*, 1st ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2009).

martial exploits to the level of heroes and demigods in epic cycles and poetry, visual representations, communal celebrations, and state rituals.[127]

The above description of the different types of military cultures we can deal with manifests the complexity of the topic. Di Cosmo is right in pointing out all the possible approaches. However, if we need to cope with the understanding of how a state behaves militarily, the second definition – "military culture can mean strategic culture, which involves a decision-making process that transcends the specific behavior of military people and involves instead the accumulated and transmitted knowledge upon which those involved in making strategic choices, from both the civil and military side, base their arguments, validate their positions, and examine a given situation" – should be fully embraced, because it represents the comprehensive approach we can engage with in order to understand a state's strategic behavior. Moreover, the second definition is the only one that combines generality with specificity, since the others tend to me too specific, not allowing the possibility to build a general framework.

One of the precious contributions of the book concerns the understanding of the delicate relationship between the *wu* (the military) and the *wen* (the civil). Notwithstanding its ability to engage with the vastness of Chinese history, it is still a little bit far from a comprehensive evaluation of Chinese strategic culture. Another element expressed in one edited chapter

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[127] *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4

is relevant for our discussion on Chinese strategic culture, that is, the role played by the external influence/shock in shaping Tang's dynasty way of warfare. an element that will be further elaborated in chapter three.

Other scholars, like Michael Pillsbury, went a step further by trying to come up with a clear understanding of what the Chinese strategic culture really is, however, lacking a coherent methodological framework. In his *Chinese View of Future Warfare*[128] and his subsequent work *The Hundred-Year Marathon*[129] both those strengths and weaknesses are present. For example, when it comes to the weaknesses, one of the strongest argument of the book is its ability to have recalibrated the centrality of the ancient strategies and therefore doctrines, specifically of the Warring States' period, into the overall Chinese foreign policy posture towards the US. However, Pillsbury's argument, throughout the book, tends to be quite speculative and too superficial in highlighting specific mechanisms underpinning the overall strategic culture and its contribution to foreign policy.

His *Chinese View of Future Warfare*, published almost two decades before, presented the same problems. On one hand, the book illustrated how important the Chinese military tradition was in setting up the stage for the Chinese doctrinal formulation during the '90s. However, we do not quite understand why and how this is the case and, above all, how the tradition has been transmitted to future generations.

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[128] Michael Pillsbury, *Chinese Views Of Future Warfare*, 1st ed. (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 1998).
[129] Michael Pillsbury, *The Hundred-Year Marathon*, 1st ed., (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2015)

Ralph Sawyer illustrates the fundamental aspect characterizing Chinese strategic culture and its associated way of war. in his work, *The Tao of Deception*,[130] he argued how Chinese leaders considered deception the central element of their strategic attitude. His reasoning has some relevant aspects and some weaknesses. Concerning the former, his contribution is crucial for the analysis of Chinese strategic culture because it goes into the right direction; that is, illustrating what the ultimate meaning of strategic culture is: the identification of a specific military doctrine which concretely reflects the overall strategic culture. On this point he correctly argued that China has extensively relied on deception as the central component of its military doctrine.

However, his argument has some weaknesses, among which two are quite crucial: first of all, arguing that deception represented throughout Chinese history the key strategic element in war is a sort of generalization, affected, I would add, by an orientalist approach. Deception is a tactical means that whoever is involved in a life-threatening situation tries to implement. Therefore this does not sound particularly Chinese, since in world history every country, general, soldier, businessman, politician, and even our neighbor may use some sort of deception. At the same time, this type of reasoning seems to be a form of orientalism because it labels another country of a particular behavior to the extent of implicitly asserting

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[130] Ralph D Sawyer and Mei -chün Sawyer , *The Tao Of Deception*, 1st ed. (New York: Basic Books, 2007).

that the culture of the author's country is not deceptive at all at the military level. This approach is, therefore, affected by value judgments.

The second weakness of Sawyer's work, connected to the first one, is the lack of a strategic analysis of Chinese history. The entire book focuses on military campaigns and war fighting. Through this type of analysis it would be difficult to sustain the assumption that China's military or strategic behavior in warfare has mainly been characterized by the recourse to deception, since it represents, in history, a mere tactical tool that every army is entitled, willing, and able to use.

Sawyer's work seems to confound the difference that characterizes Chinese style of warfare with its uniqueness. That is, as Andrew Nathan pointed out, when dealing with a cultural analysis we need first to identify the different categories or classes we want to investigate. "If that class is populated in one society and empty in others, then the object [of enquiry] is properly said to be unique." If the "attribute exists in both cultures," then we are interested to examine the "degree of difference between the two in the attribute's quantity (extent, degree, etc.), quality (intensity, functional importance, etc.), distribution (sector of society, geographical location) or relationship (pattern of association with other attributes)."[131] The use of unorthodox methods of warfare is not something uniquely Chinese. Other civilizations adopted similar systems throughout history. Here we are concerned with the level of distinctiveness that characterizes Chinese way of

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[131] Andrew Nathan, "Is Chinese Culture Distinctive?", *The Journal of Asian Studies* 52, no. 4 (1993): 927

war with respect to that one of other states. That's why it is important to approach people's war at the strategic level, rather than focusing only on mere tactical elements that are common cross-culturally.

The same problems affect Zhang and Yao's study on the comparison between Western and Chinese military thinking.[132] By employing a general and simplistic overview of both entities' military thinking, both authors end up highlighting what could be termed historical stereotypes rather than a sophisticated analysis of the actual differences belonging to both. By relying on the philosophical accounts of the two cultural traditions, the authors point out, dichotomously, that Chinese military thinking is more concerned with justice rather than interest.

Notwithstanding the fact that China has a valuable philosophical tradition explaining the moral values of warfare and the justness that was supposed to govern any military engagement, this element cannot be taken into consideration in order to express the crucial difference between the Chinese military tradition with the West's. First, it is problematic to compare China (which is a nation-state even if it is undeniable that it also represents a civilization-state[133]) with an allegedly unique or uniform "West." The West includes a large number of states with very different historical and philosophical traditions. Secondly, even the so-called "West" has produced a

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[132] Zhang Junbo and Yao Yunzhu, "Differences Between Traditional Chinese And Western Military Thinking And Their Philosophical Roots", *Journal of Contemporary China* 5, no. 12 (1996): 209-221.
[133] Martin Jacques, *When China Rules The World*, 1st ed. (New York: Penguin Books, 2012).

wide literature on the just war; that is, creating the moral conditions that could justify the use of military force. Philosophical attitude that is still affecting today's states' recourse to warfare, even at the normative level (the arguments in favor of the humanitarian intervention abroad is a case in point).

The second factor that distinguishes China with respect to the West, according to the authors, is its reliance on the "human factor" rather than "weapon factor;" that is, in Chinese terms the dichotomous relationship between "*ren* (people) and *wu* (military)."[134] Here again, the analysis is too simplistic. Chinese philosophical arguments in favor of the centrality of people in war represents a valuable as well as complex historical-philosophical factor that cannot be simplistically stated in those terms. This is because China, in its history, has also widely demonstrated how important weapons were for its war performance as well as technology. In other terms, in Chinese history the human component runs at a deeper level than many scholars argue and it has to do with the fundamental idea on how to mobilize and control the people at the same time. The same applies to the West and the importance of the human factor along the weapon/technological element. Therefore this specific difference characterizing the West-China confrontation runs much deeper than this.

Finally the third element is similar to Sawyer's argument that Chinese political and military leaders rely predominantly on stratagem 谋 *mou*, while

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[134] Zhang Junbo and Yao Yunzhu, "Differences Between Traditional Chinese And Western Military Thinking And Their Philosophical Roots"

the West is relying on strength 力 *li*.[135] While Sawyer's argument is more sophisticated, Zhang and Yao's one is not. While it is undeniable that there

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[135] *Ibid.* Along the same type of oversimplification, another scholar, Tiejun Zhang, "Chinese Strategic Culture: Traditional And Present Features", *Comparative Strategy* 21, no. 2 (2002): 73-90, overemphasized the nature of Chinese strategic culture by arguing that "the traditional Chinese strategic culture is primarily characterized by 'cultural moralism' [which] is understood as a prolonged habit or practice of moralizing and a persistent emphasis on morality, exemplified by Confucian belief on virtue (*de*), benevolence (*ren*), and righteousness (*yi*) as basic norms in maintaining domestic order and conducting security strategy." My criticism is not directed towards the assumptions that Confucianism did not play a role, actually the opposite: Confucianism did play a fundamental role, but when it comes to war, most of the arguments that emphasized benevolence, rightness, and morality in war were internalized to the extent that they lost their real conditioning power, letting them exert a specific role mostly in domestic affairs, as the author himself suggests. The author's overemphasis on the importance of these moral factors led him to consider and interpret active defense as a mere defensive doctrine. He highlighted, in fact, that even the past Chinese military expansions should be considered through this light, since they "had been primarily defensive in nature." According to the author, the factors that contributed, through the centuries, to the "active defense" advocacy – conceptualized as a defensive measure – by the Chinese elite, were: "an earth-bound agricultural society in which settled civilization and stable social order were among the main national characters, the predominant influence of Confucianism in the imperial China that emphasized appeasement and moral suasion over military campaign, and a related calculation that compared with offensive use of force, static defense, together with nonviolent means to deal with the 'barbarians,' would be less expensive in gaining similar benefits." Unfortunately, while the effort to define what the use of the active defense really meant for the Chinese is widely appreciated, it is not completely correct to define it the way the author did. Active defense, in reality. according to its definition, inevitably includes the logic of defense, however, it represents a specific theoretical design of Chinese strategy which is also deeply committed to the development of aggressive – I would say offensive – types of strategies that historically did manifest through real and concrete expansionist policies. Arguing that the latter where conducted under the logic of peripheral defense undermines first of all the logic of the Great Wall, which had been built mainly for defensive purposes, while also confirming the assumptions of the realist paradigm which argues that states tended to expand in order to create buffer zones

is a vast ancient literature on the use of stratagems and deception in war, at the same time, in Chinese history there is a plenty of evidence which illustrates the ability of war leaders to conduct pitched battles which relied on frontal engagements rather than military actions based on stratagems. Moreover, it is important to highlight that what the authors consider to be a unique cultural trait of Chinese way of fighting is not stratagem per se that makes the Chinese way of fighting unique, it is rather the strategic flexibility that derives from stratagem that characterizes the cultural uniqueness of China.[136] On this topic, one of the central academic figures that has dealt

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for their own defense, denying the fundamental truth that one's own search for security and defense is inevitably another's sense of insecurity.

That being said, however, the author points out one important aspect about the Chinese way to power and security. He argued, in fact, that the so-called CNP (Comprehensive National Power) has deep roots into the ancient Chinese practices of state security. The idea is that China should pursue a specific power project which coordinates the simultaneous development of economic, military, diplomatic, political, technological, and economic factors. According to this definition, in fact, Sun Tzu's famous dictum "to subdue the enemy without fighting" finds its fullest application, mainly because "under certain military pressures, one can coordinate a political and diplomatic offensive, to psychologically disintegrate the enemy forces and subdue them." This therefore explains the Chinese way of war and strategy, that is, the combination of military with non-military elements.

[136] For a clear identification of the different approaches to warfare between the West and the East, Edward Boylan, "The Chinese Cultural Style Of Warfare", *Comparative Strategy* 3, no. 4 (1982): 346-347, offers a detailed explanation of two clear military cases, used as examples, which highlight this difference. On one hand, he illustrated how Iphicrates' campaign in Thrace has been conducted according to the famous work of Frontinus – *Strategematicon*. Specifically, as it has been reported in that ancient strategic text, Iphicrates realized that "the neighboring hill was held by the enemy, and that from it came down a single road which might be utilized to overwhelm him and his men." Accordingly he commanded a fraction of his troops to stay in the camp and "light a number of fires. Then leading forth the remaining section of his army, he located it along the sides of the only road leading uphill. In

extensively with the application of stratagems in Chinese history is represented by Boorman's work. In his analysis we can find one of the clearest explanations for why deception is so unique in China with respect to the same use that other states carried out:[137]

> Current strategic thinking in the United States places comparatively little stress on stratagem or deception practices. Where the theory of deception is most highly developed is significantly in the area of electronic warfare, which is minimally

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this way he waited for the enemy to pass by and strike him from all sides. In this way "the disadvantage of terrain from which he himself had suffered had been turned against them." In this example, therefore, we can witness the adoption of a specific technique that characterized the Western way of war, that is, the use of camp fires "as a form of cover in order to conceal the true location of Iphicrates' troops."

The second case, the Chinese way of warfare, illustrates, instead, another way of exploiting it. By relying on Sun Tzu's explanations, Boylan illustrates the famous battle, in Chinese history, between the State of Ch'i and the State of Wei in 341BC, in which the leader of the State of Ch'i Sun Pin argued that in order to win over the State of Wei, it was necessary to take advantage of the image of cowardice that Ch'i's enemies had built towards it. Therefore Sun Pin "ordered that when the Ch'i army crossed the borders and entered Wei, they should on the first night build one hundred thousand kitchen fires, on the following night fifty thousand, and on the third thirty thousand. P'ang Chuan [Wei State commander] marched for three days and, greatly pleased, said: 'I have always been certain that the troops of Ch'i were cowards. They have been in my country for only three days and more than half of their officers and soldiers have deserted!'" Through this stratagem Sun Pin was able to deceive P'ang Chuan who decided to attack his enemy without the heavy infantry, encountering a sound defeat.

[137] Such an analysis is strongly needed because it should be remembered that deception or stratagems are not prerogatives that only China can adopt, since other states have been using them in their strategic interactions. Therefore if we argue that China is an unique actor in the way deception and stratagems have been applied then a more coherent explanation is needed. Scott Boorman, "Deception In Chinese Strategy", in *The Military And Political Power Of China In The 1970S*, William Whitson ed. , 1st ed. (New York: Praeger, 1973).

concerned with the long-run influencing of the behavior and intentions of an enemy operational commander. [This has implied] the U.S. Defense establishment must be fully capable of attaining national objectives <u>regardless of any course of action the enemy can employ</u>. Insofar as the rationale for this position is explicitly formulated, it is usually phrased in terms of a kind of risk aversion: in modern warfare, the argument runs, the risks and the stakes are too high for operational planning to rest on the assumption that enemy intentions can be effectively manipulated.

The role of stratagem in classical Chinese strategic theory is, however, unambiguous. In most classics of Chinese military thinking, successful deception is held to be a mark of high strategic merit. Moreover, …, exchanges of stratagem and counterstratagem are expected to be the normal currency of conflict interaction … This concept of strategy through stratagem goes beyond attempts merely to outwit the opponent by conveying false intentions; it involves the more sophisticated task of directly manipulating his perception of reality, and in particular his perception of the values to him of various outcome of the conflict. The aim, most particularly, is to manipulate his concept of his own objectives, and his own 'face' to induce him – for whatever reason – to assign great psychological utility to courses of action favorable to one's own interest."[138]

The pioneers of Chinese strategic culture, therefore, demonstrated to have the ability as well as the will to pursue a highly appreciable historical approach in searching for a Chinese way of warfare. The end result, unfortunately, did not match the initial expectations.

Later works, mainly published in the '90s, instead, widely influenced by the organizational culture literature and more interested in looking at direct and recent political contingencies, have been dealing with the internal dynamics of the Chinese state, in order to understand the role played by the military and its direct influence on warfare and foreign policy. At the same time, this generation's objective has been to demonstrate the rhetoric as well as the symbolism affecting Chinese strategic culture.

Part of those works focuses on the role played by the PLA. Scobell and Saunders's latest book on the PLA and its influence on the Chinese security policymaking brings fresh insights on the internal mechanisms that govern Chinese policymaking process.[139]

Other works, instead, build their own research on the findings of the "institutionalists" in order to demonstrate the role played by rhetoric and symbolism affecting the overall Chinese strategic culture. On this topic, Scobell himself, because of its deep commitment to the study of the institutional functioning, developed these additional references to the rhetoric of Chinese strategic culture. He emphasized the role played by the

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[138] Scott Boorman, "Deception In Chinese Strategy", pp. 314-316.
[139] Andrew Scobell and Phillip C Saunders, *PLA Influence On China's National Security Policy-Making*, 1st ed. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015); David Michael Finkelstein and Kristen Gunness, *Civil-Military Relations In Today's China*, 1st ed. (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 2007); Nan Li, *Chinese Civil-Military Relations*, 1st ed. (Hoboken: Taylor & Francis, 2005); Samuel B Griffith, *The Chinese People's Liberation Army*, 1st ed. (New York: Published for the Council on Foreign Relations by McGraw-Hill, 1967); John Gittings, *The Role Of The Chinese Army*, 1st ed. (London: issued under the auspices of the Royal Institute of International Affairs by Oxford U.P., 1967).

so-called "Cult of Defense" within Chinese strategic culture. That is, the idea that the Chinese way of thinking of war and strategy has been, historically, well concealed by a sophisticated mixture of historical and institutional practices whose final objective was – and still is – to create a symbolic attitude to military action which does not correspond to reality. Scobell seeks to demonstrate that the defensive argument advanced by the Chinese government is simply a symbolic attitude used to hide the real offensive nature of the Chinese military culture.[140]

Concerning Johnston's work, it was argued that Chinese strategic culture is composed of two interrelated elements: one is the Mencian-

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[140] Andrew Scobell, *China And Strategic Culture*, (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2002); Andrew Scobell, *China's Use Of Military Force*, 1st ed. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003). In another subsequent work, Scobell, "China's Real Strategic Culture: A Great Wall Of The Imagination", *Contemporary Security Policy* 35, no. 2 (2014): 211-226, keeps arguing about the centrality of this Cult of Defense by discussing at length, this time, the historical symbolism behind the Great Wall. For a better understanding of the symbol and the strategic-historical value of the Great Wall see: Julia Lovell, *The Great Wall*, 1st ed. (New York: Grove Press, 2006); Arthur Waldron, *The Great Wall Of China*, 1st ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990). For what concerns Scobell's argument, he tried to develop Johnston's theoretical design to the extent that he also advocates the existence of two strands of Chinese strategic culture. However, in his case he argues that "both the Realpolitik and Confucian-Mencian strands are operative. In fact, the two strand interact in a dialectic fashion to produce a distinctive 'Chinese Cult of Defense.'" According to Scobell, this Cult of Defense "identifies six principles that influence the decision-making of Chinese elites: 1) the primacy of national unification; 2) heightened threat perceptions; 3) the concept of active defense; 4) Chinese just war theory; 5) domestic chaos phobia; and 6) an emphasis on the welfare of the community over that of the individual." According to Scobell these elements are the crucial factors determining when China might resort to war. However, I do not think that these six elements, though important, can actually

Confucian attitude and the other is the so-called *parabellum* doctrine. The first one is merely symbolic, with Chinese policymakers using this philosophical-cultural framework to hide their real operative nature. The second element – *parabellum* thought in strategy – implies that China has internalized – culturally – throughout its history the basic features of the realist paradigm that explain a state's foreign policy behavior. Through the *parabellum* paradigm Johnston argues that China behaved offensively or defensively according to a rationalist calculation which evaluated the material as well as other important factors before deciding whether or not waging a defensive or offensive war. [141] The same assumptions – that is, that realist practice of foreign policy can be conceptualized as a cultural framework – found further application in another Johnston's work that dealt with the analysis of the Maoist strategic culture and it was included in Katzenstein's edited volume on the study of the culture of national security. By analyzing Maoist writings, Johnston, again, argues that the *parabellum* paradigm affected Maoist use of force.[142]

However, Johnston's contribution is important for two reasons; first one concerns the evidence of continuity between how the Ming behaved strategically and how they conceived strategy. This continuity demonstrates that "strategic culture is not a trivial variable in the analysis of strategic

explain Chinese strategic culture. All of them or a substantial part constitute every state's strategic sensitivities.
[141] Alastair I Johnston, *Cultural Realism*

behavior. There is, at least in the Chinese case, a long-term, deeply rooted persistent and relatively consistent set of assumptions about the strategic environment and about the best means for dealing with it."[143] Second, Johnston argues that the role played by the Marxist-Leninist influence, which can be inferred indirectly from his work, did not alter, but actually reinforced, Mao's strategic design: "Mao strategic culture does indeed represent continuity with the past, reinforced by modern Chinese nationalist and Marxist-Leninist influences on strategic preferences."[144] This type of continuity is also important when dealing with the analysis of the hotly debated Chinese "active defense" doctrine that most scholars persist at including among the exclusive defensive measures. As a further demonstration of the ambiguous defensive nature of active defense, Johnston demonstrated, by looking at the major Mao's doctrinal texts that

> "defensive operations were also sources of victory, but only as
> temporary states in the offensive application of force. In one
> cause-effect relationship, Mao linked the loss of territory from
> retreat to victory over the enemy, but it is clear from the context
> that this strategy involved trading space for time and then using
> that time to create conditions advantageous for the attack by,

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[142] Alastair Ian Johnston, "Cultural Realism And Strategy In Maoist China", in *The Culture Of National Security*, Peter Katzenstein ed. , 1st ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).
[143] *Ibid.*, p. 256
[144] *Ibid.*., p. 221

say, tiring the enemy forcing it to make mistakes that then could be exploited. Indeed, defensive operations were the first operational step in defeating the enemy."[145]

Johnston's main theoretical issues offered other scholars the opportunity to challenge his argument in order to prove the higher validity of the realist paradigm. Dealing with the same historical period – the Ming dynasty – Yuan-Kang Wang's book, *Harmony and War*,[146] emphasized how China historically behaved defensively or offensively according to its material capabilities. Wang's book, therefore, tries to illustrate that basic relative power assessments are sufficient to provide the overall explanation of Ming dynasty foreign policy behavior. Moreover, explaining Ming's foreign policy through neorealism seems to be a better approach, especially if the starting point from which Wang's book was built is the idea that realist principles of foreign policy constituted Chinese culture through the *parabellum* attitude, as Johnston explained.

Wang's argument is to test neorealism during that period in which Confucianism was believed to exert a profound influence on the entire Chinese body politic. However, even Wang failed to demonstrate why China behaved the way it did, but for different reasons. First, classifying the importance of Confucianism for the Chinese empire only because he argued that during the Song the number of *junshi* (classical texts graduates) was

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[145] *Ibid*, p. 237

seven times higher than other imperial eras does not seem adequate, considering that Confucianism exerted a considerable influence even in previous eras, let alone the continuous transmission of the Confucian principles from one generation to the other. Moreover, what Johnston and Wang found to be a "realist mentality" of Chinese strategic thinking "is in fact legalism" and Wang defines it by relying on the "orthodox political science answer … of international anarchy." And this, in turn, paved the way for another type of misperception, that is, the consideration that most of the Song and Ming military operations responded to the anarchical principle of realism, when they were actually operations devoted to the recovery of lost territories.[147]

Moreover, while Wang's book is well documented, especially when it comes to challenging Johnston's argument, at the same time it does not offer researchers what it is really needed when dealing with Chinese way of warfare: a clear understanding of its strategic culture. In fact, it is irrelevant to know whether or not a State is offensive or defensive according to material elements, since, as it has been already explained at length above, there are numerous examples in Chinese history (as well as worldwide) that contradict the realist assumptions. In the specific context – the Ming dynastic era – Wang's argument tries to highlight that the Ming advocated the use of

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[146] Yuan-Kang Wang, *Harmony And War*, 1st ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).
[147] Arthur Waldron, "Harmony And War: Confucian Culture And Chinese Power Politics By Yuan-Kang Wang", *The Journal of Asian Studies* 70, no. 4 (2011): 1146-1148.

an offensive warfare when material capabilities were higher than the opponent, and defensive operations when the contrary occurred. He even used statistical data to show that the percentage of offensive operations rose in those periods of material superiority and declined in the opposite cases.

Ming dynastic wars cannot simply be reconciled under the rubric of offensive or defensive simply by looking at the material features. Fundamental strategies actually adopted – that is, military doctrine – are different from the simple attitude to war. In other words, the Ming dynasty developed a specific historical vision of its empire and cultural expansion. Therefore we need to investigate how that vision translated into a specific military doctrine and how it intertwined with historical legacies. These are the reveling elements. And this is the direction of this research.

Going a step further, it seems that the shortcomings in the literature stimulated other scholars to find a way to combine different theoretical approaches, because this would increase the explanatory potential of strategic culture in general and on strategic culture as an intervening variable in particular. One of the first attempts going towards this direction is represented by Huiyun Feng's work.[148] Her work tries to investigate the nature of the Chinese way in foreign policy. Her methodological approach is original and stimulating, but the overall design does not seem to offer a strong overview of what can be termed the Chinese way both in foreign affairs and strategic thinking. This is because her work combines three

different approaches that instead of increasing the clearness and depth of the nature of China's strategic culture tends to offer single explanations which cannot be combined together as one overarching strategic culture. These are: heavy reliance on quantitative methods; leadership analysis; and strategic culture.

In the first part of her work, she provides a detailed description of the nature of Chinese strategic culture, which really relies on the use and application of Confucian ideals, therefore putting a premium on defensive strategic measures. This, in turn, suggests that China is a peaceful country whose rise will not translate into open conflict with other states. The other two approaches (leadership analysis and quantitative methods) tend to run counter to what the first variable expressed. The author's second part deals extensively with the leadership analysis, that is, how Chinese foreign policy developed and changed according to the specific features characterizing every chairman taking office in China. This approach, then, is combined with a quantitative approach which measures, through diagrams, the ideological positioning of the leadership and how this translates itself into offensive or defensive foreign and strategic posture. This methodological approach, therefore, while sophisticated does not hit the target, that is, the identification of a Chinese strategic culture. Any presence of it is subjected to various changes according to the leadership, underestimating, or even denying that leaders are culturally embedded and that therefore they act according to specific cultural postulates. In her work "it is difficult to find … a grappling

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[148] Huiyun Feng, *Chinese Strategic Culture And Foreign Policy Decision-Making.*

with the relationship between broader societal culture and the psychology of particular Chinese leaders."[149]

Moreover, it is important to highlight again that discussing at length whether a state's behavior in foreign policy is offensive or defensive is pointless, since state actors are complex entities that can use any type of political evaluation for justifying, in one way or another, they attitude in foreign policy. Therefore, at this level of analysis it is quite difficult to evaluate with certainty whether a state behaves offensively or defensively. We need to look at military doctrine which really represents the place where cultural elements are codified and through which we can understand a state's strategic culture.

Other authors tried other types of combinations, especially since some of them based their research on comparative studies, analyzing the dual relationship between China and US in terms of strategy. Looking specifically at the Sino-US relations, two books stand out, especially because they focus on the same historical period: Shu Guang Zhang's *Deterrence And Strategic Culture*[150] and Christopher Twomey's *The Military Lens*.[151] Zhang emphasized the idea that US deterrence in the various crises that erupted in East Asia with China did not succeed due to the culturally-shaped strategic calculations that failed to take in due

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[149] Valerie M. Hudson, "Where Is Strategic Culture To Be Found? The Case Of China", *International Studies Review* 10, no. 4 (2008): 783.
[150] Shu Guang Zhang, *Deterrence And Strategic Culture*, 1st ed. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992).

consideration the other state's strategic policy. In fact, Zhang highlights how US reliance on the Clausewitzian principles of war and Chinese reliance on the principles laid out by Sun Tzu inevitably created friction in the implementation of a credible deterrence that could refrain the adversary from engaging in specific types of actions. A similar idea is illustrated by Twomey who, with a slight but significant difference, highlights how deterrence and strategic calculation failed because of the doctrinal difference between states.

Zhang, moreover, also worked on another relevant research which got really close to the objective of the present research. His book, *Mao's Military Romanticism*,[152] is not only a valuable attempt to trace Mao's philosophy of war. It is also a comprehensive analysis on how he had been affected by Chinese tradition and how he contributed to shape Chinese strategic culture. His work, moreover, traces the fundamental historical, philosophical, and cultural roots that paved the way for the creation of Mao's military doctrine of People's War and, to a certain extent, China's overall strategic culture. The only major issue of his work concerns the overabundance of tactical details during the Chinese involvement in the Korean War that he provides. On one hand it represents an invaluable historical contribution, but on the other hand, very often, it distracts the

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[151] Christopher P Twomey, *The Military Lens*, 1st ed. (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2010).
[152] Shu Guang Zhang, *Mao's Military Romanticism* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1995).

reader and brings away the objective of his research: the analysis of Mao's (and reflexively China's) strategic culture.

Twomey's work looks at the military doctrines, also defined as "theories of victory." However, they inevitably lead to miscalculation over the adversary's capability and will to engage in military conflicts. His analysis of the Sino-US relations during the '50s explains how both states – because of their significant doctrinal differences, rooted both in historical legacies and strategic culture (without actually explaining what these roots are) – found themselves entangled in a progressive process of miscalculation about the other's resolve for war. Besides Towmey's different methodological approach, his work, in my opinion fails to address where the "theory of victory" comes from and where strategic culture really is. In fact, he clearly stated that his research "does not explain the sources of different theories of victory but rather their effects."[153]

Twomey's refusal to adopt the strategic-culture paradigm is well known. However, this shortcoming and the way he argues about the manifestation of Chinese strategic culture in a subsequent work do not contribute to a clearer understanding of a possible alternative explanation. First, his decision to skip the sources of "theories of victory" undermines his argument. According to the author, Chinese land theory of victory, because of its specificity (even if we do not understand how and why this is so) led to constant misperception of the American military and strategic actions. While

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[153] Christopher Twomey, "Chinese Doctrines As Strategic Culture: Assessing Their Effects", *Strategic Insights* 6, no. 10 (2005).

the Chinese naval doctrine, because it was the result of more defeats from which it learned, created an lower misperception, actually leading to an overestimation of the actual American maritime ability. This way of analyzing such a complex issue is not beneficial for a comprehensive approach that could clearly articulate the existence of a Chinese strategic culture.

Secondly, Twomey criticized the strategic-culture assumption because he believes that it cannot explain the supposedly unique traits of the Chinese way of war in foreign disputes. For example, by listing six main themes[154] that are believed to belong to the Chinese culture, he criticized the idea that these features can be used to explain Chinese uniqueness. Any other country can share all or part of those characteristics and therefore strategic culture fails to explain what really constitutes the behavior of a state. Moreover, his argument goes a step further by arguing that strategic culture is not applicable when we deal with the nuclear weapons, which, because of their unconventional power necessarily alter any potential cultural trait.[155]

Generally speaking, I agree with the criticisms expressed by Twomey, in fact, my methodology tries to go beyond these problems. However, two aspects deserve to be mentioned. On one hand, Twomey

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[154] *Ibid.*, The six themes are: Chinese fears regarding the security implications of weakness at home; Chinese views regarding the hierarchical nature of international relations; Chinese preferences for offensive strategies; Chinese preferences for defensive strategies; risk acceptant Chinese strategy toward crisis management; Chinese propensity to strike first in military operations.
[155] Christopher Twomey, "Chinese Strategic Cultures: Survey And Critique", *Defense Threat Reduction Agency* (2006), p. 12

criticized six themes that, as already discussed, represent the weakest arguments in favor of strategic culture. Therefore tearing them apart does not represent a hard challenge. Secondly, arguing that the nuclear weapons critically undermine the strategic-culture assumptions is not totally correct and deserves further investigation.

For example, Colin Gray identified those elements that characterize the relationship between nuclear weapons and strategic culture. Rosita Dellios[156] also tries to explain how to reconcile these two elements (nuclear weapons and strategic culture). Moreover, besides these methodological aspects, it is also important to state that even in the Chinese case it is already confirmed that the "no-first use" policy as well as the limited deterrence logic could respond to Chinese cultural assumptions.[157]

Rosita Dellios also focused on the importance of the military doctrine and its relationship with the analysis of strategic culture. Her work tries to investigate how the doctrine of people's war still exerts a relevant role in today's Chinese strategic thinking. Her theoretical intuition is important and strengthens my theoretical assumptions about the centrality of people's war doctrine. First, she offers an important interpretation of the meaning of strategic culture, which, she states, "pertains to a people's distinctive style of dealing with an [sic] thinking about the problems of national security. The

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[156] Rosita Dellios, "Chinese Strategic Culture: Part 1 - The Heritage From The Past", *CEWCES Research Paper* (1994); for a general description of the Chinese "unique" approach to nuclear deterrence, see: Jeffrey G Lewis, *Minimum Means Of Reprisal: China's Search For Security In The Nuclear Age*, 1st ed. (MIT Press, 2007).

intellectual 'spiritual' modality of a living strategic culture may be found in its strategic philosophy. In Chinese strategic philosophy there are enduring elements, such as deterrence and psychological warfare, that are applicable across time and across cultures."[158] Since she emphasizes the relevance of Chinese philosophical assets, her theoretical design tries to advance the "view that there is a uniquely Chinese *approach* to strategy and that it remains even in an age when China has become a powerful nuclear-armed state." This strategic uniqueness is expressed through a policy that

> "rests on the strategic doctrine of *people's war under modern conditions*, and incorporates the specialist variant of *local war* doctrine, designed to deal with defence contingencies of limited scope on China's peripheries. Adopted at the onset of the post-Mao era of reform under Deng Xiaoping, *people's war under modern conditions* (abbreviated … to **modern people's war**) was a development from the people's war doctrine (or **traditional people's war**) of Communist China's founder, Mao Zedong. Modern people's war was a development in that it continued to rely on a victory-denial strategy utilizing China's large land mass, population, and fighting forces – calculated to deter an invader by rendering any hope of conquest futile – but

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[157] Alastair Iain Johnston, "China's New "Old Thinking": The Concept Of Limited Deterrence", *International Security* 20, no. 3 (1995): 5-42
[158] Rosita Dellios, "Chinese Strategic Culture: Part 1 - The Heritage From The Past", p. 1.

added to these traditional elements the need for meeting the 'modern conditions' of late 20th century warfare."[159]

Another important aspect of Dellios' argument is the way she reconciles the nuclear weapons logic – meaning the centrality of the hyper technological asset – with the logic of the cultural features shaping a state's use of a specific military doctrine. Chinese philosophical elements that emphasize the centrality of the human factor does not seem to be a principle that China will abandon soon. Therefore the combination of this important cultural feature with the implementation of nuclear weapons into the overall Chinese strategic calculation means that Chinese leaders "may well detonate tactical nuclear weapons in a guerrilla fighting mode which avoids confrontational counter-attacks. This inferred aspect of modern people's war I have termed *guerrilla nuclear warfare* (GNW) and defined it as 'the use of guerrilla methods within a protracted nuclear war fought at the theatre level.'"[160]

The idea behind this doctrine represents the fundamental strategic thinking of Chinese way of war, that is, the principle of relying on "internal guidance for changing external conditions." The establishment of nuclear weapons put an emphasis on the role of deterrence and how to make it credible. Deterrence, to be effective, needs to be able to communicate clearly the will to employ nuclear weapons. The credibility is the strength of

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[159] *Ibid.*, p. 2 (original emphasis and bold)
[160] *Ibid.*, p. 8

deterrence. Therefore "deterrence is psychological," since it represents "the rational for having nuclear weapons: their 'use' is in their 'non-use.'" China aligned itself into the theoretical building of an effective deterrence by "filling the gaps in the people's war deterrent caused by changes in modern warfare." Therefore, the acquisition of nuclear weapons enhanced the people's war deterrent, rather than having created a separate one based on technology."[161]

Along this theoretical intuition which puts military doctrine at the center of any serious evaluation of a state's strategic culture, her model, however, does not go further than this, limiting herself to point out the emphasis on the defensive nature of Chinese strategic culture. This is a shortsighted evolution of the original theoretical asset which, after having started off in the right direction, relies on the common and superficial explanations of Chinese strategic culture which keep on trying to demonstrate the offensiveness or defensiveness of China's way of war. Something that Twomey rightly criticized as inconsistent, contributing to picture the strategic-culture paradigm as the tautological or too-vague explanatory model of a state's behavior.[162]

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[161] *Ibid.*, p. 8

[162] In a subsequent work, still concerned with the analysis of Chinese strategic culture and directly connected to the previous one, Rosita Dellios, "Chinese Strategic Culture: Part 2 - Virtue And Power", *CEWCES Research Paper* (1994), articulated what really constituted the nature of the Chinese power. By relying on philosophical assumptions, she argued about the necessity to understand power as virtue, since this is a common argument that can be found in many classic Chinese texts on philosophy. In fact, as she correctly pointed out, in Chinese philosophical assumptions, "politics is … about morality. So is power – it equates to virtue. Indeed,

Finally, there are a few other major works that pursued the objective of indentifying Chinese strategic culture by looking at military doctrine and how it persisted throughout Chinese history. These works, at last, engaged with the real issues concerning the identification of a state's strategic culture: what was the main military doctrine which, in turn, reflected the overall state's strategic culture. I decided to label the group collecting these works as the fifth generation of scholars (with which I tend to identify myself) mainly for two reasons: one, even if the weaker of the two, is related to the timing of publication, while the second, much stronger, concerns the research objectives which are in line with the concept of strategic culture.

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the one word, *De* (*Te*) [德] can mean both." I do not deny the positive contribution of this kind of analysis. It always proves to be a stimulating exercise. However, when it comes to the effective way of studying strategic culture, this type of analysis might lead astray, since these philosophical narratives belong to the philosophical aspirations of a people, but this does not clearly translate themselves into actual military or strategic policies. With this, I am not arguing at all that they are simple narratives created to justify more realist conducts of warfare; that is, what has been labeled political rhetoric. I find those philosophical elements to be real. However, they do not find a direct application to warfare, because unfortunately warfare is about killing and this requires the adoption of different elements, which belong to culture for sure, but to its operational and strategic records, rather than philosophical aspirations. Therefore along the typical philosophical assumptions that are directly related to military field – like Sun Tzu – all the others simply create the context within which actual action occurs. In fact, it is not a coincidence that the author herself tends to project these philosophical assumptions more to the foreign policy behavior. Discussions about the role of hegemony that China might be able to undertake in the future go exactly towards this direction. For example, she discussed how China, because of its sophisticated system of philosophical thinking, is more concerned with the role of metapower, that is, the ability of a state to shape the world through a "pervasive, indirect influence." *Ibid.*, p. 5

Within this group I decided to include four Chinese books and some Western works.

The RAND project on China, *Pattern's in China's Use of Force*,[163] illustrates quite clearly that the Chinese government ideal is to maintaining the principles of people's war even by evolving it towards the third millennium in connection to the technological influence. The RAND's project's objective was to demonstrate that today we can still consider the fact that people's war concept is still kept in full consideration by the Chinese government, instead of being dismissed as inefficient due to the advent of the new technological era.

This work also explores China leaders' concern with the implementation of tactics like: deception and surprise; psychological-political shock; and opportunistic timing. At the same time, the authors' objective, by relying on Johnston's theoretical model, is to demonstrate that China is acting offensively at the world stage or, at least, contrary to the wide literature on Chinese military behavior, not always defensively. One extra important argument is offered at chapter six, in which the authors explore the possible alternatives that China could employ in a future conflict against the US.[164]

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[163] Mark Burles and Abram N Shulsky, *Patterns In China's Use Of Force*, 1st ed. (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 2000).
[164] Andrew Scobell, "Is There A Chinese Way Of War?", *Parameters* (2005), p. 120

The edited volume *Chinese Warfighting: the PLA Experience Since 1949*[165] emphasizes, contrary to other works, that Chinese leaders actually invested lots of energies for a careful implementation of operational details in combat operations. Moreover, the six cases analyzed point to the existence of a "distinct pattern of Chinese operational preferences. Chinese strategists and warfighters seeks to seize and maintain the operational initiative." The authors' main argument is that, therefore, Chinese strategists are more inclined to use offensive operations. Besides the fact that I do not fully support this statement for the reason that it is difficult to demonstrate whether a state behaves offensively or defensively, one element, however, seems to be quite relevant: Chinese reliance on deception, surprise and operational flexibility. These specific tactical elements, moreover, put emphasis on another important asset: Chinese propensity towards the building of a "one-sided 'battle of annihilation' where the PLA can concentrate superior force and firepower at the chosen point of attack."[166] This aspect is well stated, because it highlights the Chinese peculiarity in war. And this is the field where any study on strategic culture should focus on.

Edward Boylan's article *The Chinese Cultural Style of Warfare* seeks to "provide some insight into what Chinese 'style' of warfare may be discerned over the span of centuries." The objective is to look at the "perspectives, outlooks, ways of formulating strategies, methods of attack,

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[165] Mark A Ryan, David Michael Finkelstein and Michael A McDevitt, *Chinese Warfighting*.

etc., which occurred often in the national history and should, presumably, occur again if the nation were to go to war in the future." In fact, he clearly explains that, notwithstanding the development of nuclear weapons, "if China were to go to war again, one should expect to see" many of the strategic traits that characterized Chinese way of warfare through the centuries, that is: "an emphasis on stratagem over brute force, attacks on purely military as opposed to economic targets, a willingness to end the conflict once its essential political goals had been met, and a reliance on men over machinery."[167]

This article goes, therefore, in the right direction. It provides a clear, detailed explanation of how Mao was influenced by the writing of Sun Tzu and other ancient Chinese scholars. Specifically it illustrates the relevance of ancient historical patterns of behavior which help explain today's Chinese attitudes towards strategy. For example, one crucial aspect should be highlighted. The author points out that some "ancient maxims can come down through the centuries to affect modern-day policies." Three stand out: 1) "yuan-chiao-ching-kung [远交近攻]: to cooperate with the far country and to strike at the near country; 2) i-i-chih-i [以夷制夷]: using a barbarian to check another barbarian; and 3) pi-shih-chi-shu [避实击虚]: to avoid strength and to attack weakness." Even if the first two doctrinal elements clearly belong more to the conventional analysis of China's foreign policy, which refers more to the Chinese grand strategy, the third one is merely military

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[166] Andrew Scobell, "Is There A Chinese Way Of War?", p. 120.

and found application since Sun Tzu's times. To give more credit to this last element, the author offers some clear examples, extrapolated from the ancient Chinese text, which illustrate the Chinese way in war and the correct use of stratagems. Specifically he describes how a battle between the forces of the Ch'i State and those ones of the Wei State was conducted in 341 BC. In that specific military context, the use of camp fires over a period of days just before the actual battle engagement served the purpose of "confus[ing] the opponent and induce him to act rashly and leave most of this forces behind. In essence, P'ang Chuan [Wei State leader] was manipulated, through a stratagem, to act against his best interests."[168]

When it comes to Chinese literature on strategic culture Chinese military doctrine four books stand out both for their academic value and depth of analysis. Three of them have been briefly discussed at the beginning of this chapter. Some of them represent an attempt to delineate a historical trend characterizing the overall Chinese strategic culture. However, even if the attempt is to be appreciated for the energies and the passion, some of them fail to reach a scientific objective due to the main flaw that still affects – quite strongly – Chinese literature: party affiliation and party official propaganda. The first one, *On People's War* (*Renmin Zhanzheng Lun)*,[169] the oldest of the five, tries to discuss historically the evolution of People's War. The book offers interesting elements, especially

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[167] Edward S. Boylan, "The Chinese Cultural Style Of Warfare", pp. 341, 362
[168] *Ibid.*, 346-347
[169] Wei Tao [伟涛] Guo [郭], *On People's War* [*Renmin Zhanzheng Lun* - 人民战争论]

when it comes to identification of the historical trajectory of the military doctrine. However, two problems emerge: one is related to the lack of a deep historical research. The book simply lists the most relevant cases where People's War occurred in Chinese history. Most of them are very simple explanations that lack historical details, let alone, accuracy. The second problem is the effect of the party propaganda. Throughout the book, in fact, one single narrative seems to be repeated over and over again: the idea that there is, in Chinese history, a constant frequency of events which see oppressed classes organize militarily in order to overthrow the tyranny. In other words, this book's overall argument seems to replicate continuously the Mao Zedong-Chang Kai-Shek military confrontation.

The second book, *Contemporary Strategy Of Using The Weak To Defeat The Strong (Xiandai Yi Lie Sheng You Zhanlue),*[170] published a couple of years afterwards, is related to a research that tried to investigate how relevant it was to apply the "using-the-weak-to-defeat-the-strong" strategy in Chinese history. Notwithstanding its ability to conceptualize in a more systematic way this doctrine, this work remains deeply affected by the party propaganda.

The third one, *The Overall War of People's War* (*RenMin ZhanZheng ZhengTi Zhan),*[171] like the first one, is concerned with the study of People's War by setting the stage for a new discussion which advocates the

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[170] Lei [磊] Jiang [蒋], *On Contemporary Strategy Of Using The Weak To Defeat The Strong* [*Xiandai Yi Lie Sheng You Zhanlue* - 现代以劣胜优战略]

continuous centrality of the military doctrine in the new millennium. This work, while being, to a certain extent, a continuation of the first one fared even worse than the former. In fact, while the 1992 work had, at least, some historical frameworks that had been used for analytical purposes, the third work, on the other hand, simply represents a discursive attempt to justify specific military choices by the government and by constantly emphasizing the political-military struggle against the US that "a peace-loving country like China is forced to take into consideration." In this context, unfortunately, there is not a scientific attempt to articulate a historical and analytical design which can illustrate the Chinese use and implementation of People's War. Nevertheless, even if these three works just mentioned failed to conceptualize historically and, therefore, scientifically, the nature of People's War in Chinese history, nevertheless one positive point emerges from this discussion: the centrality of People's War as a military doctrine. This is evident, because the Chinese government as well as scholars and military personnel are all trying to rely on a specific doctrine which critically characterized their strategic past, especially during the Maoist era. Therefore, this, actually, strengthens the argument because it shows how China is critically anchored to the People's War doctrine, since it represented and still represent a critical military and strategic tool of the Chinese strategic culture.

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[171] Xiansheng [宪生] Meng [孟], *The Overall War of People's War* [*RenMin ZhanZheng Zheng Ti Zhan* – 人民战争整体战]

The fourth book, *The Analysis of Chinese Strategic Culture (Zhongguo ZhanLüe WenHua JieXi　)*[172] also published in the '90s, is a general attempt to articulate what the Chinese strategic culture really is and how it is composed. In general terms, the book does not offer any original analysis, since the author has mainly relied on Western works, therefore reproducing all the limitations and the shortcomings that we have already discussed at length.

Two arguments stand out and that deserve some consideration. The first one is related to the emphasis, made by the author, that his objective is to structure "an analysis based on the contemporary issues," avoiding the typical "appreciation for the ancient thinking (发思古之幽情)."[173] While his approach is understandable, on the other it is not. If we are interested in the identification of a specific strategic culture, our duty is to focus on the past in order to understand how that reflects to the present, otherwise what would be the point to use the term "culture"?

The second argument is important on one hand, but it fails scientifically on the other. The argument goes that it is important to highlight the distinctive elements of Chinese strategic culture because in so doing we can reduce the cultural misperception that the West has of China. This is valuable, however, aiming at creating an analysis on Chinese strategic culture only by looking at how the West perceives the East and how,

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[172] Yuzhen [玉振] Gong [宫], *The Analysis of Chinese Strategic Culture* [*Zhongguo Zhanlüe Wenhua Jiexi* – 中国战略文化解析], 1st ed. (Beijing Shi [北京市]: Junshi kexue chubanshe [军事科学出版社], 2002).

therefore, to change its perception would inevitably alter the methodological approach which would not tend to be objective, but it would inevitably be conditioned by the Western perception on China. Its implicit objective, therefore, would be to find a narrative that cools down the Western misperception. And this is exactly what happened. Gong's work, in fact, repeats all over again all the typical philosophical narratives that we have been used to read in other works. That is, that China will rise peacefully, that it will become a responsible state-actor and that the so-called "Chinese theory of deterrence (中国威胁论)" is based on a flawed western perception.[174]

The Western and the Chinese literatures presented offer important insights on the Chinese way of warfare and foreign policy attitude. However, the problem within both literatures is the fact that we could not reach valuable theoretical generalizations, that is, understanding what Chinese strategic culture really is. Political science works on Chinese strategic culture generally tend to focus on Chinese foreign policy posture or military strategy. When dealing with military strategy, however, the field of research mainly focuses on specific historical periods. A similar problem concerns those works on Chinese military history. They focus on specific historical periods or specific events through which it is difficult to extrapolate a normative asset which could highlight recurrent features of a Chinese way of war or military strategy. The next, final section will build a theoretical

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[173] *Ibid.*, 172-225
[174] *Ibid.*, pp. 249-261

framework which could bridge both methodologies, that is, historical depth with political science normative approach, in order to find a way that could establish a valid analysis of Chinese strategic culture expressed through the adoption of people's war doctrine.

1.3 A New Approach to Chinese Strategic Culture

In this section, my objective is to build a theoretical framework through which establish the normative asset for the analysis of Chinese strategic culture. First, I will define culture and strategy so as to understand how they are connected and what, therefore, strategic culture really means. Secondly, I will present the theoretical reasons which support my choice for people's war doctrine as the core of Chinese military strategy and therefore strategic culture. Thirdly, I will present the theoretical tools through which establishing a new way of measuring strategic culture. The final section will explain what historical periods I selected for the analysis of the validity of people's war in Chinese history, taking into consideration three factors: cultural change, cultural continuity, and external influence. The combination of cultural change and cultural continuity serves the purpose to explain how strategic culture persists in Chinese history even during particular transformative historical periods.

As the previous sections demonstrated, the theoretical paradigm of strategic culture has witnessed a huge, and at times, hard debate over its definition and implementation, mainly for two reasons: first there is not an

agreed definition. Since it comprises two contested elements – "culture" and "strategy" – then scholars get quite nervous when dealing with this paradigm, because of this definitional problem which could trigger criticism from other scholars who are expert on their own field of research.

The second problem, more relevant and also connected with the previous one, refers to the belief that strategic culture is too vague, therefore difficult to be operationalized. This explains why many scholars, while not losing the grip on strategic culture, still try to come up with some coherent frameworks that could explain it. In so doing, therefore, there have been so far several attempts to measure strategic culture by looking directly to the military organization, political leadership, bureaucracy, and so on, that is, all those variables that have been considered easier to identify and to measure.

However, by reducing the scope, we cannot actually understand what a state's strategic culture really is, due to the too specific approaches employed. Strategic culture should be specific but also general. It should represent a good balance between specificity and generality. First of all, in order to proceed towards an identification of what strategic culture is, it is important to define culture and strategy.

When it comes to the culture,[175] one of the problems of culture is the idea that it carries with itself a plurality of meanings, such as: "inhabit,

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[175] For a comprehensive overview on the different aspects of culture see: Roger M. Keesing, "Theories Of Culture", *Annual Review of Anthropology* 3, no. 1 (1974): 73-97.

cultivate, protect, honor with worship."[176] This consideration is quite important, because it illustrates the profound dynamics within culture and how extensive its profile could be. One of the most commonly used definition of culture belongs to Clifford Geertz, who defined it as: "an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life."[177] This definition, even if it helps understand what culture is, does not explain how culture is translated into actual behavior. And this has to do with the overall tendency, in anthropological studies, that symbols are playing a relevant role and that between culture and behavior there is not too much of a difference.[178] While it is true that culture does not represent, in its immediacy, behavior, yet culture shapes behavioral principles:

> "culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for
> behavior, acquitted and transmitted by symbols, constituting the

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[176] John Carlos Rowe, "Literary Culture And U.S. Imperialism", in *Cultural Studies: A Selected Reader*, Zhang Zhongzai, Wang Fengzhen and Wang Xiaolu ed. , 1st ed. (Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, 2007), p. 237. It should be pointed out what the original meaning of culture is. According to Giocanni Anders, who introduced the concept in 1781 under the name of *coltura*, culture was "meant to imply the conditions of human attainment preserved in writing." David G. Haglund, "What Good Is Strategic Culture? A Modest Defence Of An Immodest Concept", p. 483.

[177] Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation Of Cultures*, 1st ed. (New York: Basic Books, 1973), p. 89

[178] This type of argument, in fact, helped Ian Johnston formulating that while studying Chinese strategic culture the actual behavior should not be taken into consideration.

distinctive achievement of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts, the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e. historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values; culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, on the other as conditioning elements of further action."[179]

The authors, however, carry on their reasoning by also stating something slightly different:

"…culture is not behavior or the investigation of behavior in all its concrete completeness. Part of culture consists in norms for or standards of behavior. Still another part consists of ideologies justifying or rationalizing certain selected ways of behavior. Finally, every culture includes broad general principles of selectivity and ordering ('highest common factors') in terms of which patterns of and for and about behavior in very

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[179] A. L Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn, *Culture*, 1st ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: The Museum, 1952), p. 181 in Chris Jenks, "The Relation Between Culture And Social Structure", in *Cultural Studies: A Selected Reader*, Zhang Zhongzai, Wang Fengzhen and Wang Xiaolu ed. , 1st ed. (Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, 2007), p. 184. Another anthropologist, Bronislaw Malinowski, "Culture As A Determinant Of Behavior", *The Scientific Monthly* 43, no. 5 (1936): 440-449, however, highlighted how culture and behavior are mutually interdependent. As he expressed, in fact, "culture … is nothing but the organized behavior of man." Therefore, this fundamental aspect deserves more attention as it can also be implemented in the analysis of war, as the author himself suggested.

varied areas of culture content are reducible to parsimonious generalization."[180]

From these two definitions, both authors demonstrate the importance of culture in shaping the contours of behavior while at the same illustrating the ideological dimension of culture which is not directly related to behavior even if it deeply conditions it. However, one important element that runs through both definitions is related to the importance of culture in general, which "helps to explain the persistence of distinctive approaches in the face of disconfirming evidence as well as distinctive patterns of learning that are coloured by pre-existing institutions and ideas."[181] Building on these definitions and moving forward through a historical/political science point of view, we can state that "culture or cultures comprises the persisting (though not eternal) socially transmitted ideas, attitudes, traditions, habits of mind, and preferred methods, of operation that are more or less specific to a particular geographically based security community that has had a necessarily unique historical experience."[182] Connecting these definitions to the understanding of strategic culture, as Gray himself suggested, we can

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[180] A. L Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn, *Culture*, p. 189.
[181] Jack Snyder, "The Concept Of Strategic Culture: Caveat Emptor", p. 7
[182] Colin Gray, "Strategic Culture As Context: The First Generation Of Theory Strikes Back", p. 51.

assume that it "provides the milieu within which strategic ideas and defense policy decisions are debated and decided."[183]

Moving to the definition of strategy, things are not that easy either. There is lots of disagreement over the right definition. However, one seems to be clearly enough to capture the essence of strategy, which is considered

> "as the instrumental link between military means and political ends. Strategy in other words is concerned with the process by which armed force is translated into intended political effects … by specifying *armed force* as the means available to strategy we avoid trespassing into the domain of grand strategy, an activity that is concerned with the application of the totality of national resources in the pursuit of political goals. A

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[183] Colin S Gray, *Nuclear Strategy And National Style*, p. 36. This explains that my way of structuring the strategic culture paradigm, besides combining different methods, to the extent that I have called it "the fifth generation", takes into serious account the methodology of the so-called first generation scholars, since "these writers proved a focus and a clarity that is frequently absent in contemporary approaches. Gray's culture as content may therefore provide a productive starting point from which to proceed … without investigating the cultural context in which decisions are made, we are left with narrow and meaningless insights into strategic behavior." The theoretical debate between Gray and Johnston, moreover, shed light on the "futility of thinking about strategic culture in terms of causal explanations and falsifiable theory, whilst confirming the potential of a contextual or constitutive framework." This, in turn, encourages strategic culturalists "to generate more empirical research into particular strategic cultural cases through the use of thick description. In doing so, many new insights can be gained into cases where previously rationalist materialist explanations have exerted an over-bearing dominance." Stuart Poore, "What Is The Context? A Reply To The Gray-Johnston Debate On Strategic Culture", p. 284.

consideration of these many resources would lead us into areas such as diplomacy, economics propaganda, thereby transcending the narrower concerns [on strategy]."[184]

According to the definitions of culture and strategy we can therefore infer that in order to provide a coherent understanding of strategic culture we need to focus our attention on a specific military doctrine[185] that would, in turn, reflect strategic culture, since "in an operational sense strategy is more nationalistic in its nature than most other aspects of social behavior."[186] According to Bradley Klein (even if his objective was to demonstrate how the

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[184] John Stone, *Military Strategy*, 1st ed. (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011), p. 4; for an additional explanation of strategy and how to define it, see the voluminous work of Lawrence Freedman, *Strategy*, 1st ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. ix, xii. In his work he discussed strategy at length arguing, first of all, that "strategy's etymology goes back to classical Greek. Through the Middle Ages and into the modern era, however, the relevant reference tended to be to the 'art of war.'" Therefore, by keeping this in mind, he suggests an approximate definition, stating that strategy is "about maintaining a balance between ends, ways, and means; about identifying objectives; and about the resources and methods available for meeting such objectives. This balance requires not only finding out how to achieve desired ends but also adjusting ends so that realistic ways can be found to meet them by available means." Also other scholars reached the same conclusions. For similar definitions of strategy, see: David G. Haglund, "What Good Is Strategic Culture? A Modest Defence Of An Immodest Concept", pp. 482-483.

[185] Christopher P. Twomey, "Lacunae In The Study Of Culture In International Security", *Contemporary Security Policy* 29, no. 2 (2008): 341, while criticizing strategic culture as a methodological tool, recognizes that "this style of argument – connecting culture to specific, broad military strategies or practices – has many adherents among contemporary Sinologists; for instance, Newmeyer explains the Chinese backwardness in airpower to Taoist and imperial era cultural norms. Pillsbury links Sun Tsu's [sic] writings to contemporary Chinese strategic practices. Whiting stresses the emphasis in China on preemption and seizing the initiative."

US hegemony developed culturally) "the starting point [of investigation] is to treat military strategy as a cultural practice." Therefore, since culture and strategy seem to be inevitably interconnected, we can think of strategic culture as a concept that "embodies the state's war-making style, understood in terms of its military institutions and its accumulated strategic traditions of air, land and naval power. But strategic culture is more than mere military style, for it emerges from an infrastructure of technology and an armaments sector."[187] Another important definition of strategic culture states that:

> "Strategic culture is that set of shared beliefs, assumptions, and modes of behavior, derived from common experiences and accepted narratives (both oral and written), that shape collective identity and relationships to other groups, and which determine appropriate ends and means for achieving security objectives."[188]

Based on these new but also old interpretation-definitions of strategic culture, when it comes to the Chinese case, I have identified People's War to be the military doctrine that characterizes Chinese strategic culture. Relying on the analysis of a specific military doctrine is quite important,

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[186] Ken Booth, *Strategy And Ethnocentrism*, p 20
[187] Bradley S. Klein, "Hegemony And Strategic Culture: American Power Projection And Alliance Defence Politics", pp. 135-136
[188] Jeannie Johnson, "Strategic Culture: Refining The Theoretical Construct", p. 5.

because it not only helps military leaders and organizations define a state's way of warfare, but it is also "in its own way, a theory of war." And this has to do with the idea that "war is best approached by some general observations about its conduct derived from experience, national belief systems and traditions."[189] The identification of this strategic doctrine, moreover, derived from the adoption of an inductive approach for the analysis of Chinese overall political and military history, through which I could then extrapolate the essential strategic elements of Chinese way of war. Why is People's War doctrine central to the overall analysis of Chinese strategic culture?

1.3.1 Why People's War?

By looking at Chinese history from its origins to nowadays, I have identified several historical phases in which common strategic features tended to be regularly employed. In part, as other scholars' works have already pointed out, these features were, for example, the use of deception, stratagems, and flexibility. But these are not sufficient to express the centrality of People's War, since these elements characterized warfare in other civilizations and culture as well.[190] Along with these common tactical elements, others stand out: civil-military interdependence; nationalism (with different levels of degree according to the different historical periods);

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[189] P. K. Gautam, "Ways Of Warfare And Strategic Culture", *Defense & Security Analysis* 25, no. 4 (2009): 414.

advocacy of military asymmetric strategy; centrality of the people with respect to technology; and finally the theorizing of active defense.[191]

When it comes to deception, stratagem, and flexibility, flexibility, also known under the name of *quanbian* 权变, is the fundamental element which deeply affects the other two. This is because under a coherent understanding of strategic flexibility we can comprehend China's use of deception and stratagems for its war efforts. This is because flexibility, here, is not only referred to the typical tactical flexibility in war, for example, the way troops are deployed or armed. It refers to strategic flexibility which puts a premium on the ability to quickly adapt to the changing circumstances. Therefore the idea of flexibility pervades the entire military spectrum and

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[190] Marcel Detienne and Jean-Pierre Vernant, *Cunning Intelligence In Greek Culture And Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).
[191] The centrality of people's war is attested at this level of analysis, that is, military doctrine as a reflection of strategic culture. After building this model, it would be interesting to see how Chinese foreign policy, in terms of grand strategy, would respond according to this strategic-cultural elements. This second step is beyond the scope of this paper, however, I would like to point out a few signals that are moving towards this direction: first of all, Mao, the father of what is known in history as the Doctrine of People's War, adopted this strategic framework also "when surveying world scene." That is, the idea that at the world level there was a third form of encirclement between the Chinese and the enemy, "namely the interrelation between the front of aggression and the front of peace. The enemy encircles China, the Soviet Union, France and Czechoslovakia with his front of aggression, while we *countercircle* Germany, Japan and Italy with our front of peace." Edward S. Boylan, "The Chinese Cultural Style Of Warfare", p. 357. The second example, instead, refers to contemporary issues and explains how China is trying to adopt a People's War at the international level as an expression of its rebellion against the Western world order. See: Randall L. Schweller, "Bandwagoning For Profit: Bringing The Revisionist State Back In", *International Security* 19, no. 1 (1994): 72; Rosita Dellios, "Chinese Strategic Culture: Part 2 - Virtue And Power", p. 7.

really contributes to our understanding of the Chinese way of warfare within which flexibility represents an important operative principle.

For what concerns the other elements, they deserve some explanations. Civil-military relationship represents one of the central features of Chinese military history. Better known as the *wen-wu* dichotomy, this relationship characterized almost all the delicate phases of Chinese domestic politics, especially at the strategic level. The objective, in Chinese history, has been to articulate ways to combine them in a dialectical form in order to make one the mirror image of the other. In ancient Chinese history, for example, this was commonly exemplified by the peasants who were also recruited as soldiers. This type of system found a progressive institutionalization into the form of the famous *fubingzhi* 府兵制, that is, "the system of government soldiers," representing a specific civil-military establishment which combined the military as well as the civil duties for the empire; a crucial aspect of Chinese way of waging war that characterized Tang's dynasty, which will be explored in the third chapter.[192]

This civil-military relationship, at the strategic level, was never kept the same, since there were important periods in which, for example, the civilian managed to exert the full control of the military. Notwithstanding this institutional fluctuation, the civil-military interpenetration persisted across centuries, to the extent that Chinese troops, after the end of major hostilities,

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[192] Jiguang [霁光] Gu [谷], *The Analysis Of The Fubing System* [*Fubing Zhi Du Kaoshi - 府兵制度考释*], 1st ed. (Shanghai [上海]: Shanghai People's Press [Shanghai renmin chubanshe - 上海人民出版社], 1962).

"were dismissed or sent to do civilian tasks. In some cases agricultural-military communities were established near border areas, capable (it was hoped) of repelling invaders during times of war, and surviving economically during peacetime."[193]

This system, besides the historical legacies, found another relevant theorization during the political transformation under Deng Xiaoping. He tried to develop a comprehensive national economy in order to avoid that it could function only as a defense industrial complex. "The aim was to diversify so that China's industrial and technological base was more balanced and could contribute not just to national defense but also to economic growth and civilian prosperitiy." Deng's famous 16 characters were recognized as the guidance for this transformation: "integrating military and civilian production; but making sure to balance the military requirements; maintaining military capability; and using the civilian economy to serve military modernization (*junmin jiehe; pingzhan jiehe; junpin youxian; yimin yangjun* [军民结合; 平战结合; 军品优先; 以民养军]."[194]

According to this background, the civil-military relationship is still critically implemented nowadays in the form of the so-called *junmin ronghe* 军民融合, that is, civil-military fusion. Through this system, the Chinese government is trying to create a flexible mechanism that could easily mobilize the entire population, therefore increasing the military potential,

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[193] Edward S. Boylan, "The Chinese Cultural Style Of Warfare", p. 351.
[194] Andrew Scobell, "Is There A Chinese Way Of War?", p. 121.

while also strengthening the military spirit among the civilians who could also be employed for low-intensity military operations, such as cyber attacks.

The following element, nationalism, is directly related to the civil-military relationship. In different historical periods, nationalism, of course, was not identified in the way we think of it today. However, one common element survived through the centuries: loyalty to a specific moral and cultural system. In this case, Confucianism played a relevant role in shaping the Chinese mentality towards the social hierarchies as well as the principles of loyalties to the emperor and the preservation of the Chineseness.

Another element that represented the Chinese way of warfare has been the advocacy of asymmetric strategy in war. This elements is interconnected with the overall mentality that promotes the use of deception and stratagems. In other words, while engaging war, asymmetry has represented one important element, which consisted in the ability to flexibly move the army in different directions with the final objective to attack the enemy by surprise.

Surprise is not only an operational or technological objective. In order to be achieved, one important element is represented by the belief in the centrality of the people in war. This element has already been mentioned above, however, what concerns us here is to discuss its fundamental aspect. That is, that the centrality of the people has exerted in Chinese history such a profound influence not simply for moral or philosophical reasons, but also for material reasons. Since China has represented, historically, a civilization, the huge amounts of people that it could employ in

war has represented a valuable military means. Another important reason, often overlooked, is the power itself coming out of the people. Their huge numbers have often overthrown emperors and, in other instances, it has even established others. Therefore, emperors and the generals under their command had to conceive ways to mobilize but also to control people at the same time in order to keep alive the famous philosophical principle of the *tianxia* 天下(all under heaven). In Chinese language the word revolution *geming* 革命 literarily means "lifting the mandate of heaven," meaning that people felt compelled to radically alter the established political order, in order to change the representative of the mandate of heaven, that is, the emperor. In so doing, therefore, Chinese people created chaos through insurrections with the objective to challenge the existing political harmony in order to recreate a new one.

But the centrality of people is also attested by the Chinese theories of war which advocated the establishment of the so-called *jingbing* 精兵, that is, special troops which were not only well trained but had to perform asymmetric and special operations, ranging from sabotage to secret assassinations. In Chinese history as well as military tradition, therefore, "the concept of *jingbing* has occupied a very special place … ever since the Warring States Period and remains one of the basic tenets in today's PLA army building." Another important element governing the Chinese organization of the military as well as the population has been the establishment of *yixin* 一心, that is, the principle of unity. Along these two principles, moreover, since ancient times, Chinese people "used to take

philosophy, politics and ethics as a closely interwoven system." This condition expressed the centrality of people as attested by the philosophical assumption of *yimin weiben* 以民为本, that is, the idea that "people are the foundations of society." It is not a coincidence that "in Xun Zi's well known metaphor, kings were likened to a ship and people to the water. It was the water that had the power to either support or sink the ship. The same concepts were expressed in military literature as well" as attested by Mao's famous dictum that people represented the sea into which soldiers should be able to swim. "Driven by these notions, the military thinkers take human beings as the key factor in war. they place a much higher priority on how to utilize human potential in fighting a war than upon how to invent new weapons to arm the people."[195]

This cultural element that has emphasized the centrality of the people, therefore, also influenced directly the relationship with technology. This does not mean that technology did not play a relevant role in Chinese strategic thinking, actually the opposite. But the fundamental idea that characterized the Chinese way of war has been to give technology only a limited, tactical profile, rather than being conceptualized as a strategic tool, as we used to do in the West. The excessive focus on technology derives from the "temptation, in a period of heady change, to overemphasize what is

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[195] Junbo Zhang and Yunzhu Yao, "Differences Between Traditional Chinese And Western Military Thinking And Their Philosophical Roots", pp. 213-217. For a counterargument see: Evan A Feigenbaum, *China's Techno-Warriors*, 1st ed. (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2003). In this work, the author illustrates

apparently new and to overlook the continuities, and the roots in the past. Furthermore, even 'new thinking' is done in a culturally distinctive fashion."[196]

In the Chinese case this is more evident, paradoxically, with the advent of nuclear weapons. In fact, China's acquisition of the atomic arsenal did not undermine the overall Chinese logic of deterrence. Actually, it "enhanced the people's war deterrent." In fact, as it has been explained above, in China we can witness the possibility of the GNW, that is, Guerrilla Nuclear War. Since this research deals with the centrality of People's War, it is important to highlight how it survives and how it adapts to the nuclear technological development:

> Even if guerrilla nuclear war is a deterrent strategy which presupposed the failure of the overall Chinese deterrent, in that I cannot operate before China's territorial integrity is violated, yet what is created by the addition of GNW is a multi-layered deterrent, in which the failure of the first element is not … a terminal issue. If the Chinese can accept the costs of GNW to themselves then it seems certain that they can render the costs of GNW unacceptable to the enemy hence succeed in their objective.

how China, in reality, pursued an extensive program of technological development that did not take into consideration the centrality of the people.

[196] Ken Booth, "The Concept Of Strategic Culture Affirmed", in *Strategic Power: USA/USSR*, p. 128

Guerrilla nuclear warfare as the culmination of people's war under modern conditions, represents China's mastery of strategic-military survival in the twenty-first century. When a potential aggressor is deterred from provoking GNW it can be truly said that 'a victorious army wins its victories before seeking battle' [Sun Zi]; but should GNW as a deterrent strategy fail, then it will prevail as an effective defence. An invader that 'fights in the hope of winning', under these terms of protracted warfare, is 'an army destined to defeat' [Sun Zi]."[197]

In Chinese history, the essence of the character of war has never radically changed, with the human factor always at the center. Paradoxically, even in the West, through Clausewitz, we reached the same theoretical assumptions, however, for other historical and cultural reasons we tended to neglect this important evaluation. Even in the twenty-first century the Clausewitzian trinity seems to represent an important framework for the understanding of the role of technology, since the role of reason, passion, and chance – in order to reaffirm the logic of war as the continuation of

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[197] Rosita Dellios, *Modern Chinese Defence Strategy: Present Development, Future Directions*, (London: Macmillan, 1989), p. 99 in Dellios, Rosita. "Chinese Strategic Culture: Part 1 - The Heritage From The Past", p. 9

politics by other means – should "reflect why (rather than simply with what) we fight."[198]

Therefore "technological superiority … mean[s] little without organizational superiority. And organizational superiority alone probably is worth more than superior platforms and weapons. It, not weapon's superiority, is the contemporary equivalent, at least to some degree, of the commander's operational art. Without this, superior weapons have only a tactical significance."[199]

However, when we deal with the Chinese case, we can see a stark contrast between the Clausewitzian thought, which is more in line with the Western strategic thinking, and the Suntzunian approach to war, especially when referred to the use of force for achieving political objectives. The Suntzunian approach to war stated the famous expression: 是故百战百胜，非善之善者也；不战而屈人之兵，善之善者也.[200] "For to win one hundred victories in one hundred battles is not the acme of skill. To subdue the enemy without fighting is the acme of skill."[201] This contrasts with Clausewitz's thought which "ridiculed the idea of winning without fighting":[202] "Kind-hearted people might of course think there was some ingenious way to

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[198] J. Stone, "Technology And War: A Trinitarian Analysis", *Defense & Security Analysis* 23, no. 1 (2007): 36

[199] Stephen Blank, "Preparing For The Next War: Reflections On The Revolution In Military Affairs", in *In Athena's Camp*, John Arquilla and David Ronfeldted. , 1st ed. (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 1997), p. 70.

[200] Sunzi et al., *Sun Zi*, p. 13

[201] Sunzi and Samuel B Griffith, *The Art Of War*, p. 77

[202] Michael Handel, "Clausewitz In The Age Of Technology", in *Clausewitz And Modern Strategy*, Michael Handel ed., (London: Frank Cass, 1986), p. 81-82

disarm or defeat an enemy without too much bloodshed, and might imagine this is the true goal of the art of war. Pleasant as it sounds, it is a fallacy …"[203]

Also other scholars pointed out the critical importance of strategy over technology, highlighting the fact that only "an enduring historical unity to strategic matters"[204] can help explain specific outcomes:

"Can modern policymakers really derive lessons from ancient warfare? … [T]he advent of modern technology has in no way lessened the strategist's need to adapt his military plan to social and political realities. The second half of the twentieth century has seen a series of starling defeats handed to great power by warriors whose strategic insight made up for their inferior weapons. Algeria, Vietnam, and Afghanistan are cases in point. Evidently technology has not preplaced strategy as the determining factor in military strategy. *We believe it is precisely the technologically low level of ancient warfare that makes it so valuable an object of modern study.*"[205]

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[203] Clausewitz in Michael Handel, "Clausewitz In The Age Of Technology", p. 82

[204] Colin Gray, "Strategic Culture As Context: The First Generation Of Theory Strikes Back", p. 61

[205] Barry S Strauss and Josiah Ober, *The Anatomy Of Error*, 1st ed. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990), pp. 9-10 in Colin Gray, "Strategic Culture As Context: The First Generation Of Theory Strikes Back", p. 61 (original emphasis). For a comprehensive analysis of technological influence and innovation that takes into account culture and domestic politics as important variables, see: Theo Farrell and

Finally, the last relevant element characterizing people's war is represented by the principle of active defense (*jijifangyu* 积极防御).[206] This element is best remembered for its first complete theorization by Mao Zedong. However, as a principle of war, it has always existed. As the term itself describes, military actions, to be successful, have to have the yin and yang, which dialectically interact in order to produce a specific strategic outcome. And this is related to active (the yang) and the defense (the yin). In other words, the idea is to create a system which is defensive but that also applies active measures, meaning offensive ones. To use a rugby parallelism, the team to win has to advance forward, but the ball has to move backwards. This is what is happening in the Chinese strategic thinking. The idea is not that China really represents a peace-loving country (it does not even represent a war-loving one), or that it acts only defensively, but that it implements a combination of different operational elements in order to achieve its political aims. Therefore, in this specific case, active defense, I would argue, is the advocacy of a prudent offensive war.

1.3.2 How to Measure Strategic Culture

Terry Terriff, *The Sources Of Military Change*, 1st ed. (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002).

[206] Jing [晶] Zhang [张] and Yanjin [延进] Yao [姚], *Introduction To The Strategy Of Active Defense* [*Jiji Fangyu Zhanlue Qianshuo* - 积极防御战略浅说], 1st ed. ([Beijing]: Liberation Army's Press [Jie fang jun chu ban she - 解放军出版社], 1985).

One of the central criticisms addressed to the notion of strategic culture is its presumed superficiality in explaining social phenomena which require a more rigorous normative approach. This has been often encapsulated into methodologies, such as organizational culture theory, bureaucratic systems theory, etc. They have reached significant results, however, too much rigor – that is, the lack of a more elastic approach to the analysis of specific military organizations which could take into consideration additional variables – did not help explain the fundamental research question that had initially encouraged them to go down that path: the study of a state's specific political/strategic behavior.

Therefore, in order to explain what strategic culture really is, instead of discarding it altogether, as some have suggested, it is important to find a way that could balance generality and specificity.[207] In my model, strategic

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[207] Ken Booth, "The Concept Of Strategic Culture Affirmed", in *Strategic Power: USA/USSR*, pp. 125-126. "There are several reason for thinking of strategic culture as a key concept … It is one thing to discuss the problems that might be caused by the misuse of the concept of strategic culture, but what about the problems that might be caused by ignoring its possible significance?
There are six main (overlapping reasons) why the concept of strategic culture should be regarded as a key concept. First it erodes the impact of ethnocentrism with all that implies for the theory and practice of strategy. Second, understanding a nation's strategic culture is a fundamental part of 'knowing the enemy', one of the most basic principles of war. Third, and related, is the way strategic culture sensitizes us to the importance of history if we want to ask the right questions about the motivations, self-image, and behavioral patterns of others. Fourth, it helps break down the artificial boundary between the domestic environment within which policies are made and the external security environment. Fifth, it helps to explain apparent 'irrationalities' in the thinking and behavior of those not socialized in the cultural traditions of the observer. Finally, an understanding of cultural variables can be crucial in threat perception and

culture is defined by the simple presence of the People's War doctrine which, in turn, reflects Chinese strategic culture. Since People's War doctrine is a reflection of Chinese strategic culture, it is inevitable that culture and military doctrine are intertwined.

Therefore, in order to analyze the existence of a specific Chinese way of war – as reflected in the application of the People's War Doctrine – I rely on a three-level analysis: civil-military relationship; strategic design; and tactical design.[208]

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threat assessment, since it can give nuance and insight into the way adversaries think and behave in both great and small issues."

[208] Yitzhak Klein, "A Theory Of Strategic Culture", *Comparative Strategy*, pp. 10-12, reached a similar conclusion. By arguing about the importance of strategy in setting the stage for a military doctrine that could integrate ends with means, he advocated the possibility to develop a paradigm of strategic culture mainly based on three levels of analysis, such as: military-political doctrine; the level of strategy; and finally the operational level; another scholar that reached almost the same conclusions is Colin Gray, "Strategic Culture As Context: The First Generation Of Theory Strikes Back", p. 53, who, in his reply to Ian Johnston, advanced the idea that the dimensions of strategy should be evaluated by looking at three clusters: "the first category, 'People and Politics,' comprises: people; society; culture; politics; and ethics. The second category, 'Preparation for War,' accommodates: economics and logistics; organization (including defence, force, and more directly, war, planning); military preparation and administration (including recruitment, training, and many aspects of armament); information and intelligence; strategic theory and doctrine; and technology. The final category, 'War Proper,' groups: military operations; command (political and military); geography; friction (including chance and uncertainty); the adversary; and time." Colin Gray, "Strategic Culture As Context: The First Generation Of Theory Strikes Back", p. 53. Gray's analysis of strategy by looking at three clusters is a good starting point, however, his classification is too big to actually guarantee any coherent way of extrapolating the functioning of strategic culture. Moreover, his three clusters sometimes are not very clear since they deeply overlap to the extent that it would not be possible to distinguish the strategic culture building

The first one concerns the fundamental aspect of People's War doctrine, that is, the fusion of the civil and military domains. However, I decided to include this aspect as a level on its own, because the civil-military relationship has often characterized states' strategic culture. Many works on this topic have been published, because of its relevance into the overall understanding of a state's way to strategy and military planning.[209]

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process. Finally, the starting point for a good definition of strategic culture is the identification of a specific strategic doctrine that in this case is lacking.

In my case, I decided to rely on the Chinese philosophical structure, as illustrated by Yuen Derek M. C. Yuen, "The System Of Chinese Strategic Thought", *Comparative Strategy* 29, no. 3 (2010): 245-259. According to the Chinese strategic thought, there is a horizontal and a vertical dimension. The horizontal one still exerts a deep influence on today's Chinese strategic thinking and it comprises the four schools of Chinese strategic thought, such as: the School of Strategy *quanmou* 权谋 the School of Operations and Tactics xingshi 形实 The School of Yin and Yang 阴阳 and finally the School of Technology shu 术 These four schools of the horizontal dimension that create the foundation for the evolution of the Chinese strategic thought which goes through a vertical dimension composed of three levels: the first one is the *Tao*, the second is the *Heaven and Earth*, while the third is the *Methods of Generalship*. The level of the Tao, which started to be fully conceptualized during the Warring States Period represents the fundamental strategic vision of the political dimension. Then the Heaven and Earth level represents the combination and fusion of two antithetical concepts, like yin and yang, necessary for any military struggle. Finally the third level Methods of Generalship, refers to the actual tactical implementation of military dispositions. If we translate these three levels into contemporary concepts we can have: the level of strategy, the level of civil-military relationship, and finally the level of tactics. For a detailed philosophical analysis of Chinese philosophy at war, see: William H Mott and Jae Chang Kim, *The Philosophy Of Chinese Military Culture*, 1st ed. (New York, N.Y.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

[209] See Samuel P Huntington, *The Soldier And The State*, 1st ed. (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1957). For a comprehensive overview see: Amos Perlmutter, *The Military And Politics In Modern Times*, 1st ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977). The importance of the civil-military relationship for the analysis of strategic culture has been also attested in the numerous researches on USSR military behavior, the underestimation of which could prove to

The second level refers to the necessary strategic design that a state decides to pursue in order to achieve specific political objectives. This level is also particularly important because it highlights those cultural elements that are taken into account for the final strategic design. Since the strategy I am arguing that China has been mostly adopting in its history is People's War, then all its previous elements that I have listed and commented come back again in defining and strengthening the meaning of People's War and its overall significance for the Chinese strategic culture.

Finally the third and final level of analysis, the tactical one, refers to the operational elements that characterize the implementation and execution of People's War. Every strategic culture, to be intelligently comprehended, must illustrate the tactical elements of the overarching strategy reflecting a state's strategic culture. Moreover, its importance is reflected not only on the basic fact that in so doing we understand how a specific strategy is implemented at the purely military level, but also on the assumption that this level clearly interconnects with the first one, creating a circle in which every level becomes inevitably interconnected to the other, since strategic culture, to be so, represents necessarily the mixture and interconnection of different elements that tend to influence one another without having, necessarily, a hierarchical order of importance.

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be detrimental for the strategic culture analysis. David R. Jones, "Soviet Strategic Culture", in *Strategic Power: USA/USSR*, p. 42, highlighted how "Russia has always had a degree of civil-military integration unknown in the Western democracies, a fact sometimes ignored by students of the relations existing between the Soviet leadership and its military."

In order to give substance to the three levels of analysis, I use both primary and secondary sources. The primary ones would be based on military texts, which "are essential sources of information on the values, identity, and acceptable methods of achieving security within a regime,"[210] imperial decrees, and philosophical analyses. While the latter would be based on history textbooks, especially the military history ones, which have already analyzed Chinese military history at length.

1.3.3 People's War in Chinese History

Strategic culture "and national style have very deep roots with a particular stream of historical experience, as locally interpreted."[211] This

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[210] Jeannie Johnson, "Strategic Culture: Refining The Theoretical Construct", p. 21

[211] Colin S Gray, *Nuclear Strategy And National Style*, p. 37. Other authors tried to investigate a state's strategic culture by looking at the depth of history, like the case of Iran for which Gregory Giles advocated the presence of strategic culture rooted in a 3000-year history. Gregory Giles, "The Crucible Of Radical Islam: Iran's Leaders And Strategic Culture", in *Know Thy Enemy: Profiles Of Adversary Leaders And Their Strategic Cultures*, Barry R. Schneider and Jerrold M. Posted. , 1st ed. (Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala.: USAF Counterproliferation Center, 2003). Another scholar also pointed out how the overall Iranian history should be used for strategic culture analysis: "Iranian history is, at first glance, fertile ground for a discussion of strategic culture … there is a continuity of human history in and around the Iranian plateau that extends from the emergence of Neolithic society and agriculture around 8000BCE through to the present day. In order to capture such a broad sweep of history within the confines of 'strategic culture,' it is important to begin with the question: to what end do we hope to apply our findings?" Willis Stanley, "The Strategic Culture Of The Islamic Republic Of Iran", *Defence Threat Reduction Agency* (2006), p. 3. This type of approach has also been attempted when dealing with the Indian way of war, specifically how the *Chanakya*, an ancient Indian military

therefore requires a deep historical investigation, even if its roots in Chinese history might be difficult to measure properly. That is, there might be too many variables to look at that could create a too general evaluation of the Chinese strategic culture. In order to contain such a problem, the three-level analysis explained above could provide some guidelines.

Moreover, another element that could decrease the high volatility in the explanation of the Chinese strategic culture is the emphasis on the existence and permanence of People's War.[212] This assumes that "national patterns of thought and action … are likely to alter only very gradually, short of a new historical experience that undeniable warrants a historically discontinuous response."[213] This can be understood by looking at the inner

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text, still affected Indian modern war. P. K. Gautam, "Ways Of Warfare And Strategic Culture", p. 417. Another scholars tried to achieve the same results by investigating the importance of Kautilya in today's Indian strategic culture, Rashed Uz Zaman, "Kautilya: The Indian Strategic Thinker And Indian Strategic Culture", *Comparative Strategy* 25, no. 3 (2006): 231-247.

[212] The emphasis that I put on the role played by People's War doctrine in Chinese history is referred to its overall ability to influence Chinese strategic thinking. I am aware of the fact that in Chinese history, in several occasions, the strategic thinking was not particularly congruent with the theoretical assumptions of People's War, however, it is important to highlight that even when states diverge from their primary strategic culture the secondary effect does not necessarily invalidate the primary structure of strategic culture, simply because the divergent behavior could occur under exceptional and indeed unique circumstances. For example, the case of Great Britain is quite relevant. The United Kingdom, in fact, "an overwhelmingly maritime strategic culture, [was] obliged [during World War I], to play an uncharacteristically major continual military role. However, the fact of the huge British continental commitment of 1914-18 did not alter the dominant British strategic culture, notwithstanding the infantry experience of whole generation of Britons. Colin Gray, "Strategic Culture As Context: The First Generation Of Theory Strikes Back", p. 59.
[213] Colin S Gray, *Nuclear Strategy And National Style*, p. 37

meaning of culture which has been used so far "to suggest that, once a distinctive approach to strategy takes hold, it tends to persist despite changes in the circumstances that gave rise to it, through processes of socialization and institutionalization and through the role of strategic concepts in legitimating these social arrangements."[214]

Therefore, strategic culture as such needs to be analyzed through a coherent historical perspective, since China is one of the few civilizations that could claim to have had a continuous, or as close as such, historical tradition. And "even when its door was forced open, China's civilisational continuity was not broken."[215]

Other works have tried to investigate strategic culture by looking at some specific historical periods. This type of mechanism is absolutely understandable, because it shrinks the amount of historical data to be analyzed and reduces the number of variables to be investigated. However, in so doing, it becomes difficult to actually claim to have found what really characterizes a state's strategic culture, since it inevitably represents a longer historical period, because of the presence of the "culture" variable.

One of the most comprehensive attempts to classify a specific way of war by looking at the most important turning points in history without losing sight of the total complexity of the civilizational history has been Victor David Hanson, from whose work I took inspiration. In his *Carnage and Culture* he highlighted the fundamental aspects that shape the Western way

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[214] Jack Snyder, "The Concept Of Strategic Culture: Caveat Emptor", p. 4
[215] Rosita Dellios, "Chinese Strategic Culture: Part 2 - Virtue And Power", p. 8

of war, which he identified in the peculiar nature of the civic militarism. For what concerns us here, it suffices to say that he embraced into his historical analysis the most important turning points of the Western civilization starting from Ancient Greek history until the 9/11 terrorist attacks of New York.[216] This example clearly shows how important it is to investigate a specific way of war by looking for trends throughout the entire history of the object under investigation.

This historical approach, when applied to the Chinese case inevitably highlights the idea of Chineseness. This is well represented by the historical trajectory of Chinese culture and its relationship with whatever belongs to the external world, ranging from material elements to ideational systems. Since China developed this tendency which encourages to rely on domestic variables in order to respond to external conditions, "the aim is not to imitate that which is new or foreign, and thereby attempt to become it, but to incorporate or 'civilize' it into an existing system. This is what happened to the Mongol and Manchu conquerors of China, and to concepts of Communism and Capitalism. The addition of the term 'Chinese characteristics' signifies the age-old practice of sinicising that which is new and foreign. So too with matters pertaining to defence."[217]

However, strategic culture can change, even if slowly. The change that can be registered historically usually occurs through the presence of external shocks, which can "challenge existing beliefs and undermine past

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[216] Victor Davis Hanson, *Carnage And Culture*, 1st ed. (New York: Doubleday, 2001).

historical narratives."[218] Therefore an external shock will represent "– in the form of wars, depression and revolutions – a necessary condition for radical change. Shocks of such a profound nature are widely seen as necessary to undermine the legitimacy of existing norms, shift power within communities, and enable cultural entrepreneurs to construct a new consensus around alternative norms"[219]

According to this theoretical perspective, my attempt is to build a model that looks back at the fundamental historical passages that characterized Chinese history, in order to illustrate the four major steps of People's War doctrine, that is, its origin, organization, implementation, and evolution. These four stages correspond to four historical periods, which are: the Warring States period; the Tang Dynasty; the Maoist period (with a specific focus on the Chinese Civil War); and finally the last twenty years of Chinese military strategy, specifically starting from the effects of the First Gulf War on Chinese military thinking to the Xi Jinping's presidency.[220]

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[217] Rosita Dellios, "Chinese Strategic Culture: Part 1 - The Heritage From The Past", p. 8

[218] Jeffrey Lantis, "Strategic Culture: From Clausewitz To Constructivism", *Defense Threat Reduction Agency* (2006), p. 26

[219] Theo Farrell, "Transnational Norms And Military Development:: Constructing Ireland's Professional Army", *European Journal of International Relations* 7, no. 1 (2001): 82

[220] This theoretical design, that is, analyzing a specific way of war by looking at specific historical periods in history that might be interconnected, has been already attempted by other scholars, though with different objectives and results. See, for example: James G Pangelinan, *From Red Cliffs To Chosin*, 1st ed. (Fort Leavenworth, KA: School of Advanced Military Studies, United States Army Command and General Staff College, 2010). In this work the author tries to investigate the evolution of Chinese way of war by collecting specific military

All these historical periods have been selected inductively, by looking at specific historical characteristics which were then pit against the basic assumptions of People's War. The first historical period is particularly relevant in itself because it represents one of the most important founding periods in Chinese history. Specifically, its political fragmentation, the warlike environment with the subsequent political chaos contributed to the creation of the most relevant strategic treatises, such as the famous Sun Tzu's *The Art of War*.[221] Also at the political as well as at the philosophical level the Warring States era represented a turning point in China's history. Johnston, in his formulation of the historical origins of realpolitik, observed how the Spring and Autumn and the Warring States periods (770-221 B.C.) represented a formative period[222] and "how the strategic wisdoms of the anarchical ancient Chinese Warring states system were passed down to future generations to constitute a warlike strategic 'culture.'"[223] This explains

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engagements that occurred in Chinese history, specifically the Red Cliffs Campaign (208-209 CE), the Talas Battle (747-751 CE), and the Chosin Offensive in 1950. It seems to be a well structured book, however, in my opinion two relevant elements are missing: one is the strategic dimension while the other is the short number of cases under examination, especially when the objective is to inductively find the Chinese way of warfare in history.

[221] Wei Tao [伟涛] Guo [郭], *On People's War* [*Renmin Zhanzheng Lun - 人民战争论*], p. 11

[222] Alastair Ian Johnston, "Cultural Realism And Strategy In Maoist China", in *The Culture Of National Security*, Peter Katzenstein ed. , 1st ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 260

[223] Jack Snyder, "Anarchy And Culture: Insights From The Anthropology Of War", p. 10.

why I decided to investigate the origin of People's War in this specific historical moment.

I then decided to select the Tang Dynasty era as the second historical period to be investigated. Before the Tang there are for sure other dynasties which fit into the historical trajectory of People's War. However, the objective of the second period is to demonstrate one of its first applicability in terms of strategy and organization. That's why this second stage could be called the organization of People's War. The other relevant reasons that encouraged me to select this period instead of the others is because the Tang dynasty represents a turning point in Chinese history. In fact, China was at its highest splendor thanks to the territorial conquests in Central Asia, in the East and in the South. Moreover, its conquests shaped Chinese medieval history and most of the subsequent dynastic strategic policies. In addition to that, it should be pointed out that, since usually scholars and strategists advocate that people's war is a type of warfare employed by the weak, by illustrating Tang strategies I would like to highlight how People's War could be applied also in those cases in which the state is particularly powerful geopolitically and militarily.

Besides its historical significance, I decided to select this period for two additional reasons: one has to do with the transmission process of strategic culture. It is already widely accepted that Mao, among all the different stimuli collected in his life, was also influenced by the famous *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*. This was a famous novel describing those years of the collapse of the Han Dynasty and the establishment of the Three Kingdoms,

which ruled the country. So I felt compelled to find new evidence that could link ancient Chinese history with the twentieth century military thought, especially when the topic under consideration is the analysis of People's War. The second reason has to do with the history of the establishment and decline of the Tang Dynasty. It represented, historically, a very unique case, since it was established by a form of people's war and was also brought down by the same strategic technique, making therefore people's war, again, particularly relevant.

The third historical period under investigation is the Maoist period, the most symbolic period for the application of People's War. A lot has been already written on Mao, so the objective would be to present a new and fresh light on his thinking, this time structured along those three levels of analysis, something that has not been attempted before, and also on the specific Civil War period which is still quite important to analyze.

Finally the fourth period is related to the last twenty years of Chinese politics. It starts with the shocking influence that the First Gulf War had on Chinese military thinking, especially for the technological variable, and culminates with the advent of the Xi Jinping presidency and the implementation of his strategic thinking which clearly resembles the reapplication of a new form of People's War. This historical period is very important for three major elements: the first one has to do with China itself. The country has been growing very fast in the last twenty years or so, becoming of the strongest states in the world. Therefore trying to understand how People's War might be applied is quite relevant. Secondly, in this

period, mainly characterized by the so-called RMA (Revolution in Military Affairs), it is crucial to test the applicability of People's War and how actually it has been extended to other branches of the military, such as the Navy and the Cyber domain. Thirdly, connected with the previous element, this period is also very important because allows us to test one of the central elements of People's War: the human value over the technological one. And, according to the evidence that I will provide, I will demonstrate that notwithstanding the role played by technology and external shocks (the First Gulf War), China still found a way to adapt the external variables to its own theoretical framework.

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Chapter 2

People's War at the time of the Warring States Period

"the means by which a ruler encourages
his people are offices and rank;
the means by which a state arises
are agriculture and war."

Shang Jun shu 商君书[224]

      The Warring States Period represents one of the most important eras in Chinese history, mainly for two reasons: the first one is related to the enormous literary stimuli that that turbulent period had created.[225] In fact, during the Warring States period, "the Zhou presided over an explosion in

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[224] Yang [鞅] Shang [商] *The Book Of Lord Shang [Shang Jun Shu - 商君书] With The Commentaries By Shi Lei* 石磊 1st ed. (Beijing [北京]: Chinese Bookstore [zhonghua shuju - 中华书局], 2012), chap. 3 Agriculture and Warfare (*nong zhan* 农战), p. 27

intellectual and artistic creativity that saw the composition of China's first classic texts and a transformation in society, government, statecraft and warfare."[226] Concerning the latter, many of the military treatises that are widely known today have been produced, in fact, in that historical context. The military confrontations that characterized this time in history made it one of the most bellicose in human history; "whereas the study accepted a list of eighty-nine wars involving the European 'Great Powers' during the roughly four centuries prior to AD 1815, no less than 256 wars were individually identified for northern China's 'Great Powers' during the roughly four centuries prior to 221 BC – and this after the exclusion of all purely civil conflicts and any of an external nature or involving nomadic peoples."[227]

The second reason is related to the political as well as philosophical dynamics that critically characterized that historical period, paving the way for the so-called Chinese way of warfare as well as politics. In fact, just during the Warring States period, some of the most important works on philosophy had been created or at least widely circulated: on one hand, we remember Confucius's works – such as the Analects (*Lunyu*) and the Annals of the state of Lu (*Chunqiu*) which were written during the Spring and Autumn but that received wide popularity immediately afterwards – while on the other, it is important to remind the famous *Yi Jing*, or better known as the

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[225] Witold Rodzinski, *The Walled Kingdom*, 1st ed. (London: Fontana, 1984), p. 32
[226] John Keay, *China*, 1st ed. (London: Harper, 2009), p. 50
[227] *Ibid.*, 63; for a clear summary of the important innovations the Warring States Period ushered in Chinese history see: Mark Edward Lewis, *Sanctioned Violence In Early China*, 1st ed. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), pp. 5-13.

Book of Changes for which, it is believed that also Confucius contributed to its creation.[228]

Along with this book, which represented one of the fundamental sources for the philosophical study of the inner forces of nature, during the Warring States period another important school, among the Hundred schools, established its role within the overall philosophical spectrum: the so-called Naturalists. "This name refers to two early materialist concepts, the dualist theory of negative and positive principles – 'yin' and 'yang' – considered to be the fundamental source of all natural phenomena, and the theory of the Five Elements (wood, metal, fire, water and earth), seen as the essential mechanism of permutations in the world of nature and man."[229] For what concerns the first theory (the combination of two opposite forces), the Chinese philosophy put a lot of emphasis on this dialectical relationship, especially in warfare, as the following pages will try to demonstrate.

At the political level, the idea as well as the process of state formation reached a successful stage; "the long Zhou centuries, paralleling those of ancient Greece, combine both a heroic age and classical age. In terms of China's civilization, they are seminal times." As a further explanation of this peculiar historical period, during the Zhou dynastic control of the country, "dynasties like the seasons and the planets, conformed to a cyclical pattern, they ascended and declined at Heaven's cosmic behest." In fact, precisely during the Zhou the famous Mandate of Heaven, also defined

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[228] Mario Sabattini and Paolo Santangelo, *Storia Della Cina*, 1st ed. (Roma: Laterza, 2005), pp. 100-107.

Heaven's Command (*tian ming* – 天命) found its fullest political meaning, that is, representing the tool *par excellence* "to the legitimacy of every subsequent dynasty," to the extent that it has been defined as "the cornerstone of the Chinese Empire."[230]

Furthermore, these political aspects, which transformed the political landscape of China, set in motion an enduring legacy which had lasted for

[229] Witold Rodzinski, *The Walled Kingdom*, p. 38

[230] John Keay, *China*, pp. 51, 53; for a comprehensive analysis of the Chinese state formation, see: Herrlee Glessner Creel, *The Origins Of Statecraft In China*, 1st ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), see also Victoria Tin-bor Hui, *State Formation In Ancient China And Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005). Mario Sabattini and Paolo Santangelo, *Storia Della Cina*, pp. 9-10, offer a clear explanation of the ultimate significance of the Heaven's Mandate: "the traditional interpretation of the Chinese history, in order to keep the fundamental concept of continuity, has intercepted a series of temporal scrutinies linked to the alternation of the reigning families. Through this vision, the concept of the state remained substantially static through the different historical periods. Notwithstanding the change of the dynasties, the continuity was guaranteed by the sovereigns' roles, which consisted in assuring the balance between the human society and the natural order. The execution of these roles was strictly linked to the concept of the 'heaven's mandate', *tianming*. It was the Heaven, *tian* … that conferred the mandate of governing the human society (*tianxia*) to a family, which, in turn, would transfer it to other families, when the former demonstrated to be unfit to rule … therefore in China the historical vision was often defined as cyclical-dynastic." Through this definition of the relationship between the Mandate of Heaven and the idea of concept of continuity we can understand the importance of people and its direct military manifestation: people's war. This is referred to the idea that when a dynastic family proved to be unfit to continue the Heaven's Mandate, people could also be invoked to execute heaven's will. Historically, this manifested itself through revolutions, upheavals, and all types of asymmetric warfare, such as people's war. This aspect, in turn, explains what has been discussed in chapter one on the centrality of the people and their political-military power. Because of this institutional role, Chinese dynasties as well as contemporary leaders are often struggling to find a way to balance between mobilization of the people as well as its control.

most of the later dynasties. In fact, the Jin, Wei, Tang, Song, etc., "would look back to the Zhou and to the states they had unwittingly created as a prime source of legitimization."[231]

These elements, therefore, highlight the revolutionary nature of the Zhou Dynasty which started a pattern of radical change. The Warring States period, which represents the third phase of the Zhou Dynasty (after the establishment of the subsequent Western Zhou and the Spring and Autumn Period) constitutes the historical era in which military transformation achieved its highest manifestation. For what concerns us here, therefore, the objective is to deal with the strategic and operational context that created the origin of the People's War Doctrine.

However, before proceeding into this direction, it is important to illustrate the historical context which contributed to shape what has been recognized as the Warring States period. One point should be illustrated immediately, that is, that it is very important to understand that the Spring and Autumn period (722 B.C. – 481 B.C.) – the era preceding the Warring States one – strongly affected the policies created during the latter period. Emphasizing this small but significant aspect is crucial for the methodological objectives highlighted so far, since "many of the rulers and officials who have governed the land and its people have sought cultural precedents for their policies." This is because China is one of the few civilizations that can rightly claim to have a very extended historical continuity to rely on for political analysis; an "unparalleled continuity," which

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[231] John Keay, *China*, p. 56

"may be seen to have persisted from at least Spring and Autumn times onward."[232] Therefore, a closer examination of Chinese history must look at the "features of its ancient past," since the historical continuity "constitutes one of the most outstanding characteristics of Chinese historical process, endowing it with a unique nature."[233]

The element of *continuity* should be considered by looking at two fundamental aspects: one is related to the historical process that characterized China in its objectivity; while the other refers to the "subjective consciousness of continuity," which can be found in a vast historiographical production; "the widest a civilization in premodern times could have ever

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[232] Michael Loewe and Edward L. Shaughnessy, *The Cambridge History of Ancient China* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 13. Moreover, Confucius's thought, even if developed during the Spring and Autumn, exerted a deep influence during the establishment of the Warring States' period, and mainly for two reasons: the first one is related to the creation of numerous schools that were established after his death, because his disciples felt the need to continue his ideas, especially since the Chinese world was about to be radically altered. The second reason, connected to the previous one is related to the concept of continuity and the need to emphasize it. The Spring and Autumn, while not being particularly pugnacious still set the political and military conditions for the subsequent epoch. Therefore, even during this apparently calm period, many scholars started to feel uncomfortable with the new political transformation. In this context, Confucius emphasized the need to reevaluate the ancient texts and ideas as the sources for moral stability. In fact, as he stated: "I transmit not create, I believe in the ancients and I love them." Through this expression he manifested all his will to heavily rely on the traditions as the source of stability; "for Confucius, the Ancients represented the mirror in which the present should have reflected itself in order to find the *dao*. The *dao* … represented the basic principle of the universe: conforming oneself to the *dao* meant showing respect to the fundamental rules inherent to the natural process of the existence, both of humans and things." Mario Sabattini and Paolo Santangelo, *Storia Della Cina*, p. 102; Witold Rodzinski, *The Walled Kingdom*, p. 33.
[233] Witold Rodzinski, *The Walled Kingdom*, p. 11

conceived." This continuity can be intercepted also in the ideological as well as the institutional field, in which specific elements "periodically manifests themselves, without any apparent modifications." It is undeniable, however, that certain aspects did change throughout history. However, the "consciousness of continuity," which still represents the fundamental drive of Chinese political leadership, deeply affected the historical process, encouraging the adoption of a static vision of history.[234]

In fact, "the force of such a view was of sufficient strength to color intellectual opinion, to affect the decisions of government, and to act as a

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[234] Mario Sabattini and Paolo Santangelo, *Storia Della Cina*, pp. 8-9. Moreover, another important field in which we can find a clear manifestation of continuity is the Chinese language, specifically its writing, which "represents a unique phenomenon in the history of human civilization." The Chinese writing, in, fact, has an uninterrupted history of a range between 3.500 and 7.500 years. Such a peculiarity is the result of a very unique historical development: Chinese writing is not an alphabetic language; it is based on characters each of which represents a specific meaning and a specific phonetic syllabic unit. In other words, since the writing was mainly based on graphic representation, it developed independently with respect to the associated pronunciation. In so doing, characters could be pronounced in very different ways, but their meaning remains the same. "This type of nature of the Chinese language has influenced in a very decisive way the cultural unification process of the Empire: notwithstanding the numerous and deep dialectal and linguistic differences, the written language, after the unification of the country by the Qin Emperor in 221 BC, remained overall the same." Through this process, therefore, we can understand the profound continuity of the Chinese history. The complete independence of the written language with respect to the phonetic part created the conditions for the development of a written continuity. Therefore successive generations did not need to possess a sophisticated knowledge of ancient Chinese, since the language itself allowed readers to capture its essence as well as all the meaningful implications. Moreover, this direct historical connection that readers started to develop towards the ancient texts helped create also a sort of sacred relationship, since readers understood the deep historical value as well as the characteristics of those texts. *Ibid.*, pp. 15-17

fundamental obstacle to initiative."[235] Moreover, this continuity is profoundly attested by the fact that some of the military treatises, or other manuals, for example, "were the legacy of a tradition, rather than the work of an 'author,' so it was conventional to add or modify materials in order to meet the needs of each new generation. Thus, the lack of firm dates is not a result of missing evidence but is inherent in the fluidity of the works themselves."[236]

Moreover, one additional aspect should be highlighted when dealing with such a particular historical period as the Warring States era. This has to do with the latest archeological findings. They illustrate a fundamental aspect that characterized this entire period and also the subsequent generations. That is, even if every single state cultivated its own political, military, and therefore cultural system, however, there was a proven "tendency towards a substantial cultural unity." With the advent of the Eastern Zhou dynasty localized expression of politics emerged with strength. However, this did not lead to a "dismemberment of the Chinese world, but actually to an enrichment characterized by the introduction of new and diversified cultural contributions." Therefore, even if diversity existed, it tended to recompose itself at a higher unity, since vaster and vaster population strata started to be widely affected.[237]

Furthermore, "in addition to its evidence for institutional and cultural history, the Warring States period provides for the first time broad evidence

[235] Michael Loewe and Edward L. Shaughnessy, *The Cambridge History of Ancient China* , p. 12.
[236] *Ibid.*, p. 593.
[237] Mario Sabattini and Paolo Santangelo, *Storia Della Cina*, p. 100

of the intellectual life of the time, at both the elite and popular levels …
[historical experience that] has influenced all subsequent thought in
China."[238] In fact, it is very important to emphasize that during this period we
can find the most prolific production of military treatises; one above all
stands out: Sun Tzu's *The Art of War*. This military book, among the others,
represented the central paradigm of Chinese military thought, which found
its application even during Mao's strategic planning against India during the
1962 military campaign.[239] In contradiction to what has been thought about
this book, it is quite well historically attested that the most famous military
treatise was written during the political and military turmoil of the Warring
States period, rather than, as some other scholars suggested, during the
Spring and Autumn era.

According to this premise, the present chapter goes as follows: the
first section will be dealing with a brief history of the Warring States period,
in order to illustrate the major historical evolution of this era and its
fundamental political and institutional aspects characterizing it. The second
section, then, goes into detail by investigating the nature of People's War
during this historical period. The investigation of its implementation follows
the three-level analysis described in chapter one, that is, the civil-military
relationship, the strategic dimension, and the tactical dimension. Finally, the
chapter will conclude the analysis by summing up the major findings and the
overall strategic consideration of this historical period.

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[238] Michael Loewe and Edward L. Shaughnessy, *The Cambridge History of Ancient China* , p. 16.

2.1. The Warring States Period: A History

The Warring States period belongs to the overall historical conquest of the Shang Dynasty by the Zhou, which, in fact, opened up a new historical period, symbolized by the Zhou Dynasty. During this dynastic control, the main historical phases have been the Western Zhou, followed later on by the Eastern Zhou, which, in turn, during its political representation included the Spring and Autumn period and, of course, the Warring States one.[240] Since the latter had been the last stage of the overall Zhou Dynasty it is important to briefly highlight the preceding periods which then culminated into the Warring States era.

We can start, therefore, by taking into consideration the military campaign of King Wu, conducted in 1053 BC, which was the clear manifestation of mobility and speed in military conduct. In fact, during that campaign which culminated in the famous battle of Muye, King Wu, by completing his father's (King Wen) plan to attack the Shang, managed quite easily to subdue the Shang capital's surrounding area. Then, King Wu, by employing deception in its military conduct, managed to destroy the Shang

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[239] Henry Kissinger, *On China* (New York: Penguin Press, 2011), 1-32.
[240] Witold Rodzinski, *The Walled Kingdom*, p. 26

dynasty and its capital, inaugurating a new military command in Northeast of China.[241]

This very brief example is quite important because it highlights the beginning of the military revolution in China. However, since we are talking about the establishment of a new dynasty the military apparatus and policies were still rudimentary, since they followed necessarily the only military innovations introduced by the Shang dynasty, like the use of the chariot in battlefield, even if it is quite true that King Wen first and his son King Wu after started to apply new ways of dealing with warfare, such as increasing mobility and application of stratagems, like deception.

The reign of the Zhou experienced, after the death of the King Wu, which occurred in 1043 BC, one of the most important periods in China's history, destined to last for many centuries afterwards, thanks to its highly symbolic value. King Wu's heir, the future King Cheng, "was deemed too young or inexperienced to assume the reins of power immediately. A regency council was therefore preferred, and the Duke of Zhou, a consummate leader as well as the brother of the deceased Wu, duly assumed its direction." Political control that he then handed over in 1035 BC, "after seven years as de facto regent," to the legitimate heir once the latter came of age and after having established an alternative capital near

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[241] Michael Loewe and Edward L. Shaughnessy, *The Cambridge History of Ancient China,* p. 307-313

179

Luoyang in Henan province; "this act would be seen as one of magnificent abnegation and is that for which the Duke is most revered."[242]

Things, however, did not play out very well for the successors of the dynasty. In fact, new threats arose, especially under the form of military activities, coming from the northwest. After the death of the new Zhou king Zhao, who found death on the battlefield, during the military confrontation with Chu, a "large tribute-paying but perhaps non-feudatory neighbour on Zhou's south-eastern border" in 957 BC, the King Mu had to face what would have represented, from that time onwards, the constant military and political anxiety in Chinese history: the nomadic tribes located in the north. In this specific case, King Mu had to face the invasion of the Chinese territory by the Quan Rong, a people from the northwest who did not manage to conquer China, but still managed to control most of the Zhou's vassal states located in the east.[243] The role played by the northern nomadic tribes, especially at the military level, would deeply condition the Chinese way of warfare, even if, for the time being, these groups did not possess particular military skills. "Not much is known about these 'barbarians.' However, since the Chinese would have confronted, centuries later, the warriors on horseback of the barbarous tribes of farmers and shepherds located in the steppes of the north, there was the tendency to attribute to the Rong and Di the same characteristics of the others." But, it is more plausible that these tribes' warriors fought on foot. Notwithstanding their backward political and

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[242] John Keay, *China*, pp. 54, 57
[243] *Ibid.*, 61

social conditions, their political importance, however, cannot be underestimated. In fact, it has been proved, historically, that they held complex relationships with the Zhou to the extent that "it was one of the Rong's tribes, allied with the Chinese rebels, to have occupied, in 771 BC, Hao, the capital of the Western Zhou, forcing the dynasty, therefore, to move to the east."[244]

This situation encouraged also the Chu, which suffered from the heavy-handed Chinese intervention some decades earlier, to invade China. But it was the next ruler, King Xuan, who managed to regain territorial control by reestablishing trade relations with the Chu and reinstall Chinese control over the vassal state by repulsing another nomad people of the north; the Xianyun. However, the aggressiveness in foreign policy by King Xuan proved to be counterproductive, especially after the intervention in Lu, another Shandong state, which, in turned, encouraged, from this time on, many lords to rebel against the royal commands.

King Xuan's successor, King You, who gained power in 781 BC, "was greeted by a cacophony of heavenly disgust, with a major earthquake, landslides and both a solar and lunar eclipse." These heavenly messages plus his ill conceived way of administering power cost him the Mandate of Heaven. Soon, specifically, in 771 BC, the Xianyun attacked the kingdom which, now leaderless, was destroyed. This date is very important because it brought to an end the Western Zhou (*c.* 1045-771 BC), ushering in the new

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[244] Mario Sabattini and Paolo Santangelo, *Storia Della Cina*, p. 86

dynasty: the Eastern Zhou (772-256 BC).[245] Some historians define this new epoch not as a dynasty per se, but as "a dynastic hiatus. This hiatus, a recurrent phenomenon in Chinese history … is divided in two parts: the 'Spring and Autumn' period and the 'Warring States' Period.' Both terms derive from the titles of relevant historical texts, with the 'Spring and Autumn' Annals (*Chunqiu*) covering the years 770-481 BC and the 'Warring States' Annals (*Zhanguoce*) the years 481-221 BC." These are the conventional dates, where the Warring States' period ends with the establishment of the first unified Chinese state in history.[246]

      The passage from the Spring and Autumn to the Warring States was immediate, at least historically speaking. However, the clear passage from one epoch to the other has been characterized by the partition of the state of Jin between three different states: Han, Wei, and Zhao.[247] During the former, China witnessed the formation of hundreds of "semi-sovereign entities," to the extent that the *Zuozhuan*, "a commentary on the 'Spring and Autumn Annals" lists 148 of them. A sensitive reduction in number occurred during the Warring States, in which these entities condensed to less than ten. The number of wars activated by these contenders still represent one of the highest figures in human history and of the Zhou dynasty remained only the name.

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[245] According to other historical analyses, the transfer of the Zhou capital to Luoyi, that is, today's Luoyang, was the clear act that ended the Western Zhou and established a new ruling elite, called the Easter Zhou. Mario Sabattini and Paolo Santangelo, *Storia Della Cina*, p. 85

[246] John Keay, *China*, pp. 62; Witold Rodzinski, *The Walled Kingdom*, pp. 26-39

During the Spring and Autumn period, the state of Qi, under the leadership of the Duke Huan, demonstrated to possess valuable political as well as military capabilities, thanks mainly to the minister Guan Zhong's policies. He, in fact, created important reforms both at the administrative and military level that gave Qi a powerful profile among the other contenders to the extent that the remaining political powers of the Zhou dynasty charged it with the task of setting a conference, held in 681 BC, in which the Duke Huan had to mediate between different pressures and other states' interests in order to find, on one hand, the appropriate measures of defense, while, on the other, guaranteeing the necessary political order the Zhou dynasty rulers strived for. The conference, therefore, empowered the state of Qi to intervene militarily in the Song territory in order to put down the internal conflicts. At the same time, it helped Yan, Wei, and Xing against the "barbarians," and, in 656 BC, at the head of a coalition attacked the state of Chu, forcing it to pay tribute. These military and political successes paved the way for the establishment of another conference, this time held in 651 BC at Kuiqiu, in which the Duke Huan received the title of Hegemon (*ba*). It was the first time, in Chinese history, that the institutional figure of the hegemon appeared on the stage. Its function was related to the changing perspectives on political power, which now was distributed among different actors.[248]

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[247] Mario Sabattini and Paolo Santangelo, *Storia Della Cina*, p. 85
[248] *Ibid.*, p. 88

However, the title of hegemon did not last long. In fact, soon, the state of Qi found itself overwhelmed by internal conflicts that critically weakened it. Its political power was, then, transferred by the Zhou to the state of Jin which managed to defeat, in 632 BC, another powerful state located in the south – the state of Chu – which advanced, at the time, the desire to expand north. However, the death of the Duke Wen of the state of Jin, in 628 BC, put Jin and Chu basically on the same political level, reactivating their military confrontation. In the meantime, another actor, the state of Qin, grew in power and started to get involved between the two contenders, without success, however.

In 597 BC the military balance changed again, with the state of Chu this time defeating the state of Jin. A subsequent conference, held in 546 BC, acknowledged the new balance, establishing that the states of the Central Plains (just conquered by Chu) had to pay tribute both to Chu and Jin.[249]

Along with the state of Qi, Qin, Jin, and Chu, other state-actors emerged within this political framework. In the near areas around the Yangzi the state of Wu and the state of Yue dominated the scene. The former, soon, decided to launch an offensive operation against the state of Chu in 506 BC. The state of Chu would have witnessed defeat had two concomitant events not taken place: the first one was a surprise attack that the neighbor state of Yue decided to launch against Wu, therefore undermining its military power. While the second event was the military intervention by the state of

Qin in support of Chu. This event led, in 473 BC to the annihilation of Wu and its annexation to the state of Yue. With the wars taking place during the fifth century BC, therefore in the second part of the Spring and Autumn period, the institution of the Hegemony lost its legitimacy and this was mainly related to the progressive revolution that was under way at the political as well as the military level:

> "The clashes of this period among the various principalities present a different character with respect to the previous epoch. The same intervention of the new southern powers, which were completely estranged from the political and ritual traditions of the Zhou, contributed to radicalize the contrasts between the various territories. Before, the conflicts developed by following specific rules and rituals: the declared objective was not the pure and simple annexation of another territory, but the strengthening of an order that was still formally based on the acknowledgement of the religious authority of the dynasty. From the fifth century, the situation witnessed a rapid evolution, also connected to profound economic, social, and institutional changes taking place in the principalities. The most powerful of which progressively developed into real states with complex apparatuses and structures of power that did not conform

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[249] *Ibid.*, p. 89

anymore with the traditional hierarchical relationships based on the parenthood."[250]

This brings us to the formation of the Warring States period. The most important historical shift in Chinese history. As mentioned above, in 453 BC, with the final split of the principality of Jin into three different states (Wei, Zhao, and Han), the so-called Warring States period finally began. The case in point, the partition of the state of Jin, demonstrated that now the legitimate aristocratic class was no longer able to deter other local parties to arm themselves and challenge the institutional power. The nature of the internal confrontations was also reflected at the external level. Now wars were conducted without any respect for ancient rituals. Therefore, "conflicts assumed now the character of total wars whose objectives were the self-strengthening and the annihilation of the enemy."[251]

In this new political context, due to the fierce political-military competition, the total number of contenders critically reduced in number through dissolution or incorporation. The entire period, therefore, was represented by a total of seven states. The dissolution of the state of Jin, one of the most important, led to the formation of three distinctive entities: the state of Wei, Zhao, and Han. These three then had to face four other contenders, such as the state of Qin (which will be remembered in history for

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[250] *Ibid*., pp. 89-90
[251] *Ibid*., p. 90; see also Ralph Sawyer, "General Introduction And Historical Background", in *The Seven Military Classics Of Ancient China*, Ralph Sawyer ed., (New York: Basic Books, 2007), p. 6

its ultimate ability to unify the country and creating the first Chinese empire), the state of Qi, Yan, and Chu. "The ferocious fight to the death among the strongest of the remaining states makes for grim telling. Standing armies take the field for the first time, new methods of warfare swell the casualties, and statecraft becomes more ruthless."[252]

In this context, the state of Wei was recognized as the most powerful. However, later on, the state of Qin and the state of Chu managed to block its further expansion. One of the actions undertaken against the state of Wei occurred in 354 BC, when it invaded the state of Zhao. Qi intervened and managed to occupy Wei's capital, therefore forcing it to abort the expansionist campaign. But the suffering for Wei did not stop. The state of Qin, encouraged by the frequent attacks by the state of Qi that critically weakened the state of Wei, decided to follow the same pattern. In so doing, Qin defeated Wei, managing to set the new state frontier to the banks of the Yellow River. The increasing turbulence that characterized the vicissitudes of Wei culminated in a chronic weakness that progressively marginalized it from the overall territorial struggles. The list of contenders then reduced to three major actors: Qi, Qin, and Chu.

The state of Chu was the one to have experienced a different and peculiar political development. Located in the southeastern part of China, it came across many different peoples, the so-called Man, which were recognized as the non-Xia peoples, mainly inhabiting the southern part of China. The Chu, therefore, through different military campaigns managed to

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[252] John Keay, *China*, p. 71

subdue them, reaching therefore a huge territorial expansion. However, this military success led to other political problems, such as the lack of a formal cultural recognition by the other states which started to consider the state of Chu as a non-Chinese, due to its previous cultural contamination. Therefore one common element which ran across the entire political spectrum of the Warring States' period is the nature of war: "the state made war and war made the state." This implied that states now followed one central military imperative: "mobilising all possible resources [which] clearly depended on civil reforms that strengthened the authority of the state."[253]

The principle of "mobilising the masses," therefore, "was not a twentieth-century innovation." Besides being applied by many of the Warring States, the principal state actor that developed this institutional thinking and its subsequent organization had been the state of Qin, that is, that actor which would later on unify the entire country. During its political evolution, the major political leaders set the stage for what would be later recognized as the Legalist School. Specifically, the minister of the Qin state, Shang Yang, has been credited by the historians as the main thinker of the implementation of this draconian framework. His institutional ideas were not only referred to the way of organizing the population for war, but they also referred to the transformation of the entire state system. He advocated the introduction of the county system of direct administration, units of measures were standardized, "trade heavily taxed, agriculture encouraged with

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[253] *Ibid.*, p. 74

irrigation and colonization schemes, and the entire population registered, individually taxed and universally conscripted."[254]

These strict measures, while being very terrifying, managed to guarantee the Qin state the ability to pursue successful military campaigns as attested by the decisive victory it achieved over the state of Wei in 341 BC. In addition to this military success, the Qin state also managed, in 316 BC, to occupy the south of China, precisely in Sichuan, through which it "secured a vast new source of cereals and manpower plus some important strategic leverage over Chu." This extraordinary power let Qin start "about forty of the sixty 'great power wars' recorded for the period." After establishing the new capital at a place called Xianyang in *c.* 263 BC, "Qin abandoned the traditional policy of alliances and adopted one of unilateral expansion through naked aggression." Through this measure, Qin state conducted purely annihilation campaigns."[255]

These military operations, by the end of the Zhou dynastic historical development, bore fruit: "in a series of decisive campaigns accompanied by

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[254] *Ibid.*, p. 75; The Legalists nurtured the idea of establishing a "ruthlessly authoritarian monarchy" whose final objective was to install a deeply militarist state along with a total obedient population. In so doing, the legalist-type of state inevitably promoted the creation of "invincible military forces and the encouragement of agriculture." These political measures – which reflected a contingent reality rather than an adherence to universal principles – made western scholars think that China has been advocating, throughout history, the application of *Realpolitik*. The Legalist school, besides the policies advanced by Shang Yang, were also the result of the philosophical thinking of Han Fei (c. 280-233 BC) who, through his famous work *Han Feizi*, "displayed a thoroughly Machiavellian approach to politics, advocating the steps necessary to enhance the absolute power of the rule, and the legal measures required for ensuring this goal." Witold Rodzinski, *The Walled Kingdom*, pp. 31, 37.

just such slaughter, Qin decimated the forces of Han and Zhao between 262 and 256 BC. The aging Zhou king, who had unwieldy thrown in his lot on the side of Zhao, was also forced to submit." In so doing, the Zhou dynasty came to an end." In 246 BC, once the Qin became officially the central state of the entire warring states system, "there succeeded to the Qin throne a thirteen-year-old boy 'with arched nose and long eyes, the puffed out chest of a hawk, the voice of a jackal … and the heart of a tiger or a wolf.' At this stage he was known as King Zheng of Qin. A quarter of a century's ruthless campaigning would see the remaining 'warring states' eliminated and the same King Zheng arrogate to himself the Zhou's Heavenly Mandate and assume the title of Shi Huangdi, 'First Emperor.'"[256]

This brief historical description of the major political actors involved in the politico-military struggle for supremacy emphasizes the peculiarity of the Warring States period: theories and practices of statecraft, therefore, started to be theorized and then implemented. In this period different theorists from different Warring States emerged with their theories. Influenced by the writings of Confucius, many successive thinkers advocated specific institutional measures for the state as well as warfare planning. For example, in the state of Chu, one of the biggest at the time, Mozi (Master Mo, *c.* 480- *c.* 390 BC) emerged as a central figure on the philosophical field, by advocating moral principles for the right conduct of the state. In addition, he also advocated a form of pacifism which banned the

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[255] John Keay, *China*, pp. 76-77
[256] *Ibid.*, 79

use of war as an instrument of politics. Mozi's disciples decided to implement his ideas. Therefore they organized themselves into a sect "ready to intervene every time it seemed to be necessary to avoid a conflict or to defend a city under attack." Their philosophical principles led them, moreover, to develop an expertise on the art of war, especially on the defensive techniques, and to develop the art of oratory, in order to dissuade the rulers from embarking on military expeditions.[257]

On the other hand, in the state of Wei, another scholar, Mengzi, advocated the respect for the Mandate of Heaven, "reduce punishments and taxes, and reinstate the 'well field' system of land-holding; in an age of greed and violence only a ruler who abjured oppression, who cultivated virtue and consulted the welfare of the people, would be sure to triumph." Mengzi's writings and political thought granted him respectability and a certain influence, to the extent that he became recognized as the "second sage" (after Confucius), being then recognized with the name of Mencius.[258]

In the same state, moreover, on the political level, there had been advanced profound reforms with the objective to tackle the aristocratic privileges. In fact, in the second half of fifth century, Li Kui, the minister of Wei, encouraged the adoption of specific policies with the central idea that the prestigious roles within the state had to be assigned to those people who really deserved them through personal merits and not through familiar linkages. This is just one clear example of how things started to change.

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[257] Mario Sabattini and Paolo Santangelo, *Storia Della Cina*, p. 109
[258] John Keay, *China*, pp. 74-75

Other states, like Chu and Qin adopted similar policies. These measures, therefore, reflected the political and military necessity of the time; that is, empowering any person who showed specific and valuable skills in the art of politics and war.

These measures, moreover, clearly intertwined with what was happening at the technological level: the revolution of the use of the iron, that is, the introduction of new techniques which permitted workers to fuse the iron in order to have better products to be employed in different sectors of society. In fact, this revolutionary aspect had profound influences on the economic system and the society at large. For example, the creation of new and better irony instruments accelerated the agricultural production. An astonishing increase in this sector activated, in turn, other important infrastructural projects, like the creation of canals in order to easily transport the major rivers' water to the lands to be cultivated. Therefore, the major states, like the Qin which produced important land reforms, decided to reorganize the distribution of land recreating a new relationship between the state and the population at large, which now could possess a piece of land through which producing the necessary food for itself and also a means for paying taxes. [259]

This revolution, moreover, exerted a deep influence on trade system: the new techniques for working the iron activated a new economic system now based on metallic coins. In the Warring States there were already four types of them: those ones with a vang-like shape (*bu*), which

were mainly used in the states of Zhao, Wei, and Han; those ones with the knife-like shape (*dao*), used by the state of Qi and Yan; those coins with the shell-like shape, used in the state of Chu; and finally those with a circle shape with the hole in the middle, which circulated in the state of Qin. This last form of coin, with time, became the widely used coin.[260]

It is precisely with the Warring States period that things started to sensitively change. After the intermediate period of the Spring and Autumn era, which had helped classify important written works, during the Warring States period, because of military necessities, the new rulers activated real military revolutions. The Warring States era, therefore, seems to have established reforms at two different levels: at the organizational level by instituting different political, military, and organizational systems that contributed to make the Warring States period "vastly different from earlier times," since "it is from this time that we can say that military law really began to develop." At the military level, "armies increased in size,"[261] therefore leading to two major revolutions that deserve particular attention: the promotion of a massed infantry, mainly based on peasants, which should have led to an increasing professionalization, and the creation of special units called "crack troops."[262]

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[259] Mario Sabattini and Paolo Santangelo, *Storia Della Cina*, pp. 94-96
[260] *Ibid.*, pp. 98-99
[261] Robin Yates, "Law And The Military In Early China", in *Military Culture In Imperial China*, Nicola Di Cosmo ed., (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), p. 29
[262] Michael Loewe and Edward L. Shaughnessy, *The Cambridge History of Ancient China*, p. 616.

For what concerns the first level of reform, the rulers, because of the military necessity to fight rival states, promoted legislations that required military conscription among the peasant households, "primarily for the sake of imposing universal military service." Moreover, the idea behind the mass conscription of peasants was that in so doing "the mass peasant armies of the period entailed the emergence of military specialists who were masters of the theories and techniques of warfare." Moreover, as a military policy, it would promote the creation of a diplomatic class able to produce "theorists of stratagem and persuasion."[263] Just during this period, in fact, "these arts of stratagem and manipulation, and the master of cunning wisdom who embodied them, figured prominently in Warring States literature and in later Chinese culture, and they derive from the military treatises and the handbooks of persuader/diplomats."[264]

At the military level, the increase of the number of conscripts, with its subsequent increase in size and power paved the way for the conduct of battles which are still studied for their details. For example, during the seventh century BC, the state of Jin, while being afflicted by internal struggles, managed to defeat "an invading army from Chu at a place called Chengpu. It was the first battle in Chinese history that was recorded in sufficient detail for modern military historians to produce a plan of engagement showing rectangular troops concentrations and arrowed lines of advance." That historic victory has been saluted as the saving of China,

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[263] *Ibid.*, p. 587.
[264] *Ibid.*, p. 632.

which, at that time was mentioned for the first time under the name of *zhongguo*, that is, the central kingdom.[265]

All these major elements paved the way for an efficient infantry which "came to be the core of the army, eventually replacing the chariot as the main offensive weapon."[266] This military transformation both "in weaponry and military organization," in turn, facilitated the execution of annihilation campaigns.[267] Moreover, in addition to that, the adoption of the cavalry represented an important step, since it highlighted the importance of the tribal peoples in influencing the Chinese military conduct. Military power, therefore, became a major concern mainly because "the very physical

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[265] In Chinese language China is called *Zhongguo*, which is the union of two words, *zhong*, which means center or central, and *guo*, which means state or empire. So the full name of China is Central Empire/State. However, when dealing with ancient Chinese history, we should be cautious, since grammatically speaking, Chinese language does not have the plural, so at the time *zhongguo* was mentioned for the first time as a term it could have also designated the central states and not the central state, that is, what we now recognize as China. However, "promoters of a long and continuous tradition of Chinese civilization" among which I include myself, "rightly stress that only a shared sense of identity could have generated the concept in the first place. 'The central states' of the 'Spring and Autumn' and 'Warring States' periods shared a common culture; they already evinced what has been called 'a superiority complex' in relation to their less literate neighbours; and in their nominal allegiance to the Zhou and Heaven's Mandate they preserved amid the harsh realities of competitive coexistence the ideal of a more harmonious political hierarchy under a single and more effective dispensation." John Keay, *China*, pp. 64-66

[266] Robin Yates, "Law And The Military In Early China", in *Military Culture In Imperial China*, pp. 29-30

[267] John Keay, *China*, p. 77.

survival of the contending states depended on possessing a strong and effective military."[268]

2.2. People's War during the Warring States Period

2.2.1. First Level of Analysis: Civil-Military Design of People's War

As expressed at the beginning of this chapter, as well as in the first chapter while dealing with People's War, one of the central characteristics of this military doctrine is the establishment of political, military, and social measures with the specific intent of combining the civil with the military aspect of the state. In other words, the fundamental idea elaborated during the Warring States period, which would then exert a deep influence on the future of China's military strategy, was the ability of the ruler to unite – and sometimes to intertwine – the civil with the military.[269] And this was also motivated by the fact that only by "integrating the civil and the martial could a state be assured of surviving in the tumultuous Warring States environment.[270]

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[268] Robin Yates, "Law And The Military In Early China", in *Military Culture In Imperial China*, pp. 29-30
[269] Tai [太] Gong [公], "Tai Gong's Six Secret Teachings [Tai Gong Liu Tao - 太公六韜]", in *The Seven Military Classics Of Ancient China*, pp. 40-52
[270] Liao [撩] Wei [尉], "Wei Liao Zi [尉撩子]", in *The Seven Military Classics Of Ancient China*, 229

In fact, the political units interacting during this period were called, quite intuitively, "warring states" because "devoted themselves to warfare." Moreover, "they were created through the progressive extension of military service, and the registration and mobilization of their populations for battle remained fundamental to their existence as states." Therefore, "with the rise of universal military service, warfare and the army became a mechanism for hierarchically organizing and controlling the entire population." So, what had represented a "privilege of the urban aristocracy became the duty of the rural peasantry. This process culminated in universal military service and the complete identification of the people with the army."[271]

These major features characterizing the employment of the population at large in order to organize military and paramilitary activities not only played a relevant role in ancient China, as attested during both the Spring and Autumn and the Warring States, but paved the way for the exaltation of those organizational and operative elements that came to be recognized as the People's War Doctrine. And in order to make it operational, it became very important to move as close as possible the military to the civilian field.

In this sense, "the process of expanding military service and indentifying the army with the people began with Guan Zhong and his policy of 'lodging the army amidst the people' (*yu bing yu min* 寓兵於民)[272] in Qi

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[271] Mark Edward Lewis, *Sanctioned Violence In Early China*, pp. 53-54
[272] This policy not only represented a fundamental asset for an efficient development of the military transformation occurring during the Warring States. It also shaped the future of Chinese military thought, neatly bridging the ancient military doctrine of

state in the early seventh century," therefore during the Spring and Autumn, that is, when Guan Zhong exercised his power as an advisor of the Lord Huan.[273]

However, one historical consideration, that runs throughout this chapter, should be kept in mind. These policies, and their increasing importance, were not only confined to the Spring and Autumn, where actually they started to be theorized and partially implemented. Because of their social, political, and military functions, they actually fortified during the Warring States and beyond, persisting in their full application, since "all the records of these reforms date from the Warring States period." The persistence of these policies can also be understood by considering that "the surviving records were at least based on older documents [from the Spring and Autumn], although they have doubtless been reworked to suit the needs and preconditions of Warring States redactors." [274] These preconditions, for example, were concerned with the implementation of a clear objective: reforming the overall structure of the city in order to make military staff live among the population.

But the population had to receive the priority in such a revolutionary period. And not all the advisors nor the rulers were able to understand what to do in order to receive from them the necessary loyalty for an efficient

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"lodging the army amidst the people" to the present Chinese doctrine, elaborated under Xi Jinping, of mixing the army with the people (*yu bing yu min* 寓军于民), that will be discussed at length in the last chapter.

[273] Mark Edward Lewis, *Sanctioned Violence In Early China*, p. 55

[274] *Ibid.*

military mobilization. In one historical passage, for example, it is well documented what the actions for gaining the benevolence from the people at large should be. In the *Guoyu* we can read one passage in which Lord Huan tried to appoint Baoshu as his senior official in order to implement the required measures for a successful political control of the population. However, as he measured himself with this task, he found out the complexity of the assignment, which forced him to decline the offer, paving the way, at the same time, for the emerge of the figure of Guan Zhong. He explained his refusal in the following terms:

> "if you [referring to Lord Huan] really want to control this state, then you should not choose me for the task. If there is a person that can really administer the state, then Guan Zhong is the one. In fact, I cannot compete with him on five major aspects: on being able to use widely generous and kind measures to appease the masses, I cannot compare with him; on not losing sight of the fundamental principles in order to govern the state, I cannot compare with him; on using loyalty and faith to gain people's trust, I cannot compare with him; setting ceremonies in accordance to All Under Heaven's law, I cannot compare with him; *on making the people double their*

courage when hearing the sound of drums signaling war before
entering enemy's army's gate, I cannot compare with him."[275]

      The people, their benevolence, and their trust represented the fundamental prerequisites for a coherent implementation of the martial laws, since "men in the Tao [of Heaven] are like fish in water. If they have water they will live; if not they will die. Thus the ruler must constantly be afraid and dare not lose the Tao."[276] This explains why the rulers, from the Spring and Autumn onwards, strived to create the necessary policies for a comprehensive social organization that reflected warfare needs: "the activities of warfare, deterrence armies [*guanbing* 观兵][277] as well as

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[275] Xuefeng [学锋] Shang [尚] and Dekao [德高] Xia [夏], *Discourses Of The States [Guoyu - 国语]*, 1st ed. (Beijing [北京]: Chinese Publishing House [zhonghua shuju - 中华书局], 2012), p. 68 Emphasis added

[276] Shi Gong [石公] Huang [黄], "The Three Strategies Of Huang Shi Gong [黄石公三略]", in *The Seven Military Classics Of Ancient China*, p. 306. This is a very interesting parallelism. As it will be illustrated in chapter four, Mao's military doctrine of People's War advocated the use of the population as water where soldiers should swim like fish.

[277] This military technique, that is, the use of deceptive methods, represents one of the central features of the entire Chinese history. In this specific case, as the *Zuo Zhuan* (左传) reports, the idea was to use the same technique that the barbarians living in the east employed in their encounters with the Chinese. This is one of the clearest cases in which the Chinese strengthened their way of fighting by absorbing other peoples' consolidated technique. In one specific passage where the use of these troops is contemplated, the *Zuo Zhuan* explains that during the fourth year of Lord Xi reign, the state of Chen, Zheng, and Qi had to face the barbarians of the East. Lord Huan of the state of Qi had already dispatched their troops between the state of Zheng and Chen. Yuan Tao Tu, the advisor the Chen state, suggested Shen Hou, his homonymous at the service of the state of Zheng, to avoid sending both states' troops to the east, because encountering the eastern barbarians would have

coalition armies increased a lot, creating not only large amounts of casualties among the people, but also direct effects on their farming. They were increasingly forced to shoulder heavy burdens, such as providing by themselves military uniforms, grains, forages, and all other military materials." This problem inevitably increased people's poverty due to the fact that they were forced to serve the army for a very long time. As a consequence, increasing poverty among the people affected the overall rulers' military power.

Guan Zhong's policies, as explained above, were meant to find a solution in order to have constant military resources (men to be enlisted), while also not damaging the overall social structure. Therefore, one of the measures that would have represented, later on, the central framework for the Warring States period had been the establishment of a rigorous social structure, still divided into classes, composed of several types of people living together. One initial step was to make ordinary citizens suitable for the military service and making them live together with workers and merchants in specific district areas. They were not allowed to leave the areas assigned

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been very dangerous. It was better, instead, "to use Chen troops to make a show of force [*guanbing* 观兵], in order to secure a passage to the coast from which it would have been easier going back home." Dan [丹] Guo [郭], XiaoQing [小青] Cheng [程] and BinYuan [彬媛] Li [李], *The Annals Of Zuo (Spring And Autumn Commentary) [Zuo Zhuan - 左传*], 1st ed. (Beijing [北京]: Chinese Publishing House [zhonghua shuju – 中华书局], 2015), Fourth Year of Xi Lord, sec. 4.2, p. 334.

to them, and they were also requested to specialize into military affairs, passing down this expertise to future generations.[278]

Specifically, it had been suggested, that the capital had to be divided into three areas, and each area divided into five districts. These, in turn, had to become the residential areas of the people, where they had to be left managing their own working specializations. These areas had to become also their graves. The same areas where the sage king, at last, "should carefully distribute on them his six sovereign prerogatives composed of life, death, poverty, richness, noble, and lowly."

Guan Zhong, because of the necessity to create a harmonious society where everybody had a role, suggested not only to divide the city into rigid residential areas, but he also suggested where to locate the people according to their working specializations. For example, he stated that: "the four categories of scholars, peasants, workers, and merchants should not be allowed to live in the same area, because doing so would generate language confusion while their professions would become chaotic and face vicissitudes … therefore the best way to locate them would be to settle scholars in quite areas, workers close to government quarters, merchants next to the marketplaces, and finally peasants next to the fields."[279] This

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[278] Zhaolin [昭林] Tian [田], "Guan Zhong [管仲]", in *Military Strategists Of Chinese Dynasties [Zhongguo Lidai Junshi Jia - 中国历代军事家]*, 2nd ed. (Beijing [北京]: People's Liberation Army Publishing House [jiefangjun chubanshe - 解放军出版社], 2004), p. 47; see also Xuefeng [学锋] Shang [尚] and Dekao [德鄗] Xia [夏], *Discourses Of The States [Guoyu - 国语]*, pp. 73-77.
[279] Xuefeng [学锋] Shang [尚] and Dekao [德鄗] Xia [夏], *Discourses Of The States [Guoyu - 国语]*, p. 72.

administrative technique was conceived also for strategic reasons: separating the masses into rigid areas allowed rulers to better control and, therefore, manipulate the population according to his needs. This satisfied the principle of "divide and rule" (*fen er zhi zhi* 分而治之) that characterized the Chinese rulership.[280]

At the political level, instead, for what concerns the administration of the country, Guan Zhong advanced the design to divide the capital into twenty-one villages, distributed according to this principle: six had to be distributed between workers and merchants, while fifteen had to be shared among the political officers (*junshi* 军士), that is, among those people that were concerned with the administration of the legal and political affairs of the state when not enlisted in the army. Specifically, five villages had to be assigned to the governor, five to the governor's children, while the remaining five to the high officials of the state.[281]

However, notwithstanding the wise political suggestions received by Guan Zhong, Lord Huan, thinking of ways to use the power of the military, often consulted him for political as well as military advice in order to formulate the appropriate strategy for becoming the hegemon (*ba* 霸) of the

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[280] Zhong [仲] Guan [管] and Shan [山] Li [李], *The Annals Of Guanzi [Guanzi - 管子]*, 1st ed. (Beijing [北京]: Chinese Publishing House [zhonghua shuju - 中华书局], 2012), p. 125.
[281] Xuefeng [学锋] Shang [尚] and Dekao [德操] Xia [夏], *Discourses Of The States [Guoyu - 国语]*, p. 78.

ancient Chinese world.[282] Guan Zhong spent most of his time trying to convince him of the importance of strengthening domestic politics before advancing any expansionist campaign. And in order to strengthen the internal affairs of his state, he clearly formulated the famous dictum "administer state's political affairs while making military commands reside within the government" (*zuo neizheng er qi junling yan* 作内政而寄军令焉):

> "Lord Huan asked: 'I would like to pursue the Tao of hegemony, but if the troops dispatched are not just, can I do that?' Guan Zhong replied: 'my Lord you cannot, the country is not stable yet.' So Lord Huan asked another question: 'how can I make my country safe?' Guan Zhong replied: 'first, my Lord, fix all

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[282] Some Chinese rulers, especially during the Spring and Autumn, tried to plan a strategy for hegemony (*tu ba zhanlue* 图霸战略). The desire for hegemony, of course, continued without stop also, and above all, in the Warring States period. But an important distinction between the former period's thirst for hegemony and the latter's deserves to be mentioned. During the Spring and Autumn, in fact, there were the so-called five hegemons (*chunqiu wu ba* 春秋五霸 – Duke Huan of Qi (*Qi Huangong* 齐桓公), Duke Wen of Jin (*Jin Wengong* 晋文公), King Zhuang of Chu (*Chu Zhuangwang* 楚庄王), Duke Xiang of Song (*Song Xianggong* 宋襄公) and Duke Mu of Qin (*Qin Mugong* 秦穆公) or instead of the last two the other alternatives were King Helu of Wu (*Wuwang He Lu* 吴王阖闾) and King Gou Jian of Yue (*Yuewang Gou Jian* 越王勾践) – which competed for the rulership over China. However, their desire was not only to physically conquer the other states, but to become and be perceived as the most righteous ruler from whom common people and government officials should get inspiration. A different story, instead, was the search for hegemony during the Warring States period. In this case, hegemony meant the ability to rule over other pieces of land, in order to aggrandize one's own power. This was the result of the increasing competition between state actors and the progressive transformation of warfare into a total enterprise. Xuefeng [学锋] Shang [尚] and Dekao [德考] Xia [夏], *Discourses Of The States [Guoyu - 国语]*, p. 82

King Bai's laws [the previous King] and select those ones that are still valuable; moreover, show a lot of care for the people, bring relief to the poor, and deeply respect the government officials.' After stabilizing the country, Lord Huan asked again: 'the country is stable now, can I move towards the Tao of hegemony?' But Guan Zhong replied: 'my Lord you still cannot. In fact, if you put in order the army and build armors and weapons while also the other states are doing the same, it will be very hard for you to fulfill your wishes. If the weapons you will use to attack are like the defensive weapons that dukes of small states have employed, then you will also have a very hard time to fulfill your wishes. But if you would like to quickly fulfill your desire of becoming one of the dukes who managed to become the hegemon of all Under Heaven, then you should conceal your army, you should entrust it to the government.' Lord Huan asked: 'how can I do that?' Guan Zhong replied: by administering the state's political affairs while also making the military commands reside within the government.'"[283]

These explanations also found further confirmation into one of the records of this historical period – the so-called Guanzi (管子) – which even if compiled during the Spring and Autumn, it was readapted for the political

[283] Xuefeng [学锋] Shang [尚] and Dekao [德靠] Xia [夏], *Discourses Of The States [Guoyu - 国语]*, pp. 78-79.

and military needs of the Warring States, making it one of the best intellectual expressions of the Legalist School. It describes, again, some of the suggestions that Guan Zhong gave to Lord Huan for a better implementation of policies. However, the final message is slightly different :

"'If my Lord desires to become the hegemon of All under Heaven, then your military affairs must be concealed and your government should find a way to lodge. [则事有所隐，而政有所寓].' Lord Huan asked: 'how can I achieve this?' Guanzi replied:' Set up regulations within the state and lodge within the government the military commands [作内政而寓军令焉]. Establish higher officials to administer the neighborhoods and other government officials to administer all the neighborhoods. Divide the country [Qi state] into three parts and make then three armies accordingly. Select worthy man and make them leaders of neighborhoods; let the districts organize commanders of squads made of five soldiers and put them in charge. Moreover, distribute the hunting as rewards and punishments, so that the masses will master military service.' 'Good!' replied Lord Huan.[284]

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[284] Zhong [仲] Guan [管] and Shan [山] Li [李], *The Annals Of Guanzi [Guanzi -* 管子*]*, section 'rectification of the lord; the third register' [xiaokuang 小匡]. This passage is very important because it expresses also how the language had been readapted according to the new circumstances. The same Chinese phrase, attributed to Guan Zhong, which described the necessity to put the army commands into the

Having laid down the basic principles governing the good administration of the people and their relationship with the army, in the famous work – Guanzi – we can also find additional detailed explanations on how to build an efficient army's organization in relation with the overall population, since it is important to underline the fact that with the advent of the Warring States period the physical separation of the capital from the countryside disappeared, paving the way for the total mobilization of the people for military purposes:

> Guan Zhong, therefore, organize the state's administrative system; five families formed a *gui* for which selecting a leader. Ten *gui* constituted a neighborhood, and within the neighborhood establish an officer. Four neighborhoods constituted a *lian*, and a *lian* established a leader. Ten *lian* formed a district, and a district established a senior official. He

government's hands, here means something slightly different, carrying deeper consequences for the historical period for which it had been used. The second phrase, in fact, expresses Guan Zhong's concept with the following words 作內政而寓軍令焉 As it can be understood, here the new character introduced into the sentence which substitute the previous one, is the word *yu* 寓 which means "to lodge," "to live," or "to imply/contain." Therefore the underlining idea now is that the military orders should live inside the political administration, highlighting the existence of a deeper fusion of the two spheres of actions with respect to the previous historical period for which military orders had to be, somehow, "subordinated" – or entrusted – to the political administration, as the word *ji* 寄 (shorter form of the verb *jituo* 寄托), used in the previous sentence, clearly demonstrated.

used this structure in order to make the military regulations. For this reason five families made a *gui*, and five men [one per family] constituted a military squad [in ancient China a squad was a group of five *wu* (伍) soldiers] commanded by the leader of the *gui*. Ten *gui* made a neighborhood, therefore fifty men made a small regiment commanded by the officer of the neighborhood. For neighborhoods made a *lian*, thus two hundred men formed an infantry, commanded by the *lian* leader. Ten *lian* made a district, therefore two thousand men formed a brigade, commanded by a senior official. Five districts then should be put under one commander, so that ten thousand men would make an army which should be commanded by a high ranking official … once this system is implemented within politics and people are assigned to their area, they are not allowed to leave it. Living close together should develop a harmonious social system, which will strengthen unity[285] … so

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[285] The members of each group were designed not only to occupy a specific area, but they were also "responsible for mutual surveillance. They were instructed both to recommend those among their neighbors who were worthy of office or suitable for military command and also to denounce any who behaved badly or committed crimes. Failure in these duties would result in collective punishment for the entire unit." Mark Edward Lewis, *Sanctioned Violence In Early China*, p. 56. This case is quite relevant, since we can still witness similar functions in today's China. For example retired PLA soldiers or officers are now entitled, in Beijing, to conduct surveillance operations in their neighborhood, and reporting to the party whatever seems inappropriate or illegal. This group is known as the Chaoyang secret group – Chaoyang Qunzhong朝阳群众– and it is believed that other similar groups are active around the country.

enabling the ruler to defend firmly or to attack courageously. If my Lord uses three thousand men of this kind [the country is divided into three areas, so allowing the creation of three armies] then enemies will not find a way to send punitive expedition … and under All Heaven no-one can oppose you.'"[286]

Administrative divisions such as the one just illustrated started to be employed a little bit earlier than the Warring States. The state of Jin, for example, had been one of the first states to advance these land subdivisions, encouraging the fusion between the capital (or major urban areas) of the state and the countryside. After the capture of its Lord Hui by the Qin forces in 645 BC, government officials initiated a series of reforms in order to secure the state and make sure that Lord Hui could return. The reforms focused on two subjects. One was the installation of the so-called *yuan* 爰 fields, that is, pieces of lands that would have been given to people deserving rewards. The second subject was, of course, the increase of the troops number and the consequent increase in mobilization forces. Therefore the state of Jin created the so-called *zhou* 州 troops, that is, troops extrapolated from the district areas, which before that moment only represented a residential area for the four Chinese classes of artisans,

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[286] Xuefeng [学锋] Shang [尚] and Dekao [德郜] Xia [夏], *Discourses Of The States [Guoyu - 国语]*, p. 81; see also Zhong [仲] Guan [管] and Shan [山] Li [李], *The Annals Of Guanzi [Guanzi - 管子]*, p. 81.

peasants, scholars and merchants and not only. The *zhou* troops, in fact, had been recruited also from other peoples conquered in wars and resettled outside the capital. "Thus, the creation of *zhou* troops marked a major shift in the Chinese world. For the first time, in order to increase [their] military power, state[s] began to incorporate the subject peoples and farmers of the hinterland into the state structure by having them perform military service. In return these people probably received grants of state land."[287]

Similar reforms were quickly adopted by other states, such as Lu state. It introduced, between 594 and 590 BC, the "taxed fields" *shui mu* 税亩[288] while also creating the "armored troops" *qiujia* 丘甲.[289] The *qiu*

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[287] Mark Edward Lewis, *Sanctioned Violence In Early China*, pp. 57-58. See the same source for the scholarly debate surrounding the exact meaning of the *yuan* fields. For a description of the implementation of these policies, see: Dan [丹] Guo [郭], XiaoQing [小青] Cheng [程] and BinYuan [彬原] Li [李], *The Annals Of Zuo (Spring And Autumn Commentary) [Zuo Zhuan - 左传*, fifteenth year of Lord Xi, sec. 15.4, pp. 396-406. For a description of the military engagements of *zhou* troops, on the same source, see also the seventeenth year of Lord Ai, sec. 17.5, pp. 2380-2384.

[288] Dan Guo et al. *The Annals Of Zuo (Spring And Autumn Commentary) [Zuo Zhuan - 左传*, Fifteenth year of Lord Xuan, sec. 15.8, p. 848. This field regulation was quite revolutionary, since, as reported into the *Zuo Zhuan*, it abolished the old tax system, based on the principle that taxes could not exceed the amount of workforce borrowed to cultivate the land (*ji fa* 藉法), as well as the old well-field system (*jingtianzhi* 井田制) which represented a combination of private and public lands to be cultivated according to the needs of the state.

[289] Dan Guo et al., *The Annals Of Zuo (Spring And Autumn Commentary) [Zuo Zhuan - 左传*, Lord Cheng's first year or reign, sec. 1.4, pp. 865-866. The first year tells that Lord Cheng of the state of Lu was strengthening its defensive position against the invasion of the state of Qi. The defensive measures required the establishment of new laws which decreed the creation and regulation of the *qiujia*. These soldiers' recruiting system was established by the Zhou dynasty and it was organized in the following terms: "nine laborers made a well 井[in this case it refers to the well-field system, in which there were nine pieces of land, as the character

ultimately indicated a basic population unit which had to pay taxes for its land. This "indicates that the state had begun to allot land to individual households, which were then obliged to provide sums of grain or cash and perhaps military service."[290] Other states followed suit. The state of Zheng, for example, after reorganizing the state, proceeded to the creation and organization of a "*qiu* levy" which also reflected the implementation of the *qiu* troops.

All these regulations and policies demonstrate how important the role of law had become. This paved the way for the legalist school which played a crucial role in establishing these policies, since laws and regulations became the decisive factors for a correct war planning. The Legalists advocated the centrality of the law in setting up the absolute sovereignty of the state. Therefore, reforms had to be carried out, with the sole objective of strengthening state's political as well as military policies for the centuries ahead, even at the cost of political tradition.[291]

井Illustrates, composed of eight private pieces and one public], four wells made a county, four counties made a hillock [*qiu* 丘], four hillocks made a suburb." According to this system, every suburb, then, had to provide "one war chariot, four army horses, twenty cows, three armed soldiers and seventy-two infantrymen." This represented the fixed amount of goods that *qiu* had to pay as part of the military taxation (*jun fu*军赋).

[290]Mark Edward Lewis, *Sanctioned Violence In Early China*, p. 59

[291] Zhong [仲] Guan [管] and Shan [山] Li [李], *The Annals Of Guanzi [Guanzi - 管子]*, section: laws and prohibitions *fajin* 法禁 In this section Guan Zhong clearly highlighted the importance of law, regulations and prohibitions. All these legal measures had to satisfy one specific objective: the creation of a highly legal state where political and military orders were combined together in order to avoid any type of internal disorder. Order was, therefore the key word for this political design. And the military field, more than any other, needed a good implementation of this legal

The famous administrative measures promoted and executed by the minister Shang Yang 商鞅 of the Qin state also represent another clear example. The revolution in military affairs with the newly heavy reliance on infantry with respect to chariots increased the need to find a way to combine the civil aspect of society with the military one. The population, in fact, went through a severe method of registration which was necessary in order to distribute the land and also collect taxes. Moreover, the people could, in the end, till the land only after a successful military performance.[292] One of the processes Shang Yang activated in order to enlarge the number of soldiers to serve the state was, therefore, the incorporation of the rural population. These reforms had been carried out after 359 BC and shaped Qin state's power of mobilization as well as the other states' approach to warfare. In the famous historical work on Chinese historic records – the *Shi ji* 史记, compiled by Sima Qian – we can read a very interesting conversation between the Qin ruler (Duke Qin Xiao *Qin Xiaogong* 秦孝公) and Shang Yang over the state's organization between past, present, and future, which anticipate the overall political mentality of the warring states as well as the revolutionary aspect of the legalist school. After explain the Duke that "of All Under Heaven the methods for administering a state have always been different and also unconventional, with clear examples of rulers becoming kings after tearing apart the ancient laws as well as other leaders losing the

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system so as to obtain an equalized and harmonized population which would follow orders (*yu qi ren zhi he tong yi ting ling ye*欲其人之和同以听令也).
[292] Mark Edward Lewis, *Sanctioned Violence In Early China*, p. 9.

state even after following the classics" and after being nominated a member of the nobility, he issued the following regulations, which had characterized the civil-military relation not only in ancient China, but also in subsequent centuries:

> The new law ordered the organization of society into groups composed of five or ten households. They were also ordered to spy and supervise each other and if anyone failed to report the criminal activity committed by anyone he would be punished by being chopped in half at the waist [腰斩]. Instead, who reported it would receive the same reward as that one obtained for cutting enemy's head. Moreover, those who hide a criminal would receive the same punishment as that one inflicted for surrendering to the enemy. Those families having more than two adult males that did not divide the household would pay a double amount of taxes. Those who enjoyed success in the military field would be promoted to a higher rank. Those who having personal enmities engage in open fight would receive a punishment according to the severity of the circumstances. Those who devoted their energies to the fundamental enterprise, such as farming,[293] and contributed with field

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[293] Yang [鞅] Shang [商 *The Book Of Lord Shang [Shang Jun Shu - 商君书] With The Commentaries By Shi Lei 石磊*, chap. 3 Agriculture and Warfare (nong zhan 农战). Shang Yang, in another historical book that took his name, fully described the centrality of agriculture with respect to other enterprises in the following terms: "Now

production or clothes can avoid extra labor, while those who engaged in trade and industry and those who became poor due to their laziness would become slaves. Those members of the royal family that did not obtain military success would not be listed in the registers of relatives. Moreover, titles and ranks should be respected and each one would receive land and dwellings in relation to his degree; and the clothes the male and female slaves had to wear should be related to the rank of the family. Those who achieved military success would receive glory and higher ranks, while those without any military success, even if rich, would not receive a position in society.[294]

the people within the country all say that 'one can still obtain office and rank by avoiding agriculture and war.' This would have as a consequence that all respectable men will change their occupations, such as devoting themselves to the study of the Odes and History along with improper standards. In so doing, they could obtain prominence and also office and rank. Those who desire wasting their own affairs will get involved with trade and will practice arts and crafts, all made to avoid agriculture and war. This condition prepares dangers for the state [具备, 国之危也]. Where people use these teachings, their country will be destroyed [其国必削]. To well organize a state, even though the granaries are full, no robbery in the agriculture should be allowed [不偷于农]." In the "Wei Liao Zi [尉缭子]", in *The Seven Military Classics Of Ancient China*, we can also find a particularly detailed praise towards agriculture and how it should be preserved not only as the inevitable means for food production, but also as a moral discipline within the state along the practice of war. In fact, one of the central policies that he adopted targeted specifically any type of tendency that could be "inimical to agriculture and warfare, the twin foundation of the state."

[294] Qian [迁] Sima [司马], *Records Of The Great Historian [Shiji - 史记] With Commentaries By Pei Yin 裴骃 (Song Dynasty), Sima Zhen 司马贞 (Tang Dynasty), And Zhang Shoujie 张守节 (Tang Dynasty)*, 1st ed. (Beijing [北京]: Chinese Publishing House [zhonghua shuju - 中华书局], 2016), pp. 2227-2239

These were just some of the very strict reforms that transformed the ancient Chinese world and that allowed the "Qin government to achieve the total identity of civil administration and military organization." Moreover, the "identification of the social order with the army was strengthened through the institution of ranks of military merits" and the institution of small units of military administration, called *xian* 县, which served also as the basis of local government. In other words, the *xian*, "as units of military recruitment and administration … [also] became the basic units of local, civil government."

The focus on these reforms is often based on the Qin state, because of its later historical role in unifying the country, however, also the other warring states pursued the implementation of the same reforms, which had become, historically, the "ideal [model] of legalist administrative theory."[295]

Shang Yang, in fact, before being killed due to court affairs, completed other reforms, some of which had long-lasting effects. Along with

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[295] Mark Edward Lewis, *Sanctioned Violence In Early China*, pp. 62-63. It should be pointed out, however, that not only the legalist school advocated these measures. Even other theorists, like *Guanzi* or the *Huainanzi*, focused on the important relationship between the civil and the military, as attested by the frequent idea that "weapons of war were identical with or originally based on the implements of agriculture." *Ibid.*, p. 65. For example, for what concerns the Huainanzi, in its chapter fifteen, which deals with the proper implementation of military training and strategy (whose content will be illustrated in the next sections), we can actually see the author comparing military arms as the wood used to pierce the land (*bing ru zhi mu* 兵如植木), the army conducting the same swift attack as cutting off plants and trees (斩之若草), or the bow being similar to the horn above the head of a sheep (*gongnu* 弩如羊角). Huainanzi, *Huainanzi* [淮南子], 1st ed. (Beijing [北京]: Chinese Publishing House [Zhonghua shu ju - 中华书局], 2012), chap. 15, Instruction on Military Strategy (*bing lue xun* 兵略训), p. 227

those ones on the equalization of the tax system and standardization of the measures units, in the land administration sector he opened the *qian* [阡] and *mo* [陌], that is, two types of lands divided only by small roads, which facilitated its cultivation, distribution, and sharing. This was part of his effort to reshape the countryside in order to make it an "extension of military service", that is, the identification of social order with the army. This was related to Shang Yang's major idea which advocated the centrality of agriculture as the "basis of society and the root of all wealth," in fact, "his ideal state was a land of small-scale farmers guided by a severe, detailed code of laws. In this way he was able to "allocate to each family sufficient land to be worked by a single adult male." The state, then, "could obtain the maximum amount of land in cultivation and the highest possible number of adult males liable for military service and taxes."[296] In sum:

> "The reforms of Shang Yang marked the culmination of the process of breaking down the social and institutional barriers between city and hinterland through the extension of military service. The entire countryside was divided into a rectangular grid, the entire population into military units, the administration into military districts, and then the individual households of the population were 'mapped' onto the grid in accord with merits earned in battle or through agriculture."[297]

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[296] Mark Edward Lewis, *Sanctioned Violence In Early China*, p. 63.
[297] *Ibid*., 64

But two of his political ideas seem to stand out both for their sophistication and cruelty. The first is the "chaos opening" (*kai sai* 开塞) and the second is the war of agriculture (*geng zhan* 耕战). Lord Taishi, the new Qin ruler, described them as the works that explain why Shang Yang had been killed. The first one, in fact, referred to a way of implementing laws that fomented the use of both the army and the people to create chaos inside another state; a chaos that could destroy its communication system as well as its administrative sovereignty. The second policy consisted in adopting the peasants for the war struggle and the killing of the enemy.[298] This directly reflected Shang Yang conception of warfare and agriculture as well as the political spirit of the Warring States period, which would have produced a crucial historical legacy for the centuries ahead. One of his famous assumptions, in fact, was that those who engaged in battle and those who distinguished themselves in the agriculture represented the same institutional figure, as attested in the famous section of the *Shi ji* dedicated to his political actions. In the *Shang Jun Shu*, which represents his historical

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[298] Qian [迁] Sima [司马], *Records Of The Great Historian [Shiji - 史记] With Commentaries By Pei Yin 裴骃 (Song Dynasty), Sima Zhen 司马贞 (Tang Dynasty), And Zhang Shoujie 张守节 (Tang Dynasty)*, p. 2237; see also Qian [迁] Sima [司马], *Records Of The Great Historian [Shiji - 史记] With Commentaries By Han Zhaoqi (*韩兆琦*)*, 1st ed. (Beijing [北京]: Chinese Publishing House [Zhonghua shu ju - 中华书局], 2012), pp. 205-224.

text, agriculture and warfare are completely intertwined both in concept and practice.[299]

The combination of these two elements also reflected other thinkers' thoughts. Hanfeizi, in fact, highlighted the centrality of those men engaged both in warfare and farming (*geng zhan zhi shi* 耕战之士),[300] since, as attested by the historical records, the infantry armies "were formed largely through the recruitment of the peasantry."[301]

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[299] Yang [鞅] Shang [商 *The Book Of Lord Shang [Shang Jun Shu - 商君书] With The Commentaries By Shi Lei* 石磊, chap. 3 Agriculture and Warfare (*nong zhan*农战), pp. 26-40. Other Warring States scholars acknowledged this interpenetration between agriculture and warfare to the extent that they argued that "punishments and military activity should be confined to the autumn and winter." The idea behind this thought was that "the division of the year into seasons of growth, devoted to agriculture, and seasons of death, devoted to warfare and punishments, reflected the two aspects of the 'men of service in agriculture and warfare.'" Mark Edward Lewis, *Sanctioned Violence In Early China*, p. 65.

[300] Han Fei, *Hanfeizi [韩非子] With The Commentaries By Chen Bingcai [*陈秉才*]*, 1st ed. (Beijing [北京]: Chinese Publishing House [Zhong hua shu ju - 中华书局], 2012), pp. 265-277. The phrase above belongs to a section of Hanfeizi's book in which the author explains first of all what are the five "insects" *wu du* 五蠹 (social classes) that could destroy the state. And they belong to the scholars (*xuezhe* 学者), because of their continuous reliance on nice and empty words; diplomats (*yantanzhe* 言谈者), because of their lies fabrication; swordsmen (*daijianzhe* 带剑者 even if in other texts they are referred to as *youxia* 游侠, that is, wondering swordsmen), because of their continuous exaltation of their virtues when actually violate state's regulations; those who avoided military service (*huanyuzhe* 患御者), because wanted to get rid of the war labor while searching for nobles' protection; and finally the merchants (*shanggong zhi min*商工之民), because of their lust for profit and their exploitation of peasants' interests. Therefore, if the state wants to survive it is necessary, according to Hanfeizi, to praise even more those engaged in war and agriculture, otherwise the state is in peril.

[301] Mark Edward Lewis, *Sanctioned Violence In Early China*, p. 64-65

A propos of agriculture, during the Qin the assignment of the land to the ordinary people who were also recruited for military duties was the direct outcome of the establishment of a new institutional framework through which banning the aristocratic lineages. In so doing, whenever a state subjugated another, the conquered land would have been distributed among the population in relation to their military service. This practice, which became particularly relevant, was defined as *fen zu* (分族) or *mie zu* (灭族).[302]

The distribution of land with the associated destruction of the aristocratic lineages, in turn, created a new political system which, as explained above, was devoted, entirely, to the mobilization and the control of the people. It progressively emerged "a kin system based primarily on the individual household, which formed the fundamental unit for registration and the provision of labor services in the new state." This system also envisaged the application of sanctioned violence in two ways: "the principle of collective punishment for families enshrined in the legal codes, and the moral obligation to vengeance for kin articulated in the Confucian ritual texts and commentaries." This, in turn, created also a radical shift in the blood ties that characterized people's relationships, which, along with the covenants, started to be identified with "bonds" *yue* (约). This had to do with the modification of the political significance of the ruler's role in society, which started to be perceived as the major factor for mobilizing the people and therefore as a "position of unchallenged supremacy." The pervasiveness of the ruler's power also paved the way for the "'sexualization' of the political in

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[302] *Ibid.*, p. 10

Warring States China, in which the relation between the ruler and the minister was equated with that one between husband and wife."[303]

However, all this did not undermine the implementation of the covenants, which, during the passage from the Spring and Autumn to the Warring States contributed to create the idea of the state as we know it today. Covenants, specifically the blood ones, in fact, were also widely used "to secure the support or allegiance of the capital populace (*guo ren* 國人). The major difference of their actual employment in warfare concerned the role that the aristocracy still played throughout the Spring and Autumn period. In fact, the *guo ren* were first employed during the internal struggle for power occurring within the aristocratic world, so their employment still lacked the "national" character that would later characterize the Warring States period.

The *guo ren*, moreover, "consisted of the lowest level of the nobility – the *shi* – as well as merchants and artisans. The former were a primary constituent of the army, and the entire population could expel the lord, overthrow the government and set up new rules." Therefore this forced rulers to highly esteem the population's power and trying to avoid to outrage it. In so doing, "the capital's inhabitants thus came to play a decisive role in the internecine struggles between the various lineages of the nobility and often decided the succession to the throne, so ambitious men sought to win their favor through conspicuous exemplary conduct or public charity." These blood covenants, therefore, became full "instruments of interstate

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[303] *Ibid.*

diplomacy," providing the means "for organizing conspiracy, insurrection, and civil war."[304]

This "intimate" connection between the people and the ruler was also symptomatic of a new way of conceptualizing warfare. Since people could gain land to be cultivated after a successful military performance, also in the military field, higher rankings responded to great performance on the battlefield. Therefore, "a new form of military commander, a specialist who held office through mastery of military techniques," appeared on the scene. This, in turn, stimulated also a wide production of intellectual writings which tried to describe and analyze "not only the procedures for commanding an army or defending a city, but also the principles of warfare and the relation of the army to civil society." Widely conditioned by this new intellectual context, also nonmilitary texts tended to discuss the nature of warfare, making it, therefore, one of the central features of period.

One of the elements widely discussed through most of the military writings was the rejection of "the martial ideals of the Spring and Autumn aristocracy" and the advocacy of a clear separation of "combat from the ancestral cult," which, for a long time, have been interpreted as the two sides of the same coin, [305] paving the way for the subsequent manifestation

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[304] *Ibid.*, p. 48

[305] This characteristic is crucial for the understanding of the shift from the Spring and Autumn to the Warring States. And this had to do with the fact that "the centrality of violent acts to religious cult and the political order was axiomatic in the Spring and Autumn period." In other words, sacrifice and warfare "were the principle forms of state or public services." In fact, the practice of the hunt was not clearly distinguishable from the practice of warfare. During the Spring and Autumn "it was

of the fusion of the military field with the civilian realm. Now combat mainly represented "an intellectual discipline in which the powers of mind and textual mastery of the commander, along with the unthinking obedience and

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not uncommon for a hunt to turn into a campaign or a campaign in to a hunt." Language also reflected this interchangeability for the words used in the military field, such as "military" or "martial," respectively *wu* 武 and *rong* 戎 were also applied to hunting, and the word for hunting *lie*獵 (simplified version 猎) "could also describe an army's attack, and the same word huo 獲 [simplified form 获] applied to what was captured in battle or taken in the hunt. Collective oaths with the force of law were sworn at the beginning of a hunt just as before a battle, and misconduct during a hunt was punished according to military law." *Ibid.*, pp. 17-18. As the author himself refers to, the *Zuo Zhuan* critically analyzed the centrality of these political actions. While describing the thirteenth year of Lord Cheng's rule, the Commentary explains how a specific military action was performed: "Lord Lu Cheng and his Duke went to pay homage to the shrine of the King Zhou Jian, after having decided to follow Lord Liu Kang, Lord Cheng Su in their decision to join Lord Jin Li in attacking the state of Qin. However, when Lord Cheng Su received the sacrificial meat at the god's temple, he did not show respect. So Lord Liu Kang said: 'I have heard that common people were born from the spirit of the opposites of earth and heaven [*tiandi de zhonghe zhi qi*天地的冲和之气 – in ancient times it was believed that humanity was born from the combination and, therefore, condensation, of opposite forces governing the universe, such as the Yin (阴) and Yang (阳)] obtaining what is known as life. Therefore, the performance of this action [the sacrifice], according to the righteous and dignified norm, should be used for obtaining a fortunate and helpful mandate of heaven … the great affairs of the state are sacrifice and warfare. In the sacrifices one takes and distribute the meat from the sacrifices in the ancestral temple, while in warfare on receives the meat from the sacrifices. These are the great ceremonies of the spirits.'" Dan [丹] Guo [郭], XiaoQing [小青] Cheng [程] and BinYuan [彬煐] Li [李], *The Annals Of Zuo (Spring And Autumn Commentary) [Zuo Zhuan - 左传*, Thirteenth year of Lord Cheng, sec. 13.2, pp. 973-975. On the same line, also Confucius expressed a similar view, explaining how the combination of war and proper sacrifice rituals could lead to the achievement of the Dao: "When I engage in war I conquer, and when I sacrifice I obtain good fortune. This could be called obtaining the Way." XiDan [希旦] Sun [孙], *The Collection Of The Book Of Rites [Li Ji Jijie - 礼记集解*, 1st ed. (Shanghai [上海]: Commercial Affairs [shangwu – 商务], 1935), cited in Mark Edward Lewis, *Sanctioned Violence In Early China*, p. 19

uniform actions of the troops, guaranteed victory. It was no longer combat itself but the control of men and the manipulation of combat for higher ends that now constituted the essence of war."[306]

An essence which could have been reached, as explained above, by the edification of a coherent authority, also in the military field. The Warring States, in fact, revolutionized also the role and profile of the commander, making it an entirely Chinese product. This is because generalship could be rightly considered to be "a culturally based activity whose variations can tell us much about the society of a particular place and era, and the theory and practice of generalship is particularly revealing in a society like Warring States China, where the state had been created through military organization."[307]

In other words, the Warring States period, besides culminating into the fusion between the civil and the military, also cultivated a profound military specialization. This, in turn, paved the way for another feature: the idea that military service represented more of an art, a philosophy than a ritualistic practice. Therefore, as already mentioned in the sections above, during this period the production of military treatises flourished to the extent that they were recognized as divine tools for the good government and the good art of war.[308] Battle, in fact, became "a form of wisdom or an art, a

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[306] *Ibid.*, 11
[307] John Keegan, *The Mask Of Command*, 1st ed. (London: Pimlico, 2004), cited in Mark Edward Lewis, *Sanctioned Violence In Early China*, p. 97.
[308] This divine character is expressed in many texts, but in Imperial Readings of the Taiping era (Taiping Yulan 太平御览), and specifically at the section of the "The Yellow

mental skill that could be verbally formulated and taught," that is, "the art of battle no longer consisted in the skills of driving a chariot or handling weapons, but in assessing the terrain and the enemy, organizing multitudes, and devising stratagems. As the master of texts and techniques, it was the commander who now determined the outcome of the battle."[309]

2.2.2. Second Level of Analysis: Strategic Design of People's War

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Emperor and the Art of War of the Goddess [黄帝玄女战法]" we can find a mythical story about how the Yellow Emperor obtained invincibility in war: "The Yellow Emperor [黄帝] engaged in war with Chi You [蚩尤] nine times and for nine times he could not win. So he returned to Mountain Tai and for three days and three nights was shrouded by the darkness of a fog. There a woman, with the head of human and the body of a bird, appeared. The Yellow Emperor first bowed, not daring to get up. So the goddess said: 'I am the goddess, what would like to ask?' the Yellow Emperor replied: 'I desire invincibility.' So he obtained the Art of War [遂得战法焉]." This dialogue is relevant for the understanding of the importance and the precious value that rulers as well as scholars attributed to the military treatises. In fact, as this case shows, the Yellow Emperor had the chance to meet the so-called goddess of the nine days (*jiutian xuannu*九天玄女), which represented a woman expert in the art of war and military strategy. Fang [昉] Li [李], *Imperial Records Of The Taiping Era [Taiping Yulan - 太平御览]*, Chapter 15, (Chinese Text Project http://ctext.org/text.pl?node=363096&if=en&remap=gb, n.d.).
[309] Mark Edward Lewis, *Sanctioned Violence In Early China*, pp. 98, 103. On this specific issues it is quite relevant to note that in the Western way of war, we had to wait for Clausewitz, in the early nineteenth century, to elaborate something similar, that is, that war is both an art and a science and that the brilliant commander is the one that captures the essence of war; there resides his genius. Carl von Clausewitz, Michael Howard and Peter Paret, *On War* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1976).

As the first part explained, in this specific historical period, China moved towards a combination between the military (*wu* 武) and the civil (*wen* 文). This reflected not only the necessity to develop new policies for an efficient, lethal conduct of war, but it was also the result of the challenges posed by foreign enemies, like the northern tribes. The *wen-wu* relationship, in fact, had also been shaped by the influence of the Inner Asian tribes. It is often underestimated how important the Inner Asia was in influencing Chinese strategic culture. Some specific elements of Chinese use of military power are the direct result of this cultural exchange. In fact, the historical accounts of the "barbarians" often highlighted "their proclivity to war … The account of the Xiongnu in the *Shi ji* says that 'they make war their business,' and indeed the topos of the northern nomads as a 'martial race' runs through the whole length of Chinese traditional historiography."[310] This account, therefore, demonstrates that ancient China progressively absorbed some features of external actors' military culture; especially those ones that satisfied its needs: "being that frontier defense was so critical to the preservation of dynastic rule and territorial integrity, it is not surprising that an osmotic process of subtle absorption and assimilation of Inner Asia military culture took place."[311] This historical understanding illustrates the delicate balance between the civil institution and the military one, which in turn strongly affected the creation and implementation of foreign and strategic policies.

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[310] Nicola Di Cosmo, "Introduction", in *Military Culture In Imperial China*, p. 15.
[311] *Ibid.*

The sophisticated development of this dichotomous relationship had also direct effects on the military strategy. It, in fact, developed two substantial strategic directions that would have persisted throughout Chinese military history until nowadays. The first step of the civil-military relationship was the fluid combination of attack and defense. Both were not clearly separated, since one represented the mirror-image of the other. And the use of deception (as it will be illustrated in the pages below), combined with the use of normal and special military measures, paved the way for this strategic design.

The second direction of the civil-military relationship, connected to the first one, was the elaboration of a strategic scheme through which agriculture became not only a means for food production, but also a hidden instrument of war. As illuminatingly described by the Tai Gong "the implements for offence and defense are fully found in ordinary human activity." Responding to King Wu who was wondering how to maintain the "implements of war" in time of peace,[312] Tai Gong replied:

> [in agriculture], "digging sticks serve as *chevaux-de-frise* and caltrops. Oxen and horse-pulled wagons can be used in the encampment and as covering shields. The different hoes

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[312] As the defense and offense were mutually interconnected, also peace and war were intimately related. In fact, in ancient China the "time of war" was not clearly and legally differentiated by the "time of peace." See: John Fairbank, "Introduction: Varieties Of The Chinese Military Experience", in *Chinese Ways In Warfare*, Frank Kierman and John Fairbank ed., (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974), p. 10

can be used as spears and spear-tipped halberds. Raincoats of straw and large umbrellas serve as armor and protective shields. Large hoes, spades, axes, saws, mortars, and pestles are tools for attacking walls. Oxen and horses are the means to transport provisions. Chickens and dogs serve as lookouts. The cloth that women weave serves as flags and pennants.

The method that the men use for leveling the fields is the same for attacking walls. The skill needed in spring to cut down grass and thickets is the same as needed for fighting against chariots and cavalry. The weeding methods used in summer are the same as used in battle against foot soldiers. The grain harvested and the firewood cut in the fall will be provisions for the military. In the winter well-filled granaries and storehouses will ensure a solid defense.

The units of five found in the fields and villages will provide the tallies and good faith that bind the men together. The villages have officials and the offices have chiefs who can lead the army … The skills used in repairing the inner and outer walls in the spring and fall, in maintaining the moats and channels are used to build ramparts and fortifications.

Thus the tools for employing the military are completely found in ordinary human activity. One who is good at governing a state will take them from ordinary human affairs … The husband has a number of acres that he farms, the wife a

measured amount of material to weave – this is the Way to enrich the state and strengthen the army.[313]

In the Warring States period, China's military planning and strategy as well as the influences coming from the external actors, put a premium on the application of subversive war, or generally speaking, of asymmetric warfare. This strategic condition, as already expressed above, facilitated the production of a vast literature on warfare; "in those days the strategies and methods of the famous tacticians were repeatedly tested and applied and were proven to have a timeless validity."[314] This was also related to the importance of warfare, not only because the Warring States period, as we know, represented a highly conflictual era of Chinese history (the Spring and Autumn historical records highlighted that war was also widely used at that time), but also because it represented an instrument of politics, its "continuation" as Clausewitz said many centuries later. In fact, *The Art of War* begins its discussion of the strategic and tactical elements to be implemented in war with the famous phrase: "War is a matter of vital importance to the State; the province of life and death; the road to survival or ruin; it is mandatory that it be thoroughly studied [*bing zhe, guo zhi da shi, si*

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[313] Tai Gong's Six Secret Teachings [Tai Gong Liu Tao - 太公六韜]", in *The Seven Military Classics Of Ancient China*, p. 75
[314] Ralph Sawyer, "General Introduction And Historical Background", in *The Seven Military Classics Of Ancient China*, p. 13

sheng zhi di, cun wang zhi dao, bu ke bu cha ye
兵者，国之大事，死生之地，存亡之道，不可不察也]."[315]

And at the strategic level, the civil-military relationship became even more prominent. The Tai Gong's *Six Secret Teachings*, for example, discussed at length the application of the so-called "civil offensive" which comprised a total of twelve measures to be adopted against the ruler of another state and whose final result could be compared to a real military operation, since those civil offensives were meant to disrupt the enemy's court and therefore the entire state.[316]

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[315] Sunzi and Samuel B Griffith, *The Art Of War*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 63. For a translation of *The Art of War* into modern Chinese, see also Shawn Conners and Chen Song, *Military Strategy Classics Of Ancient China*, (United States: Special Edition Books, 2013), pp. 97-142. For a comprehensive analysis of the text and the history surrounding the figure of Sun Tzu, see: Zhe [哲] Sima [司马], *The Art Of War [Sunzi Bingfa - 孙子兵法]*, (Beijing [北京]: Chinese Long Peace Press [zhongguo chang'an chubanshe - 中国长安出版社], 2007) and Sunzi et al., *Sun Zi,* (Beijing: People's China Publishing House, 1996). It is important to highlight this phrase because it is a recurrent theme also in other military treatises. For example, the Tai Gong explicitly said: "warfare is the greatest affair of state, the Tao of survival or extinction. The fate of the state lies in the hands of the general. The general is the support of the state, a man that the former kings all valued. Thus in commissioning a general, you cannot but carefully evaluate and investigate his character." Tai Gong's Six Secret Teachings [Tai Gong Liu Tao - 太公六韬]", in *The Seven Military Classics Of Ancient China*, p. 63

[316] "First, accord with what he likes in order to accommodate his wishes. He will eventually grow arrogant and invariably mount some perverse affair … second, become familiar with those he loves in order to fragment his awesomeness. When men have two different inclinations, their loyalty invariably declines … third, covertly bribe his assistants, fostering a deep relationship with them … fourth, assist him in his licentiousness and indulgence in music in order to dissipate his will. Make him generous gifts or pearls and jade, and ply him with beautiful women. Speak deferentially, listen respectfully, follow his commands, and accord with him in

Besides this overarching strategic tendency, strategy was often contemplated during the martial prognostication in which priests had to interpret the right messages of the clouds in order to understand whether or not the army was about to face "brutal" enemies; "the category of 'brutal' armies included rebellious troops, gangs of local brigands, various revolutionaries, steppe raiders, and segmented forces from field armies, all of whom might suddenly arise and unexpectedly appear."[317] The following represented one of the most famous passages for military prognostication, and the countermeasures to be adopted, especially when it came to the understanding of the manifestation of "brutal armies:"

> If black *qi* comes from the enemy's vicinity and overspreads our army, they want to launch a surprise attack. As they will surely come, it would be appropriate to prepare, but inappropriate to engage in battle. After the enemy turns about,

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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] … sixth, make secret alliances with his favored ministers, but visibly keep his less-favored outside official at a distance … seventh, if you want to bind his heart to you, you must offer generous presents … eighth, gift him with great treasures, and make plans with him … ninth, honor him with praise … tenth, be submissive so that he will trust you, and thereby learn about his true situation … eleventh, block up his access by means of the Tao … secretly express great respect toward [subordinates] … accumulate your own resources until they become very substantial, but manifest as external appearance of shortage … twelfth, support his dissolute officials in order to confuse him. Tai [太] Gong [公], "Tai Gong's Six Secret Teachings [Tai Gong Liu Tao - 太公六韜]", in *The Seven Military Classics Of Ancient China*, pp. 56-57.
[317] Ralph Sawyer, "Martial Prognostication", in *Military Culture In Imperial China*, p. 62

you can gain a minor victory by following and suddenly striking them.

If there are clouds resembling barbarians deployed into formation [for an attack]; white *qi* five or six *chang* wide that strikes Heaven in the east or west; clouds shaped like five or six panthers congregating together, or four of five dogs gathered together; or, although the four quarters are clear and bright, fulminating red clouds are seen, troops are about to rise.

If there are clouds shaped like flags and pennants, brigands will explosively arise.

Red clouds like fire indicate troops wherever they appear.

When the *qi* of forces lying in ambush resembles a man bearing a sword and shield, or there are clods like a man with a red face sitting down, explosive forces will appear at any city or town they approach.

If for no reason clouds shaped like a tiger move about a cloudy sky, brutal forces will come.

If the cloud *qi* resembles chickens, pheasants, or running rabbits, brigands will come to attack your forces. You must urgently prepare.

If red clouds resemble peoples in groups of two and three, some walking, some sitting, brutal forces will soon arrive."[318]

In this context of strategic planning, a military treatise like Sun Tzu's *The Art of War* became the masterpiece of this epoch. It codified a specific

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[318] *Huqian Jing* (Song's Military Compendium), in Ralph Sawyer, "Martial Prognostication", in *Military Culture In Imperial China*, p. 62

way of reasoning about war and how to deal with it.[319] In Sun Tzu's book we can find that one of the central themes is the concept of flexibility, which has been rendered through the term *quanbian* 权变. This overarching concept represented the pillar of strategic thinking that Sun Tzu remarked through the expression "let others assume specific forms, while I do not have any (*xingren er wo wuxing* 形人而我无形).[320]

At the strategic level this concept found its application through the study of the enemy's behavior. In fact, because of the increasing importance of the military service, which went through a strict professionalization process, the typical strategic design, as *Wuzi* advocated, envisaged the necessity to target the enemy's commander. Studying and therefore knowing him allowed one actor to understand how the enemy's army would have behaved on the battlefield.[321]

Sun Tzu also emphasized the importance of knowledge, highlighting the necessity to attack enemy's deliberations as well as the knowledge and plans of the commander. In the third chapter of his military treatise on "Offensive Strategy" he advised to "attack the enemy's strategy." This meant building a coherent strategic plan which fully considered the enemy's psychology, military preparedness, and its population. After having gained

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[319] Sunzi and Samuel B Griffith, *The Art Of War*. Recent historical findings demonstrated that this military treatise had been written during the Warring States period, rather than the Spring and Autumn one, as many others suggested so far.
[320] Sunzi and Samuel B Griffith, *The Art Of War*, p. 100; for an overall evaluation of the philosophical elements characterizing this famous Sun Tzu's phrase see :
François Jullien, *Trattato Dell'efficacia*, 1st ed. (Torino: Einaudi, 2004), p. 162.
[321] Qi [起] Wu [吳], "Wuzi [吳子]", in *The Seven Military Classics Of Ancient China*.

this information, then the skilled general plans accordingly with the final objective of "subduing the enemy without fighting" (*bu zhan er qu ren zhi bing* 不战而屈人之兵). This measure was conceptualized not only to try to save the states' resources for war, such as money and men, but also to try to capture the enemy's state and its army intact, because of the evident advantage of reusing them. However, Sun Tzu knew how important it was to conduct also actual military operations. Therefore the second best strategy should have been to attack the enemy's system of alliance; the third one to attack his army, and the final one, the worst option, to attack his cities.[322]

This strategic principle is also elaborated by Wu Qi in his famous military treatise that got his name, the *Wuzi*. Recognized as the first great general in Chinese history (several historical accounts reported that he had never been defeated), Wu Qi argued that states could survive only through a military strength and sound government. In his treatise, written during the Warring States period, he also advocated Sun Tzu's assumption, that is, the ability to create a good strategy for victory with the least military engagement:

> "now being victorious in battles is easy, but preserving the results of victory is difficult. Thus it is said that among the states under Heaven that engage in warfare, those that garner five victories will meet with disaster; those with four victories will be exhausted; those with three victories will become

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[322] Sunzi and Samuel B Griffith, *The Art Of War*, pp. 77-79

hegemons; those with two victories will be kings; and those with one victory will become emperors. For this reason those who have conquered the world through numerous victories are extremely rare, while those who thereby perished are many."

In addition to that, Wu Qi also explained what types of strategy a state should have implemented according to the circumstances. Specifically, the idea was to illustrate the concept that a strategy had to reflect necessarily the domestic as well as the foreign situations. In other words, bridging the military and politics according to the political changes. Therefore, he assumed that strategy should take into account the manifestation of five different types of armies: the righteous, the strong, the hard, the fierce, and the contrary. The first one should be employed when trying to rescue "the people from chaos." When "relying on the strength of the masses to attack" then the strong army should be employed. The army that is mobilized out of anger is defined the hard. When seeking profit, the fierce should be used. And finally, when the country is "in turmoil and the people are exhausted, embarking on military campaigns and mobilizing the masses" leads to the implementation of a contrary army. Studying them is very important, since each has its own Tao.[323]

Therefore, in order to reduce the number of military engagements so as to achieve victory in war without fighting, two directions should have been

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[323] Qi [起] Wu [吴], "Wuzi [吴子]", in *The Seven Military Classics Of Ancient China*, p. 208

followed: the first one was the ability to manipulate the enemy through deception, in order to make him dubious about one's own actual military potential. In other words, the idea was to invest on deterrence policies whose objective was to severely weaken the enemy's morale.[324] The second direction, instead, looked more to the actual combat, that is, the tactical levels, in which flexibility in military operations and the planning of surprise attacks paved the way for the final victory. Therefore, if properly applied, the strategic design based on knowledge of the enemy's military status could lead to military success: "know the enemy and know yourself; in a hundred battles you will never be in peril. When you are ignorant of the enemy but know yourself, your chances of winning or losing are equal. If ignorant both of your enemy and of yourself, you are certain in every battle to be in peril."[325]

The acquisition of knowledge as well as its manipulation represented the key instrument of war. The manipulation had to occur through the application of deception (*gui* 诡), which constituted, in turn, the fundamental aspect governing the military realm and, consequently, the

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[324] This strategic theory, winning wars without fighting, "is not a utopian fancy." Sun Tzu, in fact, "would readily understand today's system of nuclear deterrence. He would smile at the American exaltation of firepower, which too easily makes a means into an end in itself." John Fairbank, "Introduction: Varieties Of The Chinese Military Experience", in *Chinese Ways In Warfare*, p. 11
[325] Sunzi and Samuel B Griffith, *The Art Of War*, p. 84

military operations.[326] Its importance, at the strategic level, is, once again, illustrated into one of the most famous passages of Sun Tzu:

> All warfare is based on deception [兵者，诡道也].
>
> Therefore, when capable, feign incapacity [故能而示之不能];
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> when active, inactivity [用而示之不用];
>
> When near, make it appear that you are far away [近而示之远];

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[326] In most of the Chinese military texts, the importance of deception in military affairs has been widely emphasized not only because of its inevitable strategic advantage, but also because of the role it played philosophically in the eternal dichotomous relationships that governed the state and the military Tao, which were: the civil vs. the military and the normative vs. the extraordinary (this second relationship will be analyzed in the next section on the tactical dimension of people's war). Suffice here to say that because of their inner characteristics, the civil represented the normative aspect of the state, while the military the extraordinary means. For extraordinary, military theorists did not refer to the exceptionality of the military instrument, but actually the opposite. It referred, instead, to the idea that the military, because of its unique nature, was governed by different, special means that would not find equal application in the civil sphere of the state. This, therefore, explains why deception represented a special condition that governed the military world and that had to be fully implemented into the military strategy in order to survive in war. Deception, in fact, according to the opposing forces governing politics and war, resembled the opposite of information. Linguistically, moreover, the word "politics" is *zheng* 政, that is, the combination of the word *zheng* 正 (normal, correct, regular), from which "politics" absorbs the sound of pronunciation, and *pu* 攴 (to throw oneself at). Therefore the idea was that politics represented the realm of the normal, while the military the realm of the extraordinary, that is, *qi* 奇, which is the combination of the word *da* 大 (big) and *ke* 可 (to be able to), therefore meaning the ability to achieve big things.

when far away, that you are near [远而示之近].

Offer the enemy a bait to lure him [利而诱之];

feign disorder and strike him [乱而取之].[327]

When he concentrates, prepare against him [实而备之];

where he is strong, avoid him [强而避之].

Anger his general and confuse him [怒而挠之].

Pretend inferiority and encourage his arrogance [卑而骄之].

Keep him under a strain and wear him down [佚而劳之].[328]

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[327] Also the Tai Gong's secret teachings illustrate the importance of adopting deceptive measures, which resemble Sun Tzu's words, exemplifying therefore the common ideas that influenced military thinkers. In his pages, in fact, we can read: "make an outward display of confusion while actually being well ordered. Show an appearance of hunger while actually being well fed. Keep your sharp weapons within and show only dull and poor weapons outside. Have some troops come together, others split up; some assemble, others scatter. Make secret plans, keep your intentions secret. Raise the height of fortifications, and conceal your elite troops. If the officers are silent, not making any sounds, the enemy will not know our preparations. Then if you want to take his western flank, attack the eastern one … the technique for military conquest is to carefully investigate the enemy's intentions and quickly take advantage of them, launching a sudden attack where unexpected." Tai [太] Gong [公], "Tai Gong's Six Secret Teachings [Tai Gong Liu Tao - 太公六韬]", in *The Seven Military Classics Of Ancient China*, p. 52

[328] Tu Mu a Chinese scholar who analyzed Sun Tzu's text with commentaries, illustrates that this suggestion found, in Chinese history, a wide application. Specifically, the idea to wear down the enemy, not necessarily through direct military confrontation, was the result of the pursuance of a border policy that characterized Chinese strategic design until nowadays. It referred specifically to the so-called agro-military policy, which consisted of settling peasants in the remote areas of the empire

When he is united, divide him [亲而离之].

Attack where he is unprepared [攻其无备];

sally out when he does not expect you [出其不意].

these are the strategist's key to victory [此兵家之胜].

It is not possible to discuss them beforehand [不可先传也].[329]

Information and deception, then, were connected to an overarching strategic element that characterized the Chinese strategic thought: the exploitation of the *shi* 势. Besides its tactical significance, explained below, at the political level, *shi* was considered one of the three "cardinal precepts" of the Legalist school. Along with the words *fa* 法 (law), *shu* 术 (art or technique), *shi* described the existence of a "strategic advantage." Therefore the word *shi* was born first within the political environment and then exported to the military one. Its importance does reside not only on its meaning, but also on the ultimate significance that it carries; by being both a political as well as a military instrument, *shi* represented the strategic element that connected politics with war, since it became necessary to design the right

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to both cultivate the land and embrace arms in times of war. These were the typical agricultural military colonies whose actions clearly reflected the fusion of the civil with the military activities as illustrated in the first part of this chapter's second section. Sunzi and Samuel B Griffith, *The Art Of War*, p. 66.

[329] *Ibid.*, pp. 66-70

strategy in order to exploit the manifestation of a specific "strategic advantage."[330]

Trying to connect these major ideas with the central principle of finding out the origin of the people's war doctrine, I can assume that this is already one important theoretical asset towards that direction. The people's war concept, in fact, heavily relies on flexibility, since it is a key strategic element which strongly characterizes Chinese strategic culture. The *quanbian* concept, therefore, brings us to a more coherent understanding of how China had waged war in history. This strategic concept, moreover, is far from the dichotomous relationship of defensive-offensive paradigm, which so far had played a significant role in the study of other countries' strategic culture.[331]

In fact, these military strategies, during the Warring States period, made Chinese strategic culture a real strategic asset rather than a merely general strategic posture. Chinese way of warfare "is … a striking examplar of the new art of militant mobilization for defense."[332] Moreover, even if Fairbank fell into the defense-offense theoretical trap – that is, the

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[330] Roger T Ames, *The Art Of Rulership*, 1st ed. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), p. 65. The emphasis on the role of *shi* for strategic reasons can be found in several other military treatises besides Sun Tzu's the Art of War. Some of those texts that fully take into consideration the relevance of this phenomenon are: Sun [孙] Bin [膑], *Sun Pin. La Strategia Militare*, 1st ed. (Milano: BUR, 2004); Yang [鞅] Shang [商] *The Book Of Lord Shang [Shang Jun Shu - 商君书] With The Commentaries By Shi Lei* 石磊 Zhong [仲] Guan [管] and Shan [山] Li [李], *The Annals Of Guanzi [Guanzi - 管子]*.

[331] See the literature review on Chinese strategic culture in chapter one.

apparently Chinese tendency to prefer "defense [over] offense … [which, in turn,] stresse[d] the exhausting of an attacker or the pacification of a rebel as less costly than their extermination," – at the same time his findings point to another direction, that is, that China has historically emphasized the application of "attritional warfare over offensive warfare with the goal of annihilating the enemy."[333]

Strategic asset which had also been applied in other military theaters, such as the maritime context, where China, while conducing military expeditions against pirates and other adversaries, applied the same strategic concept that shaped their land strategy: (*jianbi qingye* 坚壁清野), meaning "strengthen the walls and clear the fields;" that is, an attempt to concentrate all material resources, such as food, manpower, etc, inside the city walls in order to "starve out the attackers."[334]

2.2.3. Third Level of Analysis: Tactical Design of People's War

At the tactical level, the Warring States adopted a truly totalitarian mentality.[335] The organization of the army, in fact, clearly reflected this new

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[332] John Fairbank, "Introduction: Varieties Of The Chinese Military Experience", in *Chinese Ways In Warfare*, p. 1

[333] Lawrence Sondhaus, *Strategic Culture and Ways of War* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 98

[334] John K. Fairbank, "Introduction: Varieties Of The Chinese Military Experience", in *Chinese Ways In Warfare*, pp. 25-26.

[335] Tai [太] Gong [公], "Tai Gong's Six Secret Teachings [Tai Gong Liu Tao - 太公六韬]", in *The Seven Military Classics Of Ancient China*.

tendency. Soldiers now had to perform military operations as a one body. In order to achieve this, the commander had to establish an intimate relationship with the soldiers. As briefly described in the civil-military section, one of those elements that had been used for such a purpose was the adoption of a "transformed sexual imagery of warfare, in which the celebration of masculine courage and strength was replaced by the model of feminine obedience and compliance." In doing so, warfare had to become a fully "collective enterprise that aimed at forging large numbers of men into an integrated body in which each part was subservient to the whole, and the whole was immediately responsive to the commander's will."[336]

Sometimes, this psychological as well as military unity, that is, total submission to the general's will as well as denial of personal initiatives in war, was achieved through actual extreme military actions, that is, placing the troops "in a situation in which they had no choice but to fight or die." In the Warring States period, in fact, there are several historical records that show how "commanders consciously employed stratagems, including maneuvering the army into positions where retreat was impossible, to elicit a psychology of desperation in which the troops had no choice but to fight." This tactical measure illustrates the fact that sometimes the warring states were not able to implement the "one-mind policy," however, at the same time it illustrates the centrality of the general as the supreme leader in war and the passive role of the soldiers.[337]

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[336] Mark Edward Lewis, *Sanctioned Violence In Early China*, p. 104.
[337] *Ibid.*, 106

In the aftermath of the unification of the country by the Qin, there happened, for example, in 202 BC a famous battle in which this tactical maneuver was widely applied, becoming one of the paradigmatic symbols of the Warring States way of waging warfare. Specifically, general Han Xin (韩信), during the battle of Jingxing (井陉) decided to display his troops for war in a very dangerous position, that is, with their backs facing the river (*bei shui chen* 背水陈), therefore without any route to escape. Such a measure was seen by the opposing Zhao forces as an ill-conceived maneuver, therefore giving them the perception to be about to gain an easy victory over Han Xin. However, Han Xin's army, because of this weird condition, was encouraged to fight even harder, managing to stop Zhao's forces. Moreover, Han Xin proved to be a devoted military scholar by making the enemy advance while ordering his special troops (*qi bing* 奇兵), that is, a cavalry, to attack Zhao's rear, therefore delivering a fatal blow to Lord Cheng An who found death next to the banks of the river where his enemy had displayed his forces.

This tactical measure, though very risky, represented the perfect application of the teachings of the military classics whose denial would lead to defeat. In fact, Lord Cheng An (成安君), in a previous encounter, refused to cut Han Xin supply lines (a measure that could have given Zhao an enormous military advantage) because, as reported in the *Shi ji*, he was a Confucian [*ru zhi ye* 儒者也], so he believed that a righteous army [*yi bing*

义兵] does not employ deceptive stratagems and irregular plans [*zha mou qi ji* 诈谋奇计].

After obtaining victory, many of the officials questioned Han Xin about the very unorthodox measures that he had adopted. And he clearly replied: "in the art of war does it not explicitly say 'to entrap in a deadly position in order to live [*chen zhi si di er hou sheng* 陷之死地而后生], to set a dangerous situation in order to preserve life [*zhi zhi wang di er hou cun* 置之亡地而后存]?[338]

In addition to this type of troops mobilization and disposition, another central characteristic of the tactical planning envisaged the establishment of particular forms of armies enabled to perform "heavy" as well as "light" military actions. The heaviness referred to the ability to move a big army against specific enemy's targets, such as city walls. The lightness, instead, referred to the principle of flexibility (*quanbian*) illustrated above, whose objective was to scatter the army in smaller units, like the famous five-men squads (*wu* 伍), in order to swiftly attack the enemy through surprise attacks as well as subversive actions.

The combination of these two opposing forces, as well as others, characterized the overall Chinese ancient military thinking as well as the contemporary. As Sun Tzu explained, they represented the intimate laws

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[338] Qian [迁] Sima [司马], *Records Of The Great Historian [Shiji - 史记]*, chap. 92, pp. 2615-2617; see also Anping [安平] Qiu [秋] and Jialu [嘉璐] Xu [許], *Records Of The Great Historian [Shi Ji - 史記]*, 1st ed. (Shanghai [上海]: Chinese Language Great

governing warfare for which the commander, because of its "unchallenged and absolute" leadership in war, had to develop a sophisticated *quan* 权 – balancing – which referred to the commander's ability to balance his military decisions between all those dichotomies existing in nature. On this basis, other two bipolar combinations deserve a closer scrutiny; one is the relationship between "emptiness" and "fullness" (*xu shi* 虚实), while the other, even more important, is the "normative" and "extraordinary" binomial (*zheng qi* 正奇).[339]

The first pair is well illustrated in the sixth chapter of Sun Tzu's work, often translated as "Weaknesses and Strengths." The underlying assumption is that a commander should be able to understand when to attack the weak spots of the enemy's army and when defending against his strengths: "[be] certain to take what you attack is to attack a place the enemy does not protect. [Be] certain to hold what you defend is to defend a place the enemy does not attack." But at the same time, the exploitation of these dichotomy refers to the ability of the commander to pursue a deceptive warfare, in order to confuse the enemy's plans, and leading him towards an assured defeat: "subtle and insubstantial, the expert leaves no trace; divinely

mysterious, he is inaudible. Thus he is master of his enemy's fate."[340] Only through swift maneuvers, a commander could "make the enemy see my strengths as weaknesses and my weaknesses as strengths while I cause his strengths to become weaknesses and discover where is not strong … I conceal my tracks so that none can discern them; I keep silence so that none can hear me."[341]

In the history of the Warring States, among the several examples, two formidable cases, which describe the concrete application of deceptive methods, stand out. The first one is the combination of deception and tactical maneuvers that Tian Dan had employed, during the Warring States period, in order to defeat his opponent state of Yan, which was threatening the security of his state Qi. Tian Dan moved into two directions. The first one focused on spreading false news to induce his enemy to act in a way that would have damaged its military preparations.[342] The second direction was

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factors, such as "'fear and shame' or 'many and few,' that would affect the conduct of battle." *Ibid.*, p. 118

[340] In Chinese this crucial phrase is structured in the following terms: "微乎微乎! 至于无形; 神乎神乎! 至于无声, 故能为敌之司命。" I decided to report it in full in order to highlight one specific linguistic element: the two expressions *wei hu wei hu* 微乎微乎 and *shen hu shen hu* 神乎神乎 both represent a hymn that could be translated in the following terms: "Oh great subtlety" and "Oh great divinity (in relation to the perfect execution of subtle military actions)." These expressions, then, seem to emphasize the divine nature of the warfare enterprise.

[341] Sunzi and Samuel B Griffith, *The Art Of War*, pp. 96-97.

[342] The news that Tian Dan started to spread were the following: the first one meant to create chaos inside the Yan court about the nomination of a new general with the task to subdue the state of Qi. By exploiting the enmity between the new king of Yan and the general Yue Yi, he avoided that the latter could be appointed as commander for the military operations against Qi. The second deception concerned the way he

the actual tactical deployment that he created in order to face Yan's aggressive warfare. He, first of all, feigned surrender by hiding the troops and by putting all the children, women, and elders in front of the city gates. This inevitably increased the self-esteem of Yan troops, which then grew excessively confident about their imminent success. But Tian Dan, at the same time, was preparing the "oxen tactic." That is, after collecting more than one thousand oxen from the people of the city, he decided to dress them with red clothes, to put blades on their horns, and inflammable material on their tails, in order to throw them against the Yan troops which, caught unprepared, immediately scattered due to the feeling of fear that spread among the troops after encountering a thousand oxen with flames on their tails and blades on their horns. Then, in addition to that, five thousand men were sent to pursue the fleeing enemy. This historical account and

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organized the internal resistance of Qi against Yan in three steps. First of all, he asked his fellow citizens to make sacrifices for their ancestors with food in their courtyards in order to attract many birds. Their presence was then exploited by Tian Dan to acclaim that the city was full of birds because the spirits came to support the city. Secondly, he started to spread the news that the state of Yan had ordered to cut the nose of every Qi citizen that fell prisoner and show it to everybody in order to intimidate them and therefore capture the city. This news on one hand encouraged Yan to do so (believing that such a behavior could really lead to the conquest of the city), while on the other it enraged the people of Qi, which now called for revenge. The same happened with the third misinformation, through which Tian Dan spread the news that the state of Yan was about to open the graves of Qi's ancestors so as to destroy Qi's citizens. Yan promptly did so, still believing that this could be a valuable tactic, however, their action ended up enforcing Qi citizens' hate and anger.

Yan's defeat due to deceptive measures cost it the hegemony of the area, with several cities under its control revolting against its rule.[343]

But what is quite relevant about this historical event is the commentary that the historian Sima Qian provided at the end of the chapter:

Normal soldiers should be used for the initial engagement with the enemy, but achieving victory resides only on the use of special troops [*yi qi sheng* 以奇胜]. Those skilled in the use of the military set out the implementation of the extraordinary in endless ways [*chu qi wuqiong* 出奇无穷]. The normal and the extraordinary mutually transform in a circular

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[343] Qian [迁] Sima [司马], *Records Of The Great Historian [Shiji - 史记]*, chap. 82, pp. 2453-2457; see also Anping [安平] Qiu [秋] and Jialu [嘉璐] Xu [許], *Records Of The Great Historian [Shi Ji - 史記]*, pp. 1067-1069. The idea of using deceptive methods regarding one's own city, such as the ones described above, constituted a relevant tactical asset, widely employed in Chinese history. Because of its frequent use, many military theorists analyzed this tactical measure, but one thing is to explain how to use the so-called "empty fortification" tactics, quite the other is to explain how to prevent the enemy from adopting it. Only the Tai Gong treats this argument. King Wu asked Tai Gong: "how can I know whether the enemy's fortifications are empty or full, whether they are coming or going?" Tai Gong replied: "listen to see if his drums are silent, if his bells make no sound. Look to see whether there are many birds flying above the fortifications, if they were not startled [into flight]. If there are no vapors overhead, you will certainly know the enemy has tricked you with dummies. If the enemy forces precipitously go off – but not very far – and then return before assuming proper formation, they are using their officers and men too quickly. When they act too quickly, the forward and rear are unable to maintain good order. When they cannot maintain good order, the entire battle disposition will be in chaos. In such circumstances quickly dispatch troops to attack them. If you use a small number to strike a large force, they will certainly be defeated." Tai Gong's Six Secret Teachings [Tai Gong Liu Tao - 太公六韬]", in *The Seven Military Classics Of Ancient China*, p. 88.

way [*qi zheng hai xiangsheng* 奇正还相生], like a ring which has no beginning nor end. When you start, be like a young girl, leaving the house doors wide open to the enemy; afterwards, be like a rabbit that escapes very fast, so that the enemy cannot chase: this is what Tian Dan taught us![344]

The second historical example also tried to employ camouflage during night military engagements. As illustrated in the first chapter, this historical case refers to the military confrontation between the state of Qi and state of Wei in 341BC. Qi's leader, Sun Bin, tried to win over the state of Wei by using the same misinformation that had previously damaged the image of the state of Qi. In other words, among the Warring States, it was believed that Qi was a coward state that always shied away from battle. Sun Bin, then, was determined to use this misinformation in order to lure Wei into a false military maneuver. Therefore Sun Bin "ordered that when the Ch'i army crossed the borders and entered Wei, they should on the first night build one hundred thousand kitchen fires, on the following night fifty thousand, and on the third thirty thousand. P'ang Chuan [Wei State commander] marched for three days and, greatly pleased, said: 'I have always been certain that the troops of Ch'i were cowards. They have been in my country for only three days and more than half of their officers and

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[344] Qian [迁] Sima [司马], *Records Of The Great Historian [Shiji - 史记]*, chap. 82, p. 2456; see also Anping [安平] Qiu [秋] and Jialu [嘉璐] Xu [許], *Records Of The Great Historian [Shi Ji - 史記]*.

soldiers have deserted!'" Through this stratagem Sun Bin was able to deceive P'ang Chuan who decided to attack his enemy without the heavy infantry, meeting with a sound defeat.[345]

The second dichotomy referred to the combination of the normative with the extraordinary (or indirect approach). The application of these opposing forces represents one of the fundamental pillars of Chinese way of warfare. Specifically, it focused on the ability to combine normal or regular troops with the special ones according to the different military circumstances. The combination of the two, moreover, has been widely conceptualized in order to increase the level of expertise but also the level of flexibility. With the normal troops, according to Sun Tzu's suggestions, a commander should engage in battle. With the extraordinary, instead, the commander should employ special troops with the objective to attack his flanks and take him by surprise.

Generally in battle use the normal force to engage; use the extraordinary to win.

Now the resources of those skilled in the use of extraordinary forces are as infinite as the heavens and earth; as inexhaustible as the flow of the great rivers.

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[345]Edward S. Boylan, "The Chinese Cultural Style Of Warfare", *Comparative Strategy* 3, no. 4 (1982): 356; see also Qian [迁] Sima [司马], *Records Of The Great Historian [Shiji - 史记], chap. 65, pp. 2161-2170 and Anping [安平] Qiu [秋] and Jialu [嘉璐] Xu [訓], *Records Of The Great Historian [Shi Ji - 史记].

For they end and recommence; cyclical, as are the movements of the sun and moon. They die away and are reborn; recurrent, as are the passing seasons.

The musical notes are only five in number but their melodies are so numerous that one cannot hear them all.

The primary colors are only five in number but their combinations are so infinite that one cannot visualize them all.

The flavours are only five in number but their blends are so various that one cannot taste them all.

In battle there are only the normal and extrordinary [sic] forces, but their combinations are limitless; non can comprehend them all.

For these two forces are mutually reproductive; their interaction as endless as that of interlocked rings. Who can determine where one ends and the other begins?

One of the direct application of this combination concerned the use of light troops as well as horsemen to attack the enemy where he least expected it, such as, for example, the flanks and the rears: "for if he prepares to the front his rear will be weak, and if to the rear, his front will be fragile. If he prepares to the left, his right will be vulnerable and if to the right,

there will be few on his left. And when he prepares everywhere he will be weak everywhere."[346]

These military recommendations found, practically, an operational revolution, which occurred in the actual process of military organization, with the establishment of the crack troops. "These served as the core of the Qi army, though supplemented by peasant levies in the event of major campaigns."[347] The crack troops were very small and elitist groups of warriors employed for lots of different purposes; that is, from special operations to simple bodyguard activities. They became, in other words, the specialized group of warriors that had to perform those military operations which, during the Spring and Autumn period, were the major objective of infantry, which was composed mainly by lower population and peasants. During that period, in fact, infantry had been employed, besides pitched battles of course, for "skirmishes, storming cities, night battles, or battles against non-Hua peoples who often fought on foot in mountainous or watery terrain."[348] Moreover, the creation of this elitist group went along with the introduction of cavalry for special operations as well; "under constant pressure from mounted steppe horsemen, various perceptive commander and rulers realized the need to develop their own cavalry."[349]

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[346] *Ibid.*, p. 98
[347] Michael Loewe and Edward L. Shaughnessy, *The Cambridge History of Ancient China*, p. 616
[348] *Ibid.*, p. 620
[349] Ralph Sawyer, "General Introduction And Historical Background", in *The Seven Military Classics Of Ancient China*, p. 12

Its military performance consisted of executing attacks on "undefended spots, pursuing fleeing soldiers, cutting supply lines, destroying bridges or ferries, ambushing unprepared troops, taking the enemy by surprise, burning stores and pillaging markets, and disturbing agriculture or kidnapping peasants. In short, cavalry were employed in skirmish, reconnaissance, ambush, and pillage, but they were of no use in pitched battles against a prepared enemy force or defensive position."[350]

Moreover, in addition to the crack troops and the cavalry, where the latter was introduced into the Chinese warfare system because of the influence of Inner Asian peoples, the Chinese, still for the same imitative reasons, introduced also the crossbow, during the fourth century BC.

These important tactical innovations stimulated several thinkers to evaluate the correct approaches to warfare. However, the necessity to reach flexibility during the campaign, flexibility that these tactical means further enhanced, made other important military thinkers reach the same tactical evaluations of Sun Tzu's. The *Sima Fa*[351], for example, advocated that "all war is expedient assessment," while the *Sun Bin Bingfa*[352] emphasized that "the way of military action had four aspects: formations, power of circumstances, changes, and expedient assessment." The Wei Liaozi[353] also

[350] Loewe and Edward L. Shaughnessy, *The Cambridge History of Ancient China*, p. 624
[351] Fa [法] Sima [司马], "The Methods Of The Minister Of War [Sima Fa - 司马法]", in *The Seven Military Classics Of Ancient China*.
[352] Sun [孙] Bin [膑], *Sun Pin. La Strategia Militare*.
[353] Liao [撩] Wei [尉], "Wei Liao Zi [尉撩子]", in *The Seven Military Classics Of Ancient China*.

articulated the importance of the expedient assessments to be included in the attack, defense, and warfare in general.

In order to emphasize the centrality of the *quan* and its associated concept of flexibility, in several Warring States texts, such as the Heguanzi, armies are described as "arrows, thunder, lighting, or flowing water."[354] The same occurs also in the Wei Liaozi, in which the army is conceived both as a heavy instrument, to act like a mountain, or a light one like a flame[355]: "it crushes the foe like a stone wall or swirls over him like clouds; it moves like wind and rain, like an arrow shot from a crossbow, or like a whirlwind."[356] The comparison of the army with water, which has been used to emphasize flexibility, is, therefore, a recurring theme among several texts.

For example, Sun Tzu very often highlighted the importance of moving armies like water. And to be like water, *shi* 势 is the means to achieve the form of fluidity; a form that could even carry off rocks:

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[354] Heguanzi. and Dian Lu, *Heguanzi*, (Taibei: I wen, 1965), cited in Mark Edward Lewis, *Sanctioned Violence In Early China*, p. 110.

[355] During the Warring States period the combination of the opposites became central as expressed also by the philosophical principle of yin and yang. So all the elements listed above respond to this relationship: the heavy is combined with the light for an efficient military conduct; the strength in battle is combined with the "feminization of combat", that is, the idea that soldiers should be completely devoted to the general's will; and finally, the combination of *yin* and *yang* was also linked to the periods of the year in which it was possible to wage war. Warfare was then "restricted to autumn and winter, the seasons of death, but also the period of the year when the feminine *yin* was in the ascendant, so the appearance of warfare was associated with the decline of the masculine and the rise of the feminine." Lewis, 112

[356] Liao [撩 Wei [尉], "Wei Liao Zi [尉撩子]", in *The Seven Military Classics Of Ancient China*.

The ultimate in disposing one's troops is to be without ascertainable shape [*gu xing bing zhi ji, zhiyu wuxing* 故形兵之极，至于无形]. Then the most penetrating spies cannot pry in nor can the wise lay plans against you.

It is according to the shape that I lay the plans for victory, but the multitude does not comprehend this. Although everyone can see the outward aspects, none understands the way in which I have created victory. Therefore, when I have won a victory I do not repeat my tactics but respond to circumstances in an infinite variety of ways [*gu qi zhan sheng bu fu, er ying xing yu wuqiong* 故其战胜不复，而应形于无穷].

Now the army may be linked to water [*bing xing xiang shui* 兵形象水], for just as flowing water avoids the heights and hastens to the lowlands, so an army avoids strength and strikes weakness.

And as water shapes its flow in accordance with the ground, so an army manages its victory in accordance with the situation of the enemy.

And as water has no constant form, there are in war no constant conditions [*gu bing wu chang shi, shui bu chang xing* 故兵无常势，水不常形].

Thus one able to gain victory by modifying his tactics in accordance with the enemy situation may be said to be divine.

Of the five elements [water, fire, wood, metal, and earth][357], none is always predominant; of the four seasons, none lasts forever; of days, some are long and some short, and the moon waxes and wanes.[358]

The metaphor of water, moreover, expressed the importance of dynamism and flexibility in war. In fact, among the recurrent themes of most of the military treatises, the word *shi* is the one that had been widely used for the meaning it carried. In fact, it represented, besides its strategic significance illustrated above, an important tactical asset. It referred to military circumstances "in a dynamic sense. It indicated not a static arrangement or scene, but a fluid, dynamic configuration and its inherent tendency or inertia. In the military context *shi* referred to the power imparted to an army by the circumstances of the campaign: the lay of the land, the spirit of the troops, the condition of the enemy, and the dispositions of the

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[357] The five elements represent an important spectrum of the overall Chinese philosophical theory. In fact, the number five recurs with a certain frequency in many military texts, and Sun Tzu is not an exception. In the Art of War, for example, along the five elements, there are the "five factors of the art of war" (Chap. One Estimates); "five matters" that could lead to victory (Chap. Three Offensive Strategy);"five musical notes," "five primary colors," "five cardinal tastes," (Chap. Five Energy); "five advantages," "five dangerous qualities of a general," (Chap. Eight The Nine Variables); "five ways for fire attacks" (Chap. Twelve Attack by Fire); "five classes of spies" (Chap. Thirteen Employment of Secret Agents). As it can understood from this short description, the number "five" had been widely used, this is because there was a consolidated tendency to associate warfare with art and philosophy and not simply with the technical nature of warfare.
[358] Sunzi and Samuel B Griffith, *The Art Of War*, pp. 100-101

two armies."[359] Sun Tzu, in fact, illustrates the peculiarity of the application of *shi* in the following terms:

> Apparent confusion is a product of good order; apparent cowardice, of courage; apparent weakness, of strength. Order or disorder depends on organization; courage or cowardice on circumstances; strength or weakness on dispositions.
>
> Thus, those skilled at making the enemy move do so by creating a situation to which he must conform; they entice him with something he is certain to take, and with lures of ostensible profit they await in strength.
>
> Therefore a skilled commander seeks victory from the situation [*qiu zhi yu shi* 求之于势] and does not demand it of his subordinates. He selects his men and they exploit the situation [*gu neng ze ren ren shi* 故能择人任势].[360]

But it is the Huainanzi that fully explains the different patterns of *shi* and how it should be interpreted and therefore exploited:

> In military preparations there are three types of strategic advantages and two kinds of authority. There is the

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[359] Mark Edward Lewis, *Sanctioned Violence In Early China*, p. 117

[360] Sunzi and Samuel B Griffith, *The Art Of War*, pp. 92-93

advantage of morale, the advantage of terrain, and the advantage of opportunity. When the general is full of courage and shows contempt for the enemy, when his troops are full of courage and excited for war, when the multitude of his army is countless in number and its determination reaches the clouds, when its morale is like a wind of storm and its battle cries sound like thunder, when sincerely throw themselves against the enemy with all their power, that this is recognized as a morale advantage (*qi shi* 气势). Precipitous passes, narrows, high mountains, known strategic locations, spiraling approaches, basins, snaking roadways, bottlenecks, places where one man could defend a strategic pass and a thousand enemy would not there crossing, that is called a terrain advantage (di shi 地势). Taking advantage of the enemy's fatigue, their negligence and disorder, their hunger and thirst as well as the cold and the heat, moving forward to shake them and pressing them on their weaknesses, that is called an opportunity advantage (yin shi 因势).[361]

According to this crucial element, in one of the most famous pages of Sun Tzu, for example, we can find a clear and meticulous description of how to plan and execute a tactical disposition (in fact his chapter's title is

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[361] Huainanzi, *Huainanzi [*淮南子*]*, chap. 15, pp. 219-235

"Dispositions")[362] and in which the metaphor of water becomes again a central paradigm of the tactical realm:

> Those skilled in war cultivate the Tao and preserve the laws and are therefore able to formulate victorious policies … Now the elements of the art of war are first, measurement of space; second, estimation of quantities; third, calculations; fourth, comparisons; and fifth, chances of victory.
>
> Measurements of space are derived from the ground.
>
> Quantities derive from measurement, figures from quantities, comparisons from figures, and victory from comparisons.
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> *Ho Yen-hsi*: 'Ground includes both distances and type of terrain; 'measurement' is calculation. Before the army is dispatched, calculations are made respecting the degree of difficulty of the enemy's land; the directness and deviousness of its roads; the number of his troops; the quantity of his war equipment and the state of his morale. Calculations are made to see if the enemy can be attacked and only after this is the population mobilized and troops raised.

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[362] Sun Tzu is not the only one to analyze these tactical elements. In most of the Warring States military treatises, in fact, we often come across terms, such as: "power of the circumstance" (*shi* 势); "dispositions (*xing* 形); "expedient assessments" (*quan* 权); and finally the "pivots" (*ji* 机). Mark Edward Lewis, *Sanctioned Violence In Early China*, p. 117.

Thus a victorious army is as a hundredweight balanced against a grain; a defeated army as a grain balanced against a hundredweight.

It is because of disposition that a victorious general is able to make his people fight with the effect of pent-up waters which suddenly released, plunge into a bottomless abyss.

Chang Yu: the nature of water is that it avoids heights and hastens to the lowlands. When a dam is broken, the water cascades with irresistible force. Now the shape of an army resembles water. Take advantage of the enemy's unpreparedness; attack him when he does not expect it; avoid his strength and strike his emptiness, and like water, non can oppose you.[363]

These tactical preparations constituted the foundations for a successful warfare. This is because victory, as Sun Tzu explained, can be known but it cannot be created (*sheng ke zhi, er bu ke wei* 胜可知，而不可为). Therefore a good commander, after making all the necessary calculations, had to put his army in "a position in which he cannot be defeated and misses no opportunity to master his enemy." This means that for a general, to be defined a skilled commander, it is not sufficient to accomplish easy tasks, such as defeating those ones that can be easily conquered. The ultimate ability is to set up the conditions for gaining victory

before the actual military clash has begun: "a victorious army wins its victories before seeking battle; an army destined to defeat fights in the hope of winning."[364] Such a tactical measure that could lead to victory without fighting, besides its strategic level, consists of establishing an impenetrable defense and a powerful attack, that is, through calculation and maneuver, to the extent that combat becomes "the working out of forces and processes already thought through in the mind of the commander"[365]; measures that, if not properly convincing the enemy to surrender, could have instilled on him the fear about the final war outcome to the extent that he could then be defeated.

Specifically, this superior tactical position could have been gained if the commander demonstrated an ability to identify the "pivots" (ji 机). That is, those specific tactical mechanisms through which the commander could exploit immediately the appearance of a new situation, a moment of change, "or more precisely the moment just before a new development or a shift in direction became visible." The commander, therefore, had to demonstrate his ability to feel the presence of these "pivots" right just before they actually manifested themselves. This, in turn, favored the ability to conduct flexible military operations which could have led to the conquest of the enemy without spilling blood.[366] Sun Tzu himself elaborated even further this approach when stating that

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[363] Sunzi and Samuel B Griffith, *The Art Of War*, pp. 88-89.
[364] *Ibid.*, pp. 85-87.
[365] Mark Edward Lewis, *Sanctioned Violence In Early China*, p. 116.
[366] *Ibid.*, p. 119.

"When torrential water tosses boulders, it is because of its momentum [*shi ye* 势也].

When the strike of a hawk breaks the body of its prey, it is because of timing [*jie ye* 节也].

Thus the momentum of one skilled in war is overwhelming, and his attack precisely regulated.

His potential is that of a fully drawn crossbow [*shi ru zhang nu* 势如张弩]; his timing, the release of the trigger [*jie ru ji* 节如机]."[367]

Having set the fundamental analogies between the army, its commander's military vision, and natural phenomena, Sun Tzu explains, then, how an army should behave – tactically – in order to get the full advantages the *ji* provides:

"war is based on deception. Move when it is advantageous and create changes in he situation by dispersal and concentration of forces.

When campaigning, be swift as the wind; in leisurely march, majestic as the forest; in raiding and plundering, like fire; in standing, firm as the mountains. As unfathomable, as the

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[367] Sunzi and Samuel B Griffith, *The Art Of War*, p. 92.

clouds, move like a thunderbolt … weigh the situation then move. He who knows the art of the direct and the indirect approach will be victorious. Such is the art of maneuvering.

In good order they await a disorderly enemy; in serenity, a clamorous one. This is control of the mental factor.

Close to the field of battle, they await an enemy coming from afar; at rest, an exhausted enemy; with well-fed troops, hungry ones. This is control of the physical factor.

The do not engage an enemy advancing with well-ordered banners or one whose formations are in impressive array. This is control of the factor of changing circumstances.

Therefore, the art of employing troops is that when the enemy occupies high ground, do not confront him; with his back resting on hills, do no [sic] oppose him."[368]

The *ji*, therefore, represented the key aspect of the tactical scenario that could not have been underestimated. It became crucial, therefore, "to recognize the pivots of imminent change, to seize the moment of opportunity, and thereby to avail oneself of the natural flow or dynamic of any situation." In an important passage of the Guanzi, we can also find an additional explanation of how the *ji* works and how it should be exploited:

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[368] *Ibid*., pp. 106-110 (Chap. Seven – Maneuver)

"He who listens to the most subtle will be able to hear that which has not yet reached the limit. He who looks at the newest will be able to see that which has no form. He who thinks of the most profound will be able to know that which has not yet begun. If you attack when men are frightened, they will be unable to measure you strength. If you move when you are in the ascendant, then you will gain their treasures."[369]

All these elements, therefore, illustrated the importance of flexibility, knowledge and, above all, the supreme role of the commander, who was fully responsible for the execution of the proper plans for war and therefore for the victory or defeat of his army: "just as his regulations and commands forged the army into a collective body wherein each part was subservient to the pattern of the whole, so his powers of calculation and assessment allowed him to discover the meaningful pattern or order … of the campaign."[370]

One final military example from the history of the Warring States illustrates how most of the above mentioned tactical elements found their condensation during the famous battle of Guiling, fought in 352 BC. King Hui of the state of Wei decided to advance militarily against the state of Qin, in order to recover the lost territories. So Wei's army decided to first attack the state of Zhao in the north. The latter, then, decided to ask Qi for help,

[369] *Guanzi* cited in Mark Edward Lewis, *Sanctioned Violence In Early China*, p. 120
[370] Mark Edward Lewis, *Sanctioned Violence In Early China*, p. 121

because, it was believed that in so doing Wei would find very difficult to fight a two-front war. However, Sun Bin, who was Qi's strategist at the time "advised waiting for the two antagonists to exhaust themselves, thereby ensuring maximum gain with minimum risk and effort." According to this strategic plan "Qi mobilized an army to effect an indirect strike at Wei homeland … in accord with the principles of 'first seize what they love,' 'attack vacuity,' and 'strike where undefended.'"

In the meantime, the state of Wei after reporting several victories over Zhao, decided to move against Qi as the latter expected. "[Qi] feigned concern and withdrew to its chosen battlefield to await the Wei army, thereby following a number of basic tactical principles from Sun-tzu and Sun [Bin], such as 'with ease await the tired.' From its fortified positions and high terrain [Qi] was able to quickly defeat the exhausted Wei army, inflicting severe casualties at minimal cost."[371]

Conclusions

The present chapter illustrated the major elements characterizing the implementation of People's War Doctrine. As already explained, we have to wait for the Maoist period in order to read its actual name. However, even if not mentioned, people's war was already active during the Warring States period. The passage from the Spring and Autumn to the Warring States

symbolizes this paradigmatic shift. In the former period, in fact, warfare was an elitist practice which served the major objective to emasculate the aristocracy, while in the Warring States it completely changed its shape.

In opposition to the masculinization, the process of warfare now encouraged the feminization of the military practice, meaning that soldiers had to thoroughly obey general's orders without question, just as the women fully obeyed their husbands' orders. This, in other words, could be defined as an embryonic form of nationalism that shaped people's engagement to warfare. But the transformative process of warfare critically affected the civil-military relationship, creating a mixture of the two spheres in which one became the mirror image of the other. Peasants had to cultivate their lands, but at the same they had to serve the army and the military cause. This, therefore opened up a new perspective on the mobilization policies which were meant to create, on one hand, an oppressive system for the population control, while on the other they were also trying to promote the virtuous behaviors, such as dedication to agriculture and to all those practices that represented the benefit for the state.

Along with the civil-military fusion, the Warring States period is characteristic both for its strategic as well as tactical development. When it comes to strategy, it became a common practice to theorize a way that could guarantee both offense and defense. At the same time, the emphasis was on deception, since knowledge became the most important element in

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[371] Ralph Sawyer, "General Introduction And Historical Background", in *The Seven Military Classics Of Ancient China*, p. 15.

war; knowledge on both one's own enemy and on oneself. After gaining the right information, one state could search for domination over others through simple deception and deterrent policies that would have reduced the number of military engagements.

At the tactical level, following the previous two sections, the armies were based on deception, flexibility, and irregularity. Through deception, it became a common practice to move the army in different places, even by dividing it into smaller units in order to deceive the enemy. In terms of flexibility, the armies of the Warring States period were mainly based on infantry and cavalry, that is, two very flexible deployments of war. And finally, with the irregularity, the emphasis was on the ability to combine normal military operations with the special ones. The normal were based on the use of infantry for frontal assaults, while the special troops were employed for surprise and night attacks, raiding, and throwing chaos among the enemy's troops.

Therefore, all these elements, civil-military relation, strategic flexibility, and tactical deception and irregularity increased the lethality of the Warring States period, which, in turn, because of its fundamental historical importance, set the stage of what would be later recognized as the People's War Doctrine.

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Chapter Three
People's War during the Tang Dynasty

"Sun Tzu's method

cannot be eliminated

for ten thousand generations."

Li Jing 李靖 (571-649 AD)[372]

The second historical case study under examination refers to the Tang dynasty (618-907 AD). From the Warring States period to the Tang many other dynasties succeeded in Chinese history. After the capitulation of the Qin, which created the first Chinese empire in 221 BC, another important

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[372] Jing [靖] Li [李], "Questions And Replies Between Tang Taizong And Li Weigong [Tang Taizong Li Wengong Wendui - 唐太宗李卫公问对]", in *The Seven Military Classics Of Ancient China*, Ralph Sawyer ed., 1st ed. (New York: Basic Books, 2007).

dynasty that led the country towards an era of prosperity and territorial expansion was the Han dynasty, which, ironically, was founded through a clear application of a people's war operation.[373] The military figure of Liu Bang, in fact, has represented in Chinese history a central figure in the overall Chinese revolutionary philosophy.[374]

However, the dynasties coming out of the end of the establishment of the first Chinese empire heavily relied on the military principles elaborated during the Warring States; "the mighty empire of Han had relied on the administrative structures, legal constraints, mobilisational capability and awesome reputation generated by the Qin First Emperor."[375]

Also the military thinking had been critically affected by the important Chinese heritage. For example, during the Tang, it was *Sunzi bingfa* the most respected military text among the relevant Chinese military treatises

[373] According to this brief account it is evident that in Chinese history many other historical periods could have been valuable analytical "candidates" for the study of the evolution of the People's War Doctrine, since, as explained in the first chapter of this thesis, in Chinese history there had been an abundance of cases responding to the application of the People's War principles, however, for scientific reasons, it was very important to select the real turning points in Chinese history and match those periods against the principles of People's War Doctrine. The major reason for this was the revolutionary character that shaped those periods under examination and that inevitably accompanied also the evolution of the art of war, potentially bringing it to an antithetical position with respect to the People's War principles. Therefore, cases like the Han dynasty military evolution, or the subsequent period of Three Kingdoms on which many scholars already wrote thousands of military analyses, represented more the continuity of past experiences than actual radical shifts in history through which testing the validity of People's War.
[374] Wei Tao [伟涛] Guo [郭], *On People's War [Renmin Zhanzheng Lun - 人民战争论]* (Beijing [北京]: Defence Military Press [jiefangjun chubanshe - 解放军出版社], 1992), chap. 1.

that had been transmitted in the successive generations; "when the histories of the period portray statesmen or generals as quoting from 'military science' (*bingfa*), their words are found more often than not to have been borrowed from *Sunzi bingfa*." However, it should be pointed out that also the other six military treatises played a significant influence on the Tang's military thinking, since those six classics could be regarded as a "single, coherent tradition of military thought" of China. Among the Chinese military classics, for example, it had been widely emphasized the importance of "calculation before battle, the uses of stratagem, surprise, and trickery, the employment of psychological devises to manipulate the soldiery." However, the role played by other ancient texts played a relevant influence, such as, for example, the *Zuo Zhuan* (already cited and analyzed in the previous chapter). One military case described in the *Zuo Zhuan* deserves to be mentioned: in 511 BC the strategist Wu Zixu advised King Helü of the state of Wu on how to defeat the state of Chu by advancing the proposition that "When they come forth, then [we should] withdraw; when they withdraw, [we should] then go forth." As it will be explained in the next chapter when dealing with Mao Zedong's military teaching, it is important to highlight how "this advice continued to influence Chinese guerrilla warriors in the twentieth century."[376]

After having examined the entire Chinese history, I decided, then, that the Tang dynasty represented a better historical case to test the

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[375] John Keay, *China*, 1st ed. (London: Harper Press, 2009), p. 218
[376] David Andrew Graff, *The Eurasian Way Of War,* p. 111-112.

assumptions of the People's War Doctrine for two major reasons: first of all the Tang, more than others, can be regarded as a real turning point in Chinese history. It created, in fact, a stable and prosperous country whose institutional structure, economic model, and for what concerns us here, military strategy would have deeply influenced the successive dynasties, including even the Ming, which historically speaking, has been often associated with China's entrance to modernity, like it was for the Western civilization the discovery of the American continent in 1492 AD, which symbolized the beginning of the modern era in Europe.[377] This, then, demonstrates how the Tang dynasty represented a pivotal historical turn in Chinese history, therefore worth considering for our analysis.

Just to give an example, the famous Ming system of civil examination that had created the modern concept of bureaucracy was not a purely Ming invention. But it was shaped, even if at its embryonic form, during the Sui dynasty, perfected later one with the Tang, and culminating in its highest performance during the Ming.[378] The Tang administration became, therefore, "the basic pattern to be followed by all dynasties up to

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[377] This historical aspect is particularly relevant, since the Tang dynasty, and the associated medieval development the surrounded it, brought Chinese civilization to the threshold of modernity. Mario Sabattini and Paolo Santangelo, *Storia Della Cina*, 1st ed. (Bari: Laterza, 2005), p. 246.

[378] The civil exams, also called "regular exams (*keju*), that were created during the Tang, were divided into several categories, divided into five, among which two stood out as the most important ones: the *mingjing* which allowed students to obtain the "expert of the Classics" degree, while the other, the *jinshi*, allowed students to obtain the "introduced scholar" degree. *Ibid.*, p. 284

the twentieth century."[379] This transformation was further strengthened by the replacement of the old aristocracy with a bureaucracy mainly based on "merit rather than birth," making the civil service examination system the key to such a development.[380]

And not only that. During the Tang territorial expansion, the Tang model, specifically its political institutions, started to be emulated by other peoples, such as the Koreans, the Japanese, Tibetans, and the Eastern Turks.[381]

Moreover, part of its importance belongs also to the cultural transformation that was under process during the Tang. First of all, at the political level, during the Tang "the idea of the integrity of China as a unified empire was firmly established for all posterity."[382]

This idea, however, was the result of two strong and mutually supporting elements: on one hand, the huge migration of people shifting from north to south started to settle around the Yangzi area, therefore exploiting, for the first time, the natural resources through an intensive process. On the other, the new technological innovations adopted for the cultivation of rice "would have determined a further expansion of the

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[379] Witold Rodziński, *The Walled Kingdom*, 1st ed. (London: Fontana, 1991), p. 91
[380] David Andrew Graff, *Medieval Chinese Warfare, 300-900* (New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 19
[381] *Ibid.*, p. 96-97
[382] *Ibid.*, p. 90

economy of the area," becoming in a short period of time, the empire's granary and its economic center.[383]

But the evolution of culture was also the direct result of the seventh century political as well as technological transformations. At the technological level, for example, the Tang period represented the invention of the paper and the printing, even if the "the large-scale printing of books was to wait for the [Song] era." All these inventions, then, started to be spread westward. In addition to that, the Tang dynasty represented the most important period for the evolution of the poetry, which was considered "the most outstanding achievement of these three centuries."[384]

On the other hand, technological innovation affected also other fields, such as the invention of the gunpowder, which then started to be implemented into the military field. Its invention was the direct result of the alchemist experiments carried out by the Taoists in order to find the elixir of immortality. By the end of the Tang era, in fact, we can find the application of the *huoyao* in the military sector, commonly known as the "medicine of fire," which referred specifically to the implementation of gunpowder on the arrows.[385]

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[383] Mario Sabattini and Paolo Santangelo, *Storia Della Cina*, p. 245

[384] Witold Rodziński, *The Walled Kingdom*, pp. 97, 106, 107-108

[385] Mario Sabattini and Paolo Santangelo, *Storia Della Cina*, p. 328. According to Prof. David Graff, *Medieval Chinese Warfare, 300-900*, p. 17, the Tang period, and the Chinese medieval ages in general, did not represent a clear watershed, since, according to the author: "it is not at all clear that medieval Chinese warfare … differed very much from what came before or followed after." While his assumption undermines the idea that the Tang dynasty could be really considered as a turning point, the assertion that nevertheless warfare did not differ from previous eras also

At the cultural level, moreover, the progress also concerned another fundamental aspect of the Chinese civilization and its political development: the creation of a more organized and sophisticated historiography codified into the establishment of the Historical Office, whose "task was to undertake to record the history of the five preceding dynasties and to gather materials for the future writing of the history of the reigning house." This made it, therefore, a sophisticated governmental tool for the record of historical and political events. The historical writing, however, never lost the Confucian principle, that is, that of making the past being studied "not only for its own sake, but also for didactic purposes, to serve as a mirror for the present which would aid, above all, in the achievement of a well-ordered government."[386]

On the other side, at the political level, the seventh century represented the beginning of the Islamic revolution in the Middle East and all the subsequent cultural and religious exchanges with the Tang dynasty and with Asia in general. The same applies also to Buddhism. During the Tang, in fact, we can also acknowledge the precious account of Xuanzang, a Chinese monk, who travelled around Central Asia, exploring different cultures and gaining also a higher expertise on Buddhism, making it an even more sophisticated religious doctrine. Because of his astonishing travels and political influence, Xuanzang managed to become, during the final years of

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strengthen my assumption, since the objective of my thesis is to demonstrate that notwithstanding the presence of a crucial historical turning point, Chinese military tradition still persisted.
[386] Witold Rodziński, *The Walled Kingdom*, p. 108

emperor Tang Taizong, "his spiritual adviser." This honor was confirmed also by Taizong's successor Gaozong who considered Xuanzang "the jewel of the empire." Xuanzang, therefore, became one of the most influential religious and intellectual figures of China and of the Buddhist world; "his works on Buddhist logic and epistemology added a new dimension to the intellectual life of China." And not only that. For example, he is also remembered for another work which was destined to influence Chinese novels: *The Journey to the West* which represented an allegorical tale that described all the travels and the adventures that he undertook in his travels around Asia.[387]

The same also applies to the military field. During the Sui and then the Tang, China experimented the first naval expeditions that would have had for the centuries ahead a profound influence on the Chinese way of planning and implementing naval warfare on the far seas, even if, it should be pointed out, the Chinese empire "in this period had no need for a standing navy and did not bother to maintain one."[388] During this period for these evident military as well as commercial needs China invented "the

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[387] This work is quite important not only for its fictional character. It has also been interpreted by many successive scholars and intellectuals as a political manual: "some readers have interpreted the book, which freely incorporates Confucian, Daoist and Buddhist concepts, as an allegory on the convergence of these 'three schools' of learning. Others, especially Marxists, have read the wayfarers' endless encounters with gods and monsters as evidence of class struggle and the triumph of the proletariat." John Keay, *China*, p. 245

[388] David Andrew Graff, *The Eurasian Way Of War. Military Practice In Seventh-Century China And Byzantium* (London: Routledge, 2016), p. 28.

magnetic compass, the sternpost rudder and watertight bulkheads," which were used for increasing the level of accuracy in navigation.[389]

Along with the technological innovations, at the military level, the Tang dynasty also symbolized the further development of the fortress and siege warfare that had characterized the medieval period both in China and in other areas around the world. Even if some historical accounts are not complete, however, the way these military campaigns had been conducted demonstrate that military sieges constituted an essential, inevitable part of the overall strategic calculation. During the Tang, therefore, siege warfare became one of the new elements of the dynasty's military calculation, representing the foundation of the subsequent sophisticated siege warfare elaborated during the Song dynasty and widely applied in other dynasties as well.[390]

This, therefore, explains why applying western historical paradigms to explain Chinese history does not produce the best results and that a new historical reconsideration should be adopted when dealing with the complexities of Chinese history. In fact, going a step further, after the major evolution of the political and military institutions of the Warring States, Tang dynasty really symbolized a shift in Chinese history, a shift worth studying in order to understand whether People's War Doctrine still maintained its basic principles or if they progressively altered until becoming something else.

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[389] John Keay, *China*, p. 237.
[390] Charles Peterson, "Regional Defense Against The Central Powers: The Huai-Hsi Campaign, 815-817", in *Chinese Ways In Warfare*, Frank Kierman Jr. and John Fairbank ed., (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974), p. 149.

Part of this institutional shift also derived from the influence of the external actors that managed to conquer, as never before, some areas of the country after the collapse of the Han dynasty, creating a "mixed-blood elite that combined the martial prowess of the steppe warrior with Han Chinese traditions of literacy and statecraft."[391] These actors would then form the ruling group "that reunited north and south under the authority of the Sui dynasty," whose members would then constitute part of the Tang establishment.[392] In 534, in fact, during the political turmoil surrounding the demise of the Han dynasty, two small regimes took place: one was the Northern Qi (551-77), founded by a Chinese warlord Gao Huan, while the other was the Northern Zhou (557-81), founded by Yuwen Tai, of Xianbei descent, that is, a proto-Mongol tribe that was located in the northeast, therefore a non-Han political group. But it was the latter "the weaker of the two, [which] proved the more innovative and dynamic." In fact, according to the historical sources surrounding the fate of these short-lived kingdoms, "this largely non-Han regime, headed by a Xianbei elite many of whom spoke non Chinese at all, 'was the anvil on which were forged the structures of power – the economic, political and military institutions – upon which [the Sui-Tang] monolith grew.'"[393]

At the military level, it had been very significant the way Chinese elite decided to respond, and to a certain extent adapt, to the external influences. In general there had been two major responses, one symmetric,

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[391] David Andrew Graff, *The Eurasian Way Of War,* p. 26.
[392] David Andrew Graff, *Medieval Chinese Warfare, 300-900*, pp. 18, 73.

while the other asymmetric. The former referred to the desire to "imitate the effective tactics and techniques of the nomads," such as learning to be professional mounted archers. While the latter referred to Chinese attempt to exploit its superior "strengths in engineering, social organization, and human numbers," which translated into the construction of fortifications and walls.[394]

At the very beginning of his reign, and perfectly in line with the idea and the spirit of continuity that had characterized Chinese history, he decided to reinstall the ancient principles of Confucianism that were developed during the Spring and Autumn period and partly during the Warring States era, however, without success. This was further confirmed by the fact that during the Tang, notwithstanding the important innovations introduced in this period, there still was "a long inheritance from the Legalist statesmen of the Qin dynasty."[395] The elements of innovation that he introduced in China and that would later affect the Sui and the Tang dynasty mainly affected the military field. First of all, in line with his cultural tradition, he "mastered an effective but not numerous cavalry." And in order to contain the external attacks he needed "to organize local recruitment, enlist the loyalty of various rural militia, and raise both the standing of military men and the standard of military training." The military policies proved to be successful to the extent that Emperor Wu of Northern Zhou managed to raise "Twenty-four Armies" through which he achieved the almost complete

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[393] John Keay, *China*, p. 218.
[394] David Andrew Graff, *The Eurasian Way Of War,* p. 154-155.

unification of the north of China. According to the historical records, he controlled an army of 570,000 soldiers that he used against the Northern Qi in 577 AD.

But the great result of the mobilization and of the recruitment process was achieved through a fundamental policy that characterized not only his short regime, but also the Sui and Tang military policy: the introduction of the *fubing* 府兵institution, that is, a particular military system based on the militia forces. Part of its nature is also to be ascribed to the fact that the steppes warfare required the adoption of another type of warfare.[396] Besides its technical and tactical assets that will be discussed in the third section of the second part of this chapter, it is important to immediately highlight that this system had become "the backbone of the Sui and Tang armies."[397] For instance, it is believed that through this system, the Sui managed in 612 to call up 1,133,800 soldiers during the expedition against Koguryo.[398]

At the time of Yuwen Tai, it seems that the *fubing* system was mainly based on infantry rather than cavalry even if the latter constituted a fundamental part of the army. Moreover, this system was also related to an overall tendency to increase "military professionalism and a martial culture." And last but not the least, during this period we can see the development of

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[395] David Andrew Graff, *Medieval Chinese Warfare, 300-900*, p. 20.
[396] *Ibid*., p. 31.
[397] John Keay, *China*, p. 218.
[398] David Andrew Graff, *The Eurasian Way Of War. Military Practice In Seventh-Century China And Byzantium* (London: Routledge, 2016), p. 29

a proper navy for war purposes; a condition that would directly influence the successive dynasties. Generally speaking, it was natural to develop this military system because of the highly fragmented Chinese political scenario. However, this policy proved to be persistent even in times of prosperity and internal stability as illustrated by the history of the Tang dynasty.[399]

This is also related to second fundamental aspect for why I have decided to study the Tang dynasty, that is, Tang economic and institutional development. In strategic studies, it is often demonstrated that economic prosperity had historically run counter to the application of people's war, since the latter has often symbolized the only available military means of the weak. On one hand, this is true. For example, when dealing with the Maoist era, people's war, besides being the fundamental strategic asset of Chinese strategic culture (a key research aspect of the present work), also represented the only asset that Mao could employ, since he lacked a proper army with a proper equipment. In the Chinese case, the first case study (the Warring States) demonstrated not only that people's war was widely conceptualized according to the Chinese way of thinking of war, but that it had also come out of necessity, because of the highly conflictual environment. However, as it will be explained in detail in the following pages, the Tang dynasty demonstrated the opposite, that is, that even a wealthy country with sophisticated military and political institutions could still use an asymmetric instrument of war, such as the People's War Doctrine, strengthening at the same time the concept that this military strategy really

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[399] John Keay, *China*, p. 221.

represented the key strategic cornerstone of Chinese strategic culture, even in times of profound political transformation. On the same theoretical line, also chapter five follows the same approach, since, with the advent of the twenty-first century, China has increased its military and economic potential, paving the way for a "different" China, much stronger, with many other military options, but still relying on the people's war doctrinal framework.

Nevertheless, it is important not to forget that during the Tang there were not professional military schools that could have elaborated a proper military doctrine going under the label of people's war. There were ideas, military thoughts, and strategic visions that then were applied in different military circumstances, to the extent that we can trace some important features of the overall Chinese way of warfare responding to the principles of people's war. In fact, when talking about Chinese strategic culture and how people's war played a major role in Chinese military history, I refer to the Tang period as the "organizational era" within the evolutionary spectrum of this military doctrine – with respect to the "origin era" of the Warring States period. This aspect is further demonstrated by the fact that during China's middle ages, when dealing with history records and the analysis of military decision-making, the narrative relied on the use of previous important writings and military treatises, in order to increase the "*textual* authority."[400]

3.1. Tang Dynasty: A History

The Tang dynasty ruled over China from 618 to 907 AD. But it is undeniable that part of its success had derived from the previous institutional settlements of the Sui dynasty.[401] In fact, the passage from the latter to the former was so immediate that the beginning of the Tang dynasty reign is referred to as Sui-Tang period. The importance of the Sui in shaping the next dynasty cannot be, therefore, underestimated. The Sui, first under the rule of Wendi and then his son, Yangdi, managed to conquer most of the south and part of the north of China.

Territorial aggrandizement represented one of the central aims of the Sui dynasty; "the expansionist policies of the Sui were aimed in many directions." Some of them did end with a clear military victory, others unfortunately were so ruinously conducted to the extent of undermining the entire institutional solidity of the dynasty, paving the way for its ultimate destruction.[402]

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[400] David Andrew Graff, *Medieval Chinese Warfare, 300-900*, p. 8

[401] The Sui dynasty was a short-lived rule of the country; this short duration along with its political reforms "has inclined authors to compare its fate with that of the [Qin]; in both instances the overly ambitious means employed in effecting reunification are said to have been the cause of their downfall." Witold Rodziński, *The Walled Kingdom*, p. 87

[402] Witold Rodziński , *The Walled Kingdom*, p. 89. This historical comparison is, without doubt, one of the central historiographical element of Chinese history and it heats up the debate over the continuity theory of Chinese civilization. Specifically, within the traditional Chinese historiography, there has been the tendency to compare the Sui with the Qin empire and the Tang with the Han empire because, "for ideological and political reasons," it was necessary to downgrade the historical link between Chinese medieval era and the new centralized empire: "the necessity of historically legitimating the new institutional asset within a conception that

Another great section of its political performance resides into the infrastructural projects, which set the stage for the modern China as we came to know it. First of all, *Sui* Yangdi decided to boost the construction of the Great Wall, an enormous infrastructural project that had been started centuries before, but never fully completed until the arrival of the Ming dynasty.[403] The motivation behind this project resided on its northern excursion, in 607 AD, through which he attacked the Ordos, by extending Chinese control well beyond the northern frontier. Through this military expansion he tried to "emulate the Qin and Han in respect of frontier management and wall-building." However, notwithstanding his commitment to this project, the wall as a defense fortification proved insufficient as in the past, making the Sui dynasty commit its human and economic resources to the construction of a useless project.[404]

Another infrastructure, however, did not prove so expensive and ineffective. Sui Yangdi, in fact, financed, at the same time, the construction of a canal with the objective to connect the major rivers, lakes, and other preexisting water means of transportation in order to interconnect the vast

Chinese territory. This infrastructural project came to be known later on with the name of Grand Canal, which represented "without doubt, the grandest navigation system ever undertaken by a single sovereign in pre-modern history." At the time of the Sui dynasty, the transportation of agricultural products represented the fundamental element of the economic development, but also the "strategic necessity for provisioning frontier garrisons and supporting military adventures beyond." Therefore the Grand Canal had undertaken the fundamental role of supporting the overall economic growth, but also of further uniting the country, leveling political and cultural differences:

> The Grand Canal, linking the Yangzi region with its rise surplus to the heavily populated and famine-prone northern plains, thus had a similar effect to the first transcontinental railroads in North America. It made China's economic integration feasible. Disparities of climate, terrain, produce and demographic distribution were suddenly converted into assets. Granaries – which were less mud-built silos than vast installations, walled and guarded, like oil-storage depots – were strategically located along the canal … Along the route, irrigation schemes fed off the canal to increase crop yields, so boosting population figures, tax yields and corvée numbers.[405]

But unfortunately this project brought with itself also several problems that Yangdi was not able to solve, leading to escalation of rebellions and political turmoil. The major obstacles to this project concerned its limited ability to manage the output and the stability of the canal. In fact, the "canal system could distribute only what the farmer could produce." And in case of floods, things became even worse. To aggravate things even more, Yangdi also set up military expeditions against Koguryo, "a reluctant tributary state occupying much of Manchuria and northern Korea." These conditions led to the revolts in 616 AD and the beginning of that political process which led to the establishment of the Tang dynasty.[406]

In the last moments of life, "the people swarmed like bees," with rebellions breaking out throughout the country, but especially in its northern part: "the majority of the insurgents were peasants and their numerous armed bands grew greatly in strength to become merged into two armies, one operating in [Hebei], and the second attacking [Luoyang]."[407]

After Yangdi decided to flee and find refuge in the south, one of his commanders, Li Yuan, duke of Tang, marched with his men towards the city of Chang'an, taking it with no effective resistance. In 618 he proclaimed the establishment of the Tang dynasty. During his short reign (618-626), he devoted most of his energies to quell opposition and trying to put together a fragmented country. At the political level, he "would then adopt, with only

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[405] *Ibid.*, p. 231
[406] John Keay, *China*, p. 234
[407] Witold Rodziński, *The Walled Kingdom*, pp. 89-90

minor adjustments, the entire Sui fiscal, military administrative and legal framework."[408]

Li Yuan took the name of *Tang* Gaozu, which meant "Great Progenitor" and governed the newly born Tang dynasty by trying to unite the country. His son, instead, *Tang* Taizong, became the illustrious emperor who the Tang dynasty became associated with. During his power, China prospered in all fields, from politics and economy to foreign trade and military capacity:

> "contact with maritime Asia through the seaports of the south, which were now restored to the empire, was about to be completed by throwing wide the western 'Jade Gate' into central Asia. Turkmenistan, Tibet, and Persia, no less than Vietnam, Korea and Japan, would fall within the Tang perspective and loom large in imperial policy-making. Still farther afield in India and the Byzantine empire, the political, cultural and productive preeminence of Tang China gained widespread acceptance. Its tolerance of alien belief systems and its enthusiasm for foreign craftsmanship and performances brought a cosmopolitan dimension to urban life … There was now substance to the concept of 'All-under-Heaven' looking up to the Celestial Emperor. It was as if the world had so tilted on its axis as to leave the 'Middle Kingdom' at last in the middle.

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[408] John Keay, *China*, p. 234

The period from *c.* 650 to *c.* 750 would be the first and most convincing 'China century.'"[409]

Along with these cultural developments, under the guidance of the emperor Taizong, Tang dynasty pursued also a military expansion abroad, which, except for a few shortcomings, proved to be "infinitely more successful than the Sui, and the consequence was not disaster, but the creation of an empire still larger than the Han."[410] His first military expeditions were directed against Koguryo (today's Korea). In 645 "Taizong launched a massive assault across the Liao River supported by a naval attack from Shandong. Unusually the emperor led his forces in person, such was the importance he attached to the campaign. Not unusually, 'the whole expedition ended in disaster.'" He tried to plan a second and then a third campaign, but his death, in 649, put an end to his military designs.[411]

Things went much better in Taizong's military planning against the Turks, the Tibetans, and India. When it came to the first one, specifically the Eastern Turks, Taizong managed to subdue them by using a combination of force and deception, obliging them to recognize Tang dynasty suzerainty. With the northern frontier now secure, Taizong planned his next military moves against the Western Turks. By applying the same "mix of intrigue and force" he managed to submit them to Tang suzerainty. These proved to be real military successes, since previous Sui rulers, including also his father,

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[409] *Ibid.*, p. 235
[410] Witold Rodziński, *The Walled Kingdom*, p. 95.

did not manage to subdue them. Thanks to these wide military accomplishments, Taizong added to his political figure, then, also the title of "Heavenly Qaghan."[412]

On the other strategic front, the emperor managed to reach simultaneously success in the Indian subcontinent and in Tibet, by exploiting the positive circumstances that presented themselves from 648 onwards. First of all, Taizong managed to gain favorable diplomatic agreements with the Tibetan regime. This particular case was represented by the rare circumstance in which the Tibetans were fighting Chinese forces not to keep them out of their territory, but to "secure closer relations with them, or rather to secure parity of treatment with that extended by Chang'an to their local rivals." And this, in effect, led to the "peace-through-kinship" treaty between China and Tibet in 641, which even if cooled their diplomatic relationship, at the same time created a dangerous misunderstanding, since the subsequent diplomatic exchanges were recognized by the Tibetans as "evidence of Tang vassalage and [by the] Tang as evidence of Tibetan vassalage."[413]

Nevertheless, this did not stop both actors to join their forces and move against what was, at the time, their common enemy: India. The latter had managed to attract both Chinese and Tibetans enmity due to its opposition to Buddhist political actions, which had been previously promoted by a Chinese monk, Xuanzang, who had been traveling around Central and South Asia. Harsha-vardhana of Kanauj, who reached imperial control over

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[411] John Keay, *China*, pp. 237-239
[412] *Ibid*., p. 242

the Hindu-Buddhist kingdoms of north India had died, leaving the country in the hands of a Brahminical opposition which threw itself against the Buddhist community. Chinese emissary, Wang Xuance, that traveled to India for diplomatic reasons, almost found death. As a consequence, China and Tibet retaliated, creating a "joint Sino-Tibetan force that in 649, probably by way of the Chumbi pass between Sikkim and Nepal, crossed the Great Himalaya and inflicted a heavy defeat on Harsha's successors."[414] Despite the superiority of Chinese forces, and the apparently easy access to the Indian subcontinent, this military action against India was the last one. In fact, we can register the successive Sino-Indian conflict many centuries afterwards, that is, during the famous 1962 Sino-Indian war.

With Taizong, China in general and the Tang dynasty in particular witnessed a great development, both at the economic, political, and military level. During his reign, in fact, the "granaries filled, famine relief was available, and destitution-driven banditry declined, making travel less hazardous." At the political-military level, he "reorganized the *fubing* militias, embarked on a new legal codification that was again supposed to be more lenient and rational than its predecessors." During his reign he, moreover, appointed scribes to write a huge historiographical work, which had to record the major events shaping the dynasty and also the preceding periods. This represented an important shift in the historical writing process, since

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[413] *Ibid.*, p. 243
[414] *Ibid.*, pp. 243-244

previous accounts like the *Shi ji*, for example, it should be remembered, were written by private families or individuals.

After Taizong, the dynasty control was passed on to the ninth of his fourteen sons, Tang Gaozong (649-83). He reigned the country without any success of notice, except for his ability to extend Tang's power westward over the Western Turks. After his death the reign was then distributed to his two heirs, Zhongzong and Ruizong. If it were not for the simple "chronological interest" these two political figures would have been completely forgotten due to their absolute lack of influence. In this period, with no particularly strong historical figures, the political control of the country was actually in the hands of "one who might have ranked among China's most outstanding rulers but for the handicap of gender": the overambitious and unscrupulous empress Wu Zetian, consort of Gaozong and mother of the last short-lived reigns of Zhongzong and Ruizong. During this familiar ineptitude to governance, she managed to preserve the internal peace while also keep alive the huge territorial expansions that had been acquired by Taizong. Besides maintaining the control over the Inner Asian territories, actually extending them even further, she also managed, in 668, to conquer, even if for a short period of time (that is, until 672), the kingdom of Koguryo, the territory on the northeast that had represented for the previous emperors an insurmountable task. After withdrawing from the Korean peninsula, she managed, nevertheless, to fully incorporate the northeastern part of the subcontinent, what would be later on recognized as

the Liaoning province.[415] With the full control of these territories Tang China was indeed "the greatest power in Asia at this time."[416]

Notwithstanding her own military success, Tang dynasty was soon challenged by the ascendance of the Tibetan kingdom and a would-be empire. Soon, after the defeat of the common enemy, Tibet started to develop its own military, administrative and cultural system which symbolized its progressive independence from the Chinese influence. As a result of this expansion, in 660s the Tibetans "pushed outwards, reclaiming the Tuyuhun lands in Qinghai and penetrating into both Sichuan and Xinjiang." By the 670, the Tibetans managed to virtually eliminate "the Chinese presence throughout western Xinjiang and the Pamirs. Chinese troops were frequently dispatched to regain control of the territories, managing to reconquer them only in 692.

Once her political control drew to a close, the reign passed on to Tang Xuanzong, "the dynasty *roi soleil*. Another colossus whose long and mostly glorious reign (715-56) would gild the heights of Tang civilization." Under his rule, the political, economic, and military status of Tang China reached very high standards, to the extent that, thanks to his institutional reforms, China witnessed one of its most prestigious periods in history. In

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[415] In order to preserve this territory, she employed the same tactical and strategic techniques that represented Chinese way of warfare. however, Koguryo was not a steppe-land "from which the enemy could simply be driven off. Its proud and bounteous kingdoms proved as costly to hold as they had been to take." *Ibid.*, p. 261
[416] Jacques Gernet, *A History Of Chinese Civilization*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) in John Keay, *China*, p. 245

fact, historically speaking, the end of Xuanzong's reign was later on associated with the end of the so-called High Tang.[417]

Even if his reign proved to be one of the most prosperous, however, after a couple of decades of his political control, his empire was directly challenged by another formidable foe: the Arabs and their Islamic expansion. In few decades after the Prophet's death Islam had easily reached central Asia. This created a strategic problem for China which, even if encouraging its "Western Turk *jimi* [control by loose rein] to resist the newcomers," could not stop Islamic territorial advance. This therefore culminated in the famous Battle of Talas River in 751 between Tang troops and the Arabs, which ended with the defeat of the Chinese troops. However, the Arabs failed to capitalize on this victory, failing to conquer significant Chinese territories.[418]

The military confrontation with the Abbasid Caliphate, motivated by the new religion, was not the only problem that Tang China under Xuanzong had to face. In fact, soon, another challenge, this time coming from within, would have seriously damaged the country: the An Lushan Rebellion. The reasons explaining this event are multifold, preventing a clear-cut definition of the causes. But the fact that it erupted right at the end of Zuanzong's reign is not a coincidence. In fact, the emperor, now old, could not properly rule the country, paving the way for internal problems that could not be solved. And they were directly related to military affairs: "as the rebellion was

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[417] Jacques Gernet, *A History Of Chinese Civilization*, in John Keay, *China*, pp. 251-253.

essentially factional and military, with neither the credentials of a peasants' revolt nor the dynamic of a messianic movement, its immediate causes may be sought within the mutinous armies of the north-east and the troubled mind of their commander, the redoubtable An Lushan."[419]

An Lushan was a general of both Sogdian and Turkic descent serving the Tang army in the 740s, especially in the frontier areas. Li Linfu, an aristocrat of the Tang court, taking advantage of the precarious physical and mental conditions of the emperor, decided to reorganize the frontier troops according to his own plans and wishes. In fact, he "strengthened the frontier armies still further," to the extent that most of the 600,000 troops found themselves located in the frontier areas. His plan, moreover, tried to "nullify the challenge to his own ascendancy from those who 'went out generals and came in chancellors.'" In order to reach this second objective he replaced the senior military commanders with generals of non-Han origin. And the explanation for this choice was that "they made batter fighters, and being unacquainted with court intrigue, posed less of a threat to the government." Within this reorganization process, An Lushan emerged. He was later on appointed as military governor of Pinglu, an area between Manchuria and Korea. During his control, he achieved significant results, especially at the organizational level, through which "he enjoyed the devotion of his troops. They were better supplied than their counterparts farther west thanks to the Grand Canal's north-eastern extension, and they

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[418] Jacques Gernet, *A History Of Chinese Civilization*, in John Keay, *China*, p. 265.
[419] John Keay, *China*, p. 274

may even have brought a measure of prosperity to the otherwise neglected north-east."

The military and the organizational achievements gave An Lushan the possibility to enjoy the acknowledgment by the emperor who allowed him to enter the court and gave him also a further military promotion that required from him the ability to control the Gansu region where most of the farms were located. This new appointment put An Lushan in a very powerful position, since he "now controlled the vital supply of cavalry mounts." In the meantime, within the emperor's palace, a new minister Yang Guozhong, started to become quite relevant within the dynasty administrative affairs. Fearing the growing popularity of the general at court and also the eventuality that he could gain prestigious political positions inside the palace, in 754, Yang Guozhong "purged the general's agents at court, dismissed potential supporters and floated rumors of rebellion." The year after, in 755, An Lushan, without hesitation, marched with his army towards the capital, which fell quickly since "the new recruits proved no match for the general's veteran *jian'er* and his Manchurian – largely Khitan – auxiliaries."

The emperor, due to this delicate situation recalled most of the frontier armies in order to oppose An Lushan's advance. The year after, in 756, some of the loyalist troops managed to regain Hebei. At this stage, An Lushan decided even to create his own dynasty; "it was to be called Great Yan, Yan being the age-old name for the north-east, where the rebels enjoyed the widest support. The emperor called for a counteroffensive, but were defeated, leaving the capital undefended. On the way to Chengdu, and

with the minister already dead, the emperor was now completely powerless, while the Tang dynasty was moving towards its progressive decline.[420]

Notwithstanding the great achievements of the An Lushan rebellion, the overall Tang political structure remained still intact, however. The rebellion represented a big shock. In fact, during this period, which lasted until 763, Tang dynasty had to recall most of its troops from the outer posts, therefore giving the other peoples the opportunity to reconquer the lost territories. The dynasty remained strong and prosperous, trade with the western regions remained highly appreciated, even if some of the key territories had been lost (or not fully in control by the central government), including also the northeast, where the rebellion had started. And this did not represent the only problem. Part of the beginning of the decline came from within, that is, from the other generals who desired more prestige for having raised arms against the An Lushan rebellion. Therefore, "the Tang restoration was thus offset by a much-diminished authority throughout the remaining empire. Supremacy had become contingent on concessions to the provinces and exploiting the rivalries of their mostly military governors."[421]

In this period of political uncertainties, the reign was handed in to Xuanzong's successor, Tang Suzong (756-762) who had been challenged by old foreign enemies which tried to get advantage of the Tang weaknesses, in order to regain past territories. One of the first actors to

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[420] *Ibid.*, pp. 274-278
[421] *Ibid.*, p. 280

attack the Tang was the kingdom of Nanzhao, located in the southwest, which managed in a few years to occupy most of today's Yunnan. From that time onwards, it would represent a constant military problem, due also to its political ties with the northern part of Vietnam, which would have found in the Nanzhao kingdom the necessary ally for revolting against Chinese rule.

On the western front, the situation proved to be also quite dramatic, with the Tibetan empire challenging the Chinese rule over the western lands; territories like the Xinjiang, Shaanxi and Gansu soon fell into the hands of the Tibetan expansion, which also managed to threaten and subsequently occupy, in 763, the capital Chang'an. The new emperor, *Tang* Daizong (762-79), "thus began with another ignominious flight from the capital." Even if internal problems caused the collapse of the Tibetan empire, its military actions, nevertheless, marked "the end of Chinese administration in Eastern Turkestan [Xinjiang] for almost a thousand years."[422]

The other major problem came, a couple of years afterwards, from those territories of the northeast that remained occupied after the An Lushan rebellion. The successive emperor, *Tang* Dezong (779-805) proved unable to exert a full political control over those territories. The curiosity surrounding the political faith of the northeastern territories was their fascination and subsequent reinstatement of the Warring States period's political and military practices. In fact, according to this reinvigorated historical spirit, their leaders "would compare Tang demands for their submission with those of

the Qin First Emperor when conducing China's first unification." Tang's objective towards these territories remained that one of "sweep clear Hebei," however, without success. Hebei's generals, in fact, confident of their political independence, decided to appoint themselves as "kings" and "named their dynasties Qi, Zhao, Wei and Jin in accordance with Warring States practice."[423]

But this practice was not only confined to the Hebei province area. Also the loyalists, who controlled the capital, started to advocate a return to the ancient practices, since the Tang dynasty, because of its embryonic fragmentation, seemed to have started an unrecoverable decadent path. In a short period of time, in fact, Du You, an intellectual of the legalist school, started to theorize a return to the totalitarian organization of the state according to the Qin political institutions, since the fear of a progressive decentralization proved not to be unfounded. In a few years' time, now under the rule of emperor *Tang* Xianzong (805-820), the central government decided to change policy, by appointing civilian rule in the rebellious regions. This measure, however, despite the initial success, proved ineffective, increasing even more the fragmentation process.

After the death of Tang Xianzong in 820, the country was, again, overwhelmed by several "agrarian and military uprisings, mysterious acts of terrorism and organized smuggling by large gangs." In the second half of the

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[422] John K. (John King) Fairbank, Kwang-Ching Liu and Denis Crispin Twitchett, *The Cambridge History Of China. Volume Three Part One: Sui And Tang China 589-906*, 1st ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), p. 660
[423] John Keay, *China*, p. 283

ninth century, other bandit groups, such as one created in the Zhejiang region, repeatedly defeated the Tang forces that had been sent to suppress the revolt. Immediately afterwards, the south "was transformed … from one of the most stable regions into one of the most volatile."[424]

And these events, connected to other crucial upheavals, paved the way for the final destruction of the dynasty. One of the insurgencies that critically weakened Tang and which was encouraged by the previous actions was the Huang Chao's movement that spread around China in 870s. Huang Chao, a man with intellectual ability (since we know from his biography that he competed in the *jinshi* examination), originally from Shandong, joined the local bandit groups, becoming ultimately their leader. His military actions immediately targeted Luoyang. The Tang army reported a victory in 878, forcing the rebels' leader to undertake "one of the most outrageous peregrinations in history." After the military engagement he led his men south, until reaching the area of Guangzhou (Canton), that he captured. In 879, he moved again north. These long marches allowed him to swiftly move around the country, managing in the end to capture Chang'an. The successive emperors proved to be completely impotent and their political power declined very fast until 907, the year in which a new dynasty was announced: the establishment of the Liang dynasty.[425]

3.2. People's War During the Tang Dynasty

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[424] *Ibid.*, p. 287

3.2.1. First Level of Analysis: Civil-Military Design of People's War

During the Tang, notwithstanding the profound reforms at both the political and military level, the civil-military relationship proved to be, again, a central framework for the execution of the right military strategy, even if in specific periods of imperial history, like for example, during the Eastern Han, there had been "a clear separation of soldier and civilian."[426] The combination of the civil with the military did even take place during the military campaign, conducted in 617 by Li Yuan, which led to the establishment of the Tang dynasty.[427]

Moreover, throughout the early Tang aristocratic ideal "was to possess both the military skills of the warrior [*wu*] and the literary skills of the civil official [*wen*], and, on the basis of those skills, to be able to serve as either a general in the field or a minister at court [*chu jiang ru xiang*]."[428] For example, when the passage was from the military sphere to the civil one, the most common position occupied by the military men was that of prefect (*cishi*), "governor of the largest regular unit of territorial administration." Vice versa, when the passage was from the civil to the military, those men

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[425] *Ibid.*, pp. 288-290
[426] David Andrew Graff, *The Eurasian Way Of War*, p. 34.
[427] David A. Graff, "The Battle Of Huo-i", *Asia Minor. Third Series* 5, no. 1 (1992): 40.
[428] David A. Graff, "The Sword And The Brush: Military Specialisation And Career Patterns In Tang China, 618–907", *War & Society* 18, no. 2 (2000): 10.

involved in this new position usually "offered strategic advice, drafted documents, and performed essential administrative tasks." In other words, even if they were directly involved with the military sphere, they usually "continued to be associated with administrative responsibilities rather than military command." And this aspect was also evident when dealing with the office of *xingjun sima*, which referred to the "high-level administrator of the armies in the field."[429]

During the Tang, we can distinguish two specific transformations of the civil-military relationship which occurred respectively before and after the mid-eighth century. Specifically, the military leadership of the early Tang period was characterized "by an omnicompetent aristocratic elite whose members moved easily back and forth between civil and military posts." However, by the middle of the eighth century this leadership had been replaced "by military specialists of humble and often obscure origin," that is, professional commanders.[430] Concerning this second transformation, in 747, Li Linfu, the chief minister, proposed to substitute the civil staff in charge of military positions with foreign people with military skills. The idea behind this advice was that barbarians were more "courageous and adept at fighting" while the civil-bureaucrats were not able to undertake military actions.[431] Two figures clearly illustrate this transformation: the first one was Li Shimin, the second Tang emperor who encapsulated both the civil and military role. The second was An Lushan, the leader of the 755 rebellion, named after

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[429] *Ibid.*, pp. 11-13.
[430] *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10.

him, who, because of his martial skills, distinguished himself as a military leader and "in contrast to Li Shimin he was an outsider, half Sogdian and half Turk, who made his career entirely within the military establishment and was almost certainly illiterate."[432]

The military prowess of the non-Chinese has also been considered as the element that favored the outbreak of the An Lushan rebellion. However, even if it is true that non-Chinese introduced new military techniques into the overall Chinese military system, at the same time it should be pointed out that these non-Chinese commanders were widely sinicized, to the extent that they "strived to accept the codes, culture and value of Confucianism."[433] For example, Li Yuan, the founder of the Tang dynasty and descendent of inner Asian culture, followed the Confucian pattern in establishing the new dynasty. Therefore, following the same line, "had An Lushan replicated Li Yuan's feat and initiated a long-lived dynasty after rebelling, An would have been celebrated as a great emperor because dynastic founders conventionally are lionized in traditional Chinese histories."[434]

Nevertheless, during and right after the An Lushan rebellion, the military provinces increased in number. The staff in charge held both the civil as well as the military power. The *jiedushi* – the military governors – "held

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[431] *Ibid.*, p. 16.
[432] *Ibid.*, p. 9-10.
[433] Guogang Zhang, "The Transformations Of The Tang Military System And Social Changes In Medieval China", *Frontiers of History in China* 2, no. 3 (2007): 314.

concurrent authority as civil governors (*guanchashi*), others by civil governors who also held local military authority as 'chief commissioner for military training' or 'chief defense commissioner.' In almost all of the provinces, both civil and military authority resided in the same individual."[435]

The Confucian doctrine, elaborated in the period between the Spring and Autumn and the Warring States, which advocated the civil control of the military, still exerted some influence, at least at the institutional level. As described in the second chapter in the corresponding section, between the *Guoyu* (Discourses of the States) and the *Guanzi* (The Annals of Guanzi) we can find the same phrase, but with two slightly different structures, with profound consequences, however. In fact, in the *Guoyu*, it was emphasized the idea that military commands should reside within the government, implying the idea of a subordination of the military to the civilian. While in the *Guanzi*, written during the Warring States, the same phrase was readapted in order to emphasize the idea that military commands should be lodged within the government, implying the interpenetration between the civil and the military.[436]

The advocacy of a civil control of the military became even more prominent after the end of the An Lushan rebellion. Even if soldiers enjoyed a better remuneration, at the same time "suffered from decreasing social

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[434] Jonathan Karam Skaff, "Barbarians At The Gates? The Tang Frontier Military And The An Lushan Rebellion", *War & Society* 18, no. 2 (2000): 26.
[435] David Andrew Graff, *Medieval Chinese Warfare, 300-900*, pp. 229, 234
[436] See chapter Two, section Civil-Military Relationship.

status."[437] The anti-militarist attitude had, as a direct effect, a paradoxical result: by praising the superiority of the civil over the military, late Tang dynasty's policy actually moved the civil closer to the military, making them even more intertwined. In the late Tang, for example, there are many biographies of bureaucrat-generals "dismissed by the purely military types as mere scholars [*shushing*] who nevertheless succeeded in teaching the soldiers a thing or two." One case in point is offered by the case of the prefect of Huzhou (in today's Zhejiang province), Xin Mi. In 807 he was appointed to put down the rebellion of Li Qi. At the very beginning he was underestimated, since he was a civil bureaucrat. However, the execution of a surprise attack on his opponent made him be considered as a valuable general.[438]

During the Tang, the civil-military affairs reflected the same pattern of philosophical and doctrinal adjustments that had been witnessed during the highly revolutionary historical period of the Warring States, specifically the focus on the "institution of universal military service" and the "Warring States' identification of the farming population as essentially coterminous with the state's reservoir of military manpower." Specifically, this institutional dependence between the civil and the military derives from two aspects of the tradition of Chinese statecraft: the first element referred to the idea that the military establishment "should be largely self-supporting, with soldiers

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[437] Guogang Zhang, "The Transformations Of The Tang Military System And Social Changes In Medieval China", *Frontiers of History in China* 2, no. 3 (2007): 307.
[438] David A. Graff, "The Sword And The Brush: Military Specialisation And Career Patterns In Tang China, 618–907", p. 19.

responsible for their own sustenance when not on active duty in the field."
The second aspect focused on the assumption that the "military service was
no more than a specialized form of the corvée labor duty that was incumbent
on most of the adult male taxpayers."[439]

The general idea of the civil control over the military affairs "was one
of the features that distinguished China's culture from that of its nomadic
neighbors."[440] However, even if this might hold true in general, at least at the
doctrinal and pragmatic level, things were not that clear-cut, since an actual
symbiosis of the two spheres really existed even during the Tang dynasty,
which was characterized by a lesser militaristic environment, at least when
compared to the Warring States.

As a clear manifestation of this intimate relationship, during the reign
of Tang Taizong – who has been recognized as one of the most competent
ruler of Chinese history, whose model would have been imitated by later
generations of rulers as well as by external actors like Japan – the civil
virtues (*wen*) and the military power (*wu*) were intimately intertwined in a
"perfect equilibrium." This was the result of the way Taizong conducted his
foreign policy, which resulted in a balanced combination of diplomacy and
the use of military force.[441]

This combination of the civil with the military was emphasized,
furthermore, in the seventh military classic, in which Li Jing, when replying to
the questions of Taizong, explained that the ancient system of people and

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[439] David Andrew Graff, *The Eurasian Way Of War,* pp. 34-35
[440] John Keay, *China*, p. 259

army administration had to be applied again: "I observe that the Yellow Emperor governed the army according to the methods by which he first established the 'village and well' system." This system, as briefly explained in chapter two, consisted of creating a "well" (*jing* 井) that would have been divided into nine pieces of land through the drawing of four roads (this is what the Chinese character symbolizes), with eight families cultivating the outer eight squares and with the central one left to the general. The same structure had to be adopted at the military level. By following the same pattern, it was advised, that five squares should have been used for "formations," (four squares to the army and the fifth, the central one, assigned to the general) while leaving the other four – corresponding to the four corners – empty. This, in terms of military dispositions, meant displaying the army according to the "well" structure.[442]

At the societal level, the civil-military system focused on how common people had to perform both civilian and martial roles; "troops, whether conscripts or *fubing* (territorial militias), should be farmers-on-horseback and peasants-with-crossbows; generals should be, and usually were, bureaucrats-in-uniform."[443] This also intertwined with the historical Chinese view of warfare, which came to be recognized as a corrective means, "an extension of the penal code from the recalcitrant individual … to

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[441] Mario Sabattini and Paolo Santangelo, *Storia Della Cina*, p. 252, 254

[442] Jing [靖 Li [李, "Questions And Replies Between Tang Taizong And Li Weigong [Tang Taizong Li Wengong Wendui - 唐太宗李卫公问对]", in *The Seven Military Classics Of Ancient China*, p. 327-328

[443] John Keay, *China*, p. 260

all those who dared defy the Heaven-ordained ruler, whether from within the frontier as 'bandits' (that is rebels) or from outside it as 'barbarians' (that is aliens)."[444] Notwithstanding this civil-military relationship, the fact that the *fubing* system came to be recognized as a militia system does not necessarily mean that these troops were of low quality. They actually represented "a special type of professional soldier."[445]

Moreover, like in the Warring States period, military performance was highly appreciated, and often regarded as a means to gain higher bureaucratic positions. In fact, during this period, there was a recurring term used to describe those men that went through this social transformation thanks to their personal military achievements: "went out a general and came in a chancellor" (*chu jiang ru xiang* 出将入相).[446] It is not a coincidence that the book-learning through the bureaucracy was considered to be the key for military success, to the extent that "the military command at the highest levels can be successfully exercised by scholars with no skill at arms and no practical experience in warfare."[447]

These institutional aspects were not only the Chinese product, but also the direct result of the influence of the nomads' way of waging warfare that slowly affected the Chinese way. In fact, one of the major skills that the nomads possessed and that allowed them to conquer China in the future were mainly based the ability "at combining their initial capacity for attack

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[444] *Ibid.*, 260
[445] David Andrew Graff, *Medieval Chinese Warfare, 300-900*, p. 190
[446] John Keay, *China*, p. 259
[447] David Andrew Graff, *Medieval Chinese Warfare, 300-900*, p. 8

with a subsequent capacity for powerholding. This was an achievement not only on the military level but even more on the level of political organization." The Chinese rulers absorbed this practice and progressively made it their own, to the extent that future dynasties would take full example from these cases, especially after the direct conquest of China by the Mongols and the Manchus that created respectively the famous Yuan dynasty (1279-1368) and finally the Qing dynasty (1644-1912). Therefore, the barbarians' contribution proved to be very important in the consolidation phase of the Chinese civil-military relations; "certainly they contributed in large part to the military component of the empire both in their persons and perhaps even more in their influence upon military institutions."[448]

Along with the nomadic tribes influence, the Tang dynasty inherited this fusion of the civil with the military field also from the Sui dynasty. The Sui, in fact, had to find solutions to solve the problematic political and social fragmentation that had been created after the collapse of the Han dynasty. One of the reforms that the Sui adopted and which had been inherited from the Tuoba Wei and then from the Sui's immediate predecessors such as Northern Zhou and Northern Qi, was the introduction of the land equalization system, which consisted of allocating "even greater amounts of land to the peasants, in order to bring about an increase in agricultural production which would guarantee a permanent flow of greater revenue and the achievement of a stabilization of social conditions." This measure was also further

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[448] John Fairbank, "Introduction: Varieties Of The Chinese Military Experience", in *Chinese Ways In Warfare*, Frank Kierman and John Fairbanked. , 1st ed.

elaborated by the Tang dynasty, because there was "now a great quantity of abandoned land," due to the political transformation of the period which saw many leaving the north for the south. Moreover, another fundamental reason behind the implementation of this policy was because Tang rulers "were fully conscious of the fact that the principal cause of their predecessor's collapse had been peasant discontent." Therefore, it was during the Tang that the equalization policy was implemented "on a larger scale than ever before."[449]

This system was significant for the Tang dynasty. In fact, part of its collapse can be explained by the subsequent "diminution in the size of the peasants' holdings," which caused, first, a progressive deterioration of the economic conditions for both the state and the peasants. The tax-paying peasants, in fact, decreased dramatically: "according to the 754 census, there were only 7.6 million tax-payers out of a total population of 52.8 million." This inevitably affected also the military system, which later on suffered a dramatic reduction in number, forcing the dynasty, at the certain stage, to recruit a mercenary professional army. By 742, for example, "this force, in which the number of nomads auxiliaries increased steadily, numbered 574,000, of which 490,000 were stationed on the frontiers."[450]

The equalization system (*juntianzhi* 均田制) was based, as the word itself describes, on the equal distribution of land. This system became the central component of the agricultural structure of the entire society. In so

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(Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974), pp. 15-16
[449] Witold Rodziński, *The Walled Kingdom*, pp. 86-87, 94.
[450] *Ibid.*, p. 99.

doing, the Tang guaranteed a piece of land to every able-man, in exchange for taxes and registration of the population. Through this system, moreover, the dynasty tried to underline the state control of the land, therefore no-one could possess a piece of land without the necessary authorization. The equal distribution was also part of an overall plan which tried to avoid excessive accumulation of lands by the feudal lords, therefore guaranteeing a stable fiscal foundation, while also lowering the conditions of social instabilities. Therefore, it was strongly believed that state control of the land and the population allowed dynasty rulers to keep the order. And not only that: these two measures, in fact, made possible the incredible economic and territorial expansion of the Tang dynasty.[451]

But the agricultural production combined with social stability were not the only concerns of the dynasty. The military thinking, intimately associated with the civilian field of action, represented also one of the central elements encouraging the development of this policy. In fact, through this new land redistribution program, it became possible "to continue to base the state's armed forces on the militia system, of which the peasantry remained the backbone."

Hence, one of the clearest manifestations of the unification of the civil with the military was the *fubing* system (*fubing zhi* 府兵制) firstly

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[451] Mario Sabattini and Paolo Santangelo, *Storia Della Cina*, p. 307. This territorial expansion was also possible thanks to the adoption of new technical innovations. One of the first to be adopted had been the curved pole plow, which eased the labor on the field. The second innovation referred to the technique used to store natural

implemented at the time of the Sui dynasty, even if it had not represented the . [452] It represented the "best trained, most highly skilled and 'professional' Chinese fighting men of this period."[453] It first appeared, on paper, on 16 June 590, after Emperor Wen issued a decree, which emphasized the importance of territorial and military reorganization of the empire, as a means to solve the violent conflicts that had occurred during the Sui dynasty. This system of "territorial soldiery" – also translated as "soldiers of the headquarters" or "regimental soldiery"[454] – which derived its structure from the Twenty-four Armies that had been employed in the conquest of Northern Qi by Zhou in 576, during the Sui dynasty, was based on the *xiang bing* or local troops, even if it is not excluded that also farmers were included.[455] Since it is likely that both types of troops were employed, during

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resources, such as grain. Throughout the empire, many regions started to build better and bigger storages for the grain.

[452] Jiguang [霁光] Gu [谷], *The Analysis Of The Fubing System [Fubing Zhi Du Kaoshi - 府兵制度考释]*, 1st ed. (Shanghai [上海]: Shanghai People's Press [Shanghai renmin chubanshe - 上海人民出版社], 1962); Xiyi [希义] Yang [杨] and Rubo [汝波] Yu [于], *Chinese Comprehensive Military History, Volume Ten, First Part, The Tang Dynasty Military History [Zhongguo Junshi Tongshi Dishijuan Tangdai Junshi Shi - 中国军事通史 第十卷上册 唐代军事史]*, 1st ed. (Beijing [北京]: Military Science Press [junshi kexue chubanshe - 军事科学出版社], 2005); Wenyu [文玉] Du [杜] and Rubo [汝波] Yu [于], *Chinese Comprehensive Military History, Volume Ten, Second Part, The Tang Dynasty Military History [Zhongguo Junshi Tongshi Dishijuan Tangdai Junshi Shi - 中国军事通史 第十卷下册 唐代军事史]*, 1st ed. (Beijing [北京]: Military Science Press [junshi kexue chubanshe - 军事科学出版社], 2005); Minqiu [敏求] Song [宋], *The Collection Of The Tang Imperial Edicts [Tang Da Zhaoling Ji - 唐大诏令集]*, 1st ed. (Beijing [北京]: Commercial Press [shangwu Yinshuguan - 商务印书馆], 1992).

[453] David Andrew Graff, *The Eurasian Way Of War, p. 35*

[454] *Ibid.*, p. 35

[455] David Andrew Graff, *Medieval Chinese Warfare, 300-900*, p. 109.

the Sui dynasty "a clear distinction was made between rural residence units of territorial soldiers (*xiang tuan*) and those based within walled cities (*jun fang*)."[456]

The first normative action of the 590 decree towards the creation of this new system was the abolition of the distinction between the "military families" and the "civilian families," since the entire system was extended to the entire population. Moreover, it was clearly stated that "all military men [*junren*] shall be subordinated to the prefectures and counties. Their cultivation of the land and household registration shall be the same as for ordinary subjects [*min*]."[457]

During the Sui, soldiers had to perform a rotational service in the capital. This service was based on the consolidated corvée labor, "under which adult male peasants were required to perform approximately one month of service each year on a rotational basis."[458]

During the Tang, the soldiers that had to serve into the militia system were selected according to their physical characteristics and had to be trained in specific garrisons called *fu* (府), which in turn assigned them, through a rotation system, to twelve defense corps, that represented the permanent army of the empire. Each defense corps was commanded by one Marshal (*dajiangjun* 大将军) and two Generals (*jiangjun* 将军) and also

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[456] *Ibid.*, p. 110.
[457] *Sui shu*, chapter 2, pp. 34-35 in David Andrew Graff, *Medieval Chinese Warfare, 300-900*, p. 139
[458] *Ibid.*, p. 140.

provided the men for the palace guards (*qinwei* 亲卫) and the troops to be employed on the actual battlefield.[459]

When it comes to its structure, during the Tang the *fubing* system was slightly modified. Now the policy envisaged that for every six families there should have been one adult male, at least 21 years old of age, to be enlisted into the army for a total of a forty-year service, gaining the "military status (*jun ming*), though they and their families continued to be listed in the household registers kept by the local civil authorities."[460] They, then, were sent to different garrisons (657 in total), where each one was composed of a number of soldiers comprised between the 800 and 1,200 units. These soldiers had to commit themselves to both the military service and the cultivation of land. At the same time these soldiers were also dispatched to different garrisons, including the capital,[461] according to a rotation process.

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[459] Mario Sabattini and Paolo Santangelo, *Storia Della Cina*, pp. 276-277

[460] David Andrew Graff, *The Eurasian Way Of War,* p. 36

[461] The capital troops were not part of the *fubing* system (which represented almost the entire army structure of the empire) and they went through a continuous administrative transformation. In general terms the capital soldiers were composed of: a southern command (*nanya*) and a northern command (*beiya*). The southern command controlled the twelve armies (*shierjun*), which then became the sixteen guards (*shiliuwei*), under the command of a Generalissimo (*shangjiangjun*). The northern command frequently changed its structure. At the beginning it controlled two armies, then up to ten armies. In the second part of the Tang dynasty the military situation radically changed. This time the capital troops were not composed any more of soldiers but by volunteers, who organized into a palace permanent guard (*changcongsuwei*). They then were under the direct control of the eunuchs who established their rule over these volunteers through an organ which was called Palace Secretary (*shumiyuan*). *Ibid.*, p. 283

When serving in the capital, their service lasted one month; in the frontier areas the term of service was extended, instead, to a total of three years.[462]

However, the *fubing* system reached its peak throughout the seventh century, since from the eighth onwards, that is, during the reign of Xuanzong, it started to decline. There has been a big debate about the actual reasons behind its collapse. However, the most accredited explanation, even if not the most convincing, is related to the changes occurred within the equal field system: "the collapse of the equal field system, the impoverishment and migration of the peasants certainly provided the economic grounds that undermined the dominant position of the compulsory service system and of the *fubing* system."[463]

When it comes to its distribution, however, the majority of the regiments were located in areas around the capital, "while vast stretches of central, eastern, and southern China were almost entirely without regimental headquarters." Nevertheless, only in those highly militarized prefectures it was likely that "almost every able-bodied adult male was a soldier."[464] *Fubing* soldiers, when not performing their military duties, "were expected to support themselves through farming." They had to supply their own provisions as an exchange for "limited exemption from taxes and corvée."[465]

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[462] *Ibid.*, p. 283.
[463] Jimin Sun, "Origins And Selection Criteria Of Soldiers In Different Stages Of The Tang Dynasty (618-907)", in *Civil-Military Relations In Chinese History. From Ancient China To The Communist Takeover*, Kai Filipiak ed. (New York: Routledge, 2015), p. 120.
[464] David Andrew Graff, *Medieval Chinese Warfare, 300-900*, p. 190.
[465] *Ibid.*, p. 189.

In addition to that, when *fubing* soldiers distinguished themselves in the battlefield, they could be entitled to hold "more 'land in perpetuity' (*yong ye tian*) than would otherwise gave [sic] been allowed under the equal field system."[466]

The overall pervasive *fubing* system was then implemented in all corners of the empire. In 640, for example, while the Tang was extending its reach into the Ordos region as well as the Inner Mongolia, including also Xinjiang – penetration into foreign lands that was still achieved through the application of subtle strategic means – Taizong decided to install in these regions the General Protectorate for the Pacification of the West (*anxi duhufu* 安西都护府), which was a mixed civil-military administration, under whose rule the Tang secured its control over those lands.[467]

Slightly similar policies would have been adopted also by Wu Zetian. After she managed to conquer Koguryo, she immediately confronted herself with a heavy military dilemma: "if the number of troops [sent to Korea] was small, China would be unable to exert enough force to retain control, but if the number was large, China would be exhausted trying to supply that force." Therefore, after conquest, Koreans were enlisted into the imperial forces, "while large numbers of Koguryo's farmers were transplanted west of the Yalu River into Manchuria and Hubei."[468]

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[466] David Andrew Graff, *The Eurasian Way Of War*, p. 36.
[467] Mario Sabattini and Paolo Santangelo, *Storia Della Cina*, p. 253.
[468] John Keay, *China*, p. 261.

During the Tang, when it was required to set campaign armies, generals usually relied on the "expeditionary armies" (*xingjun*), which were assembled from local regiments. The size of the expeditionary armies varied widely according to the needs. In general terms, these armies were composed of regiments with each one with its own "expeditionary army commander" (*xingjun zongguan*). In turn, among these commanders, one of them would be chosen as "expeditionary army commander-in-chief" (*xingjun da zongguan*), with the authority to "coordinate the operations of his fellows." For what concerns the use of soldiers, most of them were selected from different sources. The *fubing* was one of those, even if it was not widely used lest disrupt the rotational system, depriving crucial areas of important soldiers. For this reason, along the *fubing*, it was important to rely on short-term conscripts known as "conscript-recruits" (*bingmu*). In this way,   the recruiting system was supposed to "spread the burden of military service a little more evenly among the population." Another important source from which recruiting soldiers was represented by the tribal allies and auxiliaries.[469] At the same time, in terms of short-term conscripts, during the Tang the *fubing* "served alongside *fangding*, 'defense conscripts' drafted for a one-year term with no continuing military obligation thereafter."[470]

However, the expeditionary armies started to decline once it became evident that they could not be employed for carrying out decisive attacks on China's enemies and then "return home within a reasonable period of time."

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[469] David Andrew Graff, *Medieval Chinese Warfare, 300-900*, p. 192
[470] David Andrew Graff, *The Eurasian Way Of War,* p. 37.

This created a counterproductive effect which manifested itself in the establishment of "static encampments which gradually evolved into permanent garrisons." In order to keep these army garrisons operative, the Tang dynasty, around the end of the seventh and beginning of the eighth, decided to rely on the *fubing* system. However, in so doing, the rotational system had to stop working. The presence of soldiers in frontier areas far away from home and the progressive decline of the "equal-field system" of land redistribution – which was originally implemented in order to allow soldiers to be farmers at the same time – effected inevitably the workability of the *fubing* system, which reached its ultimate fate in 749 – "the year in which the dispatch … to the various regiments was halted on the grounds that there were no longer any troops available for service."[471]

To solve the problem of the shortage of manpower, from 737 the government tried to recruit frontier soldiers who had to serve in the army for longer periods of time. Those who accepted were labeled as *jian'er*, that is, "sturdy lads." Moreover, these newly recruited soldiers would have received benefits from the government. By the middle of the eighth century the *jian'er* "were the most common characteristic element of the frontier armies."[472] These "valiant fighters," therefore, became the crucial military asset in the early Tang, "second only to the territorial soldiers (*fubing*)."[473]

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[471] David Andrew Graff, *Medieval Chinese Warfare, 300-900*, pp. 207-208

[472] *Ibid.*, p. 209

[473] Jimin Sun, "Origins And Selection Criteria Of Soldiers In Different Stages Of The Tang Dynasty (618-907)", in *Civil-Military Relations In Chinese History. From Ancient*

Along with the *fubing* system, during the Tang there had been implemented another collateral system which served the political as well as military administration of the empire. This was called the *jimi* system (*jimi zhi* 羁縻制), which meant "control by loose rein." It was used to describe the political and the military functions performed by far-flung protectorates:

"subordinate but autonomous, *jimi* territories were designated to fit within a military and administrative framework that satisfied imperial criteria, yet they were otherwise barely distinguishable from the political entities they replaced. The *jimi* prefects and commandants were themselves often non-Han, typically former rulers of the regions they controlled who had tendered their submission in return for recognition; their staff and military establishments were also substantially non-Han. They could be called on to assist in frontier defence, to dispatch or accompany tribute missions to the capital annually, and to lodge their sons there as security for their loyalty. The tribute might include some element of tax revenue, especially in respect of the settled and easily assessable oasis-states of Xinjiang. In return the *jimi* prefects enjoyed hereditary tenure and might receive titles, brides, revenue grants and food subventions from the

China To The Communist Takeover, Kai Filipiak ed. (New York: Routledge, 2015), p. 110.

imperial government, plus presents of greater value than those tendered as tribute."[474]

The combination of the *fubing* system along with the *jimi* one did not prove to be particularly effective in the long term for the defense of the frontiers. During the reign of Xuanzong, and specifically during the years 710-711, along with an ongoing process of military transformation, new reforms of the military system had been adopted throughout the country. Now the objective became the pacification of the empire's furthest areas through the use and therefore mobilization of the direct military force, rather than the militia. The emperor, then, nominated permanent military governors (*jiedushi*) to be assigned to all the areas where their presence was required, the so-called military regions (*fangzhen*). At the beginning their task was of a simple military nature, which translated itself into the creation of the defensive force against enemies' attacks. The civil rule resided in the court's hands, however, with the practice of time, the civil-military fusion occurred again; "*gradually, the military governor ended up handling simultaneously also the civilian tasks.*" Specifically, he started to perform also the civil rule that normally would have been the general governor's duty. Therefore the military governors became also the territorial prefect.[475]

In what then came to be known as the third phase of the Xuanzong's reign, things, at the military level, changed again. The system of the military

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[474] John Keay, *China*, p. 262

governors became very consolidated to the extent that now the armies were completely controlled by those people in charge in the frontier areas. This demonstrated the progressive weakness of the Tang centralized power. In fact, at this stage, the central government did not have anymore its own army. Subsequently, an edict, issued in 737, "established that all the frontier region's soldiers should have been enlisted permanently among those who were suitable and that accepted to serve the empire. *The institution of the voluntary service, and therefore of permanent professional armies, established the almost definitive end of the militia system* (fubing)."[476]

One case in point of this transformation, especially in the late Tang, referred to the creation of two forces: the conventional army and the reserve forces. The former was called *changing jian'er* (*guanjian*), while the latter *tuanjie*. Besides their different status (the conventional army was properly fed and clothed, while the reserve one had the same treatment only during fighting operations) their territorial distribution was also significantly different. Guanjian "outnumbered tuanjie in the military districts in the north and Central plains, while tuanjie outnumbered guanjian in the south." The reasons behind this choice were motivated by the fact that the northern frontier needed a stronger conventional army due to the frequent military threats, while in the south, the fewer wars necessarily required less conventional troops. However, the problems arising in the south in the late Tang forced the dynasty to create new forces, "among which the most

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influential were *xiangbing* (local troops) and *tutuan* (civil troops). With respect to the *tuanjie* troops – which were determined by the central government –, the *xiangbing* and the *tutuan*, instead, "were temporary forces established in need by local governments and were excluded from official military status."[477]

Xuanzong, moreover, promoted the establishment of the *kuoqi* troops (palace guards). Their objective was to serve as a "permanent palace guard." In the *Xin Tangshu* it is reported that in 723 "*fubing* and commoners from the capital and other places were selected to reinforce the troops of long-term conscripts (*changcong bing*)."[478]

Hence, after the An Lushan rebellion the *fubing* system had progressively eroded, paving the way for the military professionalization. However, along this military transformation – mainly promoted for specific campaigns – it was still very important to rely on local militia. In fact, the institutionalization of the professional army did not play a crucial role. When the government's troops found themselves, in the early ninth century, committed to fight Huai Xi, a rebellious province which, encouraged by the An Lushan rebellion, advocated for itself a political autonomy, the heavy reliance on the local militia became the crucial aspect. Because of the particular geopolitical circumstances, in fact, "it was feasible, and probably

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[476] *Ibid.*, p. 267 original emphasis.
[477] Guogang Zhang, "The Transformations Of The Tang Military System And Social Changes In Medieval China", *Frontiers of History in China* 2, no. 3 (2007): 297.
[478] *Xin tangshu*, p. 1326 cited in Jimin Sun, "Origins And Selection Criteria Of Soldiers In Different Stages Of The Tang Dynasty (618-907)", p. 112.

imperative, to draw heavily on local militia," which represented the key component of the overall regular army.[479] In practice, this military aspect illustrates how the Chinese military tradition transcended the normative one, making strategic culture even more compelling.

While it is undeniable that the application of this new military system responded to the administrative necessities of the empire, it should be pointed out, however, that it also paved the way for the internal collapse. The growing political and military strength of the regional military governors created the condition for the internal revolts that would have undermined the entire political power of the dynasty. One case, destined to change the entire political spectrum of the Tang, had been the An Lushan rebellion in 755, which had been nurtured by the application of this military system.[480]

In the later stage of the Tang dynasty, a new group of special agents had also been created: the court eunuchs. In a specific historical circumstance, that is, during the exile of the period 756-763, they also became a powerful palace army, constituting "the backbone of the imperial troops." Afterwards, especially under the rule of Tang Xianzong, they became an indispensible asset of strategy and warfare, since they acted as informants and spies: some of them "had acquired an education; others

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[479] Charles Peterson, "Regional Defense Against The Central Powers: The Huai-Hsi Campaign, 815-817", in *Chinese Ways In Warfare*, p. 131. This is a relevant battle to be mentioned because, as Peterson highlighted, is one of the few that had been historically transmitted almost intact, "one of the best documented campaigns, perhaps the best, of the entire [Tang] period," therefore allowing scholars to investigate it thoroughly.
[480] Mario Sabattini and Paolo Santangelo, *Storia Della Cina*, pp. 270-272

demonstrated military aptitude; all were credited with a genius for intrigue."[481]

During the declining period of the dynasty, their function became crucial, since the emperor and his political authority weakened dramatically. At the end of the eighth century, "numbering around 4000, they became the strongest faction in the central government, having acquired ever greater control over the armed forces." And, thanks to the newly acquired strategic positions, "they were also in charge of an effective secret police."[482]

Along with the eunuchs, the Tang dynasty, in the last century of its reign, because of the inevitable decline in the number of peasants and therefore militia to be used in combat, started to promote the use of mercenaries. And they proved to be extremely valuable in at least two circumstances: first of all, when the Tang was facing the attack from the Tibetan empire, the Uighurs proved to be a fundamental component of the professional army in the defensive operations, allowing the army to survive. The second circumstance was related to the Huang Chao rebellion. The Tang army was powerless when confronting this threat, therefore completely unable to stop the revolt. It was "[Sha Tuo], reputedly the bravest of the brave of the Turkish tribes, called in to aid the faltering Tang government," to reach a definitive victory over the rebels:

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[481] John Keay, *China*, p. 285
[482] Witold Rodziński, *The Walled Kingdom*, p. 102.

Their talented commander, [Li Keyong], known as the 'One-Eyed Dragon', assembled a 40,000-strong cavalry force of his tribesmen; dressed all in black, and known as Li's Black Crows, they were to become a terror to all Chinese. Li's army was able to drive out Huang Chao, aided in this by defections in the latter's ranks, including that of [Zhu Wen], one of his chief generals. In 884, after his still sizable army was defeated in Honan, Huang Ch'ao fled with a thousand men to his native Shandong to meet his death there, probably by his own hand. The great rebellion was over; the Tang emperor returned to desolated and deserted Chang'an … Although it was still to linger on borrowed time for two more decades, the Tang dynasty had, in reality, received its deathblow. All power now fell into the hands of the provincial warlords, among whom the main contenders were [Li Keyong] and [Zhu Wen], the future founder of the Later Liang."[483]

However, all these military systems, throughout the Sui-Tang dynasty, that is, during the reconstruction of the centralized empire, had to be based on a state ideology in order to work efficiently. So, during the Tang it became very important to elaborate an ideological model that was

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[483] *Ibid.*, p. 104-105; see also Mario Sabattini and Paolo Santangelo, *Storia Della Cina*, p. 270.

necessary to mobilize the people for the military service. Gaining their political loyalty became a central component.

This necessity came out of the Sui-Tang period in which religions, old and new, started to be recognized as fully organized entities with their own consolidated doctrine and a structure which was "*separated* from that one of the state." During the Sui, the first attempt to create a state ideology was related to the revival of Confucianism, since it had historically represented the ideological legitimacy of the idea itself of the empire. For example, it became central to emphasize the role played by the filial piety, *xiao*. As the emperor Yang Jian sustained: "the reading of the 'Classics of the filial piety' (*Xiaojing*) would have been sufficient for governing the state."[484]

However, with the spread of Buddhism, emperors also tried to incorporate this ideology into their political calculation, since unlike Confucianism, Buddhism represented "*a religion that was largely popular in all social strata both in the North and in the South*" and that allowed emperors to build a more sophisticated image of their political as well as spiritual power. During the Sui, in fact, Yang Jian tried to be portrayed as the *Cakravartin*, that is, "the universal king that governs through the wheel (*cakra*), which represented the symbol of persuasion." Spiritual labels, however, did not stop there. In 585 he also went a step further claiming for himself the title of the "Son of the Heaven." In 594, in the official documents, he referred to himself as "the disciple of Buddha."[485]

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[484] Mario Sabattini and Paolo Santangelo, *Storia Della Cina*, pp. 286-289
[485] *Ibid*., pp. 286-289

On the same line operated the Tang dynasty. After its establishment, its emperors also adopted a syncretistic approach, what could be labeled as *ideological syncretism*, through which they consolidated the *sanjiao* 三教, that is, the "Three Doctrines" of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism.[486]

However, it was the Confucian ideology and its tradition that the Tang exploited in order to strengthen its political ideology, to the extent of giving birth to the neoconfucianism, which encapsulated the old tradition into a "new totalizing and organic vision" of the world, in which all the elements were not distinct and diversified, but integral parts of a single conception."[487] And this was obtained through the creation of the Historiographical Office (*shiguan* 史官) whose objective was to create the histories of the previous dynasties, including the current one, in order to create a historical attachment to the previous moral and political virtues of the Chinese past. The reason behind this practice was the relevance of history as an instrument of legitimization that the Confucian traditions encouraged to undertake. This office obviously exerted a very powerful power (it became the central bureaucratic organ for the dynasties from this time onwards), because its scope was not only to record Chinese history in a comprehensive way, but also to create the necessary historical connections that gave the dynasties the "constitutional" legitimacy they were striving to find. Legitimacy that, on the other hand, helped dynasties in their daily

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[486] *Ibid.*
[487] *Ibid.*, p. 321

administration along with the ability to mobilize people and soldiers when waging military campaigns.

Therefore, during the Tang, even if there was some religious tolerance for other beliefs, Confucianism returned to its highest stage, mainly because of the values it carried with itself. The campaign against Buddhism, in fact, besides the mere economic reasons that motivated this religious intolerance, was also motivated by moral and ideological reasons. Buddhism had to be abolished because it represented a "barbarian" belief that was undermining the foundations of society: "if a man did not cultivate the land, others would suffer hunger; and if a woman did not weave, others would have suffered cold, but the monasteries, in a countless quantity, matched even the imperial palaces in terms of beauty, even if they depended on agriculture for the food and weaving for the clothes. It had been Buddhism to provoke the weakening of the previous dynasties."[488]

Besides religion per se, the attempt by the Tang dynasty to create a state ideology in order to gain people's loyalty became an indispensible asset for a correct politico-military strategy. For example, General Gao Xianzhi, despite his incredible military achievements during the Pamirs Expedition (748-751), failed miserably at the political level, that is, after having been appointed military governor of the Tarim Basin area. He immediately established his own warlordism, which manifested itself in his "heavy-handed approach to governorship of his tributary kingdoms," which cost him the ability to gain the loyalty of the newly established city-states,

"who were clearly waiting to see which of the powers would become the region's hegemon."[489]

Moreover, in the ninth century, during the rebellion of the province of Huai Xi, the imperial troops found it very difficult to fight such a tiny administrative area, which defended itself egregiously, mainly because of its ability to create "loyalty and at least tacit support of both the army and the populace" to the extent that "no cases of defection were reported." Of course, this popular support was the result not only of ideology but also of the extraordinary ability of this small province "to sustain itself materially over the course of [campaigning years]. The effectiveness of the defense and the adequacy of supplies were mutually supportive."[490]

From 817 onwards, the imperial army, under the command of Li Su, learning from its own mistakes, undertook a comprehensive program to reform the army, in order to acquire what was missing: the loyalty and the high morale of the army. He developed this reform through several steps, one of which, the most important, consisted of restoring the army to its "fighting condition." Objective that was obtained by "relieving [soldiers] of any fear they might have of suddenly being thrown into an offensive by an ambitious new leader." Along with this practice, he undertook other social measures which were meant to increase the confidence between the troops.

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[488] *Ibid*., p. 298.
[489] James G Pangelinan, *From Red Cliffs To Chosin*, 1st ed. (Fort Leavenworth, KA: School of Advanced Military Studies, United States Army Command and General Staff College, 2010), p. 57

This type of psychological transformation proved to be essential in securing the final victory of the imperial army over the rebellious province of Huai Xi.

During the ninth century, it had become central, more than ever before, to strengthen army's martial spirit, due to the increasing strengthening of the cities' fortifications, which made them real defensive outposts. During the late Tang, specifically in the second part of its history, that is, after the An Lushan rebellion, towns' fortifications became the central political step of the administrative bodies along with the purely military one. Therefore, the scope of this system of fortifications consisted of making towns function "militarily as fortresses."[491] And this would have represented an important asset for the future development of military as well as political organization of the Chinese territory; contrary to the European history, in China, the castle, as it had been conceptualized in Western history, did not materialize: "the military and economic role of the castle (for exploiting and controlling the surrounding peasantry) was, in China performed by towns."[492]

Hence, having towns heavily fortified could pave the way for the accumulation of power within one general's hands. This, therefore, made the distribution of power an important asset both for political and military control

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[490] Charles Peterson, "Regional Defense Against The Central Powers: The Huai-Hsi Campaign, 815-817", in *Chinese Ways In Warfare*, p. 137.
[491] *Ibid*., p. 148
[492] Herbert Franke, "Siege And Defense Of Towns In Medieval China", in *Chinese Ways In Warfare*, Frank Kierman Jr. and John Fairbanked. , 1st ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974), p. 151.

over the population and the commanders.[493] This policy of power distribution became central also within the rebel provinces, since the towns fortifications, because of their high efficiency could encourage single commanders to take the lead even within one small province. In 812, in one famous statement to the emperor, Li Jiang described how the distribution of power became a sensitive topic, even within the rebel provinces, including also the province under examination, Huai Xi, towards which the imperial armies would wage war:

> "Your servant has observed that the lawbreaking governors of [Hebei] and [Henan] do not entrust their military power to any single man but rather distribute it among several. It is their fear that power accumulated in the hands of one man would lead him to revolt which lies behind this practice. Since power is evenly distributed among all the commanders, they exert a mutual control over each other. Should they wish to combine [to increase their strength], they would risk encountering those not of like mind who would reveal the conspiracy. But, should any revolt entirely on his own, his strength would not suffice and he would most certainly fail … as a result, the military commanders can only look at each other in

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[493] Charles Peterson, "Regional Defense Against The Central Powers: The Huai-Hsi Campaign, 815-817", in *Chinese Ways In Warfare*, p. 148-149

impotence, and non dare take the first step. It is on this that the rebel governors count."[494]

3.2.2. Second Level of Analysis: The Strategic Design of People's War

The strategic outcome of this profound civil-military integration was, again, the use of deception in order to defeat the enemy even before actual military confrontations had started. This implied the use of stratagems in order to weaken the enemy psychologically, paving the way for a subsequent military defeat. From this time onwards, since China was more actively involved in wars with external actors, the centuries-old consolidated strategic plan of deception (at least since the era of Western Han) was implanted: "using barbarians to control barbarians."[495]

The Sui already provided one of its clearest application. During the sixth century, for example, the Sui had to face a new steppe confederation, the Tujue, which had Turkic origins. In order to control their expansion and their offensive policy against the Sui, Yang Jian (Sui Wendi) "undertook a skilled diplomatic plan with the aim of exploiting their internal contradictions in order to weaken it and therefore impose his own supremacy." His plan became feasible thanks also to some revolts against the Eastern Turks,

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[494] *Ibid.*, p. 149; see also Xiu [修] Ouyang [欧阳] and Zhuan [撰] Qi [祁], *The New Tang Book [Xintangshu - 新唐书], Chap. 152*, 1st ed. (Shanghai [上海]: Chinese Press [zhonghua shujuchuban - 中华书局出版], 1975), pp. 4836-4844.

conducted by the Western Turks' leader, Tardu, who undermined their political unity after "usurping the title of Qaghan, which had been reserved for the Eastern Turks. Without using arms, and with the simple use of political intrigue, the Sui managed to undermine the power of the Eastern Turks while also getting rid of the Western Turks' threat."[496]

During the Tang, the use of this deceptive means became more widespread. It had been significant the way Chinese rulers used the Uighurs in order to spread discord among the Turkic tribes, culminating into the Tang victory over them in 630. This victory let the Tang annex the Eastern Turkish empire, the Ordos region, and most of East Mongolia. The Uighurs proved, again, extremely valuable, two decades afterwards, in those military operations that targeted the Western Turks, bringing them to a defeat that made China the ruler also of this area.[497]

This strategic doctrine often led astray many scholars who saw in this strategic implementation the actual application of a "defensive mindedness," clearly represented by the creation – accompanied in subsequent centuries by the consolidation – of the huge defensive project known as the Great Wall, when, in reality, it had almost no military

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[495] John Keay, *China*, p. 260
[496] Mario Sabattini and Paolo Santangelo, *Storia Della Cina*, p. 247
[497] Witold Rodziński, *The Walled Kingdom*, p. 95-96; see also Xu [昫] Liu [劉], *The Old Tang Book [Jiu Tang Shu - 舊唐書], Chap. 67*, 1st ed. (Beijing [北京]: Chinese Press [Zhonghua shu ju - 中华书洞], 1975).

significance during the Tang.[498] However, this does not hold true, since "it was not a question of 'Confucian passivity,' nor, though the peoples of the steppe often interpreted it that way, of a sedentary and agrarian lifestyle being inimical to martial prowess."[499]

During the Tang as well as the successive dynasties, military discipline was strict as well as the tactical design. The focal point of this particular behavior resides on twofold reasons: the specific strategic design that a particular geography demanded from China along with the historical consolidation of its strategic mentality which, from the Warring States onwards, was continuously strengthened and revisited. In fact, at the strategic level, as the famous Military Classic text – *Questions and Replies Between Tang Taizong and Li Weigong* – explains, the art of war constantly requires the combination of the orthodox and unorthodox methods during all the strategic phases, such as the defense, offense, and also retreat from the battlefield.[500]

When it comes to the first reason of this type of strategic approach to warfare, China had interacted with the area of Inner Asia in a manner which was quite different when compared to the relationship that other civilizations had with their respective areas of influence and/or confrontation.

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[498] John Fairbank, "Introduction: Varieties Of The Chinese Military Experience", in *Chinese Ways In Warfare*, p. 12; see also Arthur Waldron, *The Great Wall Of China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).
[499] *Ibid.*
[500] Jing [靖] Li [李], "Questions And Replies Between Tang Taizong And Li Weigong [Tang Taizong Li Wengong Wendui - 唐太宗李卫公问对]", in *The Seven Military Classics Of Ancient China*, p. 323

And the factors explaining this assumption belong to the particular geography of the Inner Asia itself and the cultural interaction between China and the other peoples of the same area. The geography of the Central Asia represents a unique topography. Due to its steppes, grasslands, and deserts it has been very often compared to the same strategic value that the Mediterranean had for the Roman empire as well as other civilizations, that is, an area particularly vast that not only made unfeasible any serious attempt at conquest, but it also allowed the northern tribes to apply swift maneuvers that could create serious damages to the Chinese armies that, even if quite mobile and flexible, had to cope with the fundamental asset required in any military campaign: the logistical problem. The second factor of the major reason that explains the peculiar Chinese military strategy against the northern tribes resides on the historical aspect that had characterized the cultural and political relationship between China and the other barbarian confederations. The Chinese clearly understood that "the nomad problem had persisted … since at least the fourth century B.C. when the putative ancestors of the Huns, the Hsiung-nu tribes on the border of North China, had first begun to raid the settled farmlands to the south." According to this constant frontier problem, therefore, direct military confrontation became superfluous when actually other means could be employed to reach the same strategic objectives. Therefore, the Chinese had constantly adopted deceptive measures which could guarantee the ability to outperform the enemy in several aspects, especially at the political and geographical level. In fact, it was not uncommon to see the Chinese

ruling elite planning a way to incorporate parts of Inner Asia into the overall Chinese peripheral areas, through which it could have been possible to raise bandits, armies and also peasant rebels. And at the cultural level, "the imperial Confucian institutions of Chinese dynasties were stretched and adapted to accommodate these non-Chinese peoples of Inner Asia. In the end the Chinese empire became in the military-strategic sense the empire of all East Asia."

According to this reason, we can explain the birth of the tribute system, through which subjugated actors had to acknowledge the moral, spiritual, and political superiority of the Chinese civilization in exchange of goods. Hence, this explains that in Chinese history, relations with the Inner Asia "were less 'foreign' than one might think because Inner Asia was from early times for military purposes a constituent sector of the Chinese military scene, even if peripheral." This, in turn, explains why in China "no Chinese Cato could succeed with a simply coercive policy of 'Mongolia delenda est.' More subtle and complex means were needed, on all the levels of statecraft."[501]

As a direct example of this practice, Tang Taizong, when planning his campaign against Turkic peoples, "had patently positioned himself beneath the Turk qaghanates and then in the 630s shaken their easternmost branch with a lunge into Mongolia and well-directed prods at the oasis-cities long the silk routes." Specifically, Taizong managed to subdue these people

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[501] John Fairbank, "Introduction: Varieties Of The Chinese Military Experience", in *Chinese Ways In Warfare*, pp. 12-13

by playing one against the other: "the various Turkic-speaking peoples who had comprised the Western Turk qaghanate succumbed … during the 640s to fratricidal strike exacerbated by what one of their inscriptions describes as 'the cunning and deceitfulness of the Chinese.'"[502]

When actually dealing with the proper use of force, Tang dynasty showed a deep propensity to apply the other side of deception: the surprise strategy. One historical case clearly exemplifies the Chinese sophistication in the use of this strategic design: Gao Xianzhi's Pamirs Expedition against the Tibetan empire (748-751). He coupled this approach with the psychological strategy by bringing a large military force across the Pamirs against the "unsuspecting Tibetan forces … One can imagine the surprise and horror of the Tibetan defenders at Sarhad as they witnessed 10,000 Chinese infantry and cavalry converging on their position from three avenues of approach." This had to do with the harsh passes and geographical features that the Pamirs presented and that made Tibetans in Gilgit think that there were

> "no reason to prepare for any Chinese military reaction to their activities south of the Pamirs. Judging by Gao's rapid conquest of the Oxus valley, Gilgit, and Kashmir, it is clear that the Tibetans were taken fully by surprise in this Chinese invasion. Being so psychologically rattled and physically unprepared to defend, the Tibetans were quickly defeated in a single

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[502] John Keay, *China*, p. 261

campaign season at little cost to the Chinese expeditionary force. Gao's brilliant planning and the sheer audacity of this operation contributed significantly to the success of the campaign."[503]

Gao's overall operational strategy proved to be, therefore, "not attritional or positional warfare," but a "phased operation" strategy, which "focused on the achievement of operationally significant intermediate objectives that were integrated into a focused and synchronized campaign plan."[504]

The deceptive strategy was also central in the second part of the Tang dynasty and not necessarily in the foreign affairs realm. Due to the increasing internal weaknesses, the Tang dynasty had to suppress those provinces that desired to obtain political independence. In one famous battle, for example, the campaign against the province of Huai Xi was a case in point. During the military preparation, two autonomous regions Ping Lu and Cheng Te believed to be the next target of the imperial forces. Ping Lu deceptively sent 3,000 troops to join the court army in the campaign against Huai Xi, turning, then, into marauding and disruptive activities, explicated through sabotage and harassment, against the imperial army. Even if easily

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[503] James G Pangelinan, *From Red Cliffs To Chosin*, p. 62
[504] *Ibid.*, p. 58

defeated, they managed to confuse the opponent's plans gaining some military advantage.[505]

Even the imperial army, though superior militarily, adopted the typical strategies that have characterized the theoretical continuum of the Chinese way of warfare in history. The central government, in fact, could have easily adopted a frontal assault against the Huai Xi's troops, not matter if the latter were adopting a defensive position, which would have inevitably increased the casualties among the imperial army. Instead, the government adopted a military strategy which was based on "encirclement and steady, ubiquitous pressure" with the objective of "choking off the province in material terms; it was probably also conceived as a means of containing counterthrusts by the mobile Huai Xi army." This strategy was well conceived, but poorly executed, therefore leading the imperial army to unsuccessful results.[506]

The imperial army had to wait for the arrival of a new commander, Li Su, who, along with the tactical readjustments of the army, decided also to strengthen Tang's overall strategic design, which tried to strangle the rebellious province. Specifically, he emphasized diplomacy and accommodation, in order to "thin enemy ranks through defections, particularly when the defector was sufficiently important to bring a garrison or location over with him." This strategic design played also an important role, because in so doing, the imperial army, thanks to the potential

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[505] Charles Peterson, "Regional Defense Against The Central Powers: The Huai-Hsi Campaign, 815-817", in *Chinese Ways In Warfare*, p. 135

defections, was able to increase the sources of intelligence by gaining the valuable information necessary for the proper execution of military operations. In fact, in a short period of time, the government obtained an enormous strategic advantage: "the defection of the commander of the Wen Cheng fortress together with its 3,000-man garrison."

Fighting the rebels by using their own strategic design proved to be very productive, since defections now turned the loyalty problem to the rebels rather than the government troops. This explains why the latter easily regained control over Yan Cheng, delivering a "serious blow to the rebels."

Li Su proved to be a very skilled general when he took into consideration also the weather conditions for his overall strategic planning. In fact, he initially thought of waiting for the Huai Xi's self-destruction, however, the heavy rain at the time of strategic planning made him think of delivering a surprise attack, instead; "the wet weather continued for the following three months, so that the move could finally be made only in the autumn." In 817 Li Su stroke his surprise blow: moving from the recently regained territory of Wen Cheng, he formed a fragmented army with the objective of acquiring speed and flexibility. During the march the weather also had a role; a snowstorm, in fact, first created panic among the troops but then it became a valuable means to conceal their position to the enemy. In fact, he and his army swiftly moved against Cai Zhou (the major headquarter of Huai Xi), capturing the area in a very short period of time.

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[506] *Ibid.*, p. 139

According to this historical case, we can clearly understand how these generals, for better or for worse, interiorized Sun Tzu's teachings: Li Su, in fact, understood the value of the speed in military operations, confirming Sun Tzu's assumption of "rapidity is the essence of war." Moreover, the surprise attack put an emphasis on two extra crucial strategic principles: one referred to "the advantage of the enemy's unreadiness," which also meant attacking "unguarded spots," while the second concerned the ability to move the army through "unexpected routes."[507]

According to the historical record of this military campaign as well as the overall Tang approach to military strategy, it becomes quite clear that even when planning defensive strategies, China relied on a strategic system that resembled, once again, Sun Tzu's approach to strategy as well as what would be recognized, later on, as the Maoist strategic principles, therefore creating an important and continuous strategic approach that ultimately define Chinese strategic culture, that is, the strategic design of active defense, which represents one of the crucial military aspects of the overall doctrine of People's War. Active defense, in line with the theoretical assumptions amply illustrated in the preceding chapters, relies on the combination of defense and offense for the definitive execution of the military strategy; that is, in other words, the combination of the opposite, like yin and yang, or orthodox and unorthodox.

In the case at hand, that is, during the military campaign against the rebellious province of Huai Xi, the extensive use of fortifications by its

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[507] *Ibid.*, pp. 143-145

leaders did not simply signify that the province was devoted to defensive strategy, that is, a strategic design based on "a passive nature of a defense based on such fixed, heavily fortified positions." In fact, they served also other purposes: they were not mere "*obstacles* to the enemy's advance or occupation but as centers of tactical operations against him." This therefore explains that "the effectiveness of Huai Xi's defense was due in part precisely to its ability to use its defensive positions in this active fashion."[508]

Peterson concludes his examination of this important military campaign against Huai Xi advocating that this type of warfare waged by the rebellious province could be defined as "position defense" and he provides the following definition for this strategic design:

[position defense is] the type of defense in which the bulk of the defending force is disposed in selected tactical localities where the decisive battle is to be fought. Principle reliance is placed on the ability of the forces in the defended localities to maintain their positions and to control the terrain between them. The reserve I used to add depth, to block or restore the battle position by counterattack."[509]

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[508] *Ibid.*, p. 149

[509] *Dictionary Of United States Army Terms*, 1st ed. (Washington: Dept. of the Army, 1965). in Charles Peterson, "Regional Defense Against The Central Powers: The Huai-Hsi Campaign, 815-817", in *Chinese Ways In Warfare*, p. 149. It is undeniable that what he provides represents an important definition of position defense. One of the central reasons behind this definition is his willingness to help scholars understand what type of strategy we are encountering when dealing with Chinese

3.2.3. Third Level of Analysis: The Tactical Design of People's War

According to the way the army was created and implemented into the overall Chinese strategic design, military maneuvers "were ideally held during the slack season of the agricultural year, campaigns were kept to a matter of months, and expeditions were launched on a there-and-back basis with objectives clearly specified and minimal discretion allowed to the commander in the field."[510]

This approach had a direct effect also on the logistical aspect of campaigns during the Tang era. During the transition from the Sui to the Tang and also during the Tang, the idea was to increase army's flexibility by encouraging a "live off the land" approach to expedition. While this method was perceived a manifestation of weakness rather than strength, at the same time it was conceived as an instrument to compensate for possible

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medieval warfare. As he further explained: "in essence this concept of position defense suggests itself as an appropriate tool to enable the twentieth century mind to confront problems of military history in China's medieval age." While this proposition is absolutely true, it should be pointed out that the active defense paradigm that arrived to the wider political stage through the Maoist war represents a better description of what was going on even at that time. In fact, in the definition that he provided there are all the elements that symbolize the strategic design of the active defense, since, as reported by both the author and the definition, Chinese defensive strategy was not a passive one, but it tried to combine also active elements, such as, for example, the use of reserve for the implementation of strong counterattacks.
[510] John Keay, *China*, p. 260

logistical overextensions during specific military campaigns, such as the Tang expeditions against Koguryo. In fact, because of the importance of logistics, "one of Li Shimin's favorite maneuvers was to disrupt the supply lines of his adversaries."[511]

This clearly responded to the flexibility concept that has been widely analyzed in the previous chapter. That is, the idea that armies represented more a deceptive means, as Sun Tzu defined, than an actual material capability to destroy the enemy. And this was necessarily related to the fact that "Sui and Tang military forces consisted of crossbowmen, cavalry, and infantrymen," with the chariot now having no military significance. Concerning the crossbowmen, due to the heavy influence of the steppe people, Chinese army adopted two types of bows: the foot archers used the *sangzhe*, which was mainly implemented for close combat operations; the second type was the *jiao gong*, or "horn bow," which was mainly used by the mounted archers. This second type, which was a composite bow, "had been used by pastoral peoples of the Eurasian steppes since ancient times."[512]

Concerning the adoption of tactical measures through which the army could be employed as a deceptive means, it is significant to analyze how the army had been deployed during the battle of Huo-i, which occurred in 617, marking the transition from the Sui to the Tang dynasty. Sung Lao-sheng, the commander of the Sui army was conducting operations within a stronghold, while Li Yuan was trying to implement deceptive means to

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[511] David Andrew Graff, *The Eurasian Way Of War,* p. 81
[512] *Ibid.,* p. 51.

encourage him to fight outside of the walls. In order to achieve this goal, Li Yuan first deployed his cavalry in front of the walls, with the infantry behind, moving it to front in a second phase. "The sight of this approaching infantry column apparently convinced Sung Lao-sheng to send the bulk of his army out through the south and east gates of Huo-i." Li Yuan, however, used another stratagem to "to lure him forward." Li Yuan divided his cavalry into two wings and ordered them to withdraw from the battlefield, so as to perform a feigned retreat. This naturally "emboldened the Sui commander to move farther forward to a point more than one-third mile east of the town" to the extent that he had been caught by surprise. A final stratagem adopted during the engagement concerned the spread of the false information that Sung Lao-sheng had been killed in order to lower Sui troops' morale.[513]

As the Huo-i battle account demonstrates, in Chinese medieval military history psychology and morale, tricks and stratagems, and finally the *qi* strength greatly mattered in war. The first aspect is connected to the ability to mentally destroy the enemy in order to reach victory without too much effort. Secondly, tricks and stratagems also played a relevant role in subduing the enemy in the fastest possible way. And finally, the *qi* strength, which refers to the "special" or "unorthodox" element in war, describes the ability to outperform the enemy by using special means, operations, or agents in order to be successful in war; that is, "to throw the enemy off balance." In the Tang case, it is undeniable that the *qi* element was represented by the cavalry. At Huo-i most of the Tang maneuvers "were

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[513] David A. Graff, "The Battle Of Huo-i", p. 44.

carried out by cavalry, from the initial flouting of the defenders to the feigned retreat to the surprise rush that sealed off the gates."[514]

The tactical sophistication of the Sui-Tang period is also quite significant for what concerns the cavalry. During the Sui dynastic control, the heavy cavalry represented the crucial component of the army, especially during the campaign against the Korean kingdom of Koguryo. However, the military defeats the Sui encountered in the Korean territory paved the way for the adoption of the light cavalry (*qing ji*). The explanation for this change is not entirely related to the military defeats. It is actually more likely "related to the origin of the army of the newly risen Tang dynasty as a frontier once engaged in fighting the highly mobile Eastern Turks."[515]

During the Sui, the dynasty on which the Tang would finally emerge, additional suntzunian principles had been applied. For example, in 618, during the confrontation between Li Mi (warlord rebel) and Wang Shichong (imperial general), the former tried to avoid battle, while the latter needed to engage his enemy, mainly due to the fact that he was experiencing a shortage of supplies. However, in order to make sure that his army would reach success, he "had gotten himself into a situation from which he could not retreat." Li Mi, on the other side, tried to deploy his troops in a "inverted 'L'" formation which relied on the use of mountains for mainly defensive operations. By relying on swift maneuvers and flexibility through the use of cavalry Wang managed to attack by surprise Li who did underestimate his

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[514] *Ibid.*, pp. 49-51.
[515] David Andrew Graff, *The Eurasian Way Of War,* p. 54.

enemy. First of all, he quickly moved his troops across a river and very close to Li's camp, attacking him by surprise. At the same time, he ordered his cavalry to attack Li's rear position.[516]

After the establishment of the Tang dynasty, Li Shimin confronted militarily, in 621, Hebei warlord Dou Jiande by applying the same Chinese military tradition, which is mainly based on avoiding "a general engagement by occupying a strong defensive position or fortified camp, while sending out smaller detachments to harass the enemy forces or raid their supply lines."[517]

Li Shimin's tactics, in fact, followed a specific pattern. It "involved the use of preliminary infantry or cavalry attacks to engage and pin down sections of the enemy battleline, preparing the way for the main assault – a cavalry charge that aimed at cutting through the line on a relatively narrow front, then hitting it from behind to cause the complete collapse of the enemy formation."[518] In other words, his technique relied on attacking "a critical weak point in the enemy line at the head of his elite cavalry" after having weakened the enemy through the use of other charging methods. In so doing, instead of relying on the use of his entire army, Li's main idea, in line with the Chinese tradition, was to "send out a relatively small detachment to attack a selected portion of the line in the hope of breaking through, creating a panic, or otherwise causing the hostile formation to come undone." Moreover, during the Tang, it became quite common to use the following

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[516] David Andrew Graff, *Medieval Chinese Warfare, 300-900*, p. 166-167.
[517] *Ibid*., p. 174.

stratagem: deploying a force "of obviously weak troops in plain view of the enemy as a decoy while better quality troops were placed in ambush positions nearby." For example, this is what had happened in 616 when General Li Yuan faced Wang Mantian and his bandit army. He decided to deploy his weak troops so as to invite bandits' military response. Once this had been achieved, Li Yuan counterattacked with the higher quality troops, which were represented by the elite cavalry, rightly "concealed on both flanks."[519]

Li's operations proved to be a tactical masterpiece while also following Chinese military traditions. Dou tried to advance toward the capital Luoyang and was met by Li's troops at the strategic pass of Hulao, near the capital. The geographical features and the overall military setting encouraged a Western sinologist to label it the "Chinese Thermopylae."[520]

During the operations, Li put his army in a defensive position on a hilltop, waiting for the enemy to move first. However, the latter stretched his line of communications too thin, giving Li the possibility to attack, spreading chaos among the enemy's ranks. After this, Li ordered his cavalry "to move south and then east in order to turn the enemy's left flank." Dou responded by moving his army to a more defensive position, disrupting "his army's linear formation." The move Li was waiting for. The Tang prince, hence, led

[518] *Ibid.*, p. 175.
[519] David Andrew Graff, *The Eurasian Way Of War*, p. 69.
[520] C. P Fitzgerald, *Son Of Heaven* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1933), p. 80 in David Andrew Graff, *Medieval Chinese Warfare, 300-900*, p. 172

a light cavalry attack in order to "cut into the retreating troops" with the rest of the army following behind him.[521]

　　　　While campaigns were necessarily conducted, however, the fundamental tactical principle was to build an army which responded to the strategic dictum of subduing the enemy without fighting. A strategic principle that could be accomplished by the simultaneous use of deception and flexible maneuvers, where the latter became possible "due to the large number of smaller, locally based units that could be called on for a major campaign." This tactical principle was widely internalized throughout the Tang dynasty during both its period of political strength and institutional weakness. At the height of its power, for example, the Tang implemented important tactical maneuvers that resembled the classic tactical teachings of Chinese history, that emphasized "speed and mobility, and flanking and other indirect maneuvers [which] received preference over brute shock action."[522] This overall tactical approach, that is, the division into multiple echelons, "meant that a part of the army would be ready to respond to sudden contingencies or reversals while others were already engaged." This method allowed the army to constantly bring new and fresh troops to the battlefield, especially "when fighting against a more numerous enemy."[523] At the same time, the "subdue the enemy without fighting" principle was also

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[521] David Andrew Graff, *Medieval Chinese Warfare, 300-900*, p. 173
[522] Jing [靖] Li [李], "Questions And Replies Between Tang Taizong And Li Weigong [Tang Taizong Li Wengong Wendui - 唐太宗李卫公问对]", in *The Seven Military Classics Of Ancient China*, p. 320
[523] David Andrew Graff, *The Eurasian Way Of War,* p. 62.

implemented during the confrontation with the steppe armies. In those occasions, the Tang frequently implemented the "scorched earth" policy, which was aimed at weakening the enemies, bringing them to collapse by impeding the use of local resources for supplying the army.[524]

At the theoretical level, in fact, this flexible principle was conceived through the design of the classic "well system," which according to its structure, would have displayed the so-called five formations and eight directions. The five formations referred to the disposition of the army along the four central squares of the well system, with the fifth, the central one, occupied by the general. The remaining four should have been left empty, in order to allow the preceding four military companies to interconnect each other so as to give form to the eight directions. Therefore, the tactical assumption was that the army should start its formation with five components and ending, ultimately, with eight according to the circumstances. In so doing, the army

"can take the front to be the rear, the rear to be the front. When advancing they do not run quickly; when withdrawing, they do not race off. There are four heads, eight tails. Wherever they are struck is made the head. If the enemy attacks the middle, the [adjoining] two heads will both come to the rescue. The numbers begin with five and end with eight … as for the changes and transformations to control the enemy:

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[524] *Ibid.*, p. 166-167.

Intermixed and turbulent, their fighting [appeared] chaotic, but their method was not disordered. Nebulous an varying, their deployment was circular, but their strategic power [shih] was not dispersed. This is what is meant by 'they disperse and become eight, reunite and again become one.'"[525]

In Li Jing's explanations of tactics to Taizong, it is illustrated another important theoretical assumption that emphasizes even more the importance of flexibility and deception, this time in relation to the frontier strategy. When Taizong informed him that he guaranteed the frontier tribes, recently conquered, the establishment of the Han (that is, Chinese) bureaucratic administration in order to keep them at bay and that he wished to find a way to preserve peace between the barbarians and the Han Chinese who lived also in those regions, Li Jing – a Tang general who would have become popular later on for being one of the protagonists of one of the Seven Military Classics – replied:

"your Majesty has ordered the establishment of sixty-six relay stations from the Tujue to the Huihuo [Uighers] to connect

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[525] Jing [靖] Li [李], "Questions And Replies Between Tang Taizong And Li Weigong [Tang Taizong Li Wengong Wendui - 唐太宗李卫公问对]", p. 327-328; see also Ralph D Sawyer and Mei -chün Sawyer, *The Tao Of Deception*, 1st ed. (New York: Basic Books, 2007). On the several types of tactical dispositions, see: Rugui [汝瑰] Guo [郭], *Chinese Military History, Volume Four, The Art Of Warfare [Zhongguo Junshi Shi Disijuan Bingfa - 中国军事史 第四卷 兵法*, 1st ed. (Beijing [北京]: Liberation Army Press [jiefangjun chubanshe - 解放军出版社], 1988), pp. 66-78

the forward observation posts. This step already implements the necessary measures. However, I foolishly believe it is appropriate for the Han [defensive] forces to have one method of training and the barbarians another. Since their instruction and training are separate, do not allow them to be intermixed and treated the same. If we encounter the incursion of some other group, then at that moment you can secretly order the generals to change their insignia and exchange their uniforms, and employ unorthodox methods to attack them … this is the technique referred to as 'manifesting many methods to cause misperception.' If you have the barbarians appear as Han Chinese, and Han Chinese masquerade as barbarians, the [enemy] will not know the distinction between barbarians and Chinese. Then no one will be able to fathom our plans for attack and defense. One who excels at employing an army first strives not the fathomable, for then the enemy be confused wherever he goes."[526]

At the practical level, in one famous case, for example, in the first half of the seventh century, Li Jing conducted a sophisticated military operation against the Turks, after the latter's revolt against the Chinese rule. In 629, Li Jing moved three thousand crack cavalry through the Eyang Mountains. This operation astonished the Great Qaghan Xieli, who could not

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[526] *Ibid.*, p. 333

believe that Li Jing could accomplish this task. Along with the application of swift moves through the mountains, Li Jing, moreover, ordered his agents to "sow discord among the Qaghan's trusted confidants." Once the enemy was internally weakened, he launched a night surprise attack, destroying Qaghan's troops and forcing him to flee.[527]

In terms of flexibility, under the reign of Taizong, the emperor decided to adopt a new strategy against Koguryo, after collecting a number of military setbacks in the first half of the seventh century. This new military approach concerned "sending generals with small, mobile forces to make harassing attacks on the Koguryo frontier, with the aim of wearing down the enemy by forcing them to maintain strong defenses and a high level of vigilance at all times." This type of military approach allowed the Tang army to achieve success in 647. A new military expedition was planned for the year after, but it was rejected after the death of Taizong.[528]

In another famous case, another general, Gao Xianzhi, distinguished himself for the right and efficacious military planning. In the preceding stages of the Battle of Talas, which occurred in 751 and represented the first direct military encounter between the Tang and the Arab army, the imperial forces had moved swiftly against the Tibetan army which was also involved in the geopolitical confrontation between the two contending powers by allying itself with the Arab Caliphate. Known as the

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[527] Xu [昫] Liu [劉], *The Old Tang Book [Jiu Tang Shu - 舊唐書], Chap. 67*, 1st ed. (Beijing [北京]: Chinese Press [Zhonghua shu ju - 中华书局], 1975).
[528] David Andrew Graff, *Medieval Chinese Warfare, 300-900*, p. 198.

Pamirs Expedition, this military campaign, which lasted four years (748-751), was meant to quickly subdue the Tibetan forces in order to regain part of the lost territory while also preventing a possible unified attack of the Tibetan-Arab forces against the Tang troops.

This expedition is particularly relevant not only for the tactics employed, but also for the military achievements that those tactics granted, especially when applied into some very difficult geographical terrains. In fact, the expedition, after leaving from Anxi –which was the locality of the frontier region of the Tarim Basin, that is, a territory located in the northwestern part of China in today's Xinjiang – reached the Pamirs, a region full of high mountains that lies in today's Central Asia (Tajikistan) and connects Kyrgyzstan with China, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. Gao Xianzhi, who was the general appointed for this expedition, led ten thousand men, composed of cavalry and infantry, first through the Taklamakan desert and Kashgar (in today's Xinjiang), that were reached in thirty-five days, and then through the mountains of Pamirs, which had been reached in another twenty days. Ultimately, after additional forty days, he reached the Oxus River, that is, nearby the place of the collision between Chinese forces and the Arab army. He accomplished this long tactical maneuver in less than three months; a logistical result quite astonishing for the epoch. This speed was achieved thanks to two factors: the military genius of Gao Xianzhi combined with the specific tactical dispositions, such as his decision to break the army into smaller columns. Stein, one important geographer, so described Gao's incredible tactical result:

The marching distance here indicated agrees well with the time which large caravans of men and transport animals would at present need to cover the same ground. But how the Chinese general managed to feed so large a force after once it had entered the tortuous gorges and barren high valleys beyond the outlying oases of the present Kashgar and Yangihissar districts is a problem which might look formidable, indeed, to any modern commander...The crossing of the Pamirs by a force which in its total strength amounted to ten thousand men is so remarkable a military achievement that the measures which alone probably made it possible deserve some closer examination, however succinct the Chinese record is upon which we have to base it.[529]

After bringing his army to the place where the Tang was supposed to fight in order to gain control over the territory of Central Asia, Gao Xianzhi decided again to divide his army into three columns and move directly against the Tibetans who had been caught by surprise. "Maneuvering to his enemy's flank, Gao achieved a tactical envelopment, in which he gained the key high ground on the battlefield and was able to penetrate the Tibetan defenses and destroy the enemy line in detail," gaining full control of the

Oxus Valley. In so doing, the Tang managed to extinguish the Tibetan threat, while also cutting Tibet's lines of communications with the Arab forces.[530] Such astonishing military success must be remembered not only for its clear military sophistication (which in itself represents a key asset), but also because it represented "the first, and perhaps the last, time [in which a general] led an organized army right across the Pamirs and successfully pierced the great mountain rampart that defends Yasin-Gilgit and with it the Indus valley against invasion from the north."[531]

This campaign plan, therefore, "revealed much about Gao's understanding of complex operational considerations in warfare, such as the proper execution of key logistical tasks associated with force projection over such a distance, the sequencing of lines of operation, control of the tempo of the campaign, and most significantly, the focus on campaign endstates." Moreover, this also illustrates that his tactical design was mainly based on a sequence approach, that is, the ability to connect one tactical victory with the others, resulting in an interconnected sequence of military actions.

> "The maneuver of this army was organized into distinct, sequential phases. Each phase oriented on strategic endstates and built on the successful accomplishment of the previous phase. Gao's first march objective was to achieve the crossing of the Pamirs with his force intact. This required the movement

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[530] James G Pangelinan, *From Red Cliffs To Chosin*,
[531] Aurel Stein, "A Chinese Expedition Across The Pamirs And Hindukush, A. D. 747", p. 115

of this force from its start point in Anxi, through the desert to the oasis city of Kashgar, across the initial mountain passes to the frontier outpost at Tashkurgan, and finally, the most difficult movement across the peak and into the Oxus River valley via multiple mountain passes. His next phase was to initiate combat operations against the Tibetans down the Oxus River valley to the mountain stronghold at Sarhad. In this phase, Gao maneuvered his force in tactical formations, enabling a coordinated convergence at Sarhad from three directions. The final phase involved the movement of the force southwards into Gilgit, the pacification of that kingdom, and the establishment of permanent frontier bases from which to launch future offensive operations into Transoxania. These effective operational maneuvers accomplished two important strategic tasks, the isolation of Gilgit and the severing of the line of communication between the Tibetans and the Arabs."[532]

Gao's success is also directly related to the supporting logistical plan that strongly paved the way for the successful execution of the tactical design. During the expedition, in fact, "his traversing of the mountain passes in multiple columns suggests a very well-ordered logistical plan." Moreover, he also decided to move his force "through multiple avenues of approach, speeding the movement of the force and maximizing available outpost

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[532] James G Pangelinan, *From Red Cliffs To Chosin*, p. 58-59

supplies and local provisions until the army descended into the more fertile Oxus River valley."[533]

Despite the incredible military performance during the Pamirs Expedition, Gao Xianzhi and his army were ruinously defeated in 751 during the famous Battle of Talas against the Arab forces that intervened to help Central Asian tribes which begged for help against the Chinese forces. Therefore, one immediately wonders: "How can a commander who accomplished so extraordinary a task, one that has never before or since been duplicated by a Chinese Army, be utterly defeated in a single battle only three years later?" Besides the mere tactical problem related to the defection of the Qarluk Turks who, during the battle, switched side, there are other important considerations to keep in mind. First of all at the institutional level. After the Pamirs Expedition's incredible success, Gao Xianzhi was promoted as regional military governor; something that would have affected his subsequent military performance. In fact, in the role as commander of the Pamirs Expedition, "Gao demonstrated exceptional audacity and a masterful understanding of the art and science of warfare at the campaign level. His movements were well-planned and orchestrated, demonstrating his unmatched expertise in strategic logistics," besides for his proved expertise on "the operational art, linking and integrating the tactical tasks of the mission together to achieve his operational objectives." Moreover, part of

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[533] *Ibid.*, p. 60

his success was also related to his clear understanding of the strategic objectives of the dynasty for which he was working.[534]

However, after he had been appointed military governor, he "devolved from military commander to regional warlord." This new position altered his military skills to the extent that his behavior was "inconsistent with his previous record. His operational military actions were reckless and impatient. In a short period of time, therefore, "he stopped working in support of his empire's strategic objectives and began operating in support of his own," culminating into a sound military defeat.[535]

At the operational level, Gao seemed to have neglected the fundamental principles of war. First of all he did not set up an operational reserve in the region under his control: "an experienced campaign commander such as Gao should have known the importance of operational reserves, which can be committed into battle to exploit successes or to reinforced weaknesses." Moreover, he seems to not have fully studied the opponent, therefore lacking "any form of counter-reconnaissance to provide early warning of enemy movement in his area of operations."[536] Therefore

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[534] As the author clearly illustrated, it is important to point out what it is meant by operational art. And, according to the U.S. Army doctrine handbook, it can be defined as "the employment of military forces to attain strategic and/or operational objectives through the design, organization, integration, and conduct of strategies, campaigns, major operations, and battles. Operational art translates the joint force commander's strategy into operational design, and, ultimately, tactical action, by integrating the key activities at all levels of war." See *FM 1-02, Operational Terms And Graphics*, 1st ed. ([Washington, D.C.]: Headquarters, Dept. of the Army, U.S. Marine Corps, 2010).
[535] James G Pangelinan, *From Red Cliffs To Chosin*, p. 57
[536] *Ibid.*, pp. 61-62

his defeat can also be explained by the fact that his military response was planned without taking into consideration the basic Suntzunian principles like: employing the necessary defensive measures and obtaining the vital information surrounding the enemy's tactical and strategic disposition.

People's War tactical principles, besides being employed by the Tang, had also been employed – inevitably – by Huang Chao's insurgent movement. And Tang's response, even if managed in the end to defeat the insurrectionist movement, could not prevent its dramatic consequences. Huang Chao's tactics would have represented, centuries afterwards, the key military tactical masterpiece of Chinese military campaigns. In this specific case, Huang Chao, while confronting Tang troops in 878, reporting a defeat in the north, decided to swiftly move south, pushing his men to embrace "one of the most outrageous peregrinations in history." Once he moved south, he and his army went through "some of the most difficult terrain in the country," managing to occupy other port cities, such as Fuzhou and Guangzhou. After that he decided to move again northward, in order to attack the capital by fast maneuvers; "anticipating the long marches of the Taiping rebels in 1851-53 and of the communists in 1934-1935, he looped west through Guizhou before regaining the middle Yangzi." These movements were based on a specific tactical method: "like Mao Zedong, Huang Chao was turning tactical retreat into political triumph. The government had interpreted his southern excursion as a retreat; indeed, in the course of his thirty months on the move (as against Mao's thirteen), Huang Chao repeatedly sought a favorable amnesty," after whose denial,

decided to quickly move against the capital. "After nearly three years and 4,800 kilometers on the march, they stormed into the Wei valley to capture Chang'an."[537]

Still in the ninth century, during the famous Huai Xi campaign, other surrounding autonomous provinces tried to intervene militarily against the imperial forces. Besides adopting a deceptive strategy (explained above), at the tactical level, for example, Ping Lu adopted a flexible tactical disposition, by letting troops conduct marauding activities to the extent that the surrounding area of the capital Luoyang also suffered deep wounds: "in the fourth month of the same year [815] Ping Lu inflicted its heaviest damage when its agents destroyed by fire the huge tax entrepot at Ho-yin (near Luoyang). Losses here in silk, grain, and cash ran into the hundreds of thousands of items. In the sixth month Ping Lu committed one of the outrages of the age, dispatching assassins to murder a prowar chief minister at Chang An. Later in the summer, however, its attempt at guerrilla action in Luoyang was frustrated."[538]

The first part of the Huai Xi campaign ended with the victory of the rebellious province over the central government. Part of this success can also be ascribed to its tactical disposition. In fact, besides the evident problem of cohesion affecting the imperial troops and the individual ability of Huai Xi's commanders, the source of the province's strength was based on two crucial elements: on one hand, the ability to be on the defensive,

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[537] John Keay, *China*, 1st ed. (London: Harper Press, 2009), p. 289

therefore operating along interior lines, while the second element resided on the province's ability to raise infantry and cavalry. Specifically, this province developed an extensive horse production, also attested by its trade specialization which was mainly based on the leather goods. "Consequently, the physical isolation and numerical inferiority under which it suffered were for at least some time offset by these specific military advantages,"[539] creating the typical case often illustrated in Chinese war manuals.[540]

While preparing for conflict, Huai Xi's troops were mainly based on a combination of infantry and cavalry in order to gain the maximum level of mobility. Within the mounted force, "an elite corps commanded by [Tong Zhongzhi] was held in particular fear ... This unit was called the 'Mule Corps' (*luozijun, luo zitu*)" and its units were soldiers mounted on mules. These tactical measures assured the rebellious province a concrete military success.[541]

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[538] Charles Peterson, "Regional Defense Against The Central Powers: The Huai-Hsi Campaign, 815-817", in *Chinese Ways In Warfare*, p. 135

[539] *Ibid*., pp. 137-138

[540] The ability to fight any enemy even with inferior forces has represented a current theme throughout the Art of War; see Sunzi and Samuel B Griffith, *The Art Of War* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971).

[541] According to the text from which this information had been gained, the name Mule Corps posits some theoretical doubts at the tactical level. Mules were not as versatile and mobile as the horses. So it is not quite clear why this corps should have been feared by Huai Xi's adversary. However, since it really was a special section of the mounted force, then we should pay attention to the translation. Therefore according to the historical sources two interpretations are possible: one refers actually to another name of the mounted infantry, which was "feared for their shooting and blade-wielding skills and yet possessing a rather degree of mobility." The second interpretation, instead, refers to the actual use of the mule in warfare, especially in

But the emperor realized that part of the defeat could have been explained by the lack of morale and proper discipline. At the tactical level, he, then, decided to adjust the structure of his troops by appointing Li Su. He, along with the measures adopted to increase the troops' morale, issued the order to acquire 2,000 northwestern cavalrymen, which included also Turks: "this was to strengthen [the army] not only quantitatively but qualitatively as well. Li also made good use in his operations of local recruits for whose recruitment of acquisition he may also have been responsible." And one final measure he adopted consisted of developing "an elite body of assault troops [tujiang]," made of cavalry. This special force accompanied the already existent Li's elite guard unit, the "Six Sections of Foot and Horse (liu bu bing ma 六部兵马)."[542]

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those historical periods when horses were in short supply. Charles Peterson, "Regional Defense Against The Central Powers: The Huai-Hsi Campaign, 815-817", in *Chinese Ways In Warfare*, p. 137

[542] *Ibid.*, p. 141. At the end of the campaign, Tong Zhongzhi, who was the cavalry commander, obtained the pardon from the central government and started working for the imperial court. When questioned on how to explain the defeat of the imperial troops against such a small province, he clearly stated that the clear problem affecting the imperial army was related to three major factors: one was the direct use of the military contingents from distant provinces and their combination with the local troops "while retaining a separate identity as 'guest units' (*kejun* [客军])." The second problem was more related to the operational level: "in a combat situation when the troops were lined up in battle formation, commanders invariably placed the 'guest units' in the front ranks. Though this naturally subjected them to higher casualties, the real military problems developed through the failure of the local troops in the rear to provide adequate support." Moreover, only in cases where victory was assured they joined the military operations, "otherwise they waited in indecision or broke ranks and retired at the first sign of disaster." Finally, "combined with and related to

These measures helped increase the overall military preparation to the extent that Li Su, through a surprise attack explained above, reported a full victory over Huai Xi. At the tactical level, besides the transformation that he had advanced, the army had been further adjusted in order to deliver the fatal blow. In order to increase flexibility and speed, he fragmented the army into three bodies composed of 3,000 men each: "in the vanguard, heavy cavalry under the command of the key ex Huai Xi general, Li Yu; in the center Li Su, probably at the head of his elite 'Six Sections'; in the rear, a mixed cavalry-foot unit."

Moreover, another important tactical aspect was Li Su's decision to keep the troops ignorant about his real intentions. At the beginning of the operations, the troops occupied one of the rebel's position at Zhang Zhai: "this they seized by surprise, slaughtering the garrison and immediately assigning contingents to cut the principle communication routes." After this operation, with no possibility to flee the military position Li Su informed the troops that the final military objective was the capture of Cai Zhou. This tactical aspect is quite important, because it illustrates how Sun Tzu's principles still proved applicable even if many centuries afterwards. In fact, by informing the troops too late, which was one of the tactical objectives, he created the conditions for the inevitability of the military engagement. Because, as Sun Tzu advocated, soldiers fight much harder, therefore, with more success, if they are put in a position from which they cannot but fight:

the lack of cohesion" at the operational level, the third problem, the overarching one, was related to the lack of "morale, discipline and poor leadership." *Ibid.*, 140

"at the critical moment, the leader of an army acts like one who has climbed up a height and then kicks away the ladder behind him. He carries his men deep into hostile territory before he shows his hand."[543]

Notwithstanding the fact that Huai Xi had been definitely defeated, nevertheless, its defensive system was really efficient, and not simply because it acted in a defensive manner, which always carries with itself a tactical advantage. In fact, besides its external fortification, which, of course represented an efficient means of defense, Huai Xi developed, at the same time "a large number of secondary defense positions" with the effect of gaining "a considerable degree of mobility."

The structure of these fortifications consisted of the presence of an outer wall (*yang ma cheng*) along with an earthwork, which was located outside of the city walls: "this served both as an initial but expendable line of defense and as a staging area for operations outside the fortress or town proper." The peculiarity of this period, moreover, was the presence of extra lines of defense to the extent that assailing and conquering the outer walls did not guarantee victory. In fact, inside the city there was frequently an inner fortress (*zicheng*) "probably not unlike the keep of Western castles." This system represented "a fortress within a fortress." Moreover, some other cities, especially provincial capitals, for a further degree of security "had an even smaller enclosure (*yacheng*) which held the residence and administrative remises of the provincial governor or other senior official. This

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[543] *Ibid.*, p. 144.

enclosure seems to have been entirely for his personal safety and probably served no serious military function in the defense of the town."[544]

Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that at the geographical level, the different towns or fortifications, except for their own actual perimeter of defense, did not have lines of protection between the different military posts. Therefore, during the Tang, it became important to connect these fortifications, in order to create an extensive defensive network. These secondary defensive positions, "mostly called cha," referred to many different types of defensive infrastructures located around the country. They were used as a form of "palisade" or as a "field-fort", where the latter became a permanent military outpost, sometimes hosting up to 3,000 soldiers in permanent duty. They were, therefore, disseminated throughout the country, creating a zone-type, rather than a line-type, defensive configuration.[545]

And completing the overall tactical logic, after the establishment of fortifications around the country, it became important, from the ninth century onwards, to secure the defense and the control of the countryside, that is, of all the surrounding area of the fortified town. In order to secure the application of this system, a "scorched earth" tactic had been widely employed for two major reasons: on one hand, the idea was to deprive the enemy of everything "which could be of potential value," transporting it inside the city walls. On the other, this principle was conceived "to deny the enemy

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[544] *Ibid.*, 146-147
[545] *Ibid.*, p. 148

cover for ambushes and to provide the defenders with an unobstructed glacis."[546]

3.3. Conclusions

As this chapter illustrated, the Tang dynasty represented an important turning point in Chinese history, more than other periods or dynasties. It opened up new political, social, and military perspectives that would have exerted profound influences on the subsequent dynasties and historical processes to the extent that "the notion that the Tang-Song divide was a turning point in this regard seems somewhat overdrawn." And this is also further demonstrated at the military level: in the Tang-Song transition, "the most important development in military technology, the introduction of gunpowder weapons, appears to have had very little impact on strategy and the basic patterns of warfare." The other relevant military institutions of early Chinese history – such as households registration, militia institutions, "the assignment of scholars and civil officials to military command," and "the militarization of rural society in response to the breakdown of central authority" – still played a major role even after the Tang-Song divide; a deep behavioral pattern that "can be seen from antiquity through to the early twentieth century." The use of these institutions until the Ming era facilitated the increasing mobilization of people for military service; the number of

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[546] Herbert Franke, "Siege And Defense Of Towns In Medieval China", in *Chinese*

soldiers enlisted for military affairs, therefore, increased exponentially in future generations – reaching several millions of soldiers – to the extent that it was more the result of "China's population growth" rather than some sort of "military revolution."[547] In other words, even during the Song dynasty, the attempt to "construct a new order was just to extend the late Tang's old order."[548] According to these reasons, the Tang dynasty symbolized a fundamental historical case against which testing the validity of the People's War Doctrine.

As these pages have demonstrated, People's War, again, found a complete application in its major social, strategic, and tactical elements. The *fubing* system, in line with the Chinese military tradition, intimately combined the civil with the military and it served indirectly the function of controlling the population, while directly mobilizing it. This system represented one of the most important military policy adopted during the Tang dynasty (even if it was abolished in the second part of the dynasty).

Also the Song dynasty, once obtained the political power, followed some of the typical social policies implemented by the Tang. For example, for what concerns the registration of households and the associated surveillance policies the Song installed the *baojia* system (*baojia zhidu* 保甲制度) which consisted in a specific program of people's mobilization as

Ways In Warfare, pp. 152-153
[547] David Andrew Graff, *Medieval Chinese Warfare, 300-900*, pp. 246-247
[548] Guogang Zhang, "The Transformations Of The Tang Military System And Social Changes In Medieval China", p. 317.

well as mutual surveillance, based again on households, like it had been the case for the Warring States period and the Qin empire.[549]

Even if the Tang still exerted a profound influence over the Song, it is important to highlight how the spreading warlordism during the Tang contributed to create a deep sense of anti-militarism during the Song, assuring that the civil authority could be firmly reestablished over the military sphere, to the extent that "it became quite common for civil officials to be entrusted with important military commands." This, in turn, affected Song's military professionalism, impeding it to reconquer the northern provinces.[550]

The profound influence of the Tang institutions for the subsequent dynasties is nevertheless attested by the way military provinces were administered. For example, in order to keep political centralization, Later Tang instituted in 926 the "Emperor's Army." It was mainly "patterned after the elite headquarters force of a Tang military governor but on a much larger scale, it provided the ruler with a powerful force to keep his military governors in line."[551]

At the strategic level, along with deception and flexibility, and also thanks to the technological innovations, like the gunpowder, the combination of the opposites created a strategic logic that would have been defined, centuries afterwards, as the active defense, since both defense and offense had to be intermixed in order to increase the strategic potential. Specifically,

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[549] Herbert Franke, "Siege And Defense Of Towns In Medieval China", in *Chinese Ways In Warfare*, p. 158
[550] David Andrew Graff, *Medieval Chinese Warfare, 300-900*, p. 246

it became central to find ways to undermine from within the enemy in order to create the preconditions for its capitulation. This strategy, often defined as "using barbarians against barbarians" heavily relied on deception and psychological warfare.

And finally, at the tactical level, flexibility in the military disposition was highly emphasized for both surprise attacks – with its inevitable psychological effects leading to the realization of the strategic principle of subduing the enemy without fighting – and the associated capacity to swiftly move along the lines of communication that, during the Tang, became very long, due to the vast empire.

At the tactical level, moreover, the newly introduced technological innovations also paved the way for a new, but also, traditional way of engaging warfare. During this period, in fact, the country witnessed a profound transformation of the urbanization, with the creation of fortifications around the empire. This, in turn, paved the way for the tactical organization of the siege warfare and military outposts that would have found a further theoretical and practical development during the Song dynasty, in which new technical instruments like the composite crossbow, seven lever and whirlwind catapults, and cloud ladder were introduced into the overall military calculation.

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[551] *Ibid.*, p. 244

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Chapter 4

Chinese People's War Doctrine at the time of Mao Zedong

> guerrilla warfare had stepped out of the bounds of tactics
> and now knocked at the door of strategy,
> demanding [to] be considered from a strategic viewpoint.[552]

       Chinese history from the end of the Tang dynasty to the establishment of the republic in the twentieth century had gone through many dynasties, which followed the political path set up by the Tang.

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[552] Michael Elliott-Bateman, "The Age of Guerrilla", in *The Fourth Dimension Of Warfare: Revolt To Revolution, Vol. II*, Michael Elliott-Bateman ed. (Manchester: Manchester University press, 1974). p. 5.

Historical evolution and other relevant changes had occurred; significant in this case, just to cite an example, had been the maritime transformation the Song Dynasty had set up for future generations: "naval fleets began to nose forth from the rivers, mercantile shipping to wing across the high seas." This would have set the stage for the Chinese maritime evolution, and consequent exploration, that had characterized the Ming Dynasty. Its importance is also reflected by the fact that "rarely had the coastline featured in Chinese strategic calculations as a frontier, or the sea in cosmic theory as an 'All-under-Heaven' element. Their utility lay almost entirely in the fish, salt and tributary bounty."[553] Notwithstanding the inevitable changes that time had brought in Chinese history, the central tenets remained the same, such as the organization of society, conceptualization of politics and geopolitics, and the consideration on warfare.[554]

For example, the Ming Dynasty, established after the collapse of the Yuan Dynasty (which represented a foreign one), very often had demonstrated its willingness to "piously restoring the institutions and rituals of the Tang and the Song."[555] Yongle emperor, for example, while undertaking his territorial expansion, was determined to "surpass the Han and the Tang" in terms of aggrandizement and prestige. In fact, as part of

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[553] John Keay, *China*, 1st ed. (New York: Basic Books, a member of the Perseus Books Group, 2011), p. 333.
[554] The importance of the past and its imitation, also in very diverse contexts, is, again, well attested by several scholars. As John Keay highlighted: "throughout China's history reverence for the antique has also inspired the imitation of ancient styles in verse, prose and painting, the concern with textual authenticity, the frequent readoption of archaic design elements, and not a little counterfeiting." *Ibid.*, p. 308.

his overall desire to pursue the "proof of Heaven's approval and his own legitimacy," he decided to recreate the greatest Chinese empires of the past. As a consequence, since the Han and the Tang empire "had embraced the Red River flood plain and extended down Annam's coastal panhandle, so must his."[556]

After a long decaying process, mainly characterized by internal problems and rebellions, the final battle, in 1644, near Shanhaiguan (not far away from Beijing), a gateway to the Great Wall, signed the official collapse of the Ming dynasty and the beginning of that political process that had led to the establishment of the new Qing dynasty. Affected by decades of agricultural problems, Li Zicheng soon became a leading rebellious figure against the Ming. Leading a powerful army in 1644 he engaged with the Ming army in Beijing, while the new Mongol confederation of the Jurchen-Manchu was pressing from the east, specifically from the Liaodong area. However, the fact that the capital was about to succumb pressed Ming general, Wu Sangui, to swiftly move towards Beijing, even asking the Jurchen-Manchu for help. Once reached Beijing and managing to defeat Li Zicheng, he and the entire Ming elites witnessed the arrival of the Jurchen-Manchu and their subsequent control of the city, paving the way for the transfer of the Mandate of Heaven. "Thus the first major battle in defence of

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[555] *Ibid.*, p. 373.
[556] *Ibid.*, p. 387.

the Great Wall was fought not against alien attackers from without but against Chinese attackers from within."[557]

The distinctive military character of the Manchus, whose rule would then establish the new Qing Dynasty, was the use of distinctive flags with different colors. This structure, then, was used as a recruiting system among the different tribes. These flags and the associated troops, which came to be recognized as the "Banners" experienced a social organization to the extent that each of them "identified with specific ethno-social groups, formed the basic military units into which the people of the north-east, whether Jurchen, Mongol or Han, were being steadily absorbed as Nurhaci extended his sway."[558] Specifically, these banners, called *gusai*, were based on the traditional Manchu system of companies *niru*. Each *niru* comprised a total of 300 people and they focused on economic, political, and social functions, ranging from the salt production to border defense. Five of them composed a section, *jiala*. Finally each banner was composed of five *jiala*, that is, 7,500 men.[559]

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[557] *Ibid*., pp. 417-420. This aspect is relevant, since it illustrates the peculiarity surrounding the Qing dynasty. Although the Manchu represented a foreign people, it nevertheless had gone through a sinicization process during their territorial control over the Liaodong region. Moreover, the additional factor that explains this peculiarity lies in the fact that they did not literary invade China in order to set their dynastic cycle, but allied themselves first with the Chinese military, contributing to quell internal revolts. In fact, during their political consolidation in the south, the Manchus relied on dissident Ming generals, such as Wu Sangui. Mario Sabattini and Paolo Santangelo, *Storia Della Cina [History of China]* (Roma: GLF editori Laterza, 2005), p. 487.

[558] John Keay, *China*, pp. 422-423.

[559] Mario Sabattini and Paolo Santangelo, *Storia Della Cina*, p. 506.

However, this "institutional revolution" would not have been possible, had it not been for the previous coexistence between the Manchu social system and the Chinese military defensive system of *weisuo* 卫所, adopted during the Ming dynasty, and which had been influenced by the previous foreign occupation of Yuan dynasty.[560] These Bannermen would then constitute "the Manchu striking force in China and the privileged backbone of Manchu society throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries."[561]

Notwithstanding their importance and centrality, the bannermen nevertheless would have been accompanied in military expeditions, specifically in Central Asia, by the green banners – *luying* – which were composed by Chinese soldiers, whose initial duty was to undertake local police activities while also keeping ready as reserve troops. However, by the end of the dynasty, it became more and more frequent to let local governors set up local militias, *xiangyong*.[562] These characterized the progressive development of the Banners' composition, whose structure now "included far more Han Chinese, both long-serving farmer-soldiers from Liaodong and more recent recruits from south of the Great Wall, than native Jurchen and Mongols."[563]

However, the internal transformation soon had to cope with the external ones; specifically the transformation of the international system and the first real institutional challenges arising from outside, which would have

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[560] *Ibid.*, p. 486.
[561] John Keay, *China*, pp. 422-423.
[562] Mario Sabattini and Paolo Santangelo, *Storia Della Cina*, p. 510-511.
[563] John Keay, *China*, p. 426.

set the pace for a slow but inevitable collapse of the Qing Dynasty: the Dutch, Portuguese, and finally Russians made their way to China. In a short period of time, the new dynasty had to think of how to handle these new types of diplomatic interactions. The Russian diplomatic challenge, for example, concerning the Russian progressive expansion in the northern part of China, led to the signing of the Nerchinsk Treaty, in 1689, which represented one of the first "unequal treaty" that China had to recognize as a piece of diplomatic work. The sign of the treaty, moreover, was historically significant, since, for the first time, it acknowledged the existence of another sovereign state – "so contradicting the traditional concept of the universal Mandate that underlay all those peace-through-kinship and trade-as-tribute agreements."[564]

However, before the advent of the nineteenth century – that is, the turbulent, crucial period of Chinese history – between 1690 and 1760, the Three Emperors (Kangxi, Yongzheng, and Qianlong) "conducted against the Zunghar Mongols a devastatingly long, if intermittent, war of attrition." The campaign proved to be tough but highly rewarding. The campaign, in fact, concerned far-flung territories, such as Xinjiang, Tibet, Qinghai, western Mongolia, and eastern Kazakhstan, proving that the military expedition was "a logistical triumph in itself." When the war ended in 1759, Zungharia, which comprised "western Mongolia, the northern Urumqi area of Xinjiang and the neighbouring district of Kazakhstan," was finally absorbed by the Qing dynasty. The territory became "a blank social space, to be filled by a state-

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[564] *Ibid.*, p. 439.

sponsored settlement movement of millions of Han Chinese peasants, Manchu Bannermen, Turkestani oasis settlers, Hui [Chinese muslims] and others." Moreover, those military expeditions allowed the Qing territory to double, making the configuration of today's China's territory.[565]

These territorial annexations, according to many historians, responded to the overall desire to emulate the Han and the Tang dynasty, since they had represented the last clear examples of the Chinese control over that vast territory today known as China. Through this politico-military effort, China seemed to have acquired a "manifest destiny," which granted it the "proportions of a subcontinent; *zhongguo* had reached its 'natural' frontiers." However, the historical roots of the Qing did also play a relevant role, to the extent that this territorial expansion also responded to the legacy of Chinggis Khan. Hence, while the Qing, it is undeniable, "had inherited the universalist claims of Heaven's Son … as the Jurchen, a people whose Jin empire had been an early casualty of Mongol expansion, they had assumed the 'world ruling' rights of the Great Khan."[566]

These new territories were administered by relying on the previous Chinese systems of territorial control, especially the Ming, even if the Qing had introduced some important modifications in order to preserve the Manchu supremacy. The area of what would be later on recognized as

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[565] *Ibid.*, pp. 440-441.
[566] *Ibid.*, pp. 444-445; see also Mario Sabattini and Paolo Santangelo, *Storia Della Cina*, p. 525.

Manchuria, as well as the western territories like Xinjiang, had been divided, and therefore administered, into military governorships.[567]

For what concerned the domestic front, the Qing dynasty social system was based on the same "mutual surveillance" type of control. Having represented the crucial social system of control for many centuries, it became now again the central element of the new dynasty. Referring specifically to the Song *baojia* system, the Qing "grouped households into decimal units of a thousand (bao-) and a hundred (-jia), the latter being composed of ten groupings of ten households and each unit having its own headman."[568]

The Qing, however, and China in general, had to face the crucial turning point in history of the two Opium Wars, occurred in the middle of the nineteenth century, which paved the way for the future collapse of the entire dynastic system and the advent of a socio-political transformation. This reflected also the new political situations that China had to face: Chinese elite hoped to appease foreign invaders like it used to be with the invaders from Central Asia, "but it became clear that this tactic underestimated the fundamentally different nature of the new threat. The imperialists sought to occupy not just land, but minds," as attested by the prolific missionary

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[567] Mario Sabattini and Paolo Santangelo, *Storia Della Cina,* p. 504
[568] John Keay, *China*, pp. 453-454; Mario Sabattini and Paolo Santangelo, *Storia Della Cina,* p. 505

activities that had started to spread all over the country, with their direct consequences, as the Taiping Rebellion clearly had demonstrated.[569]

In the nineteenth century new schools of thought started to flourish, which encouraged the adoption of new systems of thinking in order to make China stand the Western military and political superiority. For instance, within one specific school, the "Gongyang school" (*Gongyangxue*), established earlier than the outbreak of the two Opium Wars, one of its scholars, Wei Yuan, wrote in 1842 the *Haiguo tuzhi* which, besides describing the overseas countries, reformulated the Chinese historical theory of "using the barbarians against barbarians" (以夷制夷) in order to resist foreign pressure.[570]

This very delicate context, in line with the overall Chinese historical continuities, gave rise to the outbreak of internal insurgencies which proved particularly destabilizing for the Qing dynasty. Paradoxically, the foreign countries which were spending energies to subjugate China were now the ones to safeguard the existence of the dynasty against the internal revolts. From the end of the eighteenth century onwards, there were many regional uprisings, also helped by the Chinese secret societies that had played a central role in Chinese history,[571] however, one became particularly relevant

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[569] Rana Mitter, *China's War With Japan, 1937-1945* (London: Allen Lane [an imprint of Penguin Books], 2013), p. 21

[570] Mario Sabattini and Paolo Santangelo, *Storia Della Cina,* p. 521

[571] Among the most relevant uprisings that literally weakened Qing's internal stability were: the eighteenth century's insurrection of the White Lotus in the Shandong region (1774); the Red Turban armies, which fought for a Ming restoration; Muslim revolts (1781-84), followed by other separatist movements in Yunnan (1855-1873) ;

for both its nature and the consequences that came out of it: the Taiping Rebellion (1850-1864), whose name derived from the slogan *taiping tianguo*, that is, the Heavenly Kingdom of Great Peace, which represented the ultimate goal that Chinese society had to strive to achieve and which consisted in destroying all those internal enemies that contaminated Chinese society, including the Manchu dynasty. Part of its strength also derived from the pervasive Christian teachings that some converted fully embraced, such as the case of Hong Xiuquan, the leader of the movement. For its intensity and political strength, the revolt had been recognized as "one of the great pivotal events of Chinese history," "the greatest revolution the world has ever seen,"[572] or even the "greatest civil war that China, and perhaps the world, has ever seen."[573] Besides evaluating whether these comments are correct or not, one thing stands clear: "the Taiping movement spans the insurrectionist watershed between the dynastic challengers of the past and the ideological engineers of the future." And this had to do with the fact that the movement demonstrated to be "an Asian peasants' revolt

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Lin Shuangwen's Society of the Earth and the heaven revolt in Taiwan (1786-88); other revolts in the Hubei and Sichuan region supported by the White Lotus Society (1796-1804); the Sect of heavenly principle's revolt in Zhili and Shandong in 1813-1814; the Nian revolutionary group (1853-68); and finally several Triad fraternities operating in the ports. All of them, however, were poorly coordinated and heavily localized, therefore, being unable to create a vast countrywide movement. Mario Sabattini and Paolo Santangelo, *Storia Della Cina,* p. 533.

[572] Ssu-yü Teng, *The Taiping Rebellion And The Western Powers* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), pp. 1-3

[573] Rana Mitter, *China's War With Japan, 1937-1945*, p. 21

flavoured by Judaeo-Christian messianism,"[574] with its own members enlisted into "paramilitary organizations that reflected the millennial Chinese tradition, with military, religious, and administrative functions."[575]

At the same time, the Taiping demonstrated to be a proper revolution, not only because it established a new state, the Heavenly Kingdom of Great Peace already mentioned above, but also because it created (or it would have reestablished) the ancient Chinese political and administrative principles. For example, the movement created a radical agrarian reform, relying on the *jingtian* system. Moreover, in accordance to the previous methods of social surveillance, the Taiping also set up the organization of families according to a specific system – the *ku* – which comprised twenty-five families. This system was also based on a "structure that was simultaneously religious, administrative, military, and productive."[576]

The combination of these aspects made it a very unique politico-theological movement. Hong Xiuquan, the leader of the movement, professed to be the new son of God and started to practice a new religion in China, targeting Buddhism and Confucianism as the negative aspects of China's society. At the same time, the movement, once becoming an armed one, relied on ancient Chinese texts, in order to find more inspiration for its military organization. The key text had been the *Zhouli* (the Rites of Zhou), thought to be, for centuries, the "fundamentalist text" for bringing order into the overall Chinese society. It was also believed, moreover, that only at that

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[574] John Keay, *China*, pp. 470-472

[575] Mario Sabattini and Paolo Santangelo, *Storia Della Cina,* p. 535.

time China "had been the recipient of the 'original doctrine of the Heavenly Father.'"[577]

The importance of the Taiping rebellion can also be ascribed to its contribution to the establishment of a contemporary form of Chinese nationalism. In fact, most of the ideals that characterized the movement, such as "antipathy to Qing imperialism … authenticity through alignment with an impeccably organized agrarian society, insistence of China's centrality … a yearning of social justice and gender equality, and the espousal of a common Han Chinese identity based on place, race and culture rather than dynastic mandates and historiographic sanction," would have been recollected and implemented in the next manifestations of Chinese nationalism.[578]

The nineteenth century, characterized by vast internal problems and foreign occupation, paved the way for what would have become a devastating civil war, which ended with the final victory of the Communists over the Nationalists and the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949.

From a historical point of view, the twentieth century had represented, *per se*, the most crucial period of world history. It had set the stage for the most transforming and radical revolutions, which were destined to play a profound influence on world politics, paving the way for the contemporary political, social, economic, and, above all, military status. These revolutionary ideals

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[576] *Ibid.*, p. 535.
[577] John Keay, *China*, pp. 470-471

"were often imports from abroad, filtered through images of one's country's past and one's personal experiences."[579] For example, Sun Yat-sen, the father of the foundation of the Chinese Republic after the 1911 revolution, created years before, in Japan, the *Tongmenghui* – the League – whose ultimate scope was to set up an uprising against the Qing, which had not materialized. Nevertheless, "his patriotic credentials and charismatic presence inspired many Chinese nationalists."[580]

The same Chinese nationalists, moreover, also found inspiration from the activities of the Russian nihilists and terrorists, embedded of "their anarchic philosophy."[581] This revolutionary condition that paved the way for the 1917 October Revolution, coupled, then, with the communist revolutionary ideology, would strengthen the overall Chinese way of conducting warfare and revolution.[582] In other words, the culmination of the application of the People's War Doctrine could be reached because the Russian revolutionary ideology boosted what had represented, in Chinese history, a strategic attitude within the overall Chinese strategic culture. And this was later on confirmed by the Soviet military advice to the Chinese revolutionaries who based in Huangpu (the Chinese military academy also known as Whampoa) their "nerve centre": "for both the Nationalists and the Communists, the experience of working with the Soviets between 1923 and

[578] *Ibid.*, pp. 470-472
[579] Odd Arne Westad, *Decisive Encounters* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2003), p. 21
[580] Rana Mitter, *China's War With Japan, 1937-1945*), p. 28
[581] *Ibid.*, pp. 29-30

1927 on the National Revolutionary Army (NRA) was crucial" (NRA being the newly established army of the Guomindang).[583] However, the Soviet influence did not fully determine the course of the overall Chinese strategic thought, since it served as a means to awake the Chinese culture and tradition in warfare. For example, Mao's "reliance on peasants as a source of revolutionary energy ran counter to orthodox Marxist ideology that viewed the urban industrial worker as the key element in a communist revolution."[584]

The Soviet influence would have accompanied the entire Communist warfare experience, especially from the early '40s onwards: "the Sovietization of the CCP in the 1940s was, alongside its militarization, the most important change to the party during the civil war." Specifically, at the military level, Soviet influence became more important in 1947, in a period in which the CCP, through the PLA, was moving successful counteroffensive operations against the KMT: "much of what the PLA learned about logistics, battle formations, and armored warfare during the Northeastern campaigns seems to have come from Soviet sources."[585]

The revolutionary asset became even more prominent between mid-1946 to mid-1948, a period in which Chinese cadres promoted a radical revolution of the way of living in the countryside. This revolution, defined as *fanshen* – which meant "overturning" – referred to the CCP's desire to get

[582] Odd Arne Westad, *Decisive Encounters,* p. 22
[583] Rana Mitter, *China's War With Japan, 1937-1945,* p. 36
[584] Gary J Bjorge, *Moving The Enemy* (Fort Leavenworth, Kan.: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2004), p. 19
[585] Odd Arne Westad, *Decisive Encounters*, pp. 119-120

rid of "century-old patterns of life" that characterized peasants' life and introducing, in its stead, "a new, permanent order." However, even if the ideological aspect of the revolution advocated this type of transformation, on the other, the "exigencies of war, the faith in studying local conditions, and Soviet pressure for gradualism" called for a more cautious revolution.[586]

Hence, for the Chinese people, the beginning of the twentieth century, with all the revolutionary wind that it carried with itself, represented the crucial turning point of their personal and political lives. After the outbreak of the uprising in the Wuchang city in the Wuhan region in 1911 the Qing dynasty was finally brought to an end: "a local uprising quickly ignited and was sufficient to bring the whole system down."[587]

These revolutionary impulses found a first, clear expression during the May 4th 1919 movement, which gathered in Tiananmen square to protest against the outcome of the Versailles Treaty signed at the end of the First World War. It was not a simple protest movement, but it represented the ongoing revolutionary development of the Chinese political consciousness. It had, in fact, been labeled as the Second Revolution (after the first one had taken place in 1911). Through this movement the Chinese youth started to consider as universal – rather than merely Western – the values expressed in Russia after the October Revolution, to the extent that for the Chinese intellectuals "Marxism came to be acknowledged as a 'global' response to

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[586] *Ibid.*, pp. 128-129
[587] Rana Mitter, *China's War With Japan, 1937-1945*, p. 30

their political, social, and cultural needs in a period of general crisis and breakdown of all values."[588]

China had been affected by these transformations more than others, since during the second half of the nineteenth century it witnessed what would have been later on recognized as the century of humiliation, which lasted until 1949, that is, the year of the end of the civil war and the establishment of the communist China. Therefore, the mid twentieth century, with its associated civil war, represented the fundamental turning point in Chinese history. A turning point which was also shaped and conditioned by one of the most important figures of Chinese and also world history (at least for what concerned the debate on the exportation of the revolution ideology and the political competition with the USSR on the communism leadership): his name was Mao Zedong.

Mao also distinguished himself, and above all, at the military level. Labeled as "the new Clausewitz,"[589] he represented the founding father of what today has been recognized as the Chinese People's War doctrine. He "was the first to envision political power as the key to insurgency."[590] He, in fact, studied Clausewitz thoroughly to the extent that he also recognized the centrality of politics in war: "War cannot for a single moment be separated

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[588] Mario Sabattini and Paolo Santangelo, *Storia Della Cina,* p. 581
[589] Carl Schmitt and Franco Volpi, *Teoria Del Partigiano [Theory of the Partisan]* (Milano: Adelphi, 2008), p. 80.
[590] Thomas X Hammes, *The Sling And The Stone* (St. Paul, MN: Zenith Press, 2006), p. 54.

from politics … politics is war without bloodshed while war is politics with bloodshed."[591]

Elaborated during the Chinese political turmoil, that is, at the beginning of the twentieth century, People's War Doctrine became the strategic framework for Chinese communist army in order to defeat the nationalist party and the Japanese occupier. According to the Chinese Military Encyclopedia: "People's War is to seek the liberation of class or against foreign aggression, and organize and arm the masses for war. The People's War is in accordance with the fundamental interests of the oppressed classes and the oppressed nations."[592] Nevertheless, People's War doctrine central tenets are: "mobilizing the massive Chinese populace to achieve a political goal and to defeat a militarily superior opponent despite military inferiority."[593]

Mao borrowed most of his ideas from ancient Chinese military writings – such as Sun Tzu's *The Art of War* – to the extent that Sun Tzu's influence can also be intercepted at lower military levels, such as combat operations and not simply the strategic attitude, representing, therefore, "the

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[591] Mao Zedong, *Selected Works Of Mao Tse-Tung, Vol. II* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1965), p. 153
[592] Ji-Jen Hwang, "China's Cyber Warfare: The Strategic Value Of Cyberspace And The Legacy Of People's War" (PhD Thesis, University of Newcastle upon Tyne, 2012), pp. 80-81.
[593] *Ibid.*, p. ii.

spirit, if not the letter, of guidance."[594] Furthermore, Dr. Tan Yiqing, a researcher in the Chinese Academy of Military Science, said that:

> The primary source of Mao Zedong's military thought was the practical experience of the Chinese revolutionary war … [but he] also drew upon China's splendid ancient military heritage, most notably the essence of Sunzi's *The Art of War*. If one does not understand what Mao Zedong's military thought inherited from Sunzi's *The Art of War*, it will be impossible to understand its deep grounding in history, and it will also be very hard to explain the unique Chinese characteristics inherent in Mao's strategy and tactics.
>
> Mao Zedong not only put Sunzi's theories about war into practice, he used the fine quintessence of Sunzi's thought to create strategic theories that fit the specific conditions of China's revolutionary war, pushing Sunzi into a new age.[595]

However, Mao did not simply copy and paste Sun Tzu's thought. He read voraciously and learnt extensively from other Chinese ancient writings, even including novels, mainly based on rebellion, insurgency, and

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[594] Robert B Rigg, *Red China's Fighting Hordes* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1952), p. 49

[595] Yiqing Tan, "Mao Zedong Junshi Sixiang Yu Sunzi Bingfa [Mao Zedong's Military Thought And Sunzi's The Art Of War]", *Junshi lishi [Military History]* 1, no. 17 (1999),

revolution. For example, the 1930s Long March – the communist movement from the cities to the northwestern countryside in order to escape from the Nationalist extermination military campaign – was planned and took inspiration after the famous book *Water Margin*, written by Lao Guanzhong around the 13th century A.D. The book narrated the story of Chinese bandits who decided to gather in the countryside, in order to organize a military resistance against the then Song dynasty which ruled the country.[596]

However, Mao also read Clausewitz and, specifically, his analysis of people's war, which he called "people in arms." Clausewitz developed his concept by listing the five key elements necessary to develop a people's war:

1. "The war must be fought in the interior of the country.
2. It must not be decided by a single stroke.
3. The theater of operations must be fairly large.
4. The national character must be suited to that type of war.
5. The country must be rough and inaccessible, because of mountains, or forests, marshes, or the local methods of cultivation."[597]

cited in Gary J Bjorge, *Moving The Enemy* (Fort Leavenworth, Kan.: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2004), p. 6

[596]Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age Of Extremes* (London: Abacus, 1995), p. 99; Shu Guang Zhang, *Mao's Military Romanticism* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1995), p. 28

[597] Carl von Clausewitz, Michael Howard and Peter Paret, *On War* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 480.

Clausewitz's analysis still offers an important scheme, even if, however, something seems to be still missing. This might be because he "could not yet intuit the degree of totality that goes without saying for the revolutionary wars of the communist Chinese."[598] Therefore, I would suggest that Clausewitz's analysis should include two additional elements extrapolated from Elliott-Bateman's model of people's war, which are: 1) "support of the people has been achieved; 2) the philosophy of co-ordinated action in all the battlefronts has been developed."[599] These two elements are important, because people's war, in order to be effective needs to move from the political to the military level and, at the beginning of this process, the support of the population becomes crucial. Even Confucius recognized this when he stated that the key elements for a successful war were: "1) the support of the people; 2) arms; and 3) food."[600] Furthermore, when Mao declared that "political power grows out of the barrel of a gun," he wanted to emphasize not only the importance of the interconnection between military power and political legitimacy, but also "the basic elements of Chinese communist revolutionary ardor and messiansim [sic]."[601] Therefore, throughout the civil war, and even in the immediate aftermath, he appointed the PLA to mere political and institutional roles at the regional level.[602]

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[598] Carl Schmitt and Franco Volpi, *Teoria Del Partigiano*, p. 80.

[599] Michael Elliott-Bateman, "The Conditions For People's War", pp. 286-287.

[600] *Ibid.*, p. 305.

[601] Shu Guang Zhang, *Mao's Military Romanticism*,, p. 10

[602] David Shambaugh, "The People's Liberation Army And The People's Republic At 50: Reform At Last", *The China Quarterly* 159 (1999): 660; John Gittings, *The Role Of The Chinese Army* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), pp. 30, 31, 32-46.

Having set the general idea of People's War, the present chapter will analyze it by illustrating three major processes that intimately structure People's War in light of Chinese strategic culture: civil-military relationship and the mobilization of the people as the institutional background; strategic asset of the doctrine; and, finally, tactical considerations. However, before engaging with this analysis, the next section would first briefly sketch the history of China's twentieth century.

4.1. The Chinese Turbulent Twentieth Century

At the political, social, economic, and military level, China's twentieth century represented one of the most crucial periods in China's history.[603] It made China transit rapidly and revolutionarily from a pretty much feudal system to an industrial one. This radical transformation happened through important steps, which can be summarized in three historical phases: the first period started in the nineteenth century, through the so-called Opium Wars, in which China met several military defeats by the hand of the Western powers eager to get control of the trade and parts of the territories of the mainland. After several diplomatic setbacks, attested

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[603] As a historical analysis, the present section will be looking at the vast twentieth century, that is, at all those elements that had a profound effects on Chinese twentieth century. Therefore, the Chinese twentieth century can be rightly analyzed by starting from the second half of the nineteenth century and culminating with the advent of Xi Jinping, mainly because the Opium Wars critically conditioned the

by the infamous unequal treaties, and after the outbreak of internal revolutions, in 1911 the dynastic system, which had characterized China's history for millennia, was finally brought to an end. The second phase, starting from 1911, is mainly concerned with the establishment of the new political context in which the Chinese domestic political system was fermenting very fast, with the emergence of the first political parties with opposing ideologies, which contended for the control of the country. This had not come without bloody consequences, as attested by the outbreak of the Chinese civil war, which soon intermingled with the outbreak of the Second World War. This second phase finally culminated with the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949 by the communist forces led by Mao. Finally, the third phase of Chinese twentieth century started right after the final victory of the Communists over the Nationalists and we can assume it ended with the advent of the president Xi Jinping, whose political and ideological design clearly made China transit from one era to the next.

For what concerns the first phase of the Chinese twentieth century, that is, the major events shaping the nineteenth century, China went across two mutually reinforcing phenomena that would have finally attested the collapse of the Qing dynasty: internal turmoil and external invasion. These two phenomena intervened into the historical process by undermining Qing authority in two fundamental aspects: the internal upheavals would have

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subsequent Chinese politics and the twentieth century legacy was still playing a major role even during Hu Jintao era.

disrupted Qing's dynastic authority, while the external invasions would have crippled the empire.

The Opium Wars – the first one occurred between 1839-42, while the second between 1856-60 – represented the two dramatic events characterizing Chinese diplomatic relations with foreign powers. There had been previous relationships, for sure, since the time Marco Polo reached China, however, these two events had clearly represented the two cases that revolutionized the entire Chinese political, economic, and social system.

The context leading to the outbreak of the first Opium War was mainly shaped by the economic and trade imbalance that characterized the Sino-British relationship. Tea, a Chinese product, was in a high demand from English merchants, which was bought with silver. English adventurers tried to compensate this drain of silver by offering barter, "but other British exports enjoyed little demand in China." This trade imbalance was partly mitigated by the triangular trade relationship that the British managed successfully, that is, Indian products were sold in the south-east Asia in exchange for spices and other products that were then sold to China. This context, that connected India with China via the south-east Asia, paved the way for the introduction of a new good, which immediately started to be particularly relevant: the opium. The trade of this drug had started since the late eighteenth century, but with a not particularly high volume of exchange. The Chinese dynasty, under the rule of Qing Yongzheng and, afterwards, Qing Qianlong, introduced the first bans against the use and trade of this commodity. However, the British merchants found ways to elude the imperial

control, to the extent that by 1836, "total imports came to $18 million, making it the world's most valuable single commodity trade of the nineteenth century."[604]

By this huge increase in commerce, opium became the central good the British were selling to China in exchange for tea. According to this system, "silver no longer flowed into China; it flowed out." This therefore had the effect to reverse the balance of trade. The drain of silver, however, did not occur without consequences; "reduced growth, unemployment and urban unrest" could directly be "attributable to the sudden impact of this dramatic and disastrous shift in the balance of payments."[605]

The emperor tried to solve the problem by appointing Lin Zexu as the commissioner in charge of solving this issue, with the final objective to destroy the opium trade. After several fruitless attempts, the conflict seemed imminent and, in fact, it erupted in late 1839, with gunfire exchanges between Lin and the British Captain Charles Elliot, nominated superintendent for the Asian affairs. At the very beginning Lin reported several victories, but Elliot managed to get the support of the crown. So in 1840 "a large naval and military force set sail from India." The objective of this fleet was to "blockade Chinese ports, detain Chinese vessels and take possession 'of some convenient part of the Chinese territory,'" which was

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[604] Frederic Wakeman, "The Canton Trade And The Opium War", in *Cambridge History Of China, Vol. 10 Part 1*, John Fairbank ed. (London: Cambridge University Press, 1978), p. 172, cited in John Keay, *China*, p. 458

identified in Hong Kong. The British naval operations, highly underestimated, first bombarded the city of Zhejiang, and then moved northward, specifically toward the mouth of the Beihe river, which connects to the city of Beijing. At that moment, with the capital undefended and with the fear of a possible invasion, the Chinese authorities decided to come to terms with the British. The agreement was reached in 1841 in Guangzhou, which consisted in granting the British "access to Qing officials, Hong Kong was to be handed over, a $6 million indemnity paid, and trade to be reopened." However, quite surprisingly, this agreement was repudiated by both parties (the Chinese emperor thought that the concessions were too humiliating, while British Prime Minister Palmerstone complained about the lack of a reimbursement for the opium lost and the overall meager objectives reached after the deal).

Therefore, in 1841 the war resumed. At the maritime level, notwithstanding the fact that in general terms the Qing navy was not that backward, the British could easily reach important results. On land, however, the Chinese proved more proficient, especially if we consider the longer legacy of the strategy of people's war in its both cultural and operational level: "troops had been sent to Guangzhou and local militias raised there." Among them, many local people decided to embrace arms against the invader and decided to challenge it through asymmetric military operations. In the Chinese collective memory, for example, the battle of Sanyuanli represented the valuable symbol of the overall Chinese resistance, being

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[605] Susan Naquin and Evelyn Rawski, *Chinese Society In The Eighteenth Century* (London: Yale University Press, 1987), p. 233, cited in John Keay, *China*, p.

portrayed as the "first triumph of popular resistance against the foreigner." In that case, the Chinese people managed to defeat an Indo-British infantry. The Sanyuanli case would have soon stimulated "a bewildering upsurge of other irregular bands and secret societies operating independently of the Qing authorities and often in defiance of them." These movements started not only to target the foreign invader but also the Qing dynasty for its impotence. Therefore, along with the battle against the British, an anti-Manchu sentiment started to spread, paving the way for the "cataclysmic Taiping Rebellion."[606]

The war dragged on for another year, until, in 1842 both parties decided to sign the infamous Nanjing Treaty, this time approved by both parties (even if, of course, China was forced to accept it), through which Great Britain gained even more indemnities ($21 million), plus important territorial concessions, such as Hong Kong, and the opening of new ports, such as Shanghai. In the meantime, other foreign powers started to penetrate Chinese political and territorial space, giving birth to the so-called "Treaty System" which represented a "collaborative and progressive exercise in the diminution of China's sovereignty through the appropriation of large sectors of its economy, its foreign relations, its society and its territories." In other words, this treaty represented the first step towards the

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[606] John Keay, *China*, pp. 464-465

manifestation of what would have been later on recognized as the "century of humiliation," which lasted until 1949.[607]

The Taiping Rebellion tried to overturn these humiliating conditions by promoting a nationwide revolution. Having set their fundamental revolutionary principles, the movement soon became a crusade and spread all over China. In two years (1851-1853), it undertook the "Long March" which "took them from the obscurity of Guiping to centre stage in Nanjing," conquering several cities along the path, which increased its manpower and military supplies. However, the military campaign had to stop around Tianjin due to weather conditions and lack of a proper military preparation; a condition that allowed Qing troops to retaliate.

The context of the Taiping, moreover, intertwined with the overall confrontation between the Qing dynasty and the foreign powers, such as British and French forces, to the extent that while trying to quell the insurgency, the Qing dynasty found itself involved in the so-called Arrow War (1856-186), named after the *Arrow*, the Chinese freighter based in Hong Kong and suspected of piracy by the British. The war against the Anglo-French forces became also known as the second Opium War, which culminated in the signing of the punitive treaty of Tianjin. The gravity behind this additional treaty port was the role played by Russia, which managed to gain a treaty that "opened the entire northern frontier of the Qing empire,

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[607] *Ibid.*, pp. 466-467

from Manchuria to Xinjiang, to Russia's political and commercial influence."[608]

Foreign powers, now satisfied with the new acquisitions obtained from the new treaty ports, needed to secure their new possessions by challenging the Taiping insurgency. Therefore, paradoxically, it was now the time to provide Qing army with the necessary military equipment in order to defeat the common enemy. Moreover, now volunteer units "composed mainly of Chinese irregulars but equipped, drilled and officered by French, Americans and British fought alongside the Qing troops." In few years' time, the Chinese forces, supported by the Western contingents, managed to defeat the overall insurrectionist movement. However, the defeat of the Taping threat did not stabilize the country, since the end of the nineteenth century would have brought new challenges to the point of disintegrating the empire first and the dynasty after.

After the two Opium Wars, in fact, Russia, having already established a favorable diplomatic position in northern China, managed to occupy the Ili region in northern Xinjiang. A territorial seizure that reminded the British occupation of Hong Kong in 1841: "foreign encroachment across China's interminable land borders often bore an uncanny resemblance to that on the coast."[609]

But the challenge had not come only from Russia. Other powers were directly challenging China's role in East Asia. France was pressing in

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[608] *Ibid.*, pp. 475-477
[609] *Ibid.*, p. 486

the south in order to gain control over Vietnam, while Japan was also pressing on the east in order to control the Korean peninsula. Both circumstances culminated into two short wars that China had to fight against respectively France and Japan. But it was the war against the latter that forced China on its knees. The Japanese territorial expansion, in fact, did not stop in the Korean peninsula. Soon, the Japanese troops would have crossed the Yalu river and threaten Chinese capital directly. In order to avoid being fully conquered by Japanese troops, the 1895 Treaty of Shimonoseki, "the most humiliating in modern Chinese history,"[610] forced China to accept severe conditions, among which stood: the concession of Taiwan, Pescadores and Liaodong islands to Japan, the recognition of the full independence of Korea, open four new treaty ports and a disproportionate war indemnity.

The end of the nineteenth century, therefore, represented for China not only a devastating military setback but also an internal political collapse. In fact, right after the end of the Second Opium War and the beginning of the new military attacks at the end of the century, in China a new political movement had been established: the Self-Strengthening (*ziqiang*) movement, first labeled by Feng Guifen (1809-74), mathematician and cartographer. The idea behind it had been to tackle Chinese endemic weaknesses by adopting western technology and science in order to compete at the international level. The underpinning idea was to critically use the western means as a defensive method against foreign aggression

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[610] *Ibid.*, p. 489

while preserving Chinese traditions and culture. In so doing the ideology of the state and society remained Confucianism under the formula "the Western knowledge as a means, Chinese knowledge as a foundation" (*xixue wei yong, zhongxue wei ti*).[611]

At the military level, this movement became particularly relevant when looking at the provincial governors-general who started to establish their own professional armies, instead of relying "on the decrepit Banners or the gentry-led militias," in order to defeat the major insurrections occurring at the time. [612] While at the social level, the movement enforced the classic Chinese collective responsibility systems of *baojia* and *lijia*.[613]

However, the internal contradictions of the movement condemned it to a final collapse. It became evident that China was facing not only a violent political crisis, but also a profound cultural crisis. The latter emerged even more clearly when, after Japan's victory over Russia in 1905, Tokyo – the archenemy – became a source of aspiration for political transformation: "as close as lips and teeth," it was argued, was the Sino-Japanese relationship.[614] In relation to this, "it was not a coincidence that in 1905 the father of the Chinese republic, Sun Yat-sen, founded in Japan the League (*tongmenghui*) and formulated the theory of the 'three principles of the people,' *sanminzhuyi*," which referred to nationalism, democracy, and

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[611] Mario Sabattini and Paolo Santangelo, *Storia Della Cina,* p. 551
[612] *Ibid.*, p. 484
[613] Mario Sabattini and Paolo Santangelo, *Storia Della Cina,* p. 552
[614] Rana Mitter, *China's War With Japan, 1937-1945* (London: Allen Lane (an imprint of Penguin Books), 2013), p. 17

wealth. In line with the overall idea of transforming Chinese society by infusing western means in harmony with the Chinese tradition and culture, the "three principles of the people" were then associated with the "five powers, which, besides the traditional western division of powers (executive, legislative, and judiciary), it also included the traditional Chinese institutions, such as: the exam and the collective surveillance systems." [615]

The internal crisis had also been conditioned by the continuous military defeats that had occurred at the end of the century, paving the way for another devastating blow to China's internal stability: the 1899 Boxer Rebellion.

The movement started off in the Shandong region, spreading very quickly to other areas as far as Beijing and Tianjin. Their origin resided on the "rural distress" that affected most of the Chinese society. Moreover, their peculiarity laid on the reliance on the "tradition of secret societies that had simmered among the rural masses throughout China's history, from the Red Eyebrows and the Yellow Turbans to the White Lotus Society of Macartney's time and the Red Turbans of the Taiping era." During their tactical operations, they mainly targeted Christians, foreigners, and all those symbols (mainly new infrastructural means, such as railways and telegraph lines) that were perceived as impure. In fact, they were moved ideologically on the "Support the Qing, Destroy the Foreigner" slogan, through which they conducted killings in Beijing without the opposition of the Qing army. [616]

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[615] Mario Sabattini and Paolo Santangelo, *Storia Della Cina,* p. 557, 559-560
[616] John Keay, *China*, pp. 493-494

It was foreign intervention once again to stop the insurrectionist movement. This, in turn, paved the way for the near collapse of the entire Qing dynasty, led, this time, by the Empress Cixi who was forced to flee from the capital. However, the foreign powers still needed some form of Chinese government, though weak, to extract as many concessions as possible. Therefore, they allowed Cixi to regain control of the capital. During this period, she adopted some important political reforms both meant to modernize the country and undermining the revolutionaries' attempt to claim to be the "do-gooding 'natural foot' societies."[617] Therefore, on one hand she abolished, in 1905, the examination system, while on the other, in 1909, she established the first provincial assemblies. The abolishment of the examination system, while representing an attempt at modernization, had also side effects, such as the progressive cultural detachment between the elite and the population at large – especially the countryside – since the exams "guaranteed the cultural homogeneity of the bureaucracy and the local notables" thanks to the Confucian culture that they had to study in order to exercise power.[618]

At the grassroots level, "attempts were made to graft some form of local representation on to the *baojia* groupings or replace them with self-governing units." At the military level, she also established the creation of a "New Army" which would have been deployed in order to strengthen the recentralization effort on one hand, while also trying to offset the local

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[617] *Ibid.*, pp. 495-496
[618] Mario Sabattini and Paolo Santangelo, *Storia Della Cina,* p. 565

military forces on the other.[619] The military reform, however, failed miserably, as the institutional reforms instead of bringing a new setting ended up reinforcing the regional armies, as attested by the case of the Northern Army of Yuan Shikai. As a consequence, the entire national defensive system proved to be weak, to the extent that this paved the way for the advent of the "warlords," that is, army generals that controlled vast regional areas.[620]

Notwithstanding this reformist attempt, the dynasty was about to reach its final collapse, due to the empress's death along with the designated heir Guangxu, leaving Guangxu's nephew, Pu yi, as the only successor to the throne. Being, at that time, only two years old, therefore unable to govern, he would have been known in history as the "Last Emperor."

The reforms, nevertheless, started to be connected with the new ideas coming from the West, especially ideological and political doctrines such as socialism, Darwinism, Marxism, and anarchism. The new ideological context paved the way for the establishment of political movements later on consolidating into proper parties. One of the first movements to embrace these new ideas was represented by Dr. Sun Yat-Sen's Revolutionary Alliance.

The chronic problems of the dynasty and the pressing foreign presence made conditions ripe for the outbreak of the Chinese revolution, which erupted in the Wuchang city of the Wuhan region in 1911 thanks also

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[619] John Keay, *China*, pp. 495-496.
[620] Mario Sabattini and Paolo Santangelo, *Storia Della Cina,* p. 558

to the support of the members of the New Army. Yuan Shikai, one of the military governors operating during the Qing dynasty, quickly became the strong political leader of the new institutional framework, becoming, in November of the same year of the outbreak of the revolution, the newly elected prime minister. The new Republic was officially operating from 1 January 1912 while the Qing dynasty officially stopped to exist along with its more-than-two-millennia-old dynastic system.

Far from stable, the new system had ushered in a new period made of a constant status of belligerence between the different factions: "the chaos that ensued mirrored that of the fourth-century Three Kingdoms. From 1911 to 1950 the fighting never really stopped; revolution became civil war, became revolution, became civil war, became foreign invasion, became freedom struggle, became civil war, became revolution."[621]

The life of the newly established republic proved to be very weak. Sun Yat-sen's Revolutionary Alliance, now renamed Guomindang won the first national elections in 1913. However, the political rivalry between Sun and Yuan Shikai, one of the governors of the north, soon escalated to the point in which Yuan decided to usurp power, declaring himself the dictator of the republic (until 1916, the year of his death), and forcing Sun to exile.

The end of the First World War opened up new political scenarios. The Paris treaty, signed in 1919, proved to be detrimental to the Chinese sovereignty, since it consolidated the Japanese territorial acquisitions in China. On May 4th 1919, protesters gathered in Tiananmen against this

treaty outcome, "a date ever after identified with national outrage and reawakening."

The May 4th movement did not only represent a protest movement against the international agreements which undermined Chinese sovereignty. It also sparked a new political activism, which would have had enduring effects on the Chinese political system. In this period, in fact, social mobilization, political activism, and therefore "mass action took on new dimensions." At the same time, " a new generation of leaders, among them the young Mao Zedong … and Zhou Enlai gained their first experience of political activism."[622]

Soon, this situation would have consolidated into a political confrontation between the Guomindang on one side and the Communist party on the other, founded in 1921. The internal weaknesses, coupled with the foreign occupation, accelerated the political agreement between the GMD and the CCP. Both parties, in fact, agreed, in 1922, "on a joint programme to reunite the country and attain full independence." Chiang Kai-shek, the new leader of the GMD, along with the Communist party, established in 1926 the Northern Expedition, whose objective was to reconquer the lost territories. The expedition, which set off from the south, around the area of Guangdong, was divided into three armies, one directed towards Nanjing, the second heading towards Fujian and Hangzhou, and the third moving towards Wuhan. Soon the expedition managed to gain control

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[621] John Keay, *China*, p. 499
[622] *Ibid.*, p. 504

of those areas with Chiang's army moving swiftly towards Shanghai in order to consolidate the territorial control, in 1927.

Once arrived in Shanghai, in order to become the central power of the entire country, the Nationalists decided to move against the communists who, in the meantime, were conducting strikes which paralyzed the city. In 1927 the communists were caught by surprise and, outnumbered and militarily weak, left the city for the countryside, where to find refuge and political reorganization. The Shanghai strikes and their failure highlighted how the "CCP's hopes for a Marxist revolution based on the seizure of the means of production by the industrial proletariat" was destined to fail. The same also concerned the other plan of "using the Guomindang to turbo-charge a communist grab for power." Therefore, after setting off the Long March, from 1928 onwards, "Nationalist and communists were locked into a disastrous pattern of ideological detestation and military confrontation."[623]

The Nationalists, in the meantime, settled their capital in Nanjing, downgrading Beijing, now renamed Beiping (the Northern Peace). During what would have been recognized as the Nanjing decade (1927-1937), Chiang Kai-shek instituted a centralized government along with the promotion of a Confucianist ideology to support the political struggle. The centralization was conceived as an overall project to gain international respectability in order to renegotiate the unequal treaties of the nineteenth century. However, in 1932 China found itself again involved into territorial

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[623] *Ibid.*, pp. 505-506; Mario Sabattini and Paolo Santangelo, *Storia Della Cina,* p. 590

scrambles after the Japanese invasion, and then occupation, of Manchuria, which occurred on September 18th 1931.

The Japanese invasion, and the associated political problems, gave the Communists the right opportunity to breathe from the Nationalist extermination campaign. However, the 1933 truce between the Nationalists and the Japanese allowed Chiang to redirect its military effort against the communists. The latter, now settled in the hills of Jiangxi, had to confront with Chiang's military expedition. In 1934, to avoid total defeat, the Communists decided to flee, embarking on that huge journey recorded in history as the Long March.[624]

In 1936, however, a good opportunity presented for the Communists. Chiang's abduction in Xi'an, while he was trying to convince the local warlord to ally with him, granted the Communists the political acknowledgement in the overall Chinese military situation. In fact, Zhang Xueliang, son of Zhang Zuolin – Xi'an warlord – decided to capture Chiang while on visit with the intention to force him to accept the alliance with the Communists against the bigger threats that all Chinese people were facing: the Japanese. The Generalissimo (a nickname used for Chiang Kai-shek) accepted the offer in order to be released. The second united front was then established. Thanks to this opportunity, "Mao and CCP gained the breathing space to embark on rural mobilization, and all parties braced themselves for the Japanese onslaught."[625]

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[624] Mario Sabattini and Paolo Santangelo, *Storia Della Cina,* p. 596
[625] John Keay, *China*, pp. 513-515

The second united front, in fact, was immediately tested by the July 7th 1937 Marco Polo Bridge incident, which symbolized the beginning of the second Sino-Japanese war (after the 1894-95 confrontation) and, to some extent, had also represented the early stage of the Second World War. Chiang decided to set Shanghai as the battlefront against the Japanese. However, his military incompetence proved destructive to the point that the Nationalists "began their own Long March"[626] which forced them to abandon Shanghai, then Nanjing –which fell in December 1937 and where the Japanese committed their worst atrocities in what had been recorded in history as the Nanjing Massacre – Wuhan, which fell in 1938, and finally Chongqing, where the GMD established the new government until the end of the Second World War.

However, notwithstanding these critical military setbacks, the first part of the Sino-Japanese confrontation (1937-1938) reported one astonishing victory of the Nationalists over the Japanese at the battle of Taierzhuang. Things did not play well during the second part of the conflict, that is, from 1939 onwards. This context was mainly characterized by a military stasis, except for the Japanese offensive of 1944. The second period, in fact, witnessed the creation, by the Japanese, of a new political entity in 1940, guided by Chiang's enemy within the Guomindang, Wang Jingwei, who controlled it in Nanjing under the supervision of Japan. Moreover, Chiang himself was committed to the maintenance of the status

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[626] *Ibid*., pp. 513-515; for an historical evaluation of the Nationalist "long march" see: Rana Mitter, *China's War With Japan, 1937-1945*, p. 114

quo, waiting for the world conflict, and specifically US's intervention in China, to bring defeat upon the Japanese.[627]

This was also motivated by the Nationalists' delicate position, which made them unable to use the coastal provinces, now under Japanese control. The only alternative was the use of the Burma Road which allowed the Nationalists to gain resources coming from India and passing through Yunnan. The military setbacks suffered by both the Nationalists and Communists extended, almost uninterruptedly, until 1945 with the final collapse of the Japanese empire.

In this context, the Communists were also pursuing the same objective, that is, political stability. Located in the North, the red army managed to move among enemy lines, mainly conducting guerrilla operations, while also organizing a vast mobilization campaign coupled with political reforms. These politico-military measures proved to be effective for the Communists.[628]

The end of the Second World War, however, ushered in another turbulent period: the final confrontation between the Nationalists and the Communists through a violent civil war which would have ended in 1949 with the final victory of the Communists and the fleeing of the Nationalists to the island of Taiwan. The confrontation between the two factions developed immediately after the war due to the always ill-accepted status of equal partner in the overall military struggle against Japan of the Communists by

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[627] Mario Sabattini and Paolo Santangelo, *Storia Della Cina,* p. 601
[628] *Ibid.,* p. 604

the Nationalists and also because of the importance, for the Nationalists, to gain full control of the country after the collapse of the dynasty and the political fragmentation that had developed right afterwards. A situation that even Marshall's mission in China in 1946 to settle peace between the two factions could not solve.

One of the first maneuvers of the Nationalists concerned the reoccupation of Manchuria, now left heavily industrialized by the Japanese and representing, therefore, "the greatest prize." However, the Nationalists were slowed down by Russians in their advance towards north, while the Communists, already in the north, made Harbin the "first city run by the CCP," where Lin Biao "reorganized his forces as the People's Liberation Army (PLA)" before planning, in 1946, a push southward. The first year of the war (July 1946-June 1947) was mainly characterized by the Nationalist advance in the North, occupying also CCP's capital of Yan'an, and the progressive communist strategic retreat. The ensuing military confrontation, coupled with internal problems, such as a rampant inflation, famine, and social unrest, critically undermined the Nationalist military capabilities, to the extent that "by the end of 1948 most of China north of the Yangzi was in communist hands," as attested by the famous 1948 Manchuria battle, also known as the LiaoShen Campagin.[629]

Once having gained control of Manchuria, the CCP went through additional two important campaigns that would have finally brought the Communists to power: the Bei-Jin campaign, aimed at capturing Beijing and

the surrounding area, and the HuaiHai campaign, which allowed the Communists to control the northern part of China up to the Yangzi river. The campaigns conducted between the end of 1948 and the beginning of 1949, finally, culminated into the founding of the Chinese People's Republic of China (PRC) on October 1st 1949. However, not all territories were officially under the control of the communist regime and "the People's Liberation Army had much liberating still to do." The areas of Tibet and Xinjiang, for example, were pushing for independence; the south was still out of reach; Hong Kong was firmly in the British hands; and, finally, Taiwan was now occupied by the defeated Nationalists.[630]

Therefore from 1949 onwards, the PRC had been committed in regaining control of the territory. Slowly all of them, except for Taiwan, would have returned, in one form or another, to the mainland, leaving Beijing, up to today, with a very thorny and delicate issue represented by the "riotous Island." The outbreak of the Korean war the year after and the developing mechanisms of the Cold War left China "as firmly closed to the world's maritime trade as imperial China before the Opium Wars."[631] It became central for Beijing, then, to develop internally. During the '50s and '60s, in fact, Mao adopted the most controversial economic and political plans for the modernization of the state – such as the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution – with devastating consequences for the entire society. Nevertheless, the first bricks were set for the subsequent development of

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[629] John Keay, *China*, pp. 513-515
[630] *Ibid.*, p. 519

the country which arrived at the end of the century with a great internal potential to be exploited for the aggrandizement of the country's power.

The transition from the Maoist era to the new millennium (the topic of the next chapter) has been led by the next CCP leaders, such as Deng Xiaoping, Jiang Zemin, and Hu Jintao, who, then, became then the interpreters of the new social, political, and military strengths rising within the country. Deng distinguished himself for his "liberal" policies, which unleashed all the entrepreneurial instincts of society for the economic development of the country. Jiang Zemin, on the other hand, became the interceptor of the digital and information revolution in warfare, to the extent that during his presidency China started to take into consideration how to develop militarily so as to absorb the new technological transformation into a coherent set of guidelines and operational principals. Finally, Hu Jintao followed the political pattern set up by his predecessors in order to strengthen the country and lead it towards the new millennium.

However, after the election of the fifth generation of leaders, whose major representative has been president Xi Jinping, China has officially entered into a new epoch, which will carry with itself important and lasting effects on the overall Chinese political and military development. Since the election of Xi Jinping in 2012, China has transformed its institutional asset. At the political level, president Xi has been accumulating an enormous amount of power, to the extent that his political profile resembles the centrality of Chairman Mao right after the end of the Civil War. According to

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[631] *Ibid.*, p. 520

this amount of power, he has also undertaken a vast program of military reforms, trying to expand the areas of Chinese military intervention, while also modernizing the army by relying on the everlasting doctrinal principles of Chinese military thought. One of the clearest manifestation of this transformation concerns the OBOR system – a vast infrastructural system that connects Beijing to Europe and Africa passing through Central Asia – which has been used as an economic tool coupled with military and cultural objectives, such as the recreation of the ancient Chinese geopolitical centrality. And finally, at the economic level, Xi Jinping is trying to strengthen the overall economic infrastructure so as to increase people's welfare and the overall innovative spirit of the country, making China transit from a purely productive economy (the factory of the world) to an innovative system of growth, mainly based on innovation and development.

4.2. People's War Doctrine at the time of Mao

4.2.1. First Process of People's War: Civil-Military Integration and People's Mobilization

The mobilization issue represented the key component of the war effort (in both the Sino-Japanese War and the Civil War) for both the Nationalists and the Communists, to the extent that "mass mobilization would become the norm." Moreover, the bellicose period China found itself

into "also provided an opportunity for successful mobilization of society at a level that had not previously seemed possible in China."[632]

Chiang Kai-shek managed, especially until 1945, that is, after the end of the double military effort of the Sino-Japanese war and the Second World War, to mobilize the people and gain therefore ample popular support: "the key point of the war is whether we can master the masses," declared in 1938.[633] For example, after the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese war in July 1937, Chiang manifested a total commitment to the war effort, symbolized by his assumption that "in a revolutionary war, the invaders will lose. The Japanese can see only materiel and troops; they can't see the spiritual aspect." This, then, reflected the assumption that even for Chiang the Sino-Japanese war responded more to the revolutionary principles China had set off in 1911, therefore making resistance to Japanese occupation his ideological motif. A resistance – *Kangzhan daodi* "resistance to the end" as he called it – served also the purpose to emphasize its national character, with respect to the deep political fragmentation China had been affected by. For this specific end, for example, he had constantly advanced the

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[632] Rana Mitter, *China's War With Japan, 1937-1945*, p. 116; Odd Arne Westad, *Decisive Encounters*, p. 69, while not denying that the "high degree of popular participation in warfare" represented the key feature of the civil wars of the modern era, he argues that the Chinese Civil War was not characterized by this feature, since "great majority of the population were passive onlookers, doing their best to stay out of harm's way in the cataclysm that engulfed their country."
[633] "Di Yi ci Nanyue junshi huiyi kaihui xunci" [Opening Speech to the first Nanyue Miiltary Conference], (25 November 1938), in Qin Shaoyi, ed., *Xina zongtong Jianggong sixiang lun zongji* [The Thought and Speeches of President Chiang Kai-

importance of setting a "wartime educational strategy" as well as a "national mobilization plan," through which emphasizing the "revolutionary spirit" of the Kuomintang.[634] This effort was partially fulfilled by the *Sanqingtuan*, an organization of young people, controlled by the party, whose objective was to spread propaganda among the people in the urban areas, which were the focus of the Chiang's military struggles due to supply and communication routes that passed through them. In the countryside, instead, the KMT propaganda mainly focused on stability, when, in fact, the social and economic situation in the countryside strived for change.[635]

However, his mobilization techniques suffered from one major issue: his spasmodic desire to get the US involved into the overall war struggle, to the extent that he lost sight of the population at large[636] that could have played a decisive role in his next campaign against the Communists. In fact, when the civil war broke out, instead of exploiting Soviet ambiguities towards the CCP, he ended up being sucked into the Cold War framework, supporting finally the United States[637] while conducting against the CCP

shek] (Taipei, 1984), pp. 486-487, cited in Rana Mitter, *China's War With Japan, 1937-1945*, p. 201

[634] Rana Mitter, *China's War With Japan, 1937-1945*, pp. 89, 96, 124

[635] Odd Arne Westad, *Decisive Encounters*, pp. 71, 80

[636] Harold Miles Tanner, *Where Chiang Kai-Shek Lost China* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2015), p. 14

[637] Odd Arne Westad, *Decisive Encounters* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2003), p. 9

simple bandits eradication campaigns.[638] Therefore, even if Chiang won the Second World War, he definitely lost his country.[639]

Only at the end very end of the Civil War he realized how important it was to regain possession of the population and to advance mobilization policies. In the very last phase of the Civil War, especially right before the HuaiHai campaign, at the Nanjing conference held in August 1948, the Nationalist cadres recognized this fundamental problem and how the CCP demonstrated to be in a more advantageous position thanks to the right implementation of the mobilization policies. The conference "concluded with a call to coordinate work across the full spectrum of military, governmental, economic, political, educational, and cultural activities," in order to integrate the political and military spheres. The fundamental idea was to "completely mobilize all human materiel resources and unleash what they called the power of total war."[640]

On the other hand, for what concerns Mao Zedong, "the war with Japan was the making of a leader," since he had been committed at creating the vastest possible popular support in those areas under the control of the Communist Party.[641] A technique that he developed during the first alliance with the KMT, that is, "a much larger party base which he could use to plan

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[638] Gary J Bjorge, *Moving The Enemy* (Fort Leavenworth, Kan.: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2004), p. 99

[639] Rana Mitter, *China's War With Japan, 1937-1945*, p. 7

[640] Gary J Bjorge, *Moving The Enemy* (Fort Leavenworth, Kan.: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2004), pp. 99-100

[641] Lionel Max Chassin, *The Communist Conquest Of China* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1966), p. 39

radical revolution." In 1925, for example, he also became the director of the propaganda, "providing a chance for him to hone his techniques of rhetoric and mass mobilization which would prove so vital in the decades to come."[642]

However, it should be pointed out that Maoist propaganda, necessary for the creation of base areas in the countryside and consequently peasants mobilization, became attractive especially in those areas where the brutal Japanese behavior contributed to create a more favorable environment. This historical fact encouraged important historians, such as Chalmers Johnson, to even question the overall Communist ability to create base areas and mobilize the peasants; the Communists, then, "were the beneficiaries and not the main source of this mobilization." Therefore, as a consequence, "the Communists were not able to establish guerrilla bases in regions that had no direct experience with the Japanese Army."[643]

Mao stated that "the army and the people are the foundation of victory."[644] This represents one of the key elements characterizing Chinese People's War and the overall Chinese strategic culture. This initial stage is

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[642] Rana Mitter, *China's War With Japan, 1937-1945* (London: Allen Lane (an imprint of Penguin Books), 2013), p. 7, 36; see also Odd Arne Westad, *Decisive Encounters* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2003), pp. 9-10
[643] Chalmers Ashby Johnson, *Peasant Nationalism And Communist Power* (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1962), pp. 49, 146
[644] Zedong Mao and Arthur Waldron, *Mao On Warfare* (New York: CN Times Books, 2013), p. 182

especially relevant, since it illustrates how the people constitute "the whole basis" of the Chinese, but also of other revolutionary movements.[645]

Maoist thought became evident when administering the Manchurian villages. Here, the CCP was trying to establish its own version of political order. The same order that was necessary to gain popular support in order "to penetrate the region as a whole." The political work, therefore, became central for providing the PLA the population support required for the war effort. "The Communist advance teams, a mix of guerrillas and political cadres that operated beyond the military front lines, bore the brunt of this effort and paid a high price."[646] In other words, during their political struggles, the Communists realized that "cities, towns, and other specific positions could be given up and regained later," however, the loss of rural areas would have left them "with nothing." The Nationalists, at least at the very beginning of the Civil War, demonstrated to be also concerned by this factor, to the extent that they tried to "set up local government and an intelligence network" in order to gain popular support, "or at least to politically isolate the Communist armies and the Communist Party organizations from the people, denying the Communists the mass support on which they relied for intelligence, logistical support, and supplies."[647]

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[645] Michael Elliott-Bateman, "The Form Of People's War", in *The Fourth Dimension Of Warfare. Volume I: Intelligence, Subversion, Resistance*, Michael Elliott-Bateman ed. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1970), p. 163-176; Zedong Mao and Samuel Blair Griffith, *On Guerrilla Warfare* (U.S.A.: BN Publishing, 2007), p. 27
[646] Odd Arne Westad, *Decisive Encounters*, p. 126; Harold Miles Tanner, *Where Chiang Kai-Shek Lost China*, p. 123
[647] Harold Miles Tanner, *Where Chiang Kai-Shek Lost China*, pp. 52, 54, 70

Ancient Chinese writers – such as Sun Tzu, for example, unlike western scholars dealing with China[648] – treated the art of military campaign as an inseparable part of the more general art of statecraft. *Wen* (the art of politics) and *wu* (the art of warfare) are, in fact, intimately interconnected in Chinese history and, therefore, strategic culture.[649] In fact, at the very beginning of the *Art of War*, Sun Tzu stated: 兵者，国之大事。死生之地，存亡之道，不可不察也 (War is a matter of vital importance to the State; the province of life or death; the road to survival or ruin. It is mandatory that it be thoroughly studied.)[650]

An interconnection, that one between *wen* and *wu,* Chinese leaders found themselves embedded into to the extent that it continued to be applied even in peacetime. For example, right at the end of the Civil War, the war experience along with the historical legacies of Chinese strategic culture encouraged CCP leadership to carry on with the militarist policies: "they believed that the methods of war were the party's best choice in promoting reform, even in peacetime, because these methods were what the party was good at and what had brought it its victories in the revolutionary struggle." And this tendency has gone through many phases of Chinese history, "from

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[648] John A Lynn, *Battle* (New York: Basic Books, 2003), p. 33

[649] Michael I Handel, *Masters Of War* (New York: Routledge, 2001), pp. 19-32

[650] Samuel Griffith and Sun Tzu, *The Art Of War* (London: Oxford University, 1971), p. 63; Shawn Conners ed., *Military Strategy. Classics Of Ancient China* (Germany: Special Edition Books, 2013).

the Qin emperor twenty-two hundred years ago to Mao Zedong and his revolution."[651]

Mao started to implement the progressive militarization of society during the Sino-Japanese War. On 6 September 1937, for example, he gave birth to the ShaanGanNing (SGN) Border Region government, [652] with its headquarters at Yan'an: "this was the key base area where Mao would spend the war and create a new vision of society, what a classic later analysis would call 'the Yenan [Yan'an] Way].'" Here Mao not only focused on the land reforms, but also on the creation of local militias, which "divided their time between normal agricultural activity and military service." [653] This was possible because the organization of the Communist armed forces was composed of a nucleus of regular troops "supplemented by local units of militia mobilized for particular operations," therefore allowing the latter to focus on sowing and harvest times when not required for warfare operations.[654]

This type of social organization was also possible thanks to the implementation of political commissars, whose role proved to be very important. They distinguished themselves among the KMT ranks during the Northern Expedition, which "had gradually transformed powerful KMT Party representatives into lower-level 'political instructors.'" Their major task

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[651] Odd Arne Westad, *Decisive Encounters*, p. 328
[652] The name derives from the combination of the first syllables of the three provinces which composed the area: Shaanxi, Gansu, and Ningxia.
[653] Rana Mitter, *China's War With Japan, 1937-1945*, p. 193

represented the transmission belt between the civilian and the military world; at the political level, it concerned the assistance of local CCP organs and the organization of the civilian support for the army, that is, its overall mobilization. Their task also concerned "consoling the wounded, indoctrinating prisoners of war, explaining the political purpose of a particular battle, providing recreation, [and] giving lectures on political objectives." At the military level, instead, their task consisted of "generally assisting the commander in his operational role,"[655] while also helping them "address the civil considerations factor when doing a mission, enemy, terrain and weather, troops and support available, time available, and civil considerations (METT-TC) analysis."[656]

His political product soon spread also in Central China through the creation of other base areas, leading also to an important military success over the Japanese Fifth Division in September 1937 at Pingxingguan, obtained through the implementation of ambush operations by the Eighth Route Army and local troops.[657]

However, the complete transformation of society towards that goal only happened during the Civil War. The constant defeats accumulated by the CCP between 1945-46 forced Mao to rethink a way to combine the civil

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[654] Lionel Max Chassin, *The Communist Conquest Of China* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1966), p. 43

[655] William W Whitson, *The Chinese High Command. A History Of Communist Military Politics, 1927-71* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1973), p. 440

[656] Gary J Bjorge, *Moving The Enemy* (Fort Leavenworth, Kan.: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2004), p. 25

[657] Rana Mitter, *China's War With Japan, 1937-1945*, p. 193

and the military by advancing a "complete militarization of the CCP-held areas, accompanied by a reorganization of its forces that tied them closer to the political regions they were supposed to represent." The objective was to reach total mobilization, hence nullifying the distinction between combatants and noncombatants. One immediate instrument that had been used for this goal was represented by the PLA, which "symbolized this mass militarization."[658]

Moreover, the mass militarization obtained through "the interrelatedness of military and political affairs," coupled with the "tactical abilities of PLA commanders," allowed the CCP to survive in the Northeast, especially during 1946-1947 campaign which almost disintegrated the CCP.[659] Part of this tactical success resided on the Communist plan to absorb captured Nationalist troops into CCP's ranks. Adopting the so-called practice of *lifu lipu* – "immediately upon capture, immediately fill in" – the Communists turned Nationalist soldiers into PLA ones. This moreover, also responded to Sun Tzu's strategic teachings that envisaged the importance of capturing the enemy's army intact so as to use it for future military operations.[660]

The ancient understanding of how to integrate civil affairs with the military realm, as already explained, not only exerted a considerable influence over the study of Mao's elaboration of People's War, but it also

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[658] Odd Arne Westad, *Decisive Encounters*, p. 109
[659] *Ibid.*, p. 122
[660] Gary J Bjorge, *Moving The Enemy* (Fort Leavenworth, Kan.: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2004), pp. 204, 233.

emphasized the role of the peasants. In fact, "according to ancient Chinese works on warfare, the scale of peasant uprising and peasant war in Chinese history had been extremely large and virtually unmatched in the rest of the world." This explains as well the importance of the peasants in Chinese history and especially during the application of People's War to the extent that Mao theorized that "the armed struggle of the Chinese Communist Party is peasant war under the leadership of the proletariat."[661] And that "the battle for China is a battle for the hearts and minds of the peasants."[662]

In late '20s of the twentieth century, Mao elaborated his initial political thought which emphasized the need for a peasant revolution rather than an urban one. The latter represented the Soviet model, which the Communists had mistakenly applied in the first phase of their revolutionary, as attested by the communist attempt to foment an uprising in Shanghai with its subsequent suppression by the Nationalists in 1927. During that urban struggle, Mao was located in the countryside "doing Marxist analysis of the rural class structure."[663] In the same year, for example, Mao wrote a famous political work, "A Report on the Peasant Situation in Hunan," "which described the ways through which the CCP "had managed to foment a genuine class war in the rural areas of Mao's home province." In that

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[661] Ji-Jen Hwang, "China's Cyber Warfare: The Strategic Value Of Cyberspace And The Legacy Of People's War," p. 82

[662] Odd Arne Westad, *Decisive Encounters*, p. 62

[663] *Ibid.*, p. 27

circumstance, the Hunan Peasant Provincial Association mobilized the poor peasants, arming them against the richer landlords.[664]

Once in Jiangxi, after the urban defeat in Shanghai which forced the Communists to leave the cities, Mao thought that revolution had to go through a radical land reform. During the Jiangxi years, he adopted the land redistribution policy that transferred the land from the richer peasants to the poorer.[665] However, this policy immediately backfired, since party leaders "realized that gaining the support of local elites was necessary for mobilizing the wider population." Mao's initial land-reform policy "alienated many middle-level peasants who were condemned as rich even though they sometimes had only marginally more than those defined as 'poor.'"[666]

The land reform did play a relevant role in the overall Communist approach to warfare and revolution. In fact, during the Yan'an period, Mao decided to change some of the political pillars of his revolutionary movement: now the objective was to distribute "land to landless peasants." In order to realize this objective and avoid the shortcomings of the previous radical reforms adopted before the outbreak of the civil war, Liu Shaoqi and Ren Bishi – "one of the main Marxist theoreticians in the party" – had set up the Central Committees May Fourth 1946 Directive whose major objective was to take care of the land reform. Partially in line with the previous policy, the new political guidelines emphasized the importance of downgrading landholders by depriving them of their power while favoring the redistribution

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[664] Rana Mitter, *China's War With Japan, 1937-1945,* p. 39-40
[665] Lionel Max Chassin, *The Communist Conquest Of China*, pp. 37-38

policy. In so doing, the objective was to create "allies (and enemies) in the social landscape of the Chinese countryside that, over time, tied some groups of peasants to the Communist cause."[667]

However, the simple theoretical civil-military integration is not sufficient to achieve the establishment of People's War. Mao had, in fact, realized that People's War would work only with the mobilization of the people:[668] "mobilization of the masses, total militarization, and harnessing of the people's will to defeat the enemy were the goals of People's War."[669] In fact, as Mao stated:

> "What does political mobilization mean? First, it means telling the army and the people about the political aim of the war … Secondly … the steps and policies for its attainment must also be given, that is, there must be a political programme … Without a clear-cut, concrete political programme it is impossible to mobilize all the armed forces and the whole people … Thirdly, how should we mobilize them? By word of

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[666] Rana Mitter, *China's War With Japan, 1937-1945,* p. 62

[667] Odd Arne Westad, *Decisive Encounters*, p. 39

[668] Michael Elliott-Bateman, "The Conditions For People's War", pp. 286, 293, 297.

[669] Ji-Jen Hwang, "China's Cyber Warfare: The Strategic Value Of Cyberspace And The Legacy Of People's War," p. 82; see also Harold Miles Tanner, *Where Chiang Kai-Shek Lost China*, p. 178. It is significant, in this case, to highlight, as Tanner pointed out, that the Liao-Shen campaign was really a manifestation of the Maoist people's war by simply looking at the data: "the Communists mobilized 6,750 horse carts and over 1,600,000 civilian laborers, of whom nearly 100,000 followed the troops to the front line."

mouth, by leaflets and bulletins, by newspapers, books and pamphlets, through schools, through the mass organizations and through our cadres … Fourthly … Our job is not to recite our political programme to the people, for nobody will listen to such recitations; we must link the political mobilization for the war with developments in the war and with the life of the soldiers and the people, and make it a continuous movement." [670]

In order to achieve this political objective, Mao moved into two complementary directions: one political, while the other military. At the political level he established several organizational settings for the mobilization process, such as: a grass-root infrastructure "in all segments of society," specifically in those areas "of minimum government control." In this political infrastructure there were: "a) revolutionary cadres who buil[t] the organization in selected areas; b) the cell system of guerrilla fighters; c) circuit organizations for intelligence, escape routes etc.; d) a vertical system of committees for political control; and e) a horizontal structure of committees and organizations … covering all trades, professions, religions, youth and women's activities, and recreational pursuits."[671]

Concerning the last political infrastructure, the CCP became particularly active during the first year of the Civil War. The objective was to

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[670] Mao Zedong, *Selected Works Of Mao Tse-Tung, Vol. II*, pp. 154-155.
[671] Michael Elliott-Bateman, "The Conditions For People's War," p. 300

understand "how the alliance policies [the United Front with the KMT] of the CCP could be used to offset some of the party's military setbacks." Since the KMT, right after the Second World War, found itself in a delicate political position, with the Democratic League and the students movement protesting against its political role, the CCP tried to find ways to manipulate and influence those opposition movements. The party's United Front department set up a group of young intellectuals whose major activities were "propaganda, undercover work, and different forms of intelligence activities." This constant infiltration proved to be successful "as the urban public's disenchantment with GMD grew." Zhou Enlai's tactical skills, associated with "his tremendous ability for deception," helped the CCP gain the popular support their were looking for in the urban areas.[672]

A second organizational step was the establishment of a "high-level intelligence organization in all organs of society."[673] Mao's implementation of these elements clearly highlights the influence of Sun Tzu and his analysis of the use of intelligence and subversion. According to Sun Tzu, in fact, it is vitally important to acquire "foreknowledge [which] cannot be elicited from spirits, nor from gods, nor by analogy with past events, nor from calculations. It must be obtained from men who know the enemy situation."[674] However, this intelligence organization, to be successful, had to be "interlocked with the organizations at all levels which can make the immediate response – i.e. take the necessary armed action." In other words,

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[672] Odd Arne Westad, *Decisive Encounters*, pp. 57-59
[673] Michael Elliott-Bateman, "The Conditions For People's War", p. 301

a networked system should be highly preferred with respect to the typical centralized system of the traditional military organization.[675]

The third organizational design required the establishment of a "revolutionary institutions with a legal base." Mao successfully implemented this step to the extent that we can talk today of the existence of a "Chinese model." This model, in fact, relied on the establishment and dissemination of "revolutionary institutions in remote parts of the country where the government writ [was] weak." This approach, merely political, had great advantages, such as: "a) being more closely in accord with the cultural, social and political realities of the struggle of the country in question; b) enhancing the possible development of an indigenous military arm; and c) providing a better basis of legality if connected with the international scene." However, this system brought with itself also some side effects, such as: a) the development of a peasant culture that would have progressively distanced itself from the political life in the cities; b) the increasing "antagonism between rural and urban revolutionary guerrilla movements; c) immediate difficulties against advanced counter-insurgent movements aimed at the instant destruction of any such rural *foci*."[676]

The fourth organizational requirement was the "*high-grade propaganda system* which can disseminate accurate information through many media sufficiently rapidly to interpret, and so take advantage of the

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[674] Samuel Griffith and Sun Tzu, *The Art Of War*, pp. 144-149

[675] Michael Elliott-Bateman, "The Conditions For People's War," p. 301; Mao Zedong and Stuart Reynolds Schram, *Basic Tactics* (London: Praeger, 1966), p. 111

[676] Michael Elliott-Bateman, "The Conditions For People's War," p. 303.

acceleration of events. This is vital to the 'life' of the political programme."[677] In order to strengthen the political ties with the masses, Mao, moreover, issued for the Eighth Route Army the so-called Three Rules and Eight Remarks; a necessary step to gain popular support and cement a unity of spirit between troops and local inhabitants. These were very basic and elementary principles that, however, in war, constituted vital tenets to be observed:

Rules:
1. All actions are subject to command.
2. Do not steal from the people.
3. Be neither selfish nor unjust.

Remarks:
1. Replace the door when you leave the house.
2. Roll up the bedding on which you have slept.
3. Be courteous.
4. Be honest in your transactions.
5. Return what you borrow.
6. Replace what you break.
7. Do not bathe in the presence of women.

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[677] *Ibid*., p. 304.

8. Do not without authority search the pocketbooks of those you arrest.[678]

These elements further explain the reason why Mao encouraged to see the people as the sea where the guerrilla forces could swim.[679] This metaphor is crucial in understanding Chinese strategic culture. In fact, in 1938, during the battle of Taierzhuang which saw the confrontation between the Nationalists and the Japanese during the first phase of the Sino-Japanese War, Du Zhongyuan, a journalist, "in a language that echoed the way the Communist armies presented their troops to the public," described General Li Zongren's military instructions in the following terms:

The most important point in the people's war is that … troops do not harass the people of the country. If the people are the water, soldiers are the fish, and if you have fish with no water, inevitably they're going to choke; worse still is to use our water to nurture the enemy's fish – that really is comparably stupid.[680]

This politico-metaphorical image played an important role for the acquisition of intelligence from the people and finally its complete mobilization, leading to the fifth fundamental organizational setting of "a

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[678] Zedong Mao and Samuel Blair Griffith, *On Guerrilla Warfare*, pp. 92-93.
[679] *Ibid.*, p. 93

politicized military force that can at least contain opposing military action sufficiently for offensives in the cultural, social-economic, political and international battlefronts."[681]

Finally the sixth and the seventh requirements of organization were respectively: "the development of an educational system, in order to educate the "people in the revolutionary interpretations of the past, present and future [by providing] meaning to, and direction for, the cultural-spiritual upsurge;" and the development of international connections, which helped the revolutionary forces to conduct successfully their military operations.[682] It is significant that in order to fully engage with the educational development of the people to the Communist ideology, Mao had set in February 1942 the so-called: "Rectification Movement." The objective was to set "a thorough reinvention of Chinese society." Among the ideological transformations there was the "intense devotion to the study of Mao's works" along with the an "almost religious commitment to the goals of the Chinese Communist Party."[683]

An ideological transformation that Mao had to apply also among his own troops in order to build a cohesive and fully indoctrinated military body so as to facilitate the transition from a guerrilla-type movement to a conventional army. During the summer 1948, CCP set up the Speak Bitterness Movement (also adopted during the land reform in '30s), whose

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[680] Rana Mitter, *China's War With Japan, 1937-1945,* pp. 148-149
[681] Michael Elliott-Bateman, "The Conditions For People's War," p. 304.
[682] *Ibid.*, p. 305
[683] Rana Mitter, *China's War With Japan, 1937-1945,* p. 282

objective was to increase morale and professionalization within the army. In other words, through this technique, the army was supposed to "create a sense of shared identity between the soldiers from poor farmer and worker backgrounds while forcing those of other class backgrounds to abandon their class and stand with the farmers and workers." However, for those who did not comply with this indoctrination program, the CCP adopted the "Three Inspections and Three Rectifications" movement ("inspecting class, inspecting work, inspecting fighting spirit, rectifying discipline, rectifying work-style, rectifying systems"), which could proceed to purge those who showed an unsubmissive behavior.[684]

Having set this political infrastructure, Mao also involved the military into the process of gaining popular support and masses mobilization through another more invasive tool: the use of massive terror campaigns,[685] in order to force the people to embrace the communist revolutionary agenda. Specifically, the use of terror was often applied during the phase of land reform. Mao supported it "as an instrument of revolutionary terror."[686] The peculiarity behind this method is also attested by the actual implementation of proper counterinsurgency campaigns, conducted by the PLA, to fight against bandits that controlled vast territories in Manchuria and that, besides being hostile at both CCP and KMT, were known for using the same guerrilla

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[684] Harold Miles Tanner, *Where Chiang Kai-Shek Lost China* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2015), pp. 150-152

[685] Mao Zedong, *Selected Works Of Mao Tse-Tung, Vol. I* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1965)*,* p. 29.

[686] Odd Arne Westad, *Decisive Encounters*, p. 136

techniques that the Communists had been recognized for.[687] Furthermore, the PLA's counterinsurgency operations targeted exactly what the CCP was striving for: people's support. The major objective in fighting bandits was to "attack [their] relationships with the people."[688] However, it should be pointed out that terror was selectively employed, because Mao recognized its counterproductive effect, that is, alienation of the masses.[689]

Nevertheless, historically speaking, terrorism had played a significant role in the accomplishment of the mobilization objective not only for Mao, but also for Chiang. Concerning the latter, his loss of popular support during the Sino-Japanese War was also the direct effect of his application of state terror.[690] In the middle of the war against Japan as well as a worsening of the economic conditions, Chiang availed himself of a "shadowy figure," who was "in charge of a security apparatus empowered to enforce the will of the state through psychological pressures and to use torture on those who refused to obey."[691]

Notwithstanding this peculiar task that both the Communists and the Nationalists asked the military to perform, the army, moreover, served the political purpose of the mobilization of the masses through the "three combinations of forces. The first combination is that of the main troops with

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[687] Harold Miles Tanner, *Where Chiang Kai-Shek Lost China*, pp. 125-128
[688] *Ibid.*, p. 130
[689] Michael Elliott-Bateman, "The Conditions For People's War," pp. 301-302.
[690] Odd Arne Westad, *Decisive Encounters*, p. 9
[691] Rana Mitter, *China's War With Japan, 1937-1945,* p. 284

local troops; the second is the regular army with the guerrilla army; and the third is armed masses with non-armed masses."[692]

4.2.2. Second Process of People's War: Strategic Design

For what concerns the CCP, during the Sino-Japanese War Mao highlighted the guidelines for the strategic asset that the Party should have adopted in order to finally achieve victory and therefore set the stage for the radical transformation of the country. A description that it is necessary to provide at length:

> What are the characteristics of China's revolutionary war? I think there are four principle ones. The first is that China is a vast, semi-colonial country which is unevenly developed politically and economically and which has gone through the revolution of 1924-27 … China is a vast country … Hence one need not worry about lack of room for manoeuvre.
> China has gone through a great revolution – this has provided the seeds from which the Red Army has grown, provided the leader of the Red Army, namely, the Chinese Communist Party, and provided the masses with experience of participation in a

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[692] Ji-Jen Hwang, "China's Cyber Warfare: The Strategic Value Of Cyberspace And The Legacy Of People's War", p. 84

revolution … this characteristic basically determines out military strategy and tactics as well as our political strategy and tactics.

The second characteristic is that our enemy is big and powerful … the third characteristic is that the Red Army is small and weak. The Chinese Red Army, starting as guerrilla units, came into being after the defeat of the First Great Revolution …. This characteristic presents a sharp contrast to the preceding one. From this sharp contrast have arisen the strategy and tactics of the Red Army. The fourth characteristic is Communist Party leadership and the agrarian revolution.

It follows from the first and fourth characteristics that it is possible for the Chinese Red Army to grow and defeat its enemy. It follows from the second and third characteristics that it is impossible for the Chinese Red Army to grow very rapidly or defeat its enemy quickly, in other words, the war will be protracted and may even be lost if it is mishandled.

[According to these factors] it is clear that we must correctly settle all the following matters of principle:

Determine our strategic orientation correctly, oppose adventurism when on the offensive, oppose conservatism when on the defensive, and oppose flightism when shifting from one place to another.

Oppose guerrilla-ism in the Red Army, while recognizing the guerrilla character of its operations.

Oppose protracted campaigns and a strategy of quick decision, and uphold the strategy of protracted war and campaigns of quick decision.

Oppose fixed battle lines and positional warfare, and favour fluid battle lines and mobile warfare.

Oppose fighting merely to rout the enemy, and uphold fighting to annihilate the enemy.

Oppose the strategy of striking with two "fists" in two directions at the same time, and uphold the strategy of striking with one "fist" in one direction at one time.

Oppose the principle of maintaining a large rear service organization, and uphold the principle of small ones.

Oppose an absolutely centralized command, and favour a relatively centralized command.

Oppose the purely military viewpoint and the ways of roving rebels, and recognize that the Red Amy is a propagandist and organizer of the Chinese revolution.

Oppose bandit ways, and uphold strict political discipline.

Oppose warlord ways, and favour both democracy within proper limits and an authoritative discipline in the army.

Oppose an incorrect, sectarian policy on cadres, and uphold the correct policy on cadres.

Oppose the policy of isolation, and affirm the policy of winning over all possible allies.

Oppose keeping the Red Army at its old stage, and strive to develop it to a new stage.[693]

All these elements, which paved the way for the acquisition of the necessary political infrastructure and the definition of the political objectives of war, greatly contributed to the establishment of Mao's People's War doctrine and its associated strategy. This has been recognized in the design and implementation of active defense (积极防御).[694] During the Jiangxi period he, in fact, studied the nature of military strategy and tactics, by relying on "old warlord soldiers who had joined his forces and from Chinese military classics, and the transformation of peasant discontent into class warfare."[695]

This strategy further strengthens the presence of a strong Chinese strategic culture, since active defense (not the exact terminology but the same idea) had been already discussed at length by Sun Tzu. The latter, in fact, argued that in war the necessity relies on pre-emption: "Generally, he who occupies the field of battle first and awaits his enemy will be at ease; he who comes later to the scene and rushes into the fight is weary. And therefore those skilled in war bring the enemy to the field of battle and are

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[693] Mao Zedong, *Selected Military Writings* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1966), pp. 94-98
[694] Alexander Chieh-cheng Huang, "Transformation And Refinement Of Chinese Military Doctrine: Reflection And Critique On The PLA's View", in *Seeking Truth From Facts*, James Mulvenon and Andrew Yang ed. (Santa Monica: RAND, 2001), p. 131.
[695] Odd Arne Westad, *Decisive Encounters*, p. 27.

not brought there by him."[696] Mao has described active defense in the following terms:

"While the enemy ruled the whole country, we had only small armed forces; consequently, from the very beginning we have had to wage a bitter struggle against his 'encirclement and suppression' campaigns. Active defence is also known as offensive defence, or defence through decisive engagements. Passive defence is also known as purely defensive defence or pure defence. Passive defence is actually a spurious kind of defence, and the only real defence is active defence, defence for the purpose of counter-attacking and taking the offensive … our warfare consists of the alternate use of the defensive and the offensive … The counter-offensive is a long process, the most fascinating, the most dynamic, and also the final stage of a defensive campaign."[697]

According to this strategy, Chinese forces "were to conduct offensive operations within a defensive strategy." The idea was to move swiftly against the enemy in order to counterattack, instead of passively waiting his actions. Mao's main fear, in fact, was that by employing passive

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[696] Samuel Griffith and Sun Tzu, *The Art Of War*, p. 96; Ji-Jen Hwang, "China's Cyber Warfare: The Strategic Value Of Cyberspace And The Legacy Of People's War", p. 73; Harold Miles Tanner, *Where Chiang Kai-Shek Lost China*, p. 19
[697] Mao Zedong, *Selected Works Of Mao Tse-Tung, Vol. I*, pp. 207-224

defense, the army would have found itself bogged down into an endless war of attrition. Active defense, then, placed "utmost emphasis on gaining and retaining the initiative. Searching for the initiative gave, as a result, advantages in terms of flexibility during the "employment of forces."[698]

Even Chiang Kai-shek had demonstrated to possess the same strategic willingness as attested by the Burma campaign that he conducted with the support of the American General Joseph Stilwell. Specifically, the American objective was to face directly the Japanese troops in Burma in order to protect the access to India (still a British colony) and the road that connected Burma to the south of China through which Chiang could get the American military supplies. However, while Stilwell was confident of a frontal attack against the Japanese, especially after the latter's ability to surround the city of Toungoo where the Sino-American troops were located, Chiang demonstrated to be more cautious, advocating a defensive posture, that is, withdrawing, until the opportunity for counterattack would have materialized. Unfortunately for Chiang, Stilwell did not share his strategic posture, to the extent that the joint Sino-American expedition found defeat. Nevertheless, according to Stilwell, Chiang's meddling, and not his strategy, proved to be the decisive effect of defeat. Moreover, he "described Chinese politics and military strategy as 'twisting, indirect, and undercover.'"[699]

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[698] Paul Godwin, "Change And Continuity In Chinese Military Doctrine, 1949-1999", in *Chinese Warfighting. The PLA Experience Since 1949*, Mark Ryan, David Finkelstein and Michael McDevitt ed. (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2003), p. 25.
[699]Rana Mitter, *China's War With Japan, 1937-1945,* p., 257

However, Mao, by applying active defense, distinguished between "strategic attrition and operational annihilation." With the first one, he argued about the possibility to weaken and slow down the enemy in military operations, while with the second element he advocated, at the operational level, "'quick decision' engagements to 'annihilate' enemy units."[700]

The two elements just listed refer to the essence of the active defense strategy: protracted warfare (持久战).[701] Protracted war symbolized, for Mao, the military nature of active defense and it was articulated into three distinct phases: strategic defense; strategic stalemate; and finally, strategic counteroffensive.[702] The first phase, strategic defense, is based on the mobilization of the people, in order to gain popular support, while also trying to disrupt the enemy's army through small and quick military operations. These operations relied on the principle of "luring the enemy in the deep" (*you ji shenru*), which meant the application of a strategic retreat along the *interior lines* and therefore closer to the army "supporting base areas." The enemy, on the other hand, being on the offensive on the *exterior lines*, "would be moving further from [its] logistical support bases." This strategic

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[700] Paul Godwin, "Change And Continuity In Chinese Military Doctrine, 1949-1999, p. 26

[701] Mao elaborated this strategic approach in his work "On Protracted War," written in 1938, after witnessing Nationalists growing too overconfident over their victory at Taierzhuang to the extent that they could not block Japanese counterattack which finally captured the city of Xuzhou. Mao, then, argued that the war against Japan would have been a long, protracted war and for which "the development of guerrilla warfare was an essential part of the long-term strategy, which the communist armies would seek to develop in north China." Rana Mitter, *China's War With Japan, 1937-1945,* p. 154.

interaction would have facilitated the communist objective of conducting battles of annihilation.[703]

The second phase, strategic stalemate, would focus on the ability to disrupt the enemy attempt to consolidate his position. The communist forces "would use this period to prepare for their strategic counteroffensive." In this phase, therefore, the consolidation attempt "would trap the enemy forces in their garrisons and Mao's forces would continue the process of attrition with attacks on enemy strongholds and logistical lines of support."[704]

Finally, the third phase, counteroffensive, would start only when communist forces had achieved "parity or superiority to the enemy." Moreover, "the adversary's decision to consolidate his position would grant Mao's commander the initiative, allowing them to dominate the battlefield through freedom of movement."[705]

This three-stage strategy had been applied several times during the Chinese Civil War, even including the period of the Sino-Japanese War. For example, after the collapse of the resistance in the city of Taiyuan at the beginning of the Sino-Japanese War in the fall of 1937, Mao realized how relevant it was for the CCP to "making fuller use of guerrilla combat that could excite the Chinese people," since "resistance by the government and the army alone can never defeat Japanese imperialism." The communist

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[702] Mao Zedong and Arthur Waldron, *Mao On Warfare*, pp. 170-177
[703] Paul Godwin, "Change And Continuity In Chinese Military Doctrine, 1949-1999", p. 26
[704] *Ibid.*, p. 27
[705] *Ibid.*, p. 27

forces were therefore the necessary instrument to fulfill this task: "A guerrilla war should be mainly in the enemy's flanks and rear."[706]

These strategic assumptions were further confirmed when the civil war erupted. In the summer of 1946 Mao, along with Lin Biao, Chen Yi, and He Long, elaborated a strategy whose purpose was to "extend the CCP strongholds in Manchuria, defend the party's positions in North China, and withdraw from indefensible areas in Central and South China." These objectives would have been accomplished by relying on mobile warfare and the extension of rural bases.[707] Commonly known as the "7-7 Resolution" (because it had been established on 7 July), this document highlighted what the strategic asset of the CCP troops should be, after the military failures in Manchuria throughout the 1946 operations. The agreement emphasized the centrality of building base areas in Manchuria, send party cadres into the countryside, establish a land reform, strengthen the army, and "use the principles of mobile warfare to annihilate the enemy in deep, wait until the enemy is dispersed, and use superior numbers to annihilate the enemy."[708]

Specifically, these new strategic settings responded to the strategic vision that the CCP had decided to adopt the year before, in 1945. It had illustrated how the Red Army had to engage militarily in the Northeast. Liu Shaoqi and the Politburo decided that the Communists' objective was now to

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[706] Rana Mitter, *China's War With Japan, 1937-1945*, p. 112
[707] Odd Arne Westad, *Decisive Encounters*, p. 46
[708] Harold Miles Tanner, *The Battle For Manchuria And The Fate Of China* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), p. 197; Harold Miles Tanner, *Where Chiang Kai-Shek Lost China*, pp. 41-42

"march on the north, defend in the south." In other words, the CCP had to extend as farther as possible its own base areas, by moving in troops and cadres, while retreating in the south, defending the key territories under Communist control. It is clear that this symbolized the desire – too premature – to move from a guerrilla-type of warfare to a more conventional, mobile one.[709]

In addition to that, the strategy also reflected another important change: the CCP had now to focus on dispersing their forces "in the medium and small cities and rural areas, concentrate on building base areas, and prepare for a protracted struggle and eventual victory." This strategic outline highlighted the necessity to abandon the previous strategic design which had been based on the "Three Big Cities" objectives, that is, the importance of capturing Shenyang, Changchun, and Harbin. However, in Manchuria, Mao's strategy of "surround the cities from the countryside" was actually the other way round, with the cities that had first been occupied.[710]

However the Nationalists demonstrated to have, at the very beginning of the conflict, a better sense of mobile warfare, to the extent that Chiang managed to move swiftly to the west, that is, the mountain region between Hubei and Anhui close to Yan'an, and then immediately to the east, that is, in northern Jiangsu, which was under the control of the Communist general Chen Yi. Here, Chen tried to apply the "lure the enemy in the deep" strategic logic, "lulling Li's forces [Guomindang general Li Mi] into a false

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[709] Harold Miles Tanner, *The Battle For Manchuria And The Fate Of China*, pp. 45-46
[710] *Ibid.*, pp. 73, 142

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sense of security. Then he struck furiously into southern Jiangsu, broke through the nationalist lines, and inflicted heavy casualties on the GMD units." However, this bold action was not enough to avoid defeat by the hand of the Guomindang, to the extent that Chen Yi was forced to leave the region. Things were not going well either for the Communist forces in Manchuria, which were forced to flee in the fall of 1946. While retreating, their major purpose was to "set up local guerrilla groups in the mountains."[711]

Moreover, Chiang's strategic design for the Manchurian theatre of operation focused on the "first south, then north" assumption. The idea was to secure the southern part of Manchuria in order to disrupt communications between the Communist troops in north Manchuria and the base areas in North China, specifically the Bei-Ning railway line, which connected Shenyang to Shanhaiguan. Once the southern part could be secured, then Du Yuming would immediately march towards north, bringing down the entire Communist military infrastructure.[712]

Nevertheless, protracted warfare logic still governed CCP's way of thinking about war. In the fall 1946, after military setbacks, he argued that CCP counterattack in the Northeast "would have to be conducted according to the principles of conventional warfare, rather than the highly mobile tactics used in the defense of CCP positions in the South." However, Lin Biao had a different idea, which was still based on the small-scale operations. The 1946

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[711] Odd Arne Westad, *Decisive Encounters*, pp. 47-48
[712] Harold Miles Tanner, *The Battle For Manchuria And The Fate Of China*, p. 198

winter campaign proved to be a "compromise between these two approaches." On one hand, it consisted of conducting sabotage operations, such as disrupting enemy communications, while on the other it had also to directly face Nationalist forces, in order to "test out GMD strength."[713]

Concerning the former, the CCP was beginning to see the results of its guerrilla campaigns. On one hand, they made sure that Communist regular forces remained intact, while on the other, "by severing communications, [they were] separating the cities from the countryside and slowly driving the government into an economic crisis."[714]

In general terms, after the 1946 July 7 Resolution, it seemed clear how Lin Biao was committed to the application of the active defense strategy. In what has been recognized as the period of Three Expeditions and the Four Defenses – conducted between the end of 1946 and the beginning of 1947 – Lin Biao fully exploited the active defense strategy "by conducting an 'offensive-defensive campaign.'"[715]

However, the active defense was not simply Mao's strategic approach to the Civil War. Even Jiang adopted a strategic outlook that reflected the active defense. During the execution of Lin Biao's Winter Offensive between 1947-48, Chiang commanded his subordinate Chen Cheng, who asked for more troops, to still conduct offensive operations, while being "on the strategic defensive."[716]

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[713] Odd Arne Westad, *Decisive Encounters*, pp. 63-64
[714] Lionel Max Chassin, *The Communist Conquest Of China*, pp. 88-89
[715] Harold Miles Tanner, *Where Chiang Kai-Shek Lost China*, p. 73
[716] *Ibid.*, pp. 111-112

Moreover, during the HuaiHai campaign, Nationalist Defense Minister He Yingqin and General Gu Zhutong agreed to adopt an active defense approach around the city of Xuzhou. The idea was to withdraw from other nearby areas in order to consolidate the major KMT forces on the western part of Xuzhou for offensive operations, while maintaining "an area defense to the east of Xuzhou along the Long-Hai railroad between Xuzhou and Haizhou to block an ECFA penetration into north Jiangsu."[717]

4.2.3. Third Process of People's War: Tactical Design

The tactical asset of the Maoist way of warfare had been confirmed, officially, during the Zunyi Conference, held in Guizhou province in 1935, which "endorsed his tactics of mobile warfare and moved the party away from the conventional warfare strategies supported by the Comintern."[718] This aspect is crucial in understanding how, notwithstanding the important Soviet influence on the overall Chinese way of conducting warfare, it was necessary to readapt those tactical conditions to the Chinese unique social and cultural spectrum. For instance, during the first military encounters of the Civil War, Lin Biao, one of the central strategist of the communist struggle and Mao's most trusted commander, advocated the employment of Soviet battle plans, that he had personally studied during his stay in

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[717] Gary J Bjorge, *Moving The Enemy*, p. 88
[718] Rana Mitter, *China's War With Japan, 1937-1945*, p. 187; Gary J Bjorge, *Moving The Enemy*, p. 19

Moscow. However, for Mao, the Soviet tactics were "dangerous aberrations from the principles of people's war."[719]

For Mao, at least for what concerns his 1930s' writings, and in relation with the ongoing war against Japan, guerrilla tactics strongly reminded Sun Tzu's *Art of War*. Mao focused on the idea that guerrilla operations occurred in a "fluid fashion, in which there are no front lines." Moreover, the use of guerrilla emphasized the role played by speed, deception, alertness, high mobility, and flexibility, where the latter played a decisive role in shaping the military effort according to "any given situation." This, in turn, meant that Chinese troops should focus more on large scale mobile warfare, rather than positional warfare.[720]

The readaptation of war tactics to the Chinese unique conditions had also been highlighted by an American intelligence report, which stated that:

> It is argued that the CCP units are successful in only two types of warfare which they are now carrying on in Jehol [Rehe]; that when they attempt position defense, they are unable to stand against the KMT. The earlier effectiveness of the CCP in such fighting in Manchuria does not confirm this opinion. Nor does the fact that the CCP units in Jehol have confined their operations to sporadic raids against the railroads

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[719] Odd Arne Westad, *Decisive Encounters*, p. 173.

[720] Harold Miles Tanner, *Where Chiang Kai-Shek Lost China*, p. 21

mean that they are incapable of larger-scale and more sustained operations. Rather, they are carrying out the tactics most suited to the situation in which they find themselves, and their refusal to adopt any other kind of warfare is a tribute to their sagacity rather than an adverse commentary on their lack of training for other than guerrilla action.[721]

This assumption had been further implemented right during the war against Japan. As the KMT found defeat by the Japanese hand, "Communist guerrillas would infiltrate behind the lines of the advancing Japanese, organize resistance, and take over the administration of these 'liberated' areas."[722] The increasing reliance on asymmetric techniques of warfare by the Communists forced the Japanese to use counter-insurgency actions which were distinctive for their cruelty: "they moved farmers into protected villages in order to deprive the Communist guerrillas of popular support and inflicted heavy casualties on the resistance forces." For example, one of the most brutal campaign took place in 1941 in Manchuria, the so-called "three alls": "Kill all, burn all, destroy all." The campaign targeted the crucial element of the Communist guerrillas: "the rural agricultural economy and

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[721] MIS 269236 General Headquarters, United States Army Forces, Pacific, Military, Intelligence Section, General Staff, "Intelligence Summary 1508", 29 May 1946, Army Intelligence File RG 319, Box 1799 cited in Harold Miles Tanner, *The Battle For Manchuria And The Fate Of China*, p. 186
[722] Lionel Max Chassin, *The Communist Conquest Of China*, p. 15

communities on which Communist guerrilla forces relied for intelligence, logistical support, recruits, and supplies."[723]

Chinese tactical asset, especially the Maoist one, therefore, reflected not only the assumptions of the contingent People's War Doctrine, but also those of the Chinese strategic culture per se. Specifically, the main component was the use of deceptive means of war, among which stood the creation of units made of urban dwellers who left the city to join the CCP in its rural areas, which were then used as agents for underground activities in their cities of origin, such as political work and sabotage. This group of secret agents had been known as the Underground Party (*dixia dang*) and had to follow Zhou's dicta: the Three Diligences (*sanqin*) – "in studies, careers, and making friends" - and the Three Processes (*sanhua*) – "be professional, fit in, and stay legitimate whenever possible."[724]

These activities were crucial for the CCP not only as disrupting activity towards KMT's government. They also fulfilled a precious intelligence service. For example, in one famous instance, Xiong Xianghui, a spy for the CCP, while serving KMT's general Hu Zongnan in 1945-1946, had collected information about KMT's plan to occupy Yan'an during the campaign in winter 1946-47. Information that the Communist spy immediately transferred to the Party, preventing a more devastating defeat.[725]

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[723] Harold Miles Tanner, *The Battle For Manchuria And The Fate Of China*, pp. 29, 34
[724] Odd Arne Westad, *Decisive Encounters*, pp. 137-140
[725] *Ibid.*, pp. 142, 152

The tactical objectives associated with this underground activity were not only to confuse enemy's plans, but also to increase military flexibility.[726] This feature is particularly important for the understanding of Chinese strategic culture, since it was also shared even by Chiang Kai-shek especially during the Sino-Japanese War; "his tactics could lead him to adopt intricate and often deceptive strategies: he was a master at playing off his colleagues against one another." Chiang, for example, after the Manchuria Incident of September 18th 1931 decided to play this deceptive element when he offered Japan a compromise, "but in private, he encouraged the Chinese 19th Route Army to fight back."[727]

Once Mao managed to mobilize the people, and therefore create the strategy of active defense according to the Chinese geopolitical features, it was important to understand what tactics could satisfy the strategic design, whose purpose was to translate military successes into clear political objectives. By the time the civil war erupted, it became central for Mao and the Communists to understand how to block the Nationalists' advance in the Northeast. For the entire duration of the civil war, Lin Biao distinguished

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[726] The deceptive nature of the Chinese way of warfare is historically significant. For example, when Zhang Xueliang, the Manchurian warlord, decided, in 1936, to kidnap Chiang Kai-shek so as to force him into an alliance with the CCP to fight the Japanese enemy, he had not realized that a couple of months before his actions, Chiang and Mao had already agreed on the creation of the united front against the Japanese invasion. This explains the fact that "Zhang was a victim of the tendency of both Chiang and the top CCP leaders to keep their plans secret and also to pursue several lines of strategy simultaneously and sometimes contradictorily." Rana Mitter, *China's War With Japan, 1937-1945*, p. 66
[727] Rana Mitter, *China's War With Japan, 1937-1945*, pp. 23, 57

himself for his "remarkable gifts as a military leader – first and foremost his ability to quickly grasp the strategic disposition of his enemies and to mislead them with regard to his own." This allowed him to conduct, very often, surprise attacks on the enemy forces when the opportunity came.[728] The same can also be said of Chen Yi, the commander of the New Fourth Army, whose reputation of being "a master in the art of prompt retreats and unexpected reappearances" found confirmation throughout the war.[729]

The logic of maneuvers that both the KMT and the CCP were trying to implement reflected the same tactical maneuvers applied in the "bygone days of ancient Chou [Zhou] and T'ang [Tang] dynasties." That is, it became an historical constant that those kingdoms based in Shanxi "always attempted to apply what the classics call the 'horizontal plan.'" It consisted in the occupation of those territories that followed the course of the Yellow River, connecting the westward region to the sea by moving eastward. On the other hand, those states located in the south "always sought to apply the 'vertical plan,' which called for the formation of a north-south bulwark capable of confining their enemies to the west."[730] Therefore, historically speaking, even according to the historian C. P. Fitzgerald, in contemporary

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[728] Odd Arne Westad, *Decisive Encounters*, p. 37
[729] Lionel Max Chassin, *The Communist Conquest Of China*, p. 124
[730] *Ibid.*, pp. 58-59

China "the 'horizontal' and the 'vertical' plans of the ancient Chou [Zhou] strategists reappear in all essentials unchanged."[731]

According to the Chinese military tradition, it is also possible to distinguish the way the Nationalists were conducting their military operations, especially during the Civil War. For example, when dealing with the Taiping and Nian Rebellions of the mid nineteenth century, the Qing's tactical design focused on the ability to secure one sector after another, "slowly and methodically drawing the circle ever tighter around the enemy." Chiang ended up relying on the same tactical design when targeting warlords first, and Communist base areas afterwards.[732]

In addition to that, at the tactical level, army organization represented another daunting challenge. In 1946 Lin had to find a way to integrate into a coherent military force the many bandits, former Manchurian warlords, brigands, and other various groups of fighters that wanted to join the Northeast People's Liberation Army. In order to increase the military effectiveness of this heterodox mass of people, Lin relied on a rigorous military training. Moreover, he also "placed a strong emphasis on teaching his men the military methods developed in the Soviet Union and in the command areas of North China during the last years of the anti-Japanese war." These methods, contrary to the CCP military habit – which was mainly based on "guerrilla-style 'people's war'" – were more conventional means of

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[731] C. P. Fitzgerald, *Son Of Heaven: A Biography Of Li Shih-Min, Founder Of The T'ang Dynasty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1933), cited in Lionel Max Chassin, *The Communist Conquest Of China, p. 59*
[732] Harold Miles Tanner, *The Battle For Manchuria And The Fate Of China*, p. 11

warfare. However, the centrality of this new type of training remained "speed – the ability to move fast across the great Manchurian Plain, surprise the enemy, and defeat their strategies."[733]

Mao subsequently issued the famous "Ten Principles of Operations," which clarified the employment of tactics according to the different circumstances.[734] Active defense, and its essence of protracted war, as has been previously stated, relied on the implementation of three strategic phases necessary for the accomplishment of political objectives. At the tactical level, in fact, the theory envisaged the application, first of all, of strategic defense, followed by strategic stalemate, and concluded by the strategic counteroffensive. The first phase objective – "luring the enemy in

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[733] Odd Arne Westad, *Decisive Encounters*, p. 123

[734] (1) Attack dispersed isolated enemy forces first; attack concentrated strong enemy forces later. (2) Take small and medium cities and extensive rural areas first; take big cities later. (3) Make wiping out the enemy's effective strength our main objective; do not make holding or seizing a city or place our main objective. (4) In every battle, concentrate an absolutely superior force, encircle the enemy forces completely, strive to wipe them out thoroughly and do not let any escape from the net. (5) Fight no battle unprepared, fight no battle you are not sure of winning; make every effort to be well prepared for each battle. (6) Give full play to our style of fighting – courage in battle, no fear of sacrifice, no fear of fatigue, and continuous fighting. (7) Strive to wipe out the enemy when he is on the move. At the same time, pay attention to the tactics of positional attack and capture enemy fortified points and cities. (8) Concerning attacking cities, resolutely seize all enemy fortified points and cities that are weakly defended. (9) Replenish our strength with all the arms and most of the personnel captured from the enemy. (10) Make good use of the intervals between campaigns to rest, train and consolidate our troops … our strategy and tactics are based on a People's War; no army opposed to the people can use our strategy and tactics. Mao Zedong, "The Present Situation and Our Tasks," (25 December 1947), in *Selected Military Writings*

deep" – was to trade space for time:[735] "Both Mao and Chiang were familiar with the practice of falling back before a superior enemy, giving up space in order to gain time for a long war of attrition in which the enemy's need to administer and defend his newly acquired territory and its hostile population would weaken him in the long term."[736]

These basic guerrilla tactics, moreover, highlight the connection with Sun Tzu's military thought, especially when it comes to the search for flexibility, high mobility, and, above all, speed, as Lin Biao clearly demonstrated.[737] Sun Tzu's words, for example, can be found in the following Maoist tactical assumptions:

敵進我退(*di jin wo tui*) The enemy advances, we retreat;

敵駐我擾(*di jiu, wo rao*) The enemy camps, we harass;

敵疲我打(*di pi, wo da*) The enemy tires, we attack;

敵退我追(*di tui, wo zhui*) The enemy retreats, we pursue.[738]

One of the clearest application of this tactic had occurred during the communist evacuation of Yan'an, after the nationalist winter offensive campaign of 1946-47. The Communist strategic retreat would have lasted

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[735] J. L. S Girling, *People's War* (New York, Washington: Frederick A. Praeger, 1969), pp. 79-82; Samuel B Griffith, Biao Lin and Ruiqing Luo, *Peking And People's Wars* (London: Pall Mall P., 1966), p. 33.

[736] Harold Miles Tanner, *The Battle For Manchuria And The Fate Of China*, p. 11

[737] Harold Miles Tanner, *Where Chiang Kai-Shek Lost China*, p. 19

until mid 1948, a period in which the Communists "had made something of a specialty of drawing Nationalist troops out into the field, identifying weak points, and attacking them mercilessly."[739] After that, Mao and the CCP establishment decided that it was important to progressively move the army towards a conventional way of fighting. In the meantime, the constant Nationalist advance, in purely Clausewitizian terms, had reached the so-called "culminating point of the attack," after which logistics and political factors proved to be untenable.[740]

Most of the Nationalist leadership, except Chiang, was aware of what was going on in Manchuria; the easy victories that the KMT had achieved, including the capture of Yan'an, responded more to the Communist strategy of luring the enemy in deep rather than the mere superior Nationalist strength, which played, nevertheless, an important role. This explains why Chiang's advisor, Chen Lifu, notwithstanding the Nationalist victories in Manchuria, "urged the Generalissimo to abandon [it] for the time being and focus his military efforts to North China." And this was motivated mainly by the fact that KMT's armies had not been able to "outflank, pin down and annihilate Communist armies." But Chiang was still heavily concerned with the total annihilation of the Communists.[741]

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[738] J. L. S Girling, *People's War*, p. 78; John Ellis, *From The Barrel Of A Gun* (London: Greenhill Books, 1995), p. 186

[739] Harold Miles Tanner, *Where Chiang Kai-Shek Lost China*, p. 163

[740] *Ibid.*, p. 46

[741] *Ibid.*, p. 85

Thanks also to the intelligence information the CCP managed to acquire – specifically the spying activities of Xiong Xianghui, mentioned earlier, who communicated to Mao important information on KMT's general Hu Zongnan's military expedition – Mao and Lin made KMT's Manchuria offensive Jiang's "strategic trap." In fact, the Communists moved into two directions: on one hand, once they understood that the Nationalists "had made the strategic error of committing considerable force to the sterile conquest of Yenan [Yan'an], they decided to build in Shanxi their own base of maneuver.[742] On the other, for the first five months of 1947 before leaving Yan'an, Lin had conducted several offensives over the Sungari River which became the front of the military operations in northern Manchuria. The fifth of these offensives, conducted on 10th May, proved particularly successful: Lin Biao divided his forces into four groups – one of which was composed of Mongolian cavalry and Red guerrillas – and located them in different locations, with the objective to swiftly encircle and finally occupy Nationalist posts, with a clear focus on Mukden, which was soon under siege. This movement obliged KMT's troops to temporarily abandon Shandong and concentrate its main military effort in Mukden which was desperately defended. In this operational scenario, even if the Communist forces were not able to stand the superior Nationalist materiel and troops, they still "showed a degree of mobility and flexibility which enabled them to evade most of the blows leveled against them."[743]

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[742] Lionel Max Chassin, *The Communist Conquest Of China*, p. 127
[743] *Ibid.*, pp. 112-119

At the propaganda level, to justify the military setback of Yan'an while also keep troops' morale high, CCP's strategic retreat had also been described as a voluntary action Mao had undertaken in order to "expose southern Shaanxi to Communist attacks." In military terms – thanks to the intelligence information received from spies – the Chairman's military response was mainly based on his previous experience from the 1930s and the Long March, which focused on "ambushes, high mobility, and targets selected to achieve the maximum element of surprise to the enemy."[744]

Notwithstanding their military superiority, the Nationalists had to constantly face this type of warfare during the initial phase of the Civil War. After the KMT troops managed to occupy a major city on their way to Yan'an, the context was very often the same: the occupied target was emptied by the Communists, leaving the Nationalists with nothing to hold. Therefore, the Nationalists faced a dilemma which would accompany them throughout the war: "they had either to mass their forces, in order to push the Reds back and seize the cities – a ponderous solution incapable of bringing the elusive enemy to decisive battle; or they could scatter out to clear the countryside – a hazardous solution which ran the risk of exposing thinly deployed forces to defeat in detail."[745]

A version of "luring the enemy in deep," even if merely applied to fulfill the associated objective of trading space for time and also in relation to the totalizing nature of war that Chinese troops were facing, had been

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[744] Odd Arne Westad, *Decisive Encounters*, p. 153
[745] Lionel Max Chassin, *The Communist Conquest Of China*, p. 123

applied by Chiang right after the battle of Taierzhuang against the Japanese in April 1938. Specifically, after acknowledging the advance of Japanese troops towards the city of Wuhan, Chiang had decided that it would have been better "to use water instead of soldiers [*yi shui dai bing*]," which meant destroying the dykes of the Yellow River, whose river's water power would have severely slowed down Japanese advance. This, in turn, would have unleashed "incalculable suffering on those who lived nearby," however, it seemed a cost that the Nationalists were willing to bear.[746] This tactical approach had been later on reconfirmed during the civil war in the fall of 1946. In order to separate the Communist forces between Shandong and Hebei, the Nationalists decided, again, to use the Yellow River as a weapon. The objective this time was to deviate it by bringing it to its old course: "this would flood Anhwei [Anhui] and Kiangsu [Jiangsu], dry the former river bed into a mud flat at best, isolate Hopeh [Hebei] from Shantung [Shandong], and make the movement of Red troops exceedingly difficult."[747]

However, during the Sino-Japanese war, this action proved tactically costly to the extent that on 25 November 1938 Chiang held in the mountain retreat at Nanyue in Hunan a conference on the tactics failings and the inevitable readjustments to be employed for what they thought would have been the second phase of the Sino-Japanese War. During this conference Chiang heavily relied on China's history for tactical models to be followed. One of the first teachings came from Sun Tzu, and specifically the

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[746] Rana Mitter, *China's War With Japan, 1937-1945,* pp.. 157-158
[747] Lionel Max Chassin, *The Communist Conquest Of China*, p. 97

assumption that "if the enemy comes to us we can take advantage of him," meaning in other words, the centrality of defensive measures which according to Sun Tzu gave the defender the upper hand in a conflict. And Chiang, without surprise, found more convenient to base his tactical assumptions on the rich Chinese historical traditions in military affairs.[748]

It had not been too long before this strategic approach could finally be implemented. And this happened in September 1939, when the Japanese Imperial Army had sent more than 100,000 troops to take control of the city of Changsha. However, the Cantonese general Xue Yue "defended the city brilliantly, using a combination of formal field warfare along with guerrilla tactics to lure the Japanese into ambushes and prevent them from resupplying themselves."[749]

The second phase of protracted warfare, "strategic stalemate" relied on the extensive application of guerrilla tactics, by disposing the troops "without ascertainable shape."[750] Here, additional similarities with Sun Tzu emerge, since he recognized that during an attritional phase the army had to rely on the "combination of the *cheng* (regular) and *qi* (special/irregular) forces."[751] Specifically, the Red Army's irregular units were of two types: the *minbing*, that is, militia, was in charge of "local defense and support of the

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[748] Rana Mitter, *China's War With Japan, 1937-1945,* p., 200
[749] Rana Mitter, *China's War With Japan, 1937-1945,* p. 211
[750] Samuel Griffith and Sun Tzu, *The Art Of War*, p. 100
[751] Samuel Griffith and Sun Tzu, *The Art Of War*, p. 146; Michael Elliott-Bateman, "The Nature Of People's War", in *The Fourth Dimension Of Warfare. Volume I: Intelligence, Subversion, Resistance*, Michael Elliott-Bateman ed. (Manchester:

regular forces." Mainly composed of peasants, they were "poorly armed but capable of reinforcing the regulars when needed." Their military equipment was very old-fashioned and included: "medieval scythes and bills, hand grenades stuffed with nails, wooden cannon firing stones or shrapnel balls, old muskets daring back to the T'ai-p'ing [Taiping] Rebellion." The second type of irregular unit concerned the guerrilla groups. Their objective was to directly attack Nationalist troops, disrupt communications, and conducting an intensive propaganda work.[752]

This led to two "effects" of People's War tactics: the "swarm effect," which referred to the exploitation of the superior quantity of manpower in order to exhaust the enemy, and the "sting effect," which relied on the use of mobile weaponry "to sneak up on the enemy."[753]

During the operations of the Civil War, the second phase proved decisive for slowing down Nationalist advance in the Northeast. Before the collapse of Yan'an, the Communist forces, led by Mao and Zhu De, decided to make a new redisposition of the Red forces. Specifically, in the Shandong area, "Red guerrillas, militiamen, and newly formed regular columns were left with the task of spreading confusion throughout the enemy's rears areas and harassing the … railroads."[754]

Manchester University Press, 1970), pp. 130-131; Gary J Bjorge, *Moving The Enemy*, p. 74
[752] Lionel Max Chassin, *The Communist Conquest Of China*, p. 52
[753] Rosita Dellios, *Modern Chinese Defense Strategy Present Developments, Future Directions* (London: The Macmillan Press, 1989), p. 205.
[754] Lionel Max Chassin, *The Communist Conquest Of China*, p. 126

In the third phase, "strategic counteroffensive," Mao could plan the disintegration of the enemy's forces, simply by exploiting enemy's weaknesses which gave the communist army the military initiative, thanks to the wide application of guerrilla tactics, "mobile warfare, … offensive [actions], quick decisions, and [operations] on exterior lines in campaigns and battles," which allowed China to gain the initiative.[755] General Su Yu, when planning the last military campaign against the Nationalists, highlighted, in full Sunzian fashion, how important it was for the CCP troops to avoid getting involved in "fighting that would slow their advance but to keep their forces flowing forward."[756] At the end of the struggle, therefore, "mobile warfare (*yudong zhan*), positional warfare (*zhendi zhan*), and guerrilla warfare (*youji zhan*)" represented the three basic tactics of People's War doctrine in order to gain the military initiative.[757]

At the same time, for the third phase to work properly, Mao advocated the constant reliance on misconceptions in order to, then, deliver surprise attacks upon the enemy as attested by his reliance on the ancient Chinese proverb of "there can never be too much deception in war [*bing bu yan zha*]."[758]

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[755] Mao Zedong, *Selected Works Of Mao Tse-Tung, Vol. II*, p. 86.
[756] Gary J Bjorge, *Moving The Enemy*, p. 114
[757] Alexander Chieh-cheng Huang, "Transformation And Refinement Of Chinese Military Doctrine: Reflection And Critique On The PLA's View", p. 136; Harold Miles Tanner, *The Battle For Manchuria And The Fate Of China*, p. 36
[758] Shu Guang Zhang, *Mao's Military Romanticism*, p. 22

The third phase, moreover, put greater emphasis on the exploitation of the enemy's contradictions,[759] expressed in the three weaknesses that Mao intercepted during the conflict against Japanese invasion: "their shortage of troops [first weakness], fighting on foreign soil [second weakness], and their stupidities in command [third weakness]."[760] However, it should be pointed out that Mao considered the third phase as an optional step, since the war must be won, and clearly set up in the second phase.[761]

It was Lin Biao's task to make sure that Mao's overall vision of war could be translated into a proper tactical design. In order to achieve this objective, he created the so-called "Six Principles of Combat," which had been developed, however, in progressive steps, that is, as a reflection of the overall evolution of the Civil War. For example, already in 1945, Lin Biao, after the CCP had been defeated in the Laoxi Campaign, articulated a new tactical doctrine for the Red Army, the so-called "One Point, Two Flanks." His overall idea was to concentrate the maneuver effort against the enemy's key weak point while also using the rest of the army against other tactical spots of the enemy "both in order to prevent the enemy from understanding where the main point of attack really was and to either envelop, cut off, or pin down enemy forces." Along with this doctrine, Lin also had elaborated the "three-three system." According to this tactical design, each squad would

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[759] Geoffrey Fairbairn, *Revolutionary Guerrilla Warfare* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1974), p. 47; Shu Guang Zhang, *Mao's Military Romanticism*, p. 17
[760] Mao Zedong, *Selected Works Of Mao Tse-Tung, Vol. II*, pp.85-86

be divided into three teams each composed of three to four men. The squad's objective, during war operations, would have been to advance in a triangular formation, instead of a linear one, in order to reduce the number of soldiers that could have become easy target for the enemy's fire.[762]

Later on, during the Three Expeditions/Four Defenses campaign, he added two extra tactical guidelines: the "four teams, one unit" and the "four fast, one slow." With the first one, Lin desired to divide a company into four combat teams: "a firepower team, a strike team, a demolition team, and a reserve team." The second guideline, instead, focused on the actual military operation. Lin's objective was to create a "fast" attack on the enemy with a "slow" preparation, that is, the need "for commander to take the time to understand the enemy's situation and the terrain and to get all their troops and artillery prepared and in place before attacking an enemy position." Therefore, the idea behind this second guideline referred to the need for a ponderous tactical calculation of any military scenario, rather than an actually slow operation.[763]

Finally, in the summer 1948, during an extensive military training whose objective was to produce a more professional army which could undertake more conventional operations, Lin Biao adopted the last two tactical principles: "the three ferocities" and the "three types of situation,

[761] J. L. S Girling, *People's War*, pp. 81-83; Thomas X Hammes, *The Sling And The Stone*, p. 52; Walter Laqueur, *The Guerrilla Reader* (New York: New American Library, 1977). pp. 189-197.
[762] Harold Miles Tanner, *The Battle For Manchuria And The Fate Of China*, p. 72
[763] Harold Miles Tanner, *Where Chiang Kai-Shek Lost China*, pp. 80-81

three types of fighting." The first one, as the name itself suggests, advocated the use of ferocity when attacking, fighting, and pursuing the enemy, while the second emphasized the importance of studying the context and various war situations in order to better understand when and how to better perform the army's actions.[764]

Nevertheless, Lin's techniques required time before they could be properly mastered by the army. As a consequence, in specific military circumstances, Mao seemed to not have fully grasped the timing of the third phase, ending up in sounding military defeats between 1945 and 1947. For example, in the spring of 1946, Mao became obsessed with the idea that Communist troops had to settle the civil war against the Nationalist army through a "decisive battle." The place was found in the city of Siping. The ensuing battle represented for Mao the crucial engagement that would have decided the faith of both contenders. This romantic vision of warfare was also motivated by the myth surrounding the Battle of Madrid, fought ten years before in Spain during another bloody civil war, in which the leftist Republicans bravely defended the city against Franco's Nationalists. Unfortunately, the Second Battle of Siping, from March to May 1946, represented the constant confrontation between Lin Biao's and Mao's tactical visions, with the former emphasizing mobility, flexibility, and asymmetry, while the latter was more concerned to confront directly Nationalist troops. In fact, while for Mao Siping had to resemble the new Madrid, for Lin, Siping, as well as the rest of the Chinese military

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[764] Harold Miles Tanner, *Where Chiang Kai-Shek Lost China*, pp. 155-156

involvement in Manchuria, had to recall, instead, Russian military operations against Napoleon in 1812, which were mainly based on strategic retreat combined with guerrilla operations. KMT's troops, nevertheless, during this battle, demonstrated to have the ability to perform mobile operations, with Du Yuming's double envelopment of Siping and the cut-off of Lin's route of retreat: [765] a clear sign that also KMT's tactical assessments were responding to specific cultural traits in warfare.

The same tactical problem emerged after the KMT troops managed to occupy Yan'an, in early 1947. In that case, Mao forced Lin Biao to undertake a counteroffensive against the KMT's positions in Siping, which unfortunately for the Communist forces, proved to be unsuccessful due to the superior Nationalist forces.[766]

These tactical misinterpretations – that is, the desire to defeat the Nationalists in a decisive battle – critically conditioned part of the Chinese military struggle in Manchuria, yet in 1945 the CCP had already established the new tactical conditions that even Mao had agreed upon. After the Liaoxi campaign – conducted in the fall 1945 in order to block Nationalist access in Manchuria – the CCP realized how "the Communist soldiers were not prepared to conduct defense of static positions or engage in large-scale mobile operations in the field." Advocating the necessity to shift from purely guerrilla tactics to conventional ones represented, inevitably, the step the Communist forces had to go through, however, the "transition" had occurred

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[765] Harold Miles Tanner, *The Battle For Manchuria And The Fate Of China*, pp. 8, 156, 180

only at the organizational level; "beneath the surface, the men and officers were still guerrilla warriors."[767]

In other circumstances, instead, Mao proved to have grasped the third phase planning which started to be implemented in 1947 with devastating effects for the Nationalist forces throughout 1948. For example, still in 1947, the CCP, under the command of Liu Bocheng, targeted the Central Plains as the next area of expansion, which represented the KMT's stronghold. Moreover, the centrality of the Central Plains in military terms was also attested by Zhu De's historical considerations; he argued, in fact, that "the Central Plains battlefield has been the scene of decisive battles. Since ancient times, those who have triumphed in the Central Plains have become the final victors."[768]

The Communist operation conducted in the Central Plains, which relied on swift maneuvers, highlighted CCP's ability to penetrate into KMT's core areas.[769] Specifically, the Central Plains campaign "marked the beginning of a profound change" in the overall Communist tactics: "without renouncing its traditional hit-and-run tactics, the Red Army now showed that it no longer feared to undertake sieges." Moreover, Communist involvement in Central Plains proved to be very important because it highlighted Communist willingness and readiness to face the Nationalist troops at the

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[766] Odd Arne Westad, *Decisive Encounters*, pp. 155-158
[767] Harold Miles Tanner, *The Battle For Manchuria And The Fate Of China*, p. 72
[768] Gary J Bjorge, *Moving The Enemy*, p. 54
[769] Odd Arne Westad, *Decisive Encounters*, p. 168

conventional level. [770] The Communist involvement in the Central Plains would have been later confirmed, in January 1948, by the commander Su Yu who advocated the importance of conducing a "'suddenly concentrate-suddenly disperse' operational method" of warfare, in order to achieve the total destruction of the Nationalist army.[771]

However, notwithstanding the first attempts at executing conventional military operations, PLA army had never given up its traditional way of fighting, which relied on swift maneuvers and dispersed attacks on enemy's forces. We have to wait until the second half of 1948, before we can actually see the PLA directly challenging the Nationalist army in decisive battles. As briefly described earlier, even if the idea was to finally challenge the KMT through direct military confrontations, and even if between 1946 and 1948 Communist armies had reached a very strong position that allowed them to move such types of operations against it had they desired to do so, "the Communists remained reluctant to directly challenge large Nationalist maneuver forces," preferring to concentrate their military effort on swift maneuvers.[772] In other words, the weight of the Chinese strategic culture – that is, the reliance on flexibility, speed, and swift maneuvers – still governed the Communist strategic thinking in matters of war.

During the Summer Offensive in 1947, the Communists, led by Lin Biao, managed to attack and defeat part of the KMT's army in Manchuria. Specifically, the battle of Huaide represented "a textbook example of Lin

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[770] Lionel Max Chassin, *The Communist Conquest Of China*, p. 180
[771] Gary J Bjorge, *Moving The Enemy*, p. 50

Biao's tactical style." First of all, he moved his troops north of Huaide to block the potential reinforcement sent in support of Nationalist troops. Secondly, once having secured the Communist rear, he applied the "one point, two flanks" tactic: "he chose two primary breakthrough points and one secondary point, or 'flank.'" This easily allowed Lin's troops to win over the Nationalist troops.[773]

The second major military operation of the year – in strictly military terms "the crucial maneuver of the civil war" – conducted in winter and concluded at the beginning of 1948, was based in Manchuria, after Lin Biao planned the Winter Offensive, which was mainly based on the double movements of troops from east and west. The area of the military operations concerned the city of Shenyang. The city was attacked by several fronts. Li Zoupeng, Lin's chief planner, was in charge of the northwest offensive. Exploiting the superior mobility of the Communist troops he "moved stealthily through the forest and deep snow north of Shenyang." After Li's initially successful maneuver, Lin moved with his army on the western part of the city, surrounding the town of Xinlitun, while sending other forces on the eastern part of Shenyang.[774]

In the spring of 1948, full of confidence about his conventional methods, Liu Bocheng and Chen Yi reported another important victory at the battle of Kaifeng. The Communists, "abandoning guerrilla tactics for positional warfare, were to join battle with the Nationalists in open country

[772] *Ibid.*, pp. 149-150
[773] Harold Miles Tanner, *Where Chiang Kai-Shek Lost China*, pp. 87-88

and maneuver large masses of infantry, artillery, and even some tanks."
However, even if engaged in a conventional confrontation, the CCP troops
did not lose their high flexibility and mobility. For example, Chen Yi, once he
realized that he could not strike Kaifeng directly, "abandoned his initial
scheme of maneuver and improvised a swift descent upon the capital of
Honan [Henan]" by attacking KMT's Fifth Army at the rear. However, even
the Nationalists managed to adopt flexible maneuvers, to the extent that
they easily regrouped, forcing Chen Yi to retreat from the occupied city, and
challenged the Communists right outside of it. The battle that took place
"within a triangular area" composed of three small towns lasted until 9 July
with a partial defeat of the Communists.[775]

However, between the fall of 1948 and beginning of 1949, the CCP
launched three famous operations which would have finally declared
Communist victory over the KMT. The first one, the LiaoShen campaign, a
proper manifestation of Mao's People's War – as attested by the Heishan
battle in which the CCP managed to mobilize the entire population for the
war effort, just to cite an example[776] – was fought in the Liaoning province in
the fall of 1948. It had mainly represented the final epic battle between the
CCP and the KMT in Manchuria. The second operation, the Ping-Jin
Campaign, involved the capture of Beijing and Tianjin, between November
1948 and January 1949. Finally, the third one, the HuaiHai campaign –
another importance evidence of Mao's application of People's War "carried

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[774] Odd Arne Westad, *Decisive Encounters*, pp. 168-177
[775] Lionel Max Chassin, *The Communist Conquest Of China*, pp. 172-175

out on a grand scale"[777] – fought near the Huai river and the town of Haizhou between 1948 and 1949, which gave their names to the operation, was mainly conceived as the military tool through which the CCP could finally extend its territorial grasp south of Manchuria, that is, in all those territories north of the Yangzi River. The river and the town represented the "southern and the eastern extremes of the battle."[778]

For what concerns the first campaign – the LiaoShen, conducted between September and November 1948 – KMT and CCP fought a decisive war for Manchuria. After developing the right "configuration" (the *shi* as Sun Tzu would have put it) throughout 1948, Lin and Mao were determined to move on the offensive.[779] It concerned mainly the city of Jinzhou, the Bei-Ning railway line (that connected Manchuria to China Proper), the county of Yixian, the city of Mukden (Shenyang), and the city of Changchun. This campaign represented a crucial outcome of the overall Civil War.[780] Its significance is related to two major factors: the first one is KMT's overall defeat in Manchuria, paving the way for the complete territorial control by the CCP, while the second factor is related to the fact that this campaign "marked the Communist forces' transition from guerrilla warfare to large-scale maneuver operations."[781]

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[776] Harold Miles Tanner, *Where Chiang Kai-Shek Lost China*, pp. 178, 257

[777] Gary J Bjorge, *Moving The Enemy*, p. 2

[778] Odd Arne Westad, *Decisive Encounters*, p. 192-193

[779] Harold Miles Tanner, *Where Chiang Kai-Shek Lost China*, p. 183

[780] *Ibid.*, p. 3

[781] *Ibid.*, p. 5

Lin Biao, "who maneuvered in a manner worthy of Napoleon's first Italian campaign, or of the Germans at Tannenberg," managed to defeat Nationalist troops through the application of mobile maneuvers aimed at attacking the enemy on the flank and at the rear. The Nationalists controlled the area through the Fifty-second and the Fifty-third Army where the former controlled, though weakly, the Mukden-Yingkou rail line. This represented a good tactical opportunity for Lin who now had to find a way to avoid being squeezed in the middle between the advancing Nationalist troops from the south and the General Liao Yaoxiang's troops from the north. Leaving behind the 9th and the 11th columns to guard the Nationalist movement from the south, Lin brought his eleven columns, through a quick southeast maneuver, directly to the flank and rear of Liao's army, completely destroying it.[782]

Another very important military engagement, right before the battle for Jinzhou, occurred at the village of Tashan, which, even if small, represented a crucial strategic asset for the final capture of Jinzhou. The village of Tashan was a tactical challenge. The terrain, in fact, proved to be a delicate position both for the defender and the attacker. For the former, the village did not provide any natural barriers that could be used as an extra layer of defense, while for the latter the village did not provide enough space for the deployment of a frontal attack. Because of these reasons, and because of its importance, Lin Biao was determined to fight to the last man in order to defend this position, therefore he proceeded to deploy his troops

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[782] Lionel Max Chassin, *The Communist Conquest Of China*, pp. 189-191

in a very delicate situation, hoping that this would have encouraged them to fight with more determination. This reflected one of the principles of Sun Tzu, which stated how important it was to put one's own troops in a "desperate terrain", "where defeat would mean annihilation," so as to force them to fight with all their strength in order to survive and therefore prevail. The curious aspect of this tactical display is that even Chiang decided to deploy his army in a desperate condition, so as to oblige them to fight hard to defeat Lin or at least "die trying."[783]

While fighting at Tashan, the Communist forces were also involved in the famous battle of Jinzhou, where "the deep turning movement executed by his [Lin's] huge force, after the surprise strikes by four advance columns that cut the Shanhaikuan-Shenyang Railroad at several key points, must rank in military annals with such major maneuvers as the Schlieffen Plan."[784] In this case, the Communists applied the major tactical principles highlighted by Lin Biao, that is, the focus on mobile operations and flexibility. For example, during the major military operations they adopted Lin's 3-3 system in order to keep "dispersed troops formations." Moreover, the troops advanced "along multiple vectors in small teams, dividing, surrounding, and annihilating Nationalist units." While fighting within the city street, instead of frontally attacking the Nationalists, CCP forces created holes through the

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[783] Harold Miles Tanner, *Where Chiang Kai-Shek Lost China*, pp. 201-203
[784] William W Whitson, *The Chinese High Command. A History Of Communist Military Politics, 1927-71*, p. 315

buildings "a process that they called 'cutting tofu' – in order to create paths through which they could advance and outflank enemy units."[785]

The HuaiHai campaign (November 1948-January 1949), moreover, represented, at the military level, the culmination of the Maoist protracted warfare's third phase, since it was "the largest military engagement fought after World War II." The statistics of this campaign were astonishing: 1,8 million soldiers employed "across front lines of about two hundred kilometers."[786] And with a total of 5 million civilians mobilized "to move supplies to support PLA combat units."[787]

General Su Yu, who worked out the overall strategy of the HuaiHai campaign under Mao's supervision, "was aware of the difficulties of fighting around Xuzhou when coming in mainly from the North." This was the result of his historical awareness over Chinese ancient military engagements that had occurred in the same area: "He had read the imperial annals and knew that Southern dynasties since before the Han had preferred to make battle just here [Xuzhou], where rivers and hills abounded, but where the landscape was flat enough for the troops not to be easily cut off from their supply lines in the South."[788]

However, he was also aware, in Sunzian terms, that the previous loss of Jianan by the Nationalists, coupled with the arrival of the cold weather, would have further undermined the army's spirit, therefore making

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[785] Harold Miles Tanner, *Where Chiang Kai-Shek Lost China*, p. 212
[786] Odd Arne Westad, *Decisive Encounters*, pp. 201-203
[787] Gary J Bjorge, *Moving The Enemy*, p. 1
[788] Odd Arne Westad, *Decisive Encounters*, pp. 201-203

a Communist advance particularly valuable according to the ancient Chinese tactical principle of "attacking an army when its spirit is waning." This tactical mentality also responded to another important Sunzian principle: the *shi*, briefly mentioned above. Translated as "strategic advantage," or "strategic military power," the term describes a situation in which several factors condense into a unique favorable circumstance, making the use of full military power particularly advantageous. And this is what Su Yu was trying to achieve through the execution HuaiHai campaign.[789]

CCP forces were deployed right according to these topographical features, hoping that their maneuvers would deceive KMT's expeditionary force sent to stop the Communist advance. This particular military disposition reflected the major advantage of the Communist forces: the "information superiority," which led to a "numerical superiority that, in turn, creates the potential for victory through maneuver."[790] The information aspect played a decisive role for the Communists especially in two sectors: military deception and psychological operations, with the former to be employed in actual military actions and the latter to be used for political work.[791] A concept, the control of information, that even Sun Tzu critically highlighted in his military treatise when stating: "If I am able to determine the enemy's dispositions while at the same time I conceal my own then I can concentrate and he must divide." A condition that would force the enemy to

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[789] Gary J Bjorge, *Moving The Enemy*, p. 58
[790] *Ibid.*, p. 73
[791] *Ibid.*, p. 117

take too many countermeasures, with the result that "when he prepares everywhere he will be weak everywhere."[792]

Moreover, the geographical conditions represented, for the Communists, the right place where to execute the tactic of "rapid concentration and rapid dispersal."[793] Su Yu divided his forces in two units. His and Chen Yi's army in the North, while Deng Xiaoping's in the West. The objective was the capture of the city of Xuzhou, however, the Communist armies had to go first for other close-by targets in order to deceive KMT's troops about the real Communist intentions. CCP's southward movement concerned KMT's 7th Army Group, which moved immediately from the coast to the city of Xuzhou. This was what the PLA was waiting for. By occupying the city of Taierzhuang, the PLA stood in the middle between the 7th Army and Xuzhou, therefore, undermining Nationalists' response. This immediately led to the surrender of the Nationalist troops. Jiang, then, decided to send more troops, without being aware of the presence of Deng's troops which were closing in. Only Du Yuming, the Nationalist General sent to Xuzhou, acknowledged the existence of Deng's troops in the south, asking then Jiang for permission to concentrate the major military effort against these troops instead of the ones in Taierzhuang. Du's thought was well motivated by his knowledge of CCP's deceptive tactics; that is, placing the troops in areas "that may be of use as a strategic retreat once the battle has started." However, Jiang did not follow his suggestions and commanded

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[792] Samuel Griffith and Sun Tzu, *The Art Of War*, p. 98
[793] Gary J Bjorge, *Moving The Enemy*, p. 65

the 7th Army Group to engage Communist forces outside Xuzhou. This was exactly what the Communists were hoping Jiang would do. By mid November the encircling maneuvers managed to isolate Xuzhou and defeat Nationalist troops. Even in this case, "the tactics CCP used were similar to those employed in the Northeast: heavy artillery concentrating on the main units at the center of the GMD formations, and highly mobile Communist regiments at the outskirts of the battlefield, cutting off the outer edges of the enemy armies, pushing their flanks into positions increasing vulnerable to PLA shelling."[794]

Jiang's lack of political vision and leadership qualities, coupled with the problem number one of the KMT, that is, its chronic factionalism, undermined the overall Nationalist effort to counter CCP advance. The final collapse of the Nationalist army does not reflect a lack of embeddedness onto Chinese strategic culture, since KMT's army, under Du, was, in fact, adopting, with small variations, the same tactical approaches that CCP designed for the HuaiHai campaign. For example, during the CCP initial advance, KMT cadres adopted a plan to increase the army's size by 1,500,000 men so as to increase "strategic and operational-level flexibility."[795]

Moreover, the KMT had also tried to implement another old strategic concept, such as "trapping the Communist units between the hammers of maneuver forces and the anvils of forces defending in place." The idea was

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[794] Odd Arne Westad, *Decisive Encounters*, pp. 201-203
[795] Gary J Bjorge, *Moving The Enemy*, p. 85, 118

to have maneuver units swiftly moving around the Communist troops pushing them against the fire of the fixed Nationalist defenses. This idea, therefore, aspired to produce a counter-encirclement of the Communist forces which were trying, in turn, to implement their own. This operational strategy was also accompanied by the "fishing tactic," that is, the idea of placing one unit into an easily defensible position, while withdrawing the other units from the area so as to attract a Communist attack on the lone unit. Once a CCP attack had been performed the other withdrawn units would have come back and encircle the Communists through exterior lines of operation. However, the Nationalists, due to their lack of a clear operational vision, were not able to perform them throughout the campaign.[796]

Notwithstanding the now numerical superiority, the CCP did not refrain from using the first phase of protracted warfare even in the middle of the third. Once the battle for Xuzhou ended with a Communist victory, Mao ordered his troops to take care of the 12th Army Group, commanded by Huang Wei, "which slowly was making its way from Wuhan to retake Suxian and open communications with Xuzhou from the south." Communist commanders, however, did not want to risk their troops in the engagement with Wei's troops, since Du Yuming could have seized the moment in order to attack Xuzhou from the south. To avoid such a tactical misfortune, the Communists argued how important it was to lure "the GMD forces into a trap, in which the terrain would assist the PLA in an encirclement." The trap

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[796] *Ibid.*, pp. 85, 87

was set at Shuangduji: "pretending to be in hasty retreat toward Suxian, by late November the CCP forces held Huang's army to the banks of an arm of the Huai River, with hills to the north and east." The execution of this trap completely isolated "probably the best fighting force left in Jiang's army."[797]

A similar tactic had been employed when the CCP tried to occupy the northern cities of Beijing and Tianjin in the last phases of the civil war along with the HuaiHai campaign. In tactical maneuvers "reminiscent of the first part of the HuaiHai campaign," CCP forces, led by Nie Rongzhen, managed to conduct KMT's 11th Army into a trap "as they were retreating toward the Northern Capital." The final engagement, occurred on 22 December, took place at Xinbao'an and reported a final PLA victory over Nationalist troops.[798]

Mao's military thought and therefore the application of People's War doctrine really constituted a radical shift in the strategic thinking of the twentieth century, inaugurating what has been labeled the "age of the guerrilla."[799] Furthermore, this historical peculiarity is best highlighted by the empirical evidence. Unlike its previous application in history, Mao pointed out that "guerrilla warfare had stepped out of the bounds of tactics and now knocked at the door of strategy, demanding [to] be considered from a strategic viewpoint."[800] This seems to have occurred because the "guerrilla

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[797] Odd Arne Westad, *Decisive Encounters*, p. 206
[798] *Ibid.*, p. 223.
[799] Michael Elliott-Bateman, "The Age of Guerrilla," p. 7; Rupert Smith, *The Utility Of Force* (New York: Vintage Books, 2007).
[800] Michael Elliott-Bateman, "The Age of Guerrilla", p. 5

component absorbed social, economic and political expertise while the political component absorbed organizational and military knowledge."[801] The theorization and implementation of guerrilla warfare proved to be a decisive factor for the CCP's final victory over the Nationalists, mainly because it also allowed the party to gain a detailed and well coordinated knowledge on the "organization of supplies and support for its armies." After the outbreak of the Civil War, the major task for the CCP was to "transfer this knowledge to a much more massive form of warfare."[802] Hence, all these elements contributed to create "the form of political warfare called 'people's war.'"[803] This explanation clarifies why China, because of its historical legacies, "is the only state officially proclaiming a national strategy of People's War; a theory which involves the indoctrination of the people in preparation for mobilization."[804] A doctrine, therefore, that could be easily applied in other military spheres.

4.3. Conclusions

As this chapter highlighted, Chinese People's War doctrine, expressed mainly during the Civil War, follows a specific pattern that can be intercepted by looking at China's history and its historical legacies. The Civil

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[801] *Ibid.*, p. 29
[802] Odd Arne Westad, *Decisive Encounters*, p. 113
[803] Michael Elliott-Bateman, "The Age of Guerrilla", p. 29
[804] Ji-Jen Hwang, "China's Cyber Warfare: The Strategic Value Of Cyberspace And The Legacy Of People's War," p. 181.

War, for sure, helped People's War Doctrine reach the apex of its application, but its overall elements that have been discussed in the previous chapters still hold. One crucial element that the Maoist era emphasized and that also represented a key strategic component during the war effort is represented by the importance of morale in winning battles. Moreover, the associated element concerns the mobilization policies which played a crucial role for both parties' military struggle, even if Mao, in the end, proved to be far more successful than Jiang. By relying on ancient texts and examples Mao contributed to "give faith, a creed, to the peasants of China." During his vast educational campaign, "the peasant-in-arms rapidly became a fanatic, an apostle of the new religion, ready to sacrifice his life for the better tomorrows." In other words, Mao perfectly understood that wars, even or especially the civil ones, are "won by the side which knows how to gain the support of the people."[805]

The depth of the Chinese strategic culture is also represented by the way the Civil War had been conducted. The teachings extrapolated from Sun Tzu's *The Art of War* had been extensively applied. The operational art the CCP implemented in its warfare operations has "Sunzian qualities," demonstrating that we definitely encountered an "operational art with Chinese characteristics." Therefore, the fact that Chinese overall military instruments were deployed and coordinated according to a particular

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[805] Lionel Max Chassin, *The Communist Conquest Of China*, pp. 248-249

strategic, tactical, and therefore, operational attitude, demonstrates the existence of a Chinese way of war.[806]

A lot can be said about the true reasons behind Jiang's ultimate defeat. As this chapter tried to demonstrate also Jiang was embedded in the overall Chinese strategic culture, especially during the first phase of the Civil War, that is, during the Sino-Japanese war. Things started to rapidly change after that Jiang was striving to gain the American help, which caused KMT's overall strategic disorientation. In other words, the KMT tried to learn Western-type of warfare and this led it astray with respect to the actual way of fighting that the context required. For example, CCP forces lacked an air force, however, "Nationalists units wasted endless time in confecting artful camouflage and digging innumerable shelters as protection against air attacks which obviously would never come."[807]

Moreover, another important element worth considering when analyzing KMT's strategic approach is the weight of their past experiences that pushed them to embrace a slightly different type of strategy. Generally speaking, KMT's warfare approach mainly relied on the capture of territory, with a particular emphasis for the cities and transportation lines. This represented the direct consequence of its historical legacies, especially during the war against warlords.[808]

Nevertheless, along this historical legacy, KMT also adopted, as explained above, a circle-type of strategy which reflects more the typical

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[806] Gary J Bjorge, *Moving The Enemy*, p. 269
[807] Lionel Max Chassin, *The Communist Conquest Of China*, p. 257

Chinese strategic culture mentality with emphasis on mobility, flexibility, and not direct annihilation of the enemy's forces. For example, during the Fifth Extermination Campaign, which targeted the Communists, Chiang relied on the following formula: "First, achieve absolute superiority in numbers, Second, surround the base area with a system of blockhouses and roads. Third, draw the circle tighter and tighter in order to conscript the enemy in a small area."[809]

What the Civil War taught us then mainly concerns the pervasiveness of the People's War Doctrine within the overall Chinese strategic thinking. In other words, the idea that it could help China create a fertile ground for military modernization and people's mobilization. This explains why, besides the inevitable ideological legacies left by Mao, future generations of leaders still considered People's War Doctrine useful for the design of their national strategy.

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[808] Harold Miles Tanner, *The Battle For Manchuria And The Fate Of China*, p. 218

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[809] *Ibid.*

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Chapter Five:

People's War Doctrine between Cyber warfare and Maritime Militia

"We will continue to adhere to the strategy of 'people's war'"[810]

Gen. Li Deshun

This final chapter of this research on Chinese strategic culture will investigate China's military transformation since the end of the Cold War, with a specific emphasis on the Xi jinping's era. It also investigates how

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[810] Deshun Li, "Post-Gulf War World Strategic Pattern," *Beijing Review*, Vol. 25, 1991, pp. 7-9, in Robert Muller, "Adding Wings To Tigers: People's War In The South China Sea*," Culture Mandala: The Bulletin of the Centre for East-West Cultural and Economic Studies*, vol. 2, 1996, p. 42.

People's War doctrine still exerts a core military strategy within an overall political, social, and military transformation. A transformation that started to spread since the advent of the First Gulf War.

The 1991 Gulf War changed some of the central pillars of the conduct of warfare. Besides its mere political symbolism (first major war in the post-Cold War era), the Gulf War represented a shift in the employment of new technological devices. This, coupled with the advent of globalization, significantly altered the major doctrines of war, by blending offense with defense and by altering the temporal and spatial dimensions of conflict, thus leading to an emphasis on disruption rather than destruction.[811]

The advent of the information revolution has also led to the transformation of the organizational aspect of warfare. Now the central setting is based on networks rather than hierarchies.[812] A network-like approach to warfare has also led to an "increasing 'irregularization'" of war

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[811] John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt, "Chapter One: A New Epoch - And Spectrum - Of Conflict", in John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt, *In Athena's Camp* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 1997), p. 3; Michael Handel, "Clausewitz In The Age Of Technology", in *Clausewitz and Modern Strategy*, (London: Frank Cass, 1986), p. 62; Michael Brown, "The Revolution In Military Affairs: The Information Dimension", in Alan D Campen, Douglas H Dearth and R. Thomas Goodden, *Cyberwar: Security, Strategy, and Conflict in the Information Age* (Fairfax VI: AFCEA International Press, 1996), p. 33.

[812] John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt, "Chapter One: A New Epoch - And Spectrum - Of Conflict", in John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt, *In Athena's Camp*, p. 5; Evan Feigenbaum, *China's Techno-Warriors* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2003), p. 37.

and its associated strategies and tactics are inevitably reflecting this mutation.[813]

China was literally shocked by the new manifestation of warfare in 1991, to the extent that decided to speed up the process of network infrastructure, in order to pave the way for information warfare. In China, due also to important historical legacies, the new technological setting incentivized the development of a proper "technonationalism," through which the government implied that "technology is fundamental to both national security and economic prosperity."[814] Also Mao took into consideration the importance of technology when he stated that: "whatever [other states] have, we must have."[815] This led inevitably to a contradiction, since he has constantly theorized that manpower would always be superior to technology.

The Chinese approach to informatization, for example, paved the way for a peculiar Chinese cyber warfare doctrine which, since its inception, manifested unique traits that scholars and Chinese experts tried to analyze with little success, mainly because one of the common issues that affects their different perspectives on the topic is that they "often discuss cyber warfare in the broader context of China's 'informatization' strategy, but they usually have little to say about civilian cybersecurity policy or civil-military

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[813] Van Creveld, Martin, *The Transformation Of War* (New York: Free Press, 1991) cited in John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt, "Chapter One: A New Epoch - And Spectrum - Of Conflict", in John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt, *In Athena's Camp*, p. 6; Michael Brown, "The Revolution In Military Affairs: The Information Dimension", in Alan D Campen, Douglas H Dearth and R. Thomas Goodden, *Cyberwar: Security, Strategy, and Conflict in the Information Age*, p. 39.
[814] Evan Feigenbaum, *China's Techno-Warriors*, p. 14

integration in China, even though most of the relevant technology is created and used by civilians."[816] The implementation of the 863 Plan, in fact, opened up a new phase of Chinese informatization, however, China did not follow the conventional technological patterns and this raised questions about the Chinese way to cyber warfare.

The peculiarity surrounding Chinese cyber warfare has affected the current literature on the topic. The current literature has reached so far four different theoretical perspectives: the first perspective tries to look at Chinese cyberwar doctrine through the lens of deterrence theory.[817] While the general idea is quite relevant, the overall argument lacks a fundamental understanding: unlike deterrence, cyber operations in the cyberspace are very attractive because of their elusiveness, fluidity, and, above all, anonymity.[818]

Cyber warfare's unconventional setting led other scholars to draw similarities between cyberwar and nuclear warfare. There are two major reasons for this type of comparison: the first one is related to the nature of RMA and the profound effect it has exerted on strategic affairs. RMA is considered as a real military revolution only comparable to the nuclear

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[815] *Ibid.*, p. 22
[816] Jon Lindsay, "China And Cybersecurity: Controversy And Context", in Jon Lindsay ed., *China and Cybersecurity. Esionage, Strategy, and Politics in the Digital Domain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 5.
[817] Magnus Hjortdal, "China's Use Of Cyber Warfare: Espionage Meets Strategic Deterrence," *Journal of Strategic Security*, 4, 2011, 1-24.
[818] Andrew Krepinevich, *Cyber Warfare* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2012), p. iii.

one.[819] The second reason, related to the first one, refers to the underdeveloped study of cyber warfare, which has been compared to the "lack of research on the dynamics of nuclear weapons in the 1950s."[820] Meaning, in other words, that the revolutionary aspects of RMA and its major offshoot are at a such an early stage that strategists are still struggling to grapple with this new transformation like at the time of the advent of the nuclear age. However, even if it true that today's research on cyber warfare is underdeveloped like the nuclear doctrine in the '50s, one enormous difference stands out: historically, during the inception of the nuclear military revolution, policy-makers and strategists at least had to deal with something new whose huge lethality had been tested only a couple of years before. While in this case, when dealing with cyber warfare, we have only marginal and controversial empirical data that does not help us ascertain the validity of our assumptions. Moreover, as already stated, the major objective of cyberwar doctrine is the disruption of the enemy's information, since knowledge has become the new target in cyberspace.

The third perspective tries to compare cyber warfare with the air power doctrine, claiming the possibility of a "digital Pearl Harbor." It should be underlined that cyberwar can be compared to air power only when dealing with tactics, since the airplanes allow for an extended control of the airspace and a higher flexibility in maneuvers. Something that similarly

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[819] Mike McConnell, "How To Win The Cyberwar We're Losing," *Washington Post*, 2010.
[820] Magnus Hjortdal, China's Use Of Cyber Warfare: Espionage Meets Strategic Deterrence," pp. 1-24.

occurs in the cyberspace as well. However, the similarity ends there, since air power follows its own logic. And the current Chinese officers' design to implement cyberwar operations in the air theatre shifts cyberwar from a strategic perspective to a mere tactical one.[821]

The fourth approach is closer to my argument: deception and asymmetry as two frameworks to explain Chinese cyber warfare.[822] The fluidity of the cyberspace, its anonymity, and ubiquity clearly put cyberspace and its associated strategies closer to the implementation of an asymmetric military posture, in order to achieve specific political objectives. In the Chinese case this is more evident if we look at its cyberwar doctrine and empirical cases. However, this general idea immediately raises a question: if China seems to adapt cyber warfare into the overall asymmetric strategy of war, why does not the same argument apply to the US as well, for example? This question and its possible answer highlight even more the importance of strategic culture. Within this fourth approach,　Ji-Jen Hwang's work – *China's Cyber Warfare: The Strategic Value of Cyberspace and the Legacy of People's War*[823] – represents one promising theory towards the creation

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[821] Roger Cliff, *Shaking The Heavens And Splitting The Earth*, (Santa Monica, RAND: 2011); P.W. Singer and Allan Friedman, *Cybersecurity And Cyberwar*, (New York, Oxford University Press: 2014); Jon Lindsay and Derek Reveron, "The Rise Of China And The Future Of Cybersecurity", in Jon Lindsay ed., *China and Cybersecurity,* p. 345.

[822] Erik Gartzke and Jon R. Lindsay, "Weaving Tangled Webs: Offense, Defense, And Deception In Cyberspace," *Security Studies*, 24, 2015, pp. 316-348.

[823] Ji-Jen Hwang, *China's Cyber Warfare: The Strategic Value of Cyberspace and the Legacy of People's War*, PhD thesis, School of Geography, Politics and Sociology - University of Newcastle upon Tyne, 2012

of a theoretical connection between Chinese cyberwarfare doctrine and the legacy of People's War. However, it failed exactly where it should have succeeded: the connection of cyberwar with People's War is not clear, often creating confusing theoretical assumptions that do not help scholars understand why we should be concerned of the historical and strategic value of People's War. The depth in the analysis of how cyber attacks work is not matched at all with the depth that should have been devoted to the study of People's War and how it affects today's China's strategic doctrine.

It should be added that there might be a fifth analytical perspective on Chinese cyberwar which can be considered as a general theme connecting all the four previous perspectives: Chinese industrial espionage.[824] It represents, for sure, an important analysis, even if it is still debated how much damage it really plays into the industrial economy.[825] However, that being said, studying Chinese cyberwar doctrine through the industrial espionage, though significant, does not help identify the doctrine underpinning Chinese involvement into military affairs.

The theoretical uncertainties surrounding cyber warfare are also evident for the other two military sectors that this chapter tries to shed some light on: the maritime militia and the civil-military relationship. For what concerns the maritime militia, there is still a deep commitment to look at the sole Chinese military attempts to build the second aircraft carrier, dismissing or underestimating the strategic value of what has been labeled by other

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[824] William Hannas et al., *Chinese industrial espionage*, (London, Routledge: 2013).

scholars as the "people's war at sea," which implies the application of specific maritime systems mainly based on flexibility and deception.[826] This is also the reflection of the PLA Navy's radical transformation. This has been motivated by the recent assumption that China should abandon the "traditional mentality that land outweighs sea."[827] The maritime reform culminated into two recent, significant events: the creation of the Chinese Coast Guard in 2014,[828] whose aim is to conduct paramilitary activities, and for the beginning of 2016, the construction of a new aircraft carrier, the Shandong aircraft carrier, intended to operate alongside the other that China had bought from Ukraine in 2012.[829]

The same applies to the civil-military relationship. Few scholars studied this peculiar Chinese military system,[830] preferring instead to focus

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[825] Jon Lindsay and Tai Ming Cheung, "From Exploitation to Innovation", in Jon Lindsay ed., *China and Cybersecurity,* p. 52.

[826] Michael Scobell M., McMahon, C. Cooper III, "China's Aircraft Carrier Program," *Naval War College Review*, LXVIII, no. 4, 2016, p. 67; N. Li, C. Weuve, "China's Aircraft Carrier Ambitions. An Update", *Naval War College Review*, LXIII, no. 1, 2010; Yoshihara, T. and Holmes, J., *Red star over the pacific* (New York: Naval Institute Press, 2011).

[827] Andrew Erickson, "Doctrinal Sea Change, Making Real Waves: Examining The Maritime Dimension Of Strategy", in Joe McReynolds, *China's Evolving Military Strategy* (Washington: The Jamestown Foundation, 2016), p. 103

[828] Timothy Heath, "An Overview of China's National Military Strategy", in Joe McReynolds, *China's Evolving Military Strategy*, p. 24.

[829] Michael Scobell, McMahon, C. Cooper III, "China's Aircraft Carrier Program", p. 67; N. Li, C. Weuve, "China's Aircraft Carrier Ambitions. An Update"; Yoshihara, T. and Holmes, J., *Red star over the pacific* (New York: Naval Institute Press, 2011).

[830] Li Nan, *Chinese Civil-Military Relations,* (New York: Routledge, 2010); Finkelstein, D. and Gunness, K., *Civil-military relations in today's China* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 2007); Andrew Scobell, "China's Evolving Civil-Military Relations: Creeping Guojiahua," *Armed Forces & Society*, 2005, 31(2), pp.227-244.

more on the professionalization process of the Chinese army. Even if it is true that Chinese government is struggling to find a way to professionalize its army, on the other it is also important to highlight this peculiar historical trend, which intermingles the civil and the military sectors, creating a flexible system which increases the military involvement of the civilians even during peaceful times as well as the speed of military mobilization in time of war.

All these elements make clear why most of the attempts to explain the overall nature of Chinese military transformation failed to reach their objectives: their constant underestimation of the existence of a Chinese way of war which is connected to its overall strategic culture undermined their scientific analyses. Strategic culture's importance is highlighted by the fact that "a state's choices in the pursuit of wealth and power are constrained by domestic politics, historical choices, and cultural viewpoints. Failure to understand or acknowledge these constraints can heighten the potential for mistrust and miscalculation."[831]

In the case of the US, for example, it seems clear why it is trying to implement cyberwar into a different type of strategic framework, and this has to do with the overall liberal attitude to war, which has historically relied on technology, in order to avoid high casualties while still pursuing political objectives.[832]

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[831] Jon Lindsay, "China And Cybersecurity: Controversy And Context", in Jon Lindsay ed., *China and Cybersecurity. Esionage, Strategy, and Politics in the Digital Domain*, p. 4
[832] John Stone, "Cyber War Will Take Place!", *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 36 (2013), 101-108; John Stone, *Military Strategy* (London: Continuum International

In the Chinese case, the legacy of People's war represents a valuable asset, not only because of its centrality during most of China's twentieth century strategic thought, but also because it encapsulates distinctive cultural features of the Chinese way of war. In other words, People's War doctrine, as I will demonstrate, reproduces[833] Chinese strategic culture, helping us frame today's China's cyberwar doctrine, maritime strategy, and people's mobilization.

The first part of this chapter will be dealing with the concepts of the RMA and how China has internalized this transformation in military affairs. The second part will be dealing with the analysis of the Maoist people's war in order to fully capture its essence and therefore its applicability in today's military affairs. Finally, the last section will, therefore, discuss cyber warfare, maritime militia, and the civil-military relationship, that is the *junmin ronghe*, in order to discuss what they represent and how we could define them. In other words, the last part, by using three analytical levels (people's mobilization, strategic design, and tactical design) will try to illustrate the main features of today's Chinese cyber warfare, maritime militia, and civil-military relationship in connection to the people's war doctrine.

5.1. The Analysis of RMA and the Chinese Context

Publishing Group, 2011), pp. 59-81.
[833] Theo Farrell, *The Norms Of War* (Boulder, Colo.: L. Rienner Publishers, 2005).

In 1991 Jean Baudrillard wrote a book with the controversial title: "*The Gulf War Did Not Take Place*."[834] The apparent absurdity of his title concealed a more sophisticated idea. The concept behind that statement was that the new information age has radically transformed the way we conceptualized the manifestation of war. The RMA and the cyber technology transformed the essence of war which could now be conducted through a digital battlespace – that is, cyberspace – making it an almost "fictional, non-existent phenomenon."[835]

The operational modalities of the Gulf War literally shocked China which tried, from that time onwards, to embrace this new technological transformation. Before 1991, however, Deng Xiaoping had the hard task to transit China from one era to the other, in order to embrace the new technological developments. In this context, technological innovations progressively intermingled with the existing Chinese national strategy which, through the codification of People's War doctrine, inaugurated a new world warfare generation: the so-called fourth generation warfare,[836] even if other authors prefer to use the term Complex Irregular Warfare (CIW).[837]

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[834] Jean Baudrillard, *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place* (Sidney: Power Publications, 2012).

[835] Philip Hammond, *Media, War And Postmodernity* (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 7.

[836] Thomas Hammes X, *The Sling And The Stone* (St. Paul, MN: Zenith Press, 2006).

[837] Aaron Karp, Regina Cowen Karp and Terry Terriff, *Global Insurgency And The Future Of Armed Conflict* (London: Routledge, 2010), pp. 177-199.

Therefore, even if a technological transformation was on its way, Deng did not abandon People's War doctrine. [838] There were, for sure, internal resistances, especially from the PLA, against any attempt to radically change such a deep and pervasive national strategy. However, cultural and historical legacies offer a better picture of this strategic setting since, although cultural tradition can evolve in accordance to the changes of environment, "yet at the same time people can always see those unchanged things that are called the character of a civilization and the character of a nation. Thereby comprehending the tradition of strategic culture of a nation and a civilization must be based on long time investigation of their historical experience to grasp their relatively stable characteristics that are continuous and have survived repeated historical changes."[839]

Deng, therefore, started to promote the so-called "People's War under modern conditions" which was supposed to fuse together Maoist doctrine of asymmetric fighting with the necessities of the modern technology. Tactical concepts like "luring the enemy deep" and "preparing to fight a total war" were replaced by "extended depth of defense" and "local war in China's periphery."[840]

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[838] Michael Pillsbury, *Chinese Views Of Future Warfare* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 1998); Mark Burles and Abram N Shulsky, *Patterns In China's Use Of Force* (Ft. Belvoir: Defense Technical Information Center, 2000).

[839] Peng Guangqian and Yao Youzhi, 战略学 *[The Science Of Military Strategy]* (Beijing: National Defense Press, 2005), p. 73

[840] Dannis Blasko, "PLA Force Structure: A 20-Year Retrospective", in James Mulvenon & Andrew Yang, *Seeking Truth From Facts* (Santa Monica CA: RAND Corporation, 2001), p. 53; Alexander Huang, "Transformation And Refinement Of Chinese Military Doctrine: Reflection And Critique On The PLA's View", in James

Because of Chinese concerns about its periphery, People's War Doctrine soon became Local War Doctrine, later labeled Local War Under Modern High-Technology Conditions. By applying this label, Chinese officials required the application of more flexibility; units had to be more mobile, "capable of extending their reach farther, and better prepared to work together as a joint army, navy, and air force team. By the middle of the decade, Local War Under Modern High-Technology Conditions had become the dominant doctrinal thought in the PLA.[841] However, the final process of this strategic design culminated in the formulation of "Local War under conditions of informatization."[842] Even if we can witness a progressive updating process, in the early '90s, Major General Wang Pufeng reaffirmed what was the real essence of Chinese doctrinal transformation by stating that:

> "We will continue to adhere to the strategy of 'people's war', but high-tech weapons will only reinforce our 'people's war' strategy, like adding wings to tigers. Under the current circumstances, we must ponder over two questions: How to fight a people's war in light of high-tech weapons, and how to

Mulvenon & Andrew Yang, *Seeking Truth From Facts,* p. 135; Joffe, Ellis, "People's War Under Modern Conditions: A Doctrine For Modern War", *The China Quarterly*, 112 (1987), p. 560.
[841] Dannis Blasko, "PLA Force Structure: A 20-Year Retrospective", in James Mulvenon & Andrew Yang, *Seeking Truth From Facts*, p. 56-57.
[842] Andrew Nathan and Andrew Scobell, *China's Search For Security* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012) p. 281.

develop high-tech weapons to facilitate our people's war. These questions concern the security and survival of our nation, as well as China's position and role in the world's future strategic pattern."[843]

The major objective of the third millennium is to understand "how to fight … 'a multi-variant war' waged across a new spectrum of conflict that is characterized by a 'high-low' mix of operations." This mixture is the result of the understanding that "clear distinctions between conventional and unconventional conflicts are fading, and any future major conflict is almost certain to see a routine commingling of such operations."[844] The new spheres of intervention are becoming the financial markets, the industry and the economy of rival states, and even the contamination of states' internet network through powerful viruses.[845]

As a matter of fact, PLA has invested lots of energy in understanding strategically and operationally the conduct of cyber operations. A strategic tendency which can be traced back to the so-called "Project 863," inaugurated by Deng Xiaoping, which developed new

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[843] Deshun Li, "Post-Gulf War World Strategic Pattern," *Beijing Review*, Vol. 25, 1991, pp. 7-9, in Robert Muller, "Adding Wings To Tigers: People's War In The South China Sea*,"* p. 42.

[844] Michael Evans, "Elegant irrelevance revisited: a Critique of Fourth Generation Warfare", Aaron Karp, Regina Cowen Karp and Terry Terriff, *Global Insurgency And The Future Of Armed Conflict*, p. 71

[845] Qiao, Liang, Al Santoli, and Xiangsui Wang, *Unrestricted Warfare* (Panama City, Panama: Pan American Pub., 2002).

technological plans "with a focus on national-priority high-tech projects, including military programs."[846]

From '80s onwards, and especially after the outbreak of the Gulf War, China has therefore strived to acquire the digital expertise in order to encapsulate this new technological domain into the existing national strategy. However, only in 1999 Chinese leaders "began to pay a lot more attention to information warfare (IW)," mainly because of the US bombing of Chinese embassy in Belgrade, whose staff, "it was later revealed … were rebroadcasting command and control information for the defending Serbian forces."[847] But why is IW so important and so beneficial for the Chinese strategy? Simply for one reason: "IW represents an asymmetric weapon that China can exploit. In fact, "it could give the PLA a longer-range power projection capability against U.S. forces that its conventional forces cannot currently hope to match." In other words, as I will demonstrate in the following pages, Chinese Information Warfare can be recognized as an updated version of People's War.[848]

This is not only for the presence of an asymmetric nature of operations, but also because of the new intimate nature of cyberwarfare. In fact, conflicts of the contemporary and future era "will increasingly depend on, and revolve around, information and communications – cyber matters."

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[846] Andrew Nathan and Andrew Scobell, *China's Search For Security*, pp. 291-292
[847] Greg Austin, *Cyber Policy In China* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2014), pp. 41-42.
[848] James Mulvenon, "The PLA And Information Warfare", in James Mulvenon and Richard Yang, *The People's Liberation Army in the Information Age*, (Santa Monica

In other words, whether dealing with state-actors or not, "information-age modes of conflict (and crime) will be largely about 'knowledge' – about who knows what, when, where, and why, and about how secure a society, military, or other actor feels about its knowledge of itself and its adversaries."[849]

However, emphasizing the importance of knowledge in today's political and strategic realm raises two important questions: why has knowledge become so important today with respect to the past to the extent of creating the conditions for an Information Revolution? And, as a consequence, what role does technology play in this Information Revolution? When it comes to the first question, knowledge at war has always represented a vital component of strategy. Even Sun Tzu, more than two thousand years ago, stated: "知可以战与不可以战者胜," He who knows when he can fight and when he cannot will be victorious." And he went even

CA: RAND Corporation, 1999), pp. 175-186.

[849] John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt, "Chapter One: A New Epoch - And Spectrum - Of Conflict", in John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt, *In Athena's Camp*, p. 5. The importance of knowledge has even led scholars to argue about the existence of "knowledge warfare" instead of "information warfare." Knowledge warfare is conceived as a growth "beyond the systematizing of *information* and into the systematizing of *thought* and *analytic process* … It is Information Warfare to the next level." It refers specifically to the "advancement of 'knowing,' instead of the accumulation of 'knowledge,'" typical of information warfare. Philippe Baumard, "From Infowar To Knowledge Warfare: Preparing For The Pradigm Shift", in Alan D Campen, Douglas H Dearth and R. Thomas Goodden, *Cyberwar: Security, Strategy, and Conflict in the Information Age* (Fairfax VI: AFCEA International Age, 1996), p. 150; Douglas Dearth and Thomas Goodden, "Epilogue", in Alan D Campen, Douglas H Dearth and R. Thomas Goodden, *Cyberwar: Security, Strategy, and Conflict in the Information Age* (Fairfax VI: AFCEA International Press, 1996), p. 268.

further to argue that: "知彼知己者，百战不殆，" "Know the enemy and know yourself; in a hundred battles you will never be in peril."[850]

On the western front of military doctrine, Clausewitz clearly stated how important information and knowledge were in war. His analysis still remains one of the central evaluation of the importance of knowledge, and therefore intelligence, in war:

"Knowledge must be so absorbed into the mind that it almost ceases to exist in a separate, objective way. In almost any other art of profession a man can work with truths he has learned from musty books, but which have no life or meaning for him … when an architect sits down with pen and paper to determine the strength of an abutment by a complicated calculation, the truth of the answer at which he arrives is not an expression of his own personality … it is never like that in war. Continual change and the need to respond to it compels the commander to carry the whole intellectual apparatus of his knowledge within him … By total assimilation with his mind and life the commander's knowledge must be transformed into a genuine capability."[851]

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[850] Sunzi, and Samuel B Griffith, *The Art Of War* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), pp. 82-84; Sunzi, Rusong Wu, Hsien-lin Wu, TÊ»ien Cheng, Ho ChÊ»ang, and Wu-sun Lin and others, *Sun Zi* (Beijing: People's China Pub. House, 1995), p. 13-14.

[851] Carl von Clausewitz, Michael Howard, and Peter Paret, *On War* (Princeton, N.J.:

Clausewitz's evaluation of the importance of knowledge is very insightful, since his description serves the scope to articulate the inherent nature of knowledge in relation with the overall complexity of the intelligence operation required in war:

"By 'intelligence' we mean every sort of information about the enemy and his country – the basis, in short, of our own plans and operations. [However], many intelligence reports in war are contradictory; even more are false and most are uncertain. What one can reasonably ask of an officer is that he should possess a standard of judgment, which he can gain only from knowledge of men and affairs and from common sense. He should be guided by the laws of probability … This difficulty of *accurate recognition* constitutes one of the most serious sources of friction in war, by making things appear entirely different from what one had expected."[852]

But again, why do information and knowledge in war play today such a significant – revolutionary, I would say – role that should distinguish the establishment of a new pattern in military affairs with respect to the past? What has changed today is that knowledge and information have critically

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Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 147.
[852] *Ibid.*, p. 117.

become the end of the war itself[853] and not the means to an end as they used to be in the past. In other words, "cyberwar … is characterized by the effort to turn knowledge into capability,"[854] since "*knowledge* [itself] becomes the core of military power and the central resource of destructivity, rather than brute force."[855] Whatever belongs to the epistemology of an adversary becomes, therefore a target. In this case, "*epistemology* means the entire 'organization, structure, methods, and validity of knowledge.'"[856]

Today, something that has been "viewed as immaterial and abstract … can be put to hard practical use to strengthen one party over another." Therefore, in this new strategic context, where information plays a key role, the Clausewitzian concept of friction seems to be replaced by the concept of entropy; that is, "the tendency to become disorganized." Also the concept of power has shifted from the classic material assumption to the immaterial

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[853] Michael Brown, "The Revolution In Military Affairs: The Information Dimension", in Alan D Campen, Douglas H Dearth and R. Thomas Goodden, *Cyberwar: Security, Strategy, and Conflict in the Information Age*, p. 43

[854] John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt, "Cyberwar Is Coming!", in John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt, *In Athena's Camp* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 1997), p. 32; Michael Loescher, "The Information Warfare Campaign", in Alan D Campen, Douglas H Dearth and R. Thomas Goodden, *Cyberwar: Security, Strategy, and Conflict in the Information Age* (Fairfax, VI: AFCEA International Press, 1996), p. 197

[855] Douglas Dearth and Charles Williamson, "Information Age/Information War", in Alan D Campen, Douglas H Dearth and R. Thomas Goodden, *Cyberwar: Security, Strategy, and Conflict in the Information Age* (Fairfax VI: AFCEA International Press, 1996), p. 25

[856] Richard Szafranski, "A Theory Of Information Warfare: Preparing For 2020", in Alan D Campen, Douglas H Dearth and R. Thomas Goodden, *Cyberwar: Security, Strategy, and Conflict in the Information Age* (Fairfax, VI: AFCEA International Press, 1996), p. 235

one. Now power relies more on "deep psychological, cultural, and ideational structures; it makes 'the power of power' virtually metaphysical."[857]

However, this evident shift would not have occurred had not been for the important role played by technology. This leads, inevitably, to the second question; that is, how technology helped shape the new strategic environment and what its determinant role in strategic studies really is with respect to other factors such as geopolitics, culture, and political contingencies. Generally speaking, I tend to disagree with the proposition that advocates technology as an independent phenomenon that, once discovered, sets the pace for the transformation of military affairs.[858]

When it comes to cyber warfare, for example, the Suntzunian expression finds confirmation, since cyber attacks can occur even without the implementation of brute violence. Lethality of military actions, despite

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[857] John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt, "Chapter Six: Information, Power, And Grand Strategy: In Athena's Camp - Section 1", in John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt, *In Athena's Camp* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 1997), p. 142, 148, 152, 156; Knecht, Ronald, "Thoughts About Information Warfare", in Alan D Campen, Douglas H Dearth and R. Thomas Goodden, *Cyberwar: Security, Strategy, and Conflict in the Information Age* (Fairfax, VI: AFCEA International Press, 1996), p. 167

[858] One strong argument that goes in this direction is offered by Michael Handel, "Clausewitz In The Age Of Technology", in *Clausewitz and Modern Strategy*, p. 60. In that specific chapter Handel argues that "technology has become the modern military's panacea, used to solve problems previously solved by non-material means. Modern technology has acquired momentum, an importance of its own, which explains the changing nature of modern warfare." This analytical position of technology encouraged him to articulate a new perspective of the famous Clausewitzian trinity, by including a forth variable (technology) in it, to the extent that, according to the author, the revolutionary potential of technology obliges us to reconsider the trinity now resembling more a square rather than a triangle, which originally comprised only: *the passion (the people), the reason (the government), and*

some scholars' contrary argument,[859] is not always a fundamental prerequisite for a cyber attack to be considered an act of war. [860]

5.2. The Legacy of People's War and China's Military Transformation

Having highlighted the political and strategic context of the RMA at the world level and having analyzed the structure of the Maoist doctrine of people's war, it is now important to demonstrate how it still exerts a fundamental influence in shaping Chinese military transformation, especially at the three sectors of cyber warfare, maritime militia and civil-military relationship already mentioned.

5.2.1. First Process of Chinese Military Transformation: Civil-Military Integration and People's Mobilization

As People's War doctrine necessitated the mobilization of the masses, in this case China puts as well great emphasis on the role of the people. In terms of cyber warfare: "due to the intrinsic features of cyberspace, such as anonymity, asymmetry, and shared information

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chance (the military).
[859] Rid, Thomas, "Cyber War Will Not Take Place", *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 35, (2012), p. 6-7
[860] John Stone, "Cyber War Will Take Place!", p. 104-105

infrastructure, everyone and anyone can be a warrior." Beijing realized the inherent strategic potential of the digital era to the extent that the populace in cyber-territory "has become a crucial factor in terms of cyber security, and accordingly a civilian-based defensive strategy may well be the best security strategy for cyberspace."[861]

In addition to that, Chinese leaders are pursuing a closer civil-military integration, like it used to be at the time of the implementation of People's War doctrine. Historically speaking, the invention of specific technological means developed first in one of the two sectors (either civilian or military) and then spread to the other. This had to do with the necessary adaptation period the military required, before introducing a new technological device. For example, "the military benefited from technology that had been developed mainly for civilian purposes, such as railroads and telegraphs, which vastly improved the ability of military forces to mobilize and to maneuver once they arrived at the battlefield."[862]

In the Chinese case, cyberwar, even if created and then implemented by the military, is already – has always been, I would say – an integral part of the civilian sector as well,[863] of course with the all necessary restrictions the government has already adopted. In the security realm, in fact, China "has created the largest and most effective network of internet

[861] Ji-Jen Hwang, *China's Cyber Warfare: The Strategic Value of Cyberspace and the Legacy of People's War*, p. 52
[862] Bruce Berkowitz, "Warfare In The Information Age", in John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt*, In Athena's Camp* (Santa Monica CA: RAND Corporation, 1997), p. 180
[863] Andrew Nathan and Andrew Scobell, *China's Search For Security*, pp. 291-292

monitors and censors in the world and its credited with spectacular successes in cyber espionage against the United States and other countries."[864] Moreover, there are two additional peculiarities in the Chinese case: the first one is the establishment of the Central Political and Legal Commission (CPLC) as the only agency assigned to the control of the entire national security. Under the CPLC, the Ministry of Public Security (MPS) exerts a big "influence on information society policy. Its most powerful arm … appears to be the 11th Bureau, which has responsibility for supervision of the security of all public information networks."[865] The second peculiarity is the transformation of the SILG (Small Informatization Leading Group) – which represents one of the highest governmental departments of the state bureaucracy – into the Central Leading Group for Cybersecurity and Informatization." Moreover, the core of this group is composed of five Politburo members, making China the only country in the world concentrating "so many of its highest political leaders in a committee for informatization," with clear interests in "security, military and propaganda" with respect to other fields like: science, education or simply technology.[866]

The curious aspect of this political-military transformation has started to spread in China since 1980s with the inception of the idea of the development of an "information society" 信息社会 (*xinxi shehui*). This concept intertwines with the overall trend of the information revolution, which

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[864] Greg Austin, *Cyber Policy In China*, p. 6
[865] *Ibid.*, pp. 62-63
[866] *Ibid.*, pp. 64, 67.

in Chinese has been labeled as 信息化 (*xinxihua*), which can be translated as "informatization," in order to distinguish it from the older industrialization concept.[867] However, only in 2006, with the so-called "National Informatization Plan (NIP) 2006-2010," Chinese government has established the guidelines for a real development of technology as a inherent element for the building of an "information society" which, it is believed, would cut "across a wide sweep of policy (politics, culture, art, economy, industry, education, science, technology, diplomacy and security)."[868]

The government, especially under the leadership of Xi Jinping, has tried to develop this new political-technological phenomenon by advocating the establishment of two programs: "Locating Military Potential in Civilian Capabilities (*yujun yumin*;寓军于民)" and the "civil-military fusion" (*junmin ronghe*; 军民融合). In so doing, we could witness, from the presidency of Hu Jintao onwards, an increasing interdependence between the civilian and the military sector.[869] Concerning the Military-Civilian Fusion, one of the official documents describing the spirit of the 18th National Congress held in 2012, from which these reforms were based, clearly stated:

"Deepening the integration between the military and civilian sectors. To promote the integrated development of the military and civilian sectors, we will establish – at the national

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[867] *Ibid.*, p. xv
[868] *Ibid.*
[869] Bryan Krekel, Patton Adams, and George Bakos, *Occupying The Information*

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level – unified leadership, and institutions that coordinate between the military and local governments, link military demands to supplies, and share information. We will improve the national defense industry system and sci-tech innovation system serving national defense. We will reform the system and mechanism for the management of scientific research and production for national defense and armament procurement, and guide outstanding private enterprises into the fields of research, development, production and maintenance of military products. We will reform and improve the policies and systems for cultivating military personnel by relying on national education. We will open more areas of military logistics to ordinary enterprises. We will deepen the reform of national defense education, improve the national defense mobilization system, and the system of conscription during peace time and mobilization during wartime. We will deepen the reform of the militia reserve system, and adjust the management system of border defense, coast defense and air defense."

These institutional settings, in accordance to the historical legacies, have constantly blurred the distinction between the civilian and the military realm. In fact, the PLA relies on a network domain – central to the PLA – which "exists primarily as a civilian infrastructure." Current Chinese military

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High Ground ([McLean, VA?]: Northrop Grumman Corp., 2012), p. 69

writings, in fact, put a high emphasis on the "importance of civilian information technology and the civilian Internet to network warfare."[870] An additional explanation for this is also the fact that in the realm of cyberspace in general, but in the Chinese case in particular, both the military and the civilian sector "function on the same information network platform [making] the boundary between the battlefront and the rear disappear."[871]

From 2012 onwards, the MCF (Military-Civilian Fusion) has, therefore, "evolved into a holistic strategic concept that reaches beyond the defense industry."[872] It emphasizes the combination of all aspects of society along with the "five dimensional" (*wuwei yiti* 五维一体) warfare, "characterized by contests for supremacy in the ground, sea, air, space, and information domains, with the characteristics of these domains and the interconnections among them carrying major implications for force structure as well as command and control."[873]

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[870] Joe McReynolds, *China's Evolving Military Strategy*, p. 5.

[871] Ji-Jen Hwang, *China's Cyber Warfare: The Strategic Value of Cyberspace and the Legacy of People's War*, pp. 10, 40.

[872] Daniel Alderman, "An Introduction to China's Strategic Military-Civilian Fusion", in Joe McReynolds ed., *China's Evolving Military Strategy*, pp. 404-405. Specifically, three are the areas in which the fusion should occur: the use of the information network that should develop the extension of one sphere into the other; make the civilian infrastructure suitable for military operations; and finally, the third one is related to the fusion of the industries with the military in order to increase both the economic development and the military production.

[873] Taylor Fravel, "China's Changing Approach to Military Strategy: The Science of Military Strategy from 2001 to 2013", in Joe McReynolds ed., *China's Evolving Military Strategy*, p. 53.

The centrality of this program is, moreover, attested by the fact that Xi Jinping, after the Third Plenum held in the fall of 2013, issued a series of reforms with the intent of institutionalizing this fusion mechanism into a proper political entity. Between the end of 2014 and the beginning of 2015, Xi Jinping created the Military Civilian Fusion Leading Small Group (军民融合领导小组).[874]

At the technical level, the Chinese government has implemented a wide communication infrastructure around the country. "The most evidential example is the construction of the National Cable Infrastructure, which followed the model 'Eight Railway Lines from South to North and Eight Railway Lines from East to West." The final result was named: "The Communication Network of Eight North-to-South and Eight East-to-West Optical Fibre Routes." This massive technical achievement that manages to cover almost the entire size of the country "makes it possible for people everywhere in China to connect to cyberspace and act as a cyber warrior if necessary." However, in order to prevent any backfire from the local hackers, this system, though massive, has a few ports connecting to internet, making it easier for the Chinese government "to set up censorship mechanisms on these ports to control and monitor the extensive cyberspace."[875]

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[874] Daniel Alderman, "An Introduction to China's Strategic Military-Civilian Fusion", in Joe McReynolds ed., *China's Evolving Military Strategy*, p. 410-411.
[875] Ji-Jen Hwang, *China's Cyber Warfare: The Strategic Value of Cyberspace and the Legacy of People's War*, p. 149-150.

Because of China's deep concerns about the occurrence of a possible digital Tiananmen, the government has moved forward with other censorship system, since it has been recognized that there are many netizens who, besides attacking foreign networks, are also constantly trying to breach the government internet infrastructure; "a practice known as [翻墙] *fanqiang*, 'scaling the wall.'" It is not a coincidence that one of the first government's implementations, in fact, has been the Great Firewall, also recognized as the Golden Shield Project[876]: "an intricate system of Internet controls that filters out 'harmful' domestic and foreign content and communications which, in practice, creates a Chinese intranet infrastructure through a cyber 'demilitarized zone' complete with filters, deep packet inspections and other forms of 'cyber border security.'" All these measures are necessary for two major objectives: the first one has to do with the domestic political aim to fight "'revisionist organizations,' 'separatists, extremists, splittists' and Western imperialist forces that aim to disrupt social stability," while the second objective is related to Beijing's concern with how to create a concrete form of "Internet sovereignty;" a principle that China has, in fact, strongly advocated by emphasizing the right of a state "to control Internet activity within its own borders."[877]

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[876] Desmond Ball, "China's Cyber Warfare Capabilities", *Security Challenges*, 7 (2011), pp. 99, 100.
[877] Amy Chang, *Warring State. China's Cybersecurity Strategy,* Center for a New American Security, December 2014, pp. 23, 29; Ye Zheng, "From Cyberwarfare To Cybersecurity", in Jon Lindsay ed., *China and Cyber Security. Espionage, Strategy, and Politics in the Digital Domain*, p. 132

The similarity, again, with the Maoist era is significant. The PLA was the political tool of the communist army to clean up the regions from the bandits that still controlled some parts of the country. Another major problem was the presence of the "splittists" who, because of their regional power, menaced to promote political revolts against the central government. Also in this type of political scenario, the PLA was not marginal in assuring that PRC could effectively control the country.

After having set an extended censorship system, China needs to fully exploit the civilian infrastructure. The Chinese government has, nevertheless, sponsored, tacitly, a recruiting campaign with the finality of setting up a proper cyber militia, which could conduct cyber operations in favor of the Chinese strategic design. Militias "are an enduring feature of Chinese military planning." They have been widely employed since ancient time, and their importance culminated in the people's war doctrine of "drowning any invader in a 'sea of humanity.'"[878]

Categorized as "non-governmental forces" 民间力量 (*minjian liliang*), these Chinese cyber warriors are "external entities that spontaneously engage in network attack and defense, but can also be organized and mobilized for network warfare operations."[879] Hackers in China, in fact, have been recognized as "government-approved network technology security

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[878] Robert Sheldon and Joe McReynolds, "Civil-Military Integration And Cybersecurity: A Study Of Chinese Information Warfare Militias", in Jon Lindsay ed., *China and Cybersecurity. Espionage, Strategy, and Politics in the Digital Domain*, p. 193.
[879] Joe McReynolds, *China's Evolving Military Strategy*, p. 4

units."[880] Like during the civil war and its aftermath, when Mao could count on a huge manpower in order to conduct military operations – encouraging him to put man at the center of his military struggle – here again, something similar is happening. This new cyber militia should be composed of civilians who are able to use their computers as a means to develop viruses to be sent to potential enemies. And especially, it should be pointed out that:

> "Since approximately 2002, the PLA has been creating IW militia units comprised of personnel from the commercial IT sector and academia, and represents [sic] an operational nexus between PLA [computer network warfare operation] and Chinese civilian information security (infosec) professionals. The PLA has established militia units directly within commercial firms throughout China to take advantage of access to staff with advanced education, modern commercial-grade infrastructure, sophisticated software design capabilities, and the greater likelihood of finding 'politically reliable' operators."[881]

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[880] Magnus Hjortdal, "China's Use Of Cyber Warfare: Espionage Meets Strategic Deterrence," p. 11

[881] Bryan Krekel, *Capability Of The People's Republic Of China To Conduct Cyber Warfare And Computer Network Exploitation* (McLean, VA: Northrop Grumman Corp., Information Systems Sector, 2009), p. 33.

Moreover, like in the Maoist era – where Mao tried, at a later stage, to export the Chinese People's War[882] by "artificially inseminate" revolutions around the world[883] – Chinese government in the digital age has extended the concept of the people, which now does not simply refer to the *renmin* (人民) – the masses – but it may "indicate all global Chinese users of the internet all over the world. The mobilization of this global population is accordingly not limited to Chinese geographical territory."[884] The reason behind this type of political consideration over the Chinese living abroad is related to the unique Chinese perspective, which treats "instinctively" the diaspora community "as an internal affair." [885] Political attitude that has encouraged the Chinese government in 2009 to launch a very expensive project, called *waixuan gongzuo*, which aims at the development of an "overseas propaganda" with the goal of creating "a network of overseas bureaus to portray China in a favorable light to countries."[886]

This parallels another, though slightly different, Chinese approach to overseas interests during the Cold War, when Premier Zhou Enlai "stated

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[882] Johnson Chalmers, *Autopsy on People's War* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1973); Peter Van Ness, *Revolution And Chinese Foreign Policy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970).

[883] Davis Jack, "Political Violence in Latin America," IISS, London, *Adelphi Papers*, no. 85 (Feb. 1972), p. 18

[884] Ji-Jen Hwang, *China's Cyber Warfare: The Strategic Value of Cyberspace and the Legacy of People's War*, p. 111.

[885] Nigel Inkster, "The Chinese Intelligence Agencies: Evolution And Empowerment In Cyberspace", in Jon Lindsay ed., *China and Cybersecurity. Espionage, Strategy, and Politics in the Digital Domain*, p. 37

[886] Michael Pillsbury, *The Hundred-Year Marathon* (New York: Henry Holt Publishing, 2015), p. 179

that overseas Chinese communities should consider themselves citizens of the countries in which they resided." However, this statement was made at a time "when concern about the potential for such communities to serve as a fifth column for communist subversion was high."[887]

Yet the same cyber warriors that the government employs for the cyber operations could easily backfire, especially since informatization has opened up a new wave of *levée en masse*, this time developed on the cyberspace.[888] The global communications, in fact, have led to a progressive step towards democratization, even in China, as the 1989 upheaval, culminating in the Tiananmen massacre, demonstrates. However, in order to prevent such a thing to happen again, the government, beside the building of a massive censorship system described above, has developed an extensive propaganda, nationalistic, but at the same coercive campaign. Since 1991, in fact, the Chinese government has begun the "Patriotic Education Campaign," with the main objective of mobilizing, nationwide, Chinese youth, through an extensive ideological program, which centered around the reinterpretation of history. This program, along with the past ones, has been considered as "the most massive attempt at ideological

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[887] Nigel Inkster, "The Chinese Intelligence Agencies: Evolution And Empowerment In Cyberspace", in Jon Lindsay ed., *China and Cybersecurity. Espionage, Strategy, and Politics in the Digital Domain*, p. 37

[888] Audrey Cronin, "Cyber-Mobilization: The New Levée En Masse", *Parameters*, Summer 2006. The author of this article explores thoroughly the similarities between the 18th century levée en masse with the new cyber mobilization and therefore the reasons behind the idea that today we are witnessing a new levée en masse.

reeducation in human history."[889] Beijing has, in fact, introduced in schools a new set of terminologies in textbooks, in order to shift people's attention from the "interior-oriented, anti-corruption, and anti-dictatorship democratic movements in the 1980s to the rise of external-oriented, anti-Western nationalism in the 1990s."[890]

The campaign aimed at constantly blaming the Western countries for the miserable conditions China had to face during most of the twentieth century. In other words, what in textbooks was commonly recognized as the "victory narrative" (namely, China's victory during the civil war), was replaced by the "victimization narrative" (namely Western fault for China's suffering). Therefore, through this massive campaign, "Beijing has creatively used history education as an instrument for the glorification of the party, for the consolidation of the PRC's national identity and for the justification of the political system of the CCP's one party rule."[891] In fact, this is how the 1994 Outline of the CCP explained the objectives of the campaign:

> "The objectives of conducting patriotic education campaign are to boost the nation's spirit, enhance cohesion, foster national self esteem and pride, consolidate and develop a patriotic united front to the broadest extent possible, and

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[889] James Pinckney Harrison, *The Long March To Power* (New York: Praeger, 1973) in Wang Zheng, "National Humiliation, History Education, And The Politics Of Historical Memory: Patriotic Education Campaign In China", *International Studies Quarterly*, 52 (2008), p. 784
[890] *Ibid.*, p. 784

direct and rally the masses' patriotic passions to the great cause of building socialism with Chinese characteristics."[892]

This government campaign recalls what Mao established during the '50s: The PLA, for example, was also employed for carrying out operations related to the mass line campaigns. "The concept of the 'mass line' concerns itself with the techniques by which the party and government ensures that it is not alienated from the people whom it leads and controls. It also seeks to canalize the enthusiasm and energies of the 'masses', and to associate them more closely with the process of policy formulation and government," which allowed him to exploit "the tremendous energy of the masses" for bringing its political agenda to completion.[893]

Chinese massive reeducation campaign bore its fruits, even if facilitated by the international events affecting China directly. In the same decade of the Patriotic Campaign, China witnessed the manifestation of patriotic hacking which, even if already active some years before, "exploded with even greater force," by directly attacking China's enemy websites. Their hacking operations, in fact, erupted especially after "the atrocities committed against ethnic-Chinese Indonesians in 1998 after the fall of the Suharto regime." But two additional events proved to be extremely important for the

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[891] *Ibid.*
[892] Xinhua News Agency (2005), http://www.news.xinhuanet.com/ziliao/2005-03/16/content_2705546.htm
[893] Gittings, John, *The Role Of The Chinese Army* (London: issued under the auspices of the Royal Institute of International Affairs by Oxford U.P., 1967), pp. 169-

understanding of the potency of Chinese hacking and popular mobilization: 1999 US bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade and the "collision of a US Navy electronic and intelligence collection aircraft with a PLA air force fighter in 2001." Especially the first one, the US bombing, represented an interesting event, because in that case "the reference to 'people's war' in connection with the informatized war strategy [became] especially significant … it revealed China's intention, as with its ground forces, to maintain sizeable militia forces among the civilian population, trained in information technologies, for possible emergency mobilization in wartime."[894] The war, in the end, did not break out. However, Chinese mobilization against the US represented a critical event at the diplomatic level. The bombing, in fact, according to a Chinese deserter, would have offered "an irresistible opportunity for the Chinese government to implement the new hypernationalism." In the following days, in fact, the world acknowledged the outbreak of violent riots, not protests.[895]

The second event, the air collision, incentivized China to activate proper cyber operations against the US. In fact, in 2003, two years later, Chinese conducted "one of the more audacious series of cyberattacks … against U.S. military, government, and government contractor websites. The intrusion, collectively dubbed 'Titan Rain,' struck hundreds of government computers."[896] These two historical legacies played a significant role in

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[894] Greg Austin, *Cyber Policy In China*, p. 133
[895] Michael Pillsbury, *The Hundred-Year Marathon*, pp- 92-96
[896] *Ibid.*, p. 149.

shaping even more the connection between cyber warfare and People's War. In 2008, in fact, a PLA Major General Dai Qingmin stated that the PRC takes into strategic consideration the necessity to launch a 人民网路战 (*renmin wanglu zhan*) People's Cyber Warfare.[897]

The *junmin ronghe* and, to a larger extent, the doctrinal principle of People's War, are also playing a relevant role in the formation and consolidation of the maritime militia, the so-called *haishang minbing* (海上民兵). Because of its peculiar organizational structure, the current maritime militia was labeled by Professor Andrew Erickson (a leading expert of Chinese maritime issues) as "Little Blue Men"; that is, a readjustment of the term "Little Green Men", in vogue in the military, which describes the asymmetric warfare operations Russia has conducted in Crimea, through the use of a special group of soldiers, equipped with modern military equipment.[898]

The maritime militia represents one of the clearest manifestations of the *junmin ronghe* and People's War simply because, as the principles of the civil-military integration explain, "the mixture of economic integration with the State and the banner of nationalism form an effective patron-client

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[897] Ji-Jen Hwang, *China's Cyber Warfare: The Strategic Value of Cyberspace and the Legacy of People's War*, p. 153.
[898] Sergio Miracola, "La Milizia Marittima E La Guerra Di Popolo Nel Mar Cinese Del Sud - CINAFORUM", *CINAFORUM*, last modified 2016, http://www.cinaforum.net/via-le-bombe-la-milizia-marittima-787-e-la-guerra-di-popolo-nel-mar-cinese-meridionale/.

relationship that benefits both the Chinese fishing community and the Chinese Communist party."[899]

This has been also exemplified by the 13th Five Year Plan 2016-2020, released on March 17, 2016, which clearly stated China's maritime objectives for the near future. This document is quite important because it highlights the importance that China started to attach to the maritime domain, since, historically, China has vastly dedicated its military effort to the development of land forces. Now the objective is different, with the fundamental idea that China should become a "hybrid land-and-sea power." An authoritative document, the 2001 Science of Military Strategy, in fact, highlights that this is an "era of sea," characterized by the application of the 'Mahanian and other strategies 'to actively develop comprehensive sea power' and 'expand strategic depth at sea.'" It stated that China needs:

1. Build itself into a "maritime power";[900]
2. Strengthen the exploration and development of marine resources;
3. Deepen historical and legal research on maritime issues;

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[899] James Kraska and Michael Monti, "The Law Of Naval Warfare And China's Maritime Militia," *International Law Studies,* 91, 2015, p. 453.
[900] Guangqian Peng, and Yao Youzhi, 战略学 *[The Science Of Military Strategy]*, in Andrew Erickson, "Doctrinal Sea Change, Making Real Waves: Examining The Maritime Dimension Of Strategy", in Joe McReynolds, *China's Evolving Military Strategy*, p. 106.

4. Create a highly effective system for protecting overseas interests and safeguard the legitimate overseas rights/interests of Chinese citizens and legal persons.
5. Active promote the construction of strategic strong points (*zhanlue zhidian* 战略支点) for the "21st century Maritime Silk Road"
6. Strengthen construction of reserve forces, especially the construction of maritime mobilization forces.[901]

This theoretical development originated from the early twenty-first century's military thinking which emphasized the employment of "preemption, a broad spectrum of advanced military technologies, and integration of civilian and military forces in missions (e.g. 'guerrilla warfare on the sea') that incorporate political, economic, and legal warfare." The emphasis, moreover, is on the use of asymmetric platforms – here considered to be *shashoujian* (杀手锏), that is, trump cards – through which the enemy's weaknesses are exploited.[902]

Moreover, the creation of the maritime militia is also related to the fact that "China operates the world's largest fleet of civilian fishing vessels and trawlers, and many of their crews and ships form a maritime militia used

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[901] *Ibid.*, pp. 103-104.
[902] *Ibid.*, pp. 108-109.

to advance the country's geopolitical claims in the East China Sea and South China Sea." It should be pointed out that maritime militia represents an important asset not only for the naval military operations, but also as a way of defending fishermen which would find in the militia the protective shield against the foreign competition for the control of the fish stocks. It should be specified that historically "the use of fishing vessels as an adjunct to naval forces is not new, although the scope and depth of China's effort is unprecedented."[903]

China has adopted the maritime militia in its recent history, even if its doctrinal evolution belongs to the last ten years' political guidance under Hu Jintao first, and Xi Jinping after. In 1974 the maritime militia played a crucial role in "helping China win the Battle of the Paracels against Vietnam."[904]

The maritime militia is not managed by the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN), which operates only in cases of coordinated activities at the provincial level. Specifically the local activities, in addition to being managed by PAFD (People's Armed Forces Department), are coordinated by the civilian government groups. In these phases, the primary aim is to make "special cells militia" (专职人民 武装干部), "leaders of business units," and "personal information" (信息员) operational. These selected personnel are the central element of the maritime militia and promotes the implementation

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[903] James Kraska and Michael Monti, "The Law Of Naval Warfare And China's Maritime Militia," *International Law Studies,* pp. 451-452, 456.

of the party's command and control, as well as the maintenance of the military-political cohesion among the various units. Essential to the implementation of the political control over the militia are the "ship captains" (船老大) and staff information.[905]

This system could be implemented because of the large Chinese commercial fishing sector "with fourteen million people working in the industry – 25 percent of the world's total." Through this vast pool of manpower, "fishermen are assigned to collectives or attached to civilian companies and receive military training and political education in order to mobilize and promote China's interests in the ocean." Their training, as a militia (besides the mere civil defense training), develops the ability to intercept other ships, as well as assisting the overall Chinese effort to create artificial islands with their presence and material transportation.[906] This training and the effects of nationalism are well evident in instances in which fishermen strive to become part of the overall militia force. In 2012, for example, He Jianbin, the chief of the State-run Baosha Fishing Corporation in Hainan province, advocated the inclusion of his division into the militia force for the PLAN

[904] Andrew Erickson, "Doctrinal Sea Change, Making Real Waves: Examining The Maritime Dimension Of Strategy", p. 106.
[905] Andrew Erickson and Conor Kennedy, "Meet the Chinese Maritime Militia Waging a 'People's War at Sea,*" The Wall Street Journal*, March 2015.
[906] James Kraska and Michael Monti, "The Law Of Naval Warfare And China's Maritime Militia."

If we put 5,000 Chinese fishing ships in the South China Sea, there will be 100,000 fishermen … And if we make all of them militiamen, give them weapons, we will have a military force stronger than all the combined forces of all the countries in the South China Sea … Every year, between May and August, when fishing activities are in recess, we should train these fishermen/militiamen to gain skills in fishing, production and military operations, making them a reserve force on the sea, and using them to solve our South Sea problems.[907]

The basic operating personnel of militia, instead, is composed of two main sub-components: on the one hand the ordinary reserves, that is, the personnel registered to the various militias, which, however, does not pay actual service. On the other hand, the primary force, composed of operational personnel, ready to be mobilized in case of need. The primary force, of course, is the one that gets all the paramilitary resources for its activities and, based on the monitoring operations conducted at the disputed islands in the South China Sea, it can be assumed that the primary force of the maritime militia is mainly composed of workers (including of course the fishermen) and demobilized soldiers, who, with their ships – usually no ordinary fishing vessels or merchant ships – start tiling operations of

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[907] *Ibid.*

suspicious ships with unconventional maneuvers, to the point of increasing the probability of accidents at sea.[908]

This is one of the central objectives behind the implementation of the maritime militia. Its use should complicate the overall war scenario, creating political and military dilemmas within the enemy's overall strategic calculation. This confusion also applies to the actual military operations through which maritime militia would erase "the longstanding distinction between warships and civilian ships in the law of naval warfare."[909]

In 2014 China widely employed its maritime militia in order to strengthen its "peacetime power projection in the region," especially when dealing with Japan over the disputed Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands. During that year, China replaced its surveillance vessels with the maritime militia "in order to maintain a presence, while reducing the likelihood of a war with Japan."[910]

Another similar case occurred in the fall of 2015, when the Chinese vessels had an accident with the "USS Lassen," an American destroyer, within 12 nautical miles of the disputed islands, over which China claims its exclusive sovereignty. The case provoked protests in Beijing, but it also

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[908] Andrew Erickson and Conor Kennedy, "Meet the Chinese Maritime Militia Waging a 'People's War at Sea."

[909] James Kraska and Michael Monti, "The Law Of Naval Warfare And China's Maritime Militia."

[910] *Ibid.*, p. 454

highlighted even more the use of these vessels, which were assisting the coast Guard in the identification and expulsion operations.[911]

In terms of technological development, the crew of the militia vessels is equipped with real military equipment, such as artillery and radar systems. One particularly relevant instrument, of which the majority of these ships are equipped, is the satellite navigation system Beidu, which allows the militia to intercept other ships at sea and at the same time convey messages, even complex, with the help of specific digital screens, through which sending also handwritten messages. These elements illustrate, generally, the capacity of the maritime militia to conduct information warfare operations.[912]

However, it should not be underestimated that the same satellite system Beidu also performs other functions that make the Chinese maritime militia a particularly important organ for rescue operations at sea. The reputation of the militia also stems from the fact that it has led to safety those vessels that were in the midst of typhoons or storms. Thanks to this feature, the militia coordinates these activities with the Border Defense Department Station of Tanmen Village on the island of Hainan.[913]

But what are the main militias operating in the South China Sea? The Militia Danzhou Militia belonging to the Baimajing port, which has had a

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[911] Christopher Cavas, "China's 'Little Blue Men' Take Navy's Place in Disputes," *DefenseNews*, Nov. 2015.
[912] James Kraska and Michael Monti, "The Law Of Naval Warfare And China's Maritime Militia," pp. 452-453.

particular role in the military operations against Vietnam during the Battle of the Paracel Islands in 1974. The second, also significant, is the Tanmen Village Militia Maritime Company, which also operates in Hainan, famous for its 2012 operations against the Philippines at the island of Scarborough Shoal, whose paramilitary role has received special government attention, to the extent that President Xi Jinping appointed village Tanmen as a model to emulate for future operations. In fact this militia has also widely supported the island constructions in the Paracel and in part of the Spratly islands. The last two, finally, are respectively the Sansha City Maritime Militia, created in 2013, and Sanya Maritime Militia of 2001. The first, according to official sources, can be used for operations within the Paracel islands, while the second could be used for operations against the United States.[914]

5.2.2. Second Process of Chinese Military Transformation: Strategic Design

The creation of the massive infrastructural digital system in order to allow the government to move in two different but complementary directions – cyber mobilization and internet censorship – puts at the center of the Chinese strategic design the pursuit of an information supremacy as a clearly defined political objective. In Chinese political-military circles,

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[913] Andrew Erickson and Conor Kennedy, "Meet the Chinese Maritime Militia Waging a 'People's War at Sea.'"
[914] *Ibid.*

achieving control "within a specific time and place," represents "the precondition for achieving supremacy in the air, at sea, and on the ground and it is critical to achieving and maintaining battlefield supremacy."[915] Since Jiang Zemin presidency, in fact, China has had not only "its eye on stepping up aspects of its military informatization," but has also built the strategic concept that "'seizing information dominance' would become a 'focus in warfare.'"[916] Therefore information becomes now the "center of gravity."[917] The importance of information, moreover, envisages the Chinese use of cyberwar, which aims at the disruption of the enemy civilian infrastructure, because it "can be targeted more freely with network warfare than with conventional weapons, without provoking the degree of conflict escalation that a conventional attack on civilian targets would." This strategic formulation has led to the idea of "'unrestricted network warfare' (网络超限战) [*wangluo chaoxian zhan*] long advocated by some of the PLA's more hawkish network warfare theorists."[918]

According to this basic assumptions, Chinese underpinning strategy remains active defense, that is, "a politically defensive, but operationally offensive strategy in which China will rhetorically maintain a defensive

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[915] Kevin Pollpeter, "Chinese Writings On Cyberwarfare And Coercion", in Jon Lindsay ed., *China and Cybersecurity. Espionage, Strategy, and Politics in the Digital Domain* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 141.

[916] Greg Austin, *Cyber Policy In China*, p. 36.

[917] John Costello, "Chinese Views On The Information 'Center Of Gravity': Space, Cyber And Electronic Warfare", *China Brief*, XV (2015), p. 12

[918] Joe McReynolds, *China's Evolving Military Strategy*, p. 5

posture up until the time it decides to attack." [919] However, a closer look at the Chinese active defense in the information age shows that Chinese army strives to gain information dominance at the initial stage of a campaign, preferably through pre-emptive actions.[920] Unlike the Maoist period, therefore, China has now adopted an extended version of active defense which also includes active offense. This additional component advocated that, "unlike … defensive information operations [that] merely fend off attacks without weakening the opposing side's forces … offensive information operations are the only way information superiority can be achieved."[921]

Active defense, therefore, would serve the purpose of gaining information superiority, where information is supposed to become both capability and target for the Chinese strategic design. "By striking enemy information systems, the PLA can take out the 'eyes, ears, brain, and nervous system' of weapons systems, thereby causing paralysis and achieving victory with lower costs and in a shorter amount of time."[922]

Nevertheless, it is important to understand why China, despite the globalizing effects of the information age, still pursues the application of

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[919] Kevin Pollpeter, "Chinese Writings On Cyberwarfare And Coercion", in Jon Lindsay ed., *China and Cybersecurity. Espionage, Strategy, and Politics in the Digital Domain*, p. 142

[920] Ji-Jen Hwang, *China's Cyber Warfare: The Strategic Value of Cyberspace and the Legacy of People's War*, p. 115

[921] Kevin Pollpeter, "Chinese Writings On Cyberwarfare And Coercion", in Jon Lindsay ed., *China and Cybersecurity. Espionage, Strategy, and Politics in the Digital Domain*, p. 142

[922] *Ibid.*, p. 143

active defense, which represents a strategy to be applied regionally. This can be explained by simply looking at China's strategic objectives which are still related to the safeguarding of its national stability and territorial integrity. In fact, in Jiang Zemin's opinion, China should develop an "information deterrent" which could complement "the country's nuclear deterrent."[923] The underpinning idea of this statement – even if wrong because of the impossibility of cyberwar to act as a deterrent means for reasons that I briefly discussed in the introduction and that I will illustrate in detail in the following section – clarifies, once more, Chinese regional interests which aim at the preservation of internal and regional stability. In fact, the last twenty years' Chinese naval modernization, even if it has sensitively projected Chinese influence at the global level, still relied on active defense as the key strategy, since regional concerns are still central in Chinese strategy, as attested by the progressive updating process of People's War doctrine, which shifted from "fighting a local war under high-tech conditions to fighting a local war under conditions of informatization."[924] The application of active defense at sea, in fact, has led some scholars, mainly from US, to define it as A2/AD, that is, Anti-Access and Area Denial, in light of its regional features.

This explains, moreover, how China is willing to even pursue a "people's war at sea."[925] The Chinese PLAN, in fact, is trained to "adopt the

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[923] Greg Austin, *Cyber Policy In China*, p. 135
[924] *Ibid.*, p. 132
[925] Hongzhou Zhang, Rethinking China's Maritime Militia Policy. The thinking behind China's maritime militia policy is becoming increasingly obsolete, *The Diplomat*, May

'attrition concept' of wearing and tearing down the enemy vessels from the source of resupply, and employing its overwhelmingly large number of conventional combat ships and fishing boats to 'drown the enemy.'"[926] This training parallels some actual naval operations conducted in the '50s and '60s, when the Chinese "proved adept at the art of naval ambush, concealing their torpedo craft behind reefs or fishing vessels." This legacy still exerts an important influence, since "Chinese strategists advocate the employment of more technological means of hit-and-run combat at sea,"[927] as also attested by the 2006 White Paper which highlighted today's PLAN's attempt to implement a strategy – and the associated tactics – of "maritime people's war under modern conditions.'" This specific strategic setting manifests the existence of "a multitude of military and civilian forces" whose objective is to allow "China to 'flood the zone' with activity, confusing and complicating opponents' intelligence collection and targeting capacity. Massive deployments may also divert attention from the main effort, perhaps permitting certain movements to occur undetected. Could the harassment of the USNS Impeccable and USNS Victorious have been conceived to mask other activity happening at the same time? Indeed, these events took place as the People's Liberation Army (PLA) Navy's South Sea Fleet was

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2015; Andrew Erickson and Conor Kennedy, "Meet the Chinese Maritime Militia Waging a 'People's War at Sea,*"*

[926] Srikanth Kondapalli, *China's Naval Power* (New Delhi: Knowledge World in association with Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, 2001), p. 7

[927] Thomas Kane, *Chinese Grand Strategy And Maritime Power* (London: Frank Cass, 2002), p. 76

conducting exercise involving destroyers, submarines, and helicopters in the South China Sea."[928]

China's increasing power at both a military and economic level has increased its potential leverage of the international area. From 2013 onwards, along with the strategic principle of active defense, a new theoretical concept had been developed: "the forward edge defense." It consists of extending "the potential culminating point of any future conflict as far from the mainland as possible." In other words, the fundamental idea is to expand the strategic area of interest, projecting Chinese power beyond its territorial waters as far as creating an "arc-shaped strategic zone that covers the Western Pacific Ocean and Northern Indian Ocean." In so doing, China could exploit this area as a "strategic outer line," whose military operations occurring within would be supported by "operations with the mainland and the coastal waters as the strategic inner line." This strategic vision is often referred to as "using the land to control the sea, and using the seas to control the oceans (*yiluzhihai, yihaizhiyang* 以陆制海，以海制洋)." This also reflected the 2015 Defense White Paper, in which, along with the traditional "near-seas defense" principle an additional one has been added: the "far-seas protection (*yuanhaihuwei* 远海护卫)."[929]

It is important to highlight that while the first part of this strategic vision (using the land to control the sea), "representing a continental approach to

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[928] Dannis Blasko, "Chinese Strategic Thinking: People's War In The 21St Century," *China Brief*, Vol. 10, 2010, p. 6.
[929] Andrew Erickson, "Doctrinal Sea Change, Making Real Waves: Examining The

maritime security," has witnessed ample consideration, the second part, instead, "is newer in its emphasis," emphasizing, therefore, how Xi Jinping has combined the traditional strategic principles with the new military assets. In relation to the newer elements, the 2013 edition of the Science of Military Strategy discusses the possible eight strategic missions that the PLAN should perform: "1) Participate in large scale operations in the main strategic axis of operations. 2) Contain and resist sea-borne invasions. 3) Protect island sovereignty and maritime rights and interests. 4) Protect maritime transportation security. 5) Engage in protecting overseas interests and the rights/interests of Chinese nationals. 6) Engage in carrying out nuclear deterrence and counterattack. 7) Coordinate with the military struggle on land. 8) Protecting the security of international sea space."[930]

The combination of these new sea strategic guidelines (using the land to control the sea, near-seas defense, and far-seas protection) contributed to the evolution of the active defense doctrine, leading to several important implications. The first and most important, refers to the transformation of the strategic space, which is now based on the above mentioned internal and external lines of operation as well as the combination of the two into a multidimensional one (*neiwai jiangu, duowei liti* 内外兼顾, 多维立体). Along with this assumption, the new Chinese strategic asset also envisages a reconsideration of the strategic directions and the theater of operations,

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Maritime Dimension Of Strategy," p. 111.

[930] Xiaosong Shou, 战略学 *[The Science Of Military Strategy],* (Beijing: Military Science Press, 2013), pp. 209-212, in Andrew Erickson, "Doctrinal Sea Change,

which have been radically expanded by the advent of the informatized warfare.[931]

The 2013 edition of the Science of Military Strategy identifies four major transformations that China needs to implement in order to achieve strategic superiority and that represent all an evolution of traditional strategic thinking. The first one refers to the development of "functional versality" (*gongneng duoyang* 功能多样), that is, the ability to quickly swift from one strategic design to another. For example it "includes cultivating a strategic deterrence posture in peacetime and a rapid reaction capability when a crisis occurs to prevent escalation, while in wartime it requires the ability to seize the strategic initiative." The second transformation is the advancement of the multidimensional integration (*duoweiyiti* 多维一体), which refers to the "transformation from emphasizing the ground forces to an 'omni-dimensional, multidimensional, and multi-domain' posture." The third one refers to the development of an internal and external unity (*neiwaijiehe* 内外结合) which consists of "creating a strategic posture that combines internal and external elements to shift from homeland defense to forward defense." The fourth transformation is the encouragement of an integrated coordination (*zhengti xietiao* 整体协调), which refers to "the transformation

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Making Real Waves: Examining The Maritime Dimension Of Strategy," pp. 112-115
[931] Taylor Fravel, "China's Changing Approach to Military Strategy: The Science of Military Strategy from 2001 to 2013", in Joe McReynolds ed., *China's Evolving Military Strategy*, p. 57-58.

from compartmentalization of functions to the combination of centralization and decentralization that would improve the responsiveness of the PLA."[932]

5.2.3. Third Process of Chinese Military Transformation: Tactical Design

The legacy of People's War helps explain also the tactical dimension of Chinese cyber warfare.[933] Since 2010, China has developed its "Information Warfare Base." And the year after, the PLA has consolidated "a doctrine of integrated network warfare: 'the use of electronic warfare,

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[932] *Ibid.*, pp. 65-66.

[933] Ji-Jen Hwang, *China's Cyber Warfare: The Strategic Value of Cyberspace and the Legacy of People's War*, pp. 120-121. The author offers additional elements extrapolated from the Chinese military traditions, like the *Thirty-Six Stratagems*, which fit neatly into the People's War doctrine and into the cyber warfare design. "Certain stratagems could be seen as examples of China's cyber warfare, as follows: 1) Fool the emperor to cross the sea (瞞天過海, *man tian guo hai*): this alludes to lowering the enemy's guard while masking one's own intentions. A cyber scenario could be luring computer manufacturers into the Chinese market and thereby building back doors into the systems. 2) Kill with a borrowed sword (借刀殺人, *jie dao sha ren*): this implies using surrogates to attack an adversary. A cyber example would be to use botnets of zombie computers, hosted around the globe, to conduct a network attack. 3) Await the exhausted enemy at your ease (以逸待勞, *yi yi dai lao*): this refers to choosing the time and place of battle and encouraging the enemy to expend energy in fruitless endeavours. A cyber scenario may be to increase the number of hacking attempts by masses of Chinese civilian hackers to fully engage computer network defence teams and exhaust them while holding the most sophisticated virus/attack in reserve. 4) Borrow a corpse to resurrect the soul (借屍還魂, *jie shi huan hun*): this suggests taking an institution, a technology, a method or even an ideology that has been forgotten or discarded and appropriate it

computer network operations, and kinetic strikes to disrupt battlefield information systems' especially through joint operations." For the PLA, in fact, IW has become "an operational priority, and not just a broad strategic goal." As a proof for this statement, some officials of the National Security Council reported that China "was planting 'logic bombs' in the US power grid that could be activated in times of tension or war to disrupt power deliveries on a militarily and politically significant scale."[934]

As a matter of fact, Jiang Zemin strongly advocated the creation of an assassin's mace. In 1999 he declared that it was necessary "to master, as quickly as possible, a new *shashoujian* needed to safeguard state sovereignty and security." Of course the assassin's mace can be identified in a big variety of weapons. For example, one early manifestation of this weapon application has been the infection of thousands of American computers with Chinese "zombies," which refer to "malicious software packages that infect computers and allow hackers to turn them into 'slave' computers for use in cyberattacks."[935]

Besides the mere network actions, cyber warfare tactics heavily rely on several fundamental elements in order to be successful that recall the

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for your own purpose. Possible cyber applications include planting individuals or malware in unnoticed units or computers of the opponent."

[934] Greg Austin, *Cyber Policy In China*, pp. 136-137, 141. According to additional Chinese sources, Pollpeter defined it instead "integrated network electronic warfare" (网电一体战, INEW). Kevin Pollpeter, "Chinese Writings On Cyberwarfare And Coercion", in Jon Lindsay ed., *China and Cybersecurity. Espionage, Strategy, and Politics in the Digital Domain*, p. 145

[935] Michael Pillsbury, *The Hundred-Year Marathon*, p. 148, 150; Daniel Ventre, *Information Warfare* (London, UK: ISTE Ltd., 2009), pp. 88-92

tactical elements of People's War. The importance of the people's mobilization still encourages, at the military level, the advocacy of an "all-out defense/offense," where everyone can potentially become a soldier. This condition, in fact, could facilitate the PLA to employ "citizens' computers to host a botnet and conduct a simple Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attack," [936] where "a target becomes overwhelmed with more signals than it can process,"[937] something resembling the idea of the "swarm effect" and the "sting effect" which profoundly characterized People's War Doctrine.[938]

In addition to that, speed (and the associated element of flexibility) and anonymity are, for example, other two fundamental tactical elements for the asymmetric conduct of warfare in cyberspace. With the application of speed, sophisticated computer networks can shut down significant segments of an enemy military infrastructure without being bogged down into friction. The speed of movement, in fact, guarantees the success in the battlefield as attested by Deng himself who put great emphasis on the creation of the RRUs (Rapid Reaction Units) in order to keep alive the concept of flexibility, which characterized Chinese military strategy and in a more extensive way Chinese strategic culture.[939]

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[936] Ji-Jen Hwang, *China's Cyber Warfare: The Strategic Value of Cyberspace and the Legacy of People's War*, p. 111, 120

[937] Ye Zheng, "From Cyberwarfare To Cybersecurity", in Jon Lindsay ed., *China and Cyber Security. Espionage, Strategy, and Politics in the Digital Domain*, p. 127

[938] Ji-Jen Hwang, *China's Cyber Warfare: The Strategic Value of Cyberspace and the Legacy of People's War*, pp. 112-113

[939] Dannis Blasko, "PLA Force Structure: A 20-Year Retrospective", in James Mulvenon & Andrew Yang, *Seeking Truth From Facts*, pp. 54-55; Edward O'Dowd, *Chinese Military Strategy In The Third Indochina War* (London: Routledge, 2007).

The second element allows cyber warriors to carry out military operations without being detected.[940] Not being intercepted represents a fundamental element for a successful result in warfare.[941] Cyber warfare, therefore, specifically because of the last element, cannot be employed as a deterrent means of war. Deterrence, in fact, needs to be effectively signaled in order to make an enemy refrain from waging military operations. Cyber warfare, instead, does not need to be signaled; it needs to be kept secret[942] and delivered with speed through surprise.[943]

The application of cyber warfare, according to these features, clearly reproduces Sun Tzu's famous dicta[944] briefly analyzed in first section. Surprise and network attacks, for example, strengthen the famous principle of: "subduing the enemy without fighting is the acme of skill.[945] One empirical case, for example, confirms the applicability of this theoretical

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[940] Ji-Jen Hwang, *China's Cyber Warfare: The Strategic Value of Cyberspace and the Legacy of People's War*, pp. 42-43

[941] P. W Singer and Allan Friedman, *Cybersecurity And Cyberwar* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 81-82

[942] Erik Gartzke and Jon R. Lindsay, "Weaving Tangled Webs: Offense, Defense, And Deception In Cyberspace", *Security Studies*, 24 (2015), p. 322

[943] Kevin Pollpeter, "Chinese Writings On Cyberwarfare And Coercion", in Jon Lindsay ed., *China and Cybersecurity. Espionage, Strategy, and Politics in the Digital Domain*, p. 150.

[944] George Stein, "Sun Tzu Conducts Information Warfare", in Alan D Campen, Douglas H Dearth and R. Thomas Goodden, *Cyberwar 3.0: Human Factors in Information Operations and Future Conflict* (Fairfax VI: AFCEA International Press, 2000), pp. 39-48; Kenneth Geers, "Sun Tzu And Cyber War", *Cooperative Cyber Defense Center of Excellence (CCD COE)*, Tallin, Estonia, 2011; Mark McNeilly and Sunzi, *Sun Tzu And The Art Of Modern Warfare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

[945] Sunzi and Samuel B Griffith, *The Art Of War*, p. 77

statement: in Octorber 2010 the US military "lost control of 50 nuclear warheads for 45 minutes due to a 'computer glitch,' which could have been caused by planted computer virus via the network system."[946]

Targeting information in cyber warfare clearly connects to another important Chinese tactical legacy: "know the enemy and know yourself; in a hundred battles you will never be in peril."[947] Through this mechanism, PLA can, in fact, not only gather intelligence, but it can also disseminate false information for pure deception.[948] Deception, in the information age, confirms another important assumption made by Sun Tzu and later readjusted by Mao, as the previous chapter discussed it at length: "all warfare is based on deception, therefore when capable, feign incapacity; when active, inactivity, when near, make it appear that you are far away; when far away, that you are near. Offer the enemy a bait to lure him; reign disorder and strike him."[949] Moreover, technology, above all other things, facilitates deception in war, which is therefore concerned in manipulating information, "showing what is false and hiding what is true. In this case, signaling becomes relevant, but for opposite purpose: deception and not deterrence.[950]

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[946] Ji-Jen Hwang, *China's Cyber Warfare: The Strategic Value of Cyberspace and the Legacy of People's War*, pp. 103-104

[947] Sunzi and Samuel B Griffith, *The Art Of War*, p. 82-84.

[948] Ji-Jen Hwang, *China's Cyber Warfare: The Strategic Value of Cyberspace and the Legacy of People's War*, p. 112

[949] Sunzi and Samuel B Griffith, *The Art Of War*, p. 66

[950] Erik Gartzke and Jon R. Lindsay, "Weaving Tangled Webs: Offense, Defense, And Deception In Cyberspace", pp. 326-328.

Along with deception, the digital age has improved Chinese approach to intelligence gathering to the extent that now China pursues an extended cyber espionage campaign. Also defined as "the greatest transfer of wealth in history," Chinese espionage represents and indirect approach of fighting, which consists of stealing sensitive information to be implemented in the military and technological sector. This practice is believed to be leading to the "death by a thousand cuts,"[951] which refers to the continuous disruption of an enemy's military competitiveness through information stealing. Chinese espionage activity, however, exerts some "fascination" because of its peculiarity, that is, its reliance on the principle of *tiyong* which refers to the political design of keeping "China's style of learning to maintain societal *essence* and adopt western learning for practical use."[952] One famous associated espionage tactic has been defined as "the thousand grains of sand approach," which consists of stealing precious information by sending in "ten thousand of [China's] citizens abroad, instead of employing the classic intelligence means; exactly like those people that go to the beach and once back home "simply shake out their towels," with the end result of having collected lots of sand without too much effort.[953]

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[951] Jon Lindsay and Tai Ming Cheung, "From Exploitation To Innovation", in Jon Lindsay ed., *China and Cybersecurity. Espionage, Strategy, and Politics in the Digital Domain*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 51.

[952] Wm. C Hannas, James C Mulvenon, and Anna B Puglisi, *Chinese Industrial Espionage* (London: Routledge, 2013), p. 4; P.W. Singer and Allan Friedman, *Cybersecurity And Cyberwar*, p. 70

[953] Wm. C Hannas, James C Mulvenon, and Anna B Puglisi, *Chinese Industrial Espionage*, p. 189

For what concerns the maritime militia tactical asset, the presence of these vessels – lightly armed and easily mobilized – creates two basic conditions, so that the art of asymmetric warfare finds the best application: confusion and surprise.[954] Even the international legal system also seems to favor this condition. The agreement between China and the US, the CUES (Code for Unplanned Encounters at Sea), does not included maritime services – such as militia – but it only regulates the navy, ensuring the militia, therefore, the capacity to intervene, even militarily, performing irregular operations to achieve certain political objectives.[955] Among other things the same militia members, in response to the need to apply a certain degree of strategic flexibility, wear - in an unconventional way - the military uniforms, so as to act as soldiers (if the situation requires it), or as simple fishermen (hence depriving themselves of uniforms), should it prove to be particularly disadvantageous to act under the strategic and tactical profile.[956]

This tactical aspect also intertwines with the juridical aspect that characterizes the law of naval warfare. It "protects coastal fishing vessels from capture or attack unless they are integrated into the enemy's naval force." This, therefore, increases the asymmetry of the maritime militia, whose central objective is to represent "a force multiplier" for the PLAN, "raising operational, legal and political challenges for any opponent." Its use

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[954] Sergio Miracola, "La Milizia Marittima E La Guerra Di Popolo Nel Mar Cinese Del Sud - CINAFORUM".
[955] Andrew Erickson and Conor Kennedy, "Meet the Chinese Maritime Militia Waging a 'People's War at Sea.'".
[956] Christopher Cavas, "China's 'Little Blue Men' Take Navy's Place in Disputes."

allows it to become the "'eyes and ears' of China's burgeoning naval fleet and land-based force structure, and augment PLAN operations and intelligence activities" forming, ultimately, "China's network of intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR)."[957]

Because of the development of the new type of warfare, which is mainly based on the informatized spectrum of operations, the civil-military fusion is brought a step forward with the theorization of the so-called "Integrated Joint Operations" (*yitihua lianhe zuozhan* 一体化联合作战). The idea is to coordinate at a deeper level not only to the civil and the military spheres of action, but also the three military services.[958]

This further strengthens the bureaucratic-operational merger between the military and the civilian sphere. This is expressed mainly in the institutionalization of operational sectors – of military character - for which civilians also receive a corresponding training and equipment, while maintaining, at the institutional level, their civil character.[959] To explain this phenomenon, among Chinese analysts there is often used the following formula: "the military body expresses his demands, the NDMC [National

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[957] James Kraska and Michael Monti, "The Law Of Naval Warfare And China's Maritime Militia," p. 465

[958] Andrew Erickson, "Doctrinal Sea Change, Making Real Waves: Examining The Maritime Dimension Of Strategy," p. 120.

[959] Sergio Miracola, "La Milizia Marittima E La Guerra Di Popolo Nel Mar Cinese Del Sud - CINAFORUM".

Defense Committee Mobilitization] coordinates them and the Government implements them."[960]

Finally, the continuing nationalistic mobilizations, serve the main purpose of keeping a high level of attention, including civilians, and of course, the military, on the possible risks that the nation could face. In this way, two essential aspects for the proper execution of military operations are consolidated. Resolution of internal contradictions in order to enable a concerted national effort towards the safeguard of the country and, above all, at the military level, the continued consolidation of the inner unity of the military sector as a whole.[961]

These very last elements, moreover, clearly explain another important tactical asset behind the employment of the maritime militia. If part of it gets destroyed when confronting enemy's vessels in proper naval combat operations, its annihilation could still be used as "the centerpiece of political and public diplomacy efforts by China to undermine enemy resolve. Even non-kinetic responses, such as electronic jamming of fishing vessel transmissions, will be incorporated into China's propaganda campaign to generate sympathy, particularly among other states in East Asia." Moreover, even during peacetime operations, the maritime militia can perform "State-sponsored agitation and low-level coercion in waters claimed by China or

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[960] Andrew Erickson & Conor Kennedy, Tanmen Militia: China's 'Maritime Rights Protection' Vanguard, *The National Interest*, May 2015.
[961] Sergio Miracola, "La Milizia Marittima E La Guerra Di Popolo Nel Mar Cinese Del Sud – CINAFORUM".

that are associated with China's numerous maritime boundary disputes with its neighbors."[962]

5.3. Conclusions

As this chapter highlighted, Chinese cyber warfare, maritime militia, and civil-military relationship follow a specific pattern that can be intercepted simply by looking at China's history and its historical legacies, instead of drawing general strategic overviews over it. For example, cyber warfare, because of its asymmetric nature, clearly parallels an earlier version fully deployed in Chinese history: People's War Doctrine. Moreover, this aspect reveals something more: "the strategy of asymmetric warfare will inevitably continue to be developed in China."[963]

Information warfare has put a high premium on disruption and on knowledge. These two elements have reinforced Chinese approach to cyber warfare through the lens of People's War. Information warfare "merges the miracles of modern information technology to an ancient strategy of victory without violence."[964] Therefore, this inherent characteristic helps,

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[962] James Kraska and Michael Monti, "The Law Of Naval Warfare And China's Maritime Militia", p. 466

[963] Ji-Jen Hwang, *China's Cyber Warfare: The Strategic Value of Cyberspace and the Legacy of People's War*, p. 78.

[964] Alan Campen, "Coming To Terms With Information War", in Alan D Campen, Douglas H Dearth and R. Thomas Goodden *Cyberwar: Security, Strategy and Conflict in the Information Age*, p. 253.

furthermore, draw important connections between Sun Tzu and cyber warfare passing through Mao.

In fact, even if it is true that China is working hard to implement the new effects of RMA, organizationally speaking, Chinese military cadres did not have to go through substantial modifications, since in China the network-type warfare – which relies on decentralization – was already in place. In fact, the Chinese demonstrated through history to have a sanguine view of the People's Liberation Army's ability to confront even the most sophisticated opponent – so long as the conflict takes within or near the Chinese sphere of interest."[965] This is reflected in the Maoist organizational setting that "command must be centralized for strategic purposes and decentralized for tactical purposes."[966] This, therefore, attests the importance of historical legacies in war since "technical innovations, especially the truly revolutionary ones, have been initially applied enhancing performance in the service of old objectives."[967] In this light, "Mao's view of 'People's War' has more relevance to the information age" than other doctrines employed to explain Chinese way in information warfare[968] Mao's

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[965] John Arquilla and Solomon M. Karmel, "Welcome To The Revolution In Chinese Military Affairs", *Defense Analysis*, 13 (1997), p. 261

[966] John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt, "Chapter One: A New Epoch - And Spectrum - Of Conflict", in John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt, *In Athena's Camp*, pp. 38-39; P.W. Singer and Allan Friedman, *Cybersecurity And Cyberwar*, p. 82.

[967] Jeffrey Cooper, "Another View Of The Revolution In Military Affairs", in *In Athena's Camp*, John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt ed. (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 1997), p. 117

[968] John Arquilla and Solomon M. Karmel, "Welcome To The Revolution In Chinese Military Affairs", p. 261

military thought really constituted a radical shift in the strategic thinking of the twentieth century, inaugurating what has been labeled as the "age of the guerrilla." This seems to have occurred because the "guerrilla component absorbed social, economic and political expertise while the political component absorbed organizational and military knowledge. From this interchange there emerged the form of political warfare called "people's war."[969]

The way Chinese political institutions conceived the civil-military relationship, the way the CCP has mobilized the people in Chinese history, and finally, the way the PLA has implemented asymmetric strategies and tactics both at the cyber and maritime level clearly uncover the real nature of the Chinese military transformation: the persistence of People's War Doctrine. A few countries in the world can, in fact, wage "civil offensive," where civil "encompasses a range of measures including deceit, espionage, propaganda and diplomacy."[970] As Clausewitz stated, the asymmetric movement "should be nebulous and elusive; its resistance should never materialize as a concrete body, otherwise the enemy can direct sufficient forces at its core."[971] This sensitively reflects another and older Chinese

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[969] Michael Elliott-Bateman, "The Conditions for People's War," in Michael Elliott-Bateman ed., *The Fourth Dimension of Warfare: Revolt to Revolution*, Vol. II, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1974), pp. 7, 29; Rupert Smith, *The utility of force* (New York: Knopf, 2007).

[970] Thomas M Kane, *Chinese Grand Strategy And Maritime Power* (London: Frank Cass, 2002), p. 166.

[971] Carl von Clausewitz, Michael Howard, and Peter Paret, *On War* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 481. For a similar view see Lawrence, T.E., "The Evolution Of A Revolt", *Army Quarterly and Defence Journal*, 1920.

assumption: "故形人而我无形"[972] "avoiding taking a specific configuration while inducing the adversary to take one."[973] Therefore all these features finally suggest that People's War has been, is, and will likely remain "the constant guideline of modern Chinese strategy."[974]

Cyber warfare, because of its asymmetric nature, clearly parallels an earlier version fully deployed in Chinese history: People's War Doctrine. Moreover, this aspect reveals something more: "the strategy of asymmetric warfare will inevitably continue to be developed in China."[975]

Information warfare has put a high premium on disruption and on knowledge. These two elements have reinforced Chinese approach to cyber warfare through the lens of People's War. Information warfare "merges the miracles of modern information technology to an ancient strategy of victory without violence."[976] Therefore, this inherent characteristic helps, furthermore, draw important connections between Sun Tzu and cyber warfare passing through Mao.

This explanation clarifies why China, because of its historical legacies, "is the only state officially proclaiming a national strategy of

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[972] Sunzi, Rusong Wu, Hsien-lin Wu, Tien Cheng, Ho Chang, and Wu-sun Lin and others, *Sun Zi*, p. 24
[973] Francois Jullien, *A Treatise On Efficacy* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004), p.162.
[974] Ji-Jen Hwang, *China's Cyber Warfare: The Strategic Value of Cyberspace and the Legacy of People's War*, p. 78.
[975] *Ibid*., p. 78.
[976] Alan Campen, "Coming To Terms With Information War", in Alan D Campen, Douglas H Dearth and R. Thomas Goodden *Cyberwar: Security, Strategy and Conflict in the Information Age*, p. 253.

People's War; a theory which involves the indoctrination of the people in preparation for mobilization."[977] A doctrine undoubtedly well suited to cyber warfare and maritime affairs.

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[977] *Ibid.*, p. 181

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Conclusions

This research on Chinese strategic culture has represented a vast effort to conceptualize the nature of Chinese way of warfare and its way of thinking of strategy. At the same time, the objective of this research has also been to provide a new theoretical model for the analysis and identification of strategic culture, with the hope that it could be replicated for other case studies.

The three levels of analysis of civil-military relationship, strategic design, and tactical dispositions seemed to have worked quite well for the analysis of Chinese strategic culture. When applying this model, I realized how complexity and generality seemed to have coexisted in order to guarantee the good balance between deep analysis of military affairs and general strategic trends.

Moreover, this three-level analysis helped me investigate quite smoothly Chinese strategic culture by looking at the enormous historical data that each case study could offer. Only on this point, I feel like that I could have reduced the number of cases to be analyzed. However, it is also true that if I had done so, I would have reduced the explanatory power of strategic culture, reducing Chinese way of warfare only to a few theoretical

tests, therefore critically undermining the value of the strategic-culture paradigm.

For what concerns the identification of Chinese strategic culture with a specific military doctrine, the conceptualization of the Chinese way of warfare into the overall perspective of the People's War Doctrine proved to hold the test, especially when confronted with the turning points in Chinese history that could have run counter the applicability of this military doctrine.

And this aspect is not only very positive for my research, but also for the overall theoretical idea behind the study of Chinese strategic culture. Testing such a theoretical hypothesis against those four very different case studies demonstrated that the historical continuity theory of China does hold and can help scholars understand the complexities of Chinese civilization.

At the military level, as this represents the principal objective of my research, the major findings concerned three important elements that demonstrated to have a tendency to persist over time. The first one is the combination of the opposites not only at the philosophical level, but also at the political and military level. The civil and the military, in Chinese history, walked hand in hand, mutually supporting and influencing. This aspect is particularly important, since it allows us to properly understand what is going on in the South China Sea with the contested islands and the Chinese project of artificially building them.

Moreover, this combination is quite relevant also for another aspect: the role of the people. Chinese rulers tried historically to develop professional armies, but most of the times they ended up creating systems

that reflected what was already occurring at the social level, that is, the combination of the civilian roles with the martial duties. It is also true that by looking at the material characteristic, China's abundance of men also encouraged the creation of those political and military systems that could facilitate the mixture of these two spheres of actions, in order to increase agricultural productivity while also increasing the level of military service for the Chinese government.

And this specific institutional and cultural setting, as demonstrated throughout my research, found its ultimate application in several, crucial policies: from the Warring States to the twenty-first century, China has moved from the "allowing the army live among the people" policy of the Warring States era, from the *fubing* system of the Tang dynasty, to the Maoist "soldiers should swim among the people" principle, and finally to the normative design of Xi Jinping, which advocated the fusion of the military with the civilian asset as well as the mutual influence between the civil with the military both at the cyber and maritime level.

At the same time, it seems clear that in specific historical periods this type of system necessitated the application of a totalitarian political framework,[978] something that during the Warring States and the Maoist Civil

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[978] For a comprehensive analysis of the totalitarian asset of politics and warfare during the Warring States era see: Yuri Pines, "A "Total War"? Rethinking Military Ideology In The Book Of Lord Shang", *Journal of Chinese Military History* 5, no. 2 (2016): 97-134; Yang Shang and Yuri Pines, *The Book Of Lord Shang* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017).

War had been widely implemented. However, the other two case studies, the Tang dynasty and the era of the fifth generation of leadership, due to their higher economic development did not seem to have developed the need to apply such a system. This, in turn, demonstrates that the interpenetration between the civil and the military suggests that totalitarian measures are not needed in order to make such a system work properly, mainly because the Chinese cultural system seems to tend towards the implementation of this type of theoretical framework.

At the strategic level, the combination of the opposites also manifested itself. Historically, attack and defense, through ample historical evidence, even during radical political transformations, were combined to serve a higher objective: to subdue the enemy with a strong combination of deceptive means and psychological operations which, if properly applied, would have severely weakened the country, making it, at last, an easy prey. In fact, the combination of the defense and the offense in a very fluid way guaranteed Chinese troops not only the possibility to confound the enemy army, but also to quickly change approach according to the strategic circumstances.

At the tactical level, similar elements seemed to have passed the test of time. Chinese generals as well as the emperors advocated the building of armies that could easily move around the country and that made flexibility their central tactical principle. The disposition of the army, amply illustrated in those four case studies, demonstrate that Chinese governors strived to find ways to swiftly attack the enemy, making the army able to

quickly adjust its proper tactical balance according to the campaign dispositions or other changing circumstances. The five formations and the eight directions elaborated during the Tang dynasty perfectly captures this theoretical assumption.

Therefore, this research, by looking at the Chinese strategic culture at specific historical junctures in Chinese history and by testing the dependent variable of People's War Doctrine in those turning points has demonstrated two crucial aspects: first, it has demonstrated that strategic culture, as a paradigm, can profoundly contribute to the analysis of another state's strategic design in general, and to the analysis of the Chinese case, in particular, by proving the strong existence of a continuous strategic tradition that does not seem to stop.

The second aspect refers to the identification of People's War Doctrine as the crucial aspect of Chinese strategic culture. Through those historical cases, in fact, and thanks also to the three-level analysis, it was possible to highlight how specific normative, strategic, and tactical elements seemed to persist over time while responding to the dicta of what has been recognized in history as the People's War Doctrine.