

The Chinese Military's STRATEGIC MIND-SET

Lieutenant Colonel Timothy L. Thomas, U.S. Army, Retired

STRATEGY” IS a Chinese military term with thousands of years of tradition and culture behind it. In antiquity, the Chinese classified strategists according to four concept-categories: power and stratagem, disposition and capability, Yin and Yang, and technique and skill.¹ This strong emphasis on strategic concepts can still be felt. The 1997 *Chinese Military Encyclopedia's* index, for example, offers a comprehensive overview of strategic concepts. The word “strategic” is followed by other terms (pivot, thought, surprise, etc.) 78 times in the index while concepts associated with the words “strategic” or “strategy” were used 21 times. A 2002 addendum to the encyclopedia added another 12 strategy-related items that resonate with idiosyncratic meaning often challenging to Western comprehension. But that does not mean that we cannot know how Chinese strategists think. By looking at several recent texts, especially *The Science of Military Strategy* (2001), we can arrive at some understanding of the Chinese military's strategic mind-set. It differs markedly from the methodology the U.S. uses to develop its strategic thought.

Lieutenant Colonel (Retired) Timothy L. Thomas is a senior analyst at the Foreign Military Studies Office (FMSO) at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Mr. Thomas holds a B.S. from West Point and an M.A. from the University of Southern California. While on active duty, he was a foreign area officer specializing in Soviet/Russian studies. His military assignments included serving as director of Soviet studies at the United States Army Russian Institute (USARI) in Garmisch, Germany; as an inspector of Soviet tactical operations under the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe; and as a brigade intelligence officer and company commander in the 82d Airborne Division. In addition to working at FMSO, Mr. Thomas is an adjunct professor at the U.S. Army's Eurasian Institute; an adjunct lecturer at the U.S. Air Force Special Operations School; and a member of two Russian organizations, the Academy of International Information, and the Academy of Natural Sciences. His most recent book is *Decoding the Virtual Dragon*, from which this article was extracted.

Stratagem, Philosophy, and Science

The Chinese divide their concept of strategy scientifically into basic and applied theory, relying even today on the word's ancient roots. For example, in routing an electronic warfare attack on an adversary's computer network through a third country's network, the Chinese would say they seek to “kill with a borrowed sword.”³ Americans simply do not think in terms of using packets of electrons like so. This instance of cultural expression captures just how much ancient tradition has informed China's modern strategic thinking.

An important and revealing aspect of this mind-set is that the Chinese strive to impel opponents to follow a line of reasoning that they (the Chinese) craft. According to Li Bingyan, one of the most influential and brilliant contemporary Chinese strategists, they work to entice technologically superior opponents into unwittingly adopting a strategy that will lead to their defeat.⁴ Li's examples are noteworthy. First, he asks how an inferior force could fight a technologically superior opponent. Using the example of a weak mouse (i.e., China) trying to keep track of a huge cat (i.e., the U.S.), he asks, “How could a mouse hang a bell around a cat's neck?” His answer: “The mouse cannot do this alone or with others. Therefore, the mouse must entice the cat to put the bell on himself.” Second, he asks, “How can you make a cat eat a hot pepper?” His answer: “You can stuff a pepper down a cat's throat [the most difficult], you can put the pepper in cheese and make the cat swallow

Report Documentation Page

Form Approved
OMB No. 0704-0188

Public reporting burden for the collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to a penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number.

1. REPORT DATE DEC 2007		2. REPORT TYPE		3. DATES COVERED 00-11-2007 to 00-12-2007	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE The Chinese Military's Strategic Mind-Set				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S)				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command ,Foreign Military Studies Office (FMSO),Fort Leavenworth,KS,66027				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT					
15. SUBJECT TERMS					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT unclassified	b. ABSTRACT unclassified	c. THIS PAGE unclassified			

it, or you can grind the pepper up and spread it on his back. The latter method makes the cat lick itself and receive the satisfaction of cleaning up the hot pepper.”⁵ The cat is oblivious to the end goal either in the case of the bell or the hot pepper. This deception reflects idiosyncratic Chinese strategy and, at least so far as how an inferior force might defeat a superior force, it evinces their mind-set.

When assessing the character of their country’s military culture, China’s ancient scholars arrived at a specific military style that is “good at strategy and adept at the use of the indirect method.”⁶ A recent report on China’s military culture notes: “Chinese scholars’ way of thinking was essentially a kind of wisdom and war, this lively confrontation between people with all its variables, this arena with all the traits of a game, which provided them with the best stage for giving free rein to their marvelous imaginations and creativity. While it is true that they attached importance to the substance of war, they attached even greater importance to bringing into play the subjective, dynamic roles of people, using strategy to gain victory, and they especially advocated not following one pattern and using the indirect to gain the upper hand.”⁷ The example of the cat demonstrates vividly the indirect method of bringing imagination and creativity into play.

Sun Tzu and Mao Tse-tung are probably the two most respected and quoted Chinese strategic philosophers and practitioners. Almost every bookstore in America has a copy of Sun Tzu’s *Art of War* on its shelves, and even now, Western businessmen study Chinese strategic philosophy, including the 36 stratagems of war, to enhance sales and negotiation techniques.⁸ Military institutes worldwide study Mao’s writings on guerrilla warfare.

The Science of Military Strategy, a compilation of essays by academicians at the Chinese Academy of Military Science (AMS), examines Chinese military strategy from historical, cultural, and contemporary vantage points and captures the essence of Sun Tzu’s and Mao’s strategic thought.⁹ Peng Guangqian and Yao Youzhi, the book’s editors, are major generals in the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) and are known for their thoughtful strategic analyses. Yao is chief of the Strategic Studies Department at AMS, where Peng is a research fellow. The book appeared just two years after a 1999 recasting of Chinese military rules and regulations (the Chinese

equivalent of doctrine). Consequently, it should offer a look at how new rules and regulations affect strategy. The book’s postscript notes that “the project team tried their best to write a theoretical work which is guided by the Marxist scientific concepts of war and strategy and based on our national and military situation; combines inheritance and development, imitation, and innovation; has the Chinese characteristics and features of the current time; and can play a guiding role in implementing the military strategic guidelines in the new era.”¹⁰ This postscript serves to underscore Chinese reliance on Sun Tzu’s and Mao’s strategic insights.

Comparing Chinese and U.S. Concepts of Strategy

According to the *Chinese Military Encyclopedia*’s definition, strategy is “the analytical judgment of such factors as international conditions, hostilities in bilateral politics, military economics, science and technology, and geography as they apply to the preparation and direction of the overall military/war plan. It is advantageous: to study the occurrences and developments in war forecasting/predictions; to formulate strategic policy, strategic principles, and strategic plans; to make warfare preparations; and to put into place directives on the actual principles and methods of warfare.”¹¹ With its culturally idiosyncratic comprehensiveness, this definition hints at the major differences between Chinese and American views.

The *Chinese People’s Liberation Army Officer’s Handbook* bases its definition more specifically on Mao’s thoughts; that is, strategy is a contest in subjective ability between commanders of opposing armies to gain the initiative and superiority by manipulating material conditions.¹² Material conditions include a country’s level of science and technology, defense budget, location of forces around the world, geographical setting, and such. Subjective ability is the manner in which commanders use creative ideas, initiative, and other factors to manipulate objective conditions to their benefit.¹³

The Science of Military Strategy gives a shorter definition of strategy. In a chapter on strategic thinking, Peng and Yao define strategy as “a general plan to prepare and direct the preparation and implementation of war.”¹⁴ Elsewhere, they defer to two Chinese classics that define strategy: Mao’s



Problems of Strategy in China's Revolutionary War (1936) and *Military Terms of the Chinese People's Liberation Army* (1997).¹⁵ In the first book, Mao defines strategy as “the study of the laws of a war situation as a whole”; in other words, strategy requires a comprehensive consideration of a war's various aspects and stages. *Military Terms* echoes Mao's definition.¹⁶

Peng and Yao conclude that, ultimately, strategy is designed to address the problem of who takes what means in how large a scope to gain what purpose. This last understanding of strategy is similar to a discussion of strategy in “A Survey of the Theory of Strategy” in the U.S. Army War College's *Guide to National Security Policy and Strategy*.¹⁷ The survey notes that the strategist asks such questions as, What is it I want to do? What do I have, or what can I reasonably get that might help me do what I want to do? What is the best way to use what I have to do what I want to do? The college also uses a broader definition of strategy, attributed to Art Lykke: strategy equals ends plus ways plus means.¹⁸ According to Lykke, if these three elements are not in balance, there must be an assumption of greater risk.

Until 2006, official U.S. publications such as Joint Publication (JP) 1-02, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* defined strategy as “the art and science of developing and employing instruments of national power in a synchronized and integrated fashion to achieve theater, national, and/or multinational objectives.”¹⁹ In September 2006, JP 1-02 redefined strategy as “a prudent idea or set of ideas for employing instruments of national power in a synchronized and integrated fashion to achieve theater, national, and/or multinational objectives.”²⁰ Under the umbrella of strategy, JP 1-02 also defines “strategic psychological activities,” “strategic plan,” “strategic mission,” “strategic level of war,” “strategic concepts,” and “strategic advantage” among more than 20 strategic or strategy-related terms. Still, JP 1-02 does not place the same emphasis on strategy as the *Chinese Military Encyclopedia* does.

As noted, the latter lists more than 70 terms with a strategic reference. Clearly, the U.S. definition of strategy lacks the same level of comprehensive detail as the Chinese view.

Factors affecting strategy: Chinese views. The editors of *The Science of Military Strategy* note that when determining strategy, strategists must consider national interests, war strength, and an opposing force's war potential. International political factors also have a role in determining strategy. These could include international political configurations, coalitions, and organizations; the strategic intentions of major states; and the overall balance of power. Moreover, Chinese strategists need to keep in mind the influence and restrictions of domestic politics. Both international and domestic politics determine military strategy, and military strategy's aim is subject to that of politics.²¹

Chinese views likewise take account of geostrategic relationships, natural geographic elements (such as a state's position, size, and natural resources), and human geographic elements. Geo-economic relations and conflicting interests among states, religious sects, and alliances might determine the alignment of the various players.²² Strategic studies should be comprehensive and view war from various aspects and stages (space, time, and so on).²³ In the Chinese perspective, these are objective conditions.

Factors affecting strategy: U.S. views. The Army War College's guidelines for strategy formulation appear in appendix 1 of its *Guide to National Security Policy and Strategy*.²⁴ The guidelines note that strategy formulation is simultaneously a scientific and creative art that follows certain patterns. These patterns require a common understanding of terminology and adherence to certain principles. Planners develop strategy according to time, place, and personalities involved. Core interests (ends) are physical security, the promotion of values, and economic prosperity. Interests are fundamental national concerns and are written as conditions without verbs, action modifiers, or intended actions. Whether an interest is vital, important, or peripheral determines the priority accorded to it. The strategic process identifies interests and determines objectives (ends), concepts (ways), and resources (means) to achieve strategic goals. National security interests dictate strategic objectives. The ways and

means to obtain these objectives are based on the national leadership's strategic vision, which has ranged from isolationism to global engagement, containment, and primacy. Grand-strategic means involve America's national instruments of power at the broadest level.²⁵ Strategists develop strategies employing all of these instruments.

Analysis also identifies opportunities and threats to interests. Regardless, interests should *not* become a function of a threat because this conjunction might skew the allocation of commitments and resources.²⁶

In the U.S. view, strategy formulation at any level employs a strategic thought process based on balancing ends, ways, and means.²⁷ Strategy should always be end-driven to ensure maximum opportunity to achieve objectives. Strategists examine each option according to its feasibility, acceptability, and suitability and subject each option to a risk assessment. Risk assessment is essential for determining consequences, including possible second- and third-order effects if forces do not attain full success.²⁸

The Science of Strategy

The focal point for the broader concept of Chinese strategy in the 2001 version of *The Science of Military Strategy* is the science of strategy (SOS).²⁹

While the U.S. has not defined SOS, it is generally regarded as the military science that studies the principles of war, the principles of the conduct of war, and the principles of the evolution of strategic thought. The SOS reveals the essence of war and strategy, the various objective elements that influence strategy, and the operating functions and inherent principles that govern strategic thinking and strategic guidance during war.³⁰

Peng and Yao note that the SOS is a military science characterized by politics, antagonism, comprehensiveness, stratagem, practice, and prediction.³¹ This characterization is philosophically important because it contains the idiosyncratic essence of many Chinese strategic elements:

- *Politics* is the soul of strategy.
- *Antagonism* most likely refers to contradiction and dialectic, the idea that concepts are always in competition with one another, similar to Hegel's idea in which a concept is converted by its opposite. First there is a thesis, then an antithesis, resulting in a synthesis.

- *Comprehensiveness* entails a comparison of certain factors in international relations or of various Chinese internal factors. The term defines an all-inclusive method for examining a state's power base. It differs from the old Soviet term meaning "correlation of forces" because it requires a more holistic consideration of all issues affecting strategy and power: the economy, culture, the military, and so on. Peng and Yao use "comprehensive" in conjunction with "national power," "sea power," "strategic interest," "strategic targets," "strategic benefits," "cyberized war," "confrontation capacity," "national defense construction," "support efficiency," and "national strategy." Specific institutes in China calculate comprehensive national power year by year based on select criteria. This habit of looking at things holistically is a major feature of Chinese strategic assessments. It is not always done in U.S. assessments.

- *Stratagem* is perhaps the most important SOS characteristic because deception is a practical expression of strategy. As aforementioned, ancient Chinese military strategists were classified according to power and stratagem, disposition and capability, Yin and Yang, and technique and skill.³² The purpose of power and stratagem was "to defend the state by orthodox methods and to use force by unorthodox methods" (not unlike asymmetric war).³³ Stratagem is fundamentally about deception, as in the example of the cat and the bell. According to Peng and Yao, modern Chinese strategists—themselves included—favor power and stratagem. They claim that SOS is "a science of wisdom to sum up the laws of using stratagems," and note that Caesar thought stratagem was more important than arms, while Lenin believed there could be no war without stratagems.³⁴ As a point of contrast, Peng and Yao see Western strategic theories as being more disordered and less systematic than China's.³⁵ China's concentration on the deception in stratagems highlights this difference in thinking.

- *Practice* means that one does not simply base strategy on pure reason: the science of strategy is founded on practice.³⁶ This might be the weakest link in the Chinese theory of strategy. During the past 50 years, the People's Liberation Army has not had much practice other than during local exercises. However, recent Chinese incursions into U.S. computer systems (Titan Rain, reconnaissance efforts at the Naval War College, etc.) indicate that perhaps

there is more peacetime practice, at least in the electronic world, than one might have expected.

- *Prediction* is predicated on a deep analysis of all relevant elements and intentions and a complete understanding of objective conditions, not on simple analogy or inference.³⁷

Basic and Applied Strategic Theory

The SOS, precise and detailed in its characteristic elements, has two components: basic and applied strategic theory (see figure).³⁸

Basic theory of strategy. The Chinese military subdivides basic strategic theory into the following:

- Concept of strategy (the relationship between war and strategy, targets and categories of SOS studies, scientific connotations of strategy, status of SOS in military art, strategic elements, strategic classifications, and stratified structure).
- Related elements of strategy (politics, economy, science and technology, national interests, geography, cultural tradition, military force).

- Development history and evolutionary laws of strategic theory (study of historical paths leading toward the development of strategic theory).

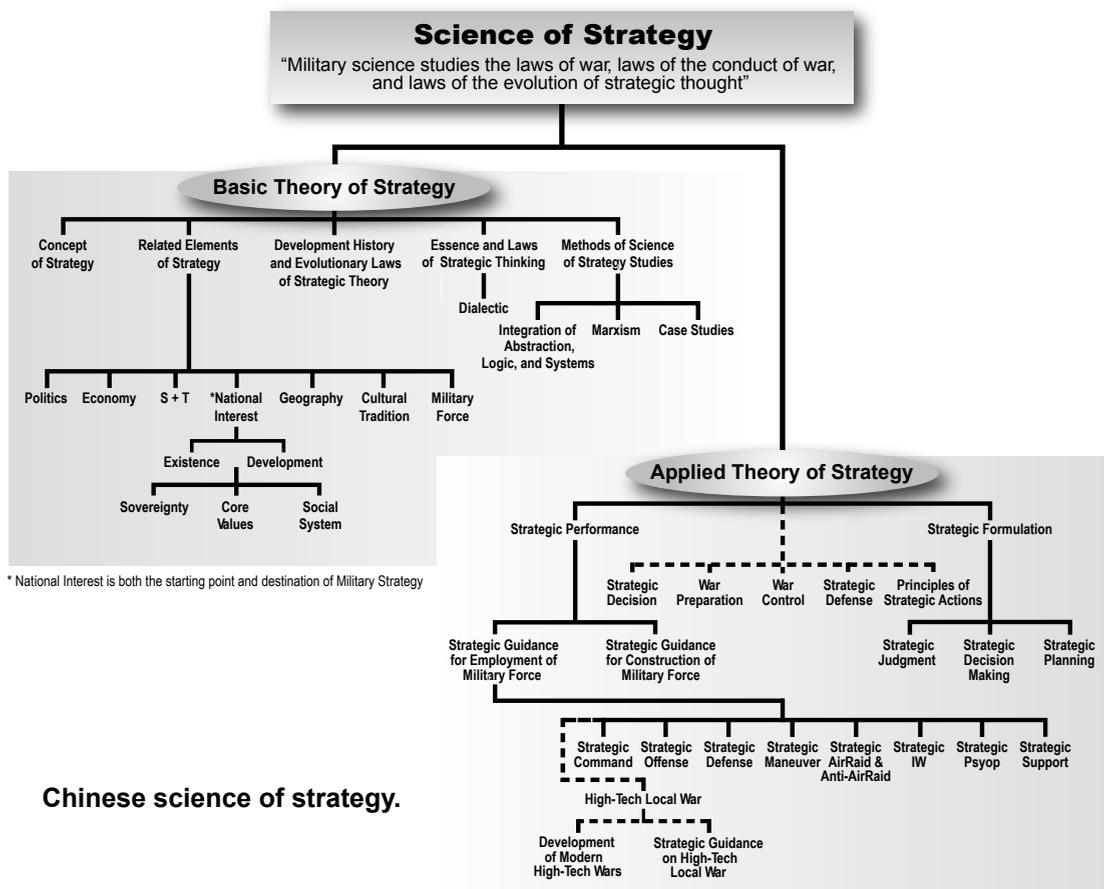
- Essence and laws of strategic thinking (the top level of military art, based on the dialectic).

- Methods of SOS studies (scientific theories of knowledge and methodology in the strategic field that orient, process, and examine strategy and look at the integration of abstraction, logic, systems, Marxism, and case studies).³⁹

Three of these five subdivisions are elaborated below, to illuminate how SOS reflects the Chinese military's strategic mind-set.

– Concept of strategy. Peng and Yao give an overall view of the “concept of strategy” from a Marxist viewpoint that emphasizes the objective-subjective nature of strategy:

The objective physical conditions of war determine the laws of war as well as the guiding laws of war. Although strategy manifests itself in a war conductor's activities of subjective guidance, it [strategy] is by no means the war



Chinese science of strategy.

conductors' personally extemporaneous elaboration. Instead it is based on given objective physical conditions and restricted by a certain social mode of production and certain social conditions of history. Therefore, it is an important task for studies of the science of strategy to correctly analyze the objective elements having a bearing on war strategy and reveal their inherent connections with war strategy.⁴⁰

Many of the primary characteristics of the Chinese "concept of strategy" shine through in this quotation. However, note that subjective creativity ("the war conductors' personally extemporaneous elaboration") might be limited because of a regime's economic conditions (e.g., the social mode of production determines the type of weapons available) and military history and culture (e.g., historical social conditions influence when to use force and when to use diplomacy). From this it appears that the dynamic relation among subjective creativity, the "objective physical conditions of war" (called "laws" in the quotation), and contingent factors affecting strategy appear not fully articulated in Peng and Yao's Marxist summary.

— Related elements of strategy. Peng and Yao's seven related elements—politics, economy, science and technology, geography, cultural tradition, military force, and national interest—are factors that subjective creativity can manipulate. Four of them are factors in determining strategy. The final element, national interest, is, according to the editors, both the start point and destination of military strategy.⁴¹ As such, it is the most important factor that determines strategy. It encompasses a state's objective physical and spiritual requirements. The Chinese divide national interest into national political interest, national economic interest, national military interest, and so on. Generally, national interest equates to territorial integrity, security, political sovereignty, development, stability, and dignity.⁴² Strategic goals involve protecting these vital interests.

The element of strategy that functions as the second most important determining factor is military force, the nation's strength and ability to fight and win a war. Strength and ability to win help determine the nation's material base for strategic planning. They are the fundamental means of achieving military strategic objectives. They also constrain war-making efforts and are the most active factors in efforts to change military strategy.⁴³

Geography is a third related element that factors into determining strategy. As Peng and Yao discuss it, geography includes "geographic position," "size and shape of territory," "natural resources," "the national capital's location," "frontiers and national boundaries," "relative distance between states," and "grand strategic space" (maritime, atmospheric, and outer space).⁴⁴ Taking these sub-elements into consideration with the other determining factors naturally plays into how strategic resources will be manipulated.

A fourth and extremely important element that also functions as a determining factor of strategy is culture. Peng and Yao define culture as "the sum total of a state or a nation's spiritual and material precipitations accumulated under a long period of influence of its natural circumstances, social pattern, and economic level."⁴⁵ One forms strategic thought on the basis of certain historical and national cultural traditions, and the formulations and performance of strategy are always controlled and driven by a certain cultural ideology and historical-cultural complex.⁴⁶ Different cultures bring various understandings of our world to the table. Close attention to a nation's strategic culture can offer insight about that nation's own strategy, enabling Chinese strategists to judge the strategic environment with greater certainty. With regard to culture, Peng and Yao note that—

The cultural history of the Chinese nation lasted more than 5,000 years without interruption, forming a national cultural tradition with its unique characteristics. The benevolence and self-discipline of the Confucius school, the reluctance to use force and [the] indifference to fame and fortune of the Taoist school, the diligence and sincerity of the Mohist school, the tactics and stratagem of military science, the sizing up of situations of political strategists and the education on farming and warfare of legalists all had tremendous influence on Chinese strategic thinking and strategic culture. Chinese philosophy values identity and unification. Chinese history is a history of a unified multinational state for more than 2,000 years. All these [factors] imprint firmly and deeply the idea of unification on the psychology of the nation.⁴⁷

To summarize, cultural tradition plays a large role in determining strategy and shaping China's articulation of its strategic mind-set.

— Essence and laws of strategic thinking. The principles (i.e., “laws”) of strategic thinking are another subdivision of the basic theory of strategy. In accordance with strategic factors, strategic thinking formulates strategic thought, strategic guidelines, and strategic decisions.⁴⁸ The characteristics of strategic thinking include—

- Totality (a comprehensive look at the parts and elements).
- Confrontation (a contest of material and spiritual forces).
- Certainty (starting from the fact that war is full of uncertainty about the enemy situation but ending with certain conclusions about the enemy).
- Foresight (using history, current factors, wisdom, and resolution to visualize future war).
- Creativity (that is, the soul of strategic thinking requires subjective initiative to surpass experience and tradition).
- Inheritance (culture).⁴⁹

Strategic thinking should always possess these characteristics regardless of any model employed to form strategy. Among the five models of strategic thinking that Peng and Yao list are the objective and subjective thinking model and the stratagem and force thinking model.⁵⁰

Objective strategic thinking refers to activities that, in war, reflect the objective principles of war and strategy (called “laws” in their models). Subjective strategic thinking refers to activities that yield strategic judgments and decisions based on subjective will, especially the data and experience in one’s mind.⁵¹

A second model of strategic thinking is the stratagem or force type, divided according to the degree of strength (soft stratagem or hard force) applied by the strategic subject. Winning by stratagem has always “been the main idea of traditional Chinese strategic thinking . . . [It entails] the use of limited force to achieve victory or to realize the aim of the war.”⁵² In contrast, Western thinking pays more attention to contests of strength, emphasizing direct confrontation or force-type models.⁵³

Applied theory: general laws and the conduct of war. The second subdivision of the Science of Strategy is applied theory, the practical system that studies the principles of strategic guidance (i.e., its “laws”), which consist of strategic formulation and strategic performance.

Strategic *formulation* comprises—

- Strategic judgment (the nature of a threat, posture, or intention).
- Strategic decision-making (the strategic aim, mission, guidelines, and deployment).
- Strategic planning (the prearrangements for war).

Strategic *performance* consists of—

- Strategic guidance for the construction of military force.
- Strategic guidance for the employment of military force (including such operations as strategic command, strategic maneuver, strategic offense and strategic defense, strategic air raid and anti-air raid, strategic information warfare, strategic psychological warfare, and strategic support. Developing laws for high-tech local wars is a new field in this subset).⁵⁴

Strategic planning, a subset of strategic formulation, is of particular interest. Peng and Yao note that the task of strategic planning is to restrict war, make war preparations, and win the war, in that order.⁵⁵ A wise strategist’s first step is to soberly estimate the war strength and potential of an opposing force in order to analyze the basis of war.⁵⁶ Intimidation, efficient war power, limited deterrence means, and some form of parity are the best ways to contain and restrict war.⁵⁷

A deterrence strategy, which consists of appropriate military strength, resolve, and the will to use force, is necessary to persuade an opponent to perceive such strength and resolve. The deterrence strategy can be subdivided according to purpose and nature (offense and defense); degree (superiority, parity, limited, and minimum); scope (overall and partial); and structure (conventional, nuclear, and biochemical weapons).⁵⁸ War preparations should be underway even in peacetime in case strategies to contain and restrict war fall short.

Strategy in the Information Age

Stratagems and strategy have undergone evolutionary changes over the past 30 years with the advent of information technology and the miniaturization of weapons and equipment. The 1970s and 1980s witnessed the introduction of microtechnologies, advanced missile technologies, cyberization of weaponry (the use of computer chips in weapons for guidance, precision, and so on), and the spread of military technologies into the civilian arena via

the Internet. United States forces availed themselves of these technologies during the Persian Gulf War with devastating effects. Chinese military planners studied the high-tech experiences of U.S. forces to examine the effects of information technology on military strategy and future warfare. Of key interest was how to integrate strategy and technology, a problem often discussed in articles, books, and official presentations. In addition to the integration issue, Chinese strategists attempted to keep the long-term development of the military in view. When pondering how to fight future wars, Chinese strategists thought holistically, having “the whole world in view” as well as the “strategic chain of the past, present, and future.”⁵⁹ This holistic emphasis reflects China’s continuing attention to its cultural legacy as its modern strategic mind-set evolves.

The continuing impact of culture is apparent in recent literature on the topic. In *On the Chinese Revolution in Military Affairs*, Li Bingyan discusses Information Age strategy, defining it as a special way decision-makers can use information to influence or control the direction of an opponent’s decision-making activities.⁶⁰ He writes that strategy is the sum of decision-makers’ wisdom, intelligence, and intellect put into a plan; as practiced by astute strategists who calculate the future, grasp the situation, make comprehensive plans, and seek gains, it provides the means to gain the upper hand.⁶¹

According to Li, military forces use the fog of war to execute, conceal, and develop strategy. Strategists hope to know the situation on the other side so their use of strategy and concealment can add to the opponent’s fog of war. Thus, strategic planning calls for knowing the enemy, while implementing strategy requires that you use a channel of information to send the things you want the opponent to know.⁶² To thwart enemy plans, friendly forces must analyze their own and the enemy’s interests, to include how important each interest is, and they must resolve any apparent contradictions they uncover. They then arrange factors to see if their own objectives can be realized by influencing or destroying the opponents’ cognition systems or by changing the opponents’ decision-making.⁶³

Li believes military strategy should absorb the new methodologies such as systematology, cybernetics, synergetics, mutationism, information theory, dispersion theory, function theory, intelli-

gence theory, optimality theory, homology theory, and fuzzy theory.⁶⁴ He asserts that if one absorbs and understands these properly, one can update strategy and be able to take advantage of contemporary conditions. Risk and opportunity coexist.⁶⁵ Fighting in the physical, information, and perception realms leaves a wide space for the application of strategy. Strategy should adapt and change, and its capabilities should improve.⁶⁶

Li adds that Western game theory can be characterized as “no matter what game the opponent uses, the game we use must assure the greatest gains and the least losses; that is, the so-called ‘maximum/minimum principle.’” Game theory is a connotative method used to resolve a contradiction within the contradiction. An algorithm method, it can be expressed in precise mathematics. Game theory strives for certainty and reliability. Strategy, on the other hand, attempts to make the opponent commit errors in the realization of his goals. Remember the cat and the mouse. Strategy was the mouse’s method to make the cat do as the mouse wanted.⁶⁷

In Peng and Yao’s opinion, Li is correct: war and strategy have never before changed so dramatically and profoundly. The direction of these developments is difficult to predict, and their nature is difficult to recognize, which implies that only practice can test or improve theory. Further, Peng and Yao note that “dramatic developments in the practice of wars urgently require new theoretical explanations about the emerging situation.”⁶⁸ In their opinion, information age technical developments are being applied to local war scenarios as well as potential large-scale war scenarios, producing new problems and new conclusions that warrant a reevaluation of the principles of war and war’s conduct.

Improving the Theoretical Strategy System

Peng and Yao appear to have taken several favorable steps toward improving the theoretical system of Chinese strategy. Noting that antagonism, politics, comprehensiveness, stratagem, practice, and prediction characterize military science, they highlight the need for each to work in harmony. They focus on the characteristics of strategic thinking (totality, confrontation, certainty, foresight, creativity, and inheritance), and this sharpens the reader’s thoughts on harmony of effort. Peng and

Yao detail a host of applied strategic issues that indicate a comprehensive approach to adapting strategy to high-tech war. With their emphasis on harmony, their new steps illustrate China's continuing reliance on their cultural tradition in developing a modern strategic mind-set.

Peng and Yao also integrate several issues into their narrative that should sound familiar to Westerners: centers of gravity, asymmetric thinking, national interests, and principles of strategic action. Other issues they discuss are more idiosyncratically Chinese and Marxist in nature and less easily understood: objective versus subjective thought; the nature, form, means, application, and time features of strategy;

and the division of strategy into basic and applied aspects. As a result, the reader is left with the feeling that the Chinese concept of strategy is much more comprehensive than that of Western strategists.

In fact, the West has much to learn from China as regards strategy. Judging by its recent battlefield performances, the U.S. military seems to have cornered the market on tactical expertise, and Russian military theorists have always been ahead of the field when it comes to operational art. But it is the Chinese, with their long historical perspective and their comprehensive, nuanced approach, who have the greatest expertise in strategic issues. *The Science of Military Strategy* adds to their legacy. **MR**

NOTES

1. Stratagem generally refers to scheming and military strategy (or tactics—taolue); the war planning (or scheme, plot—mohua) employed by the two opposing combatants to be used at different levels of military strategy, military campaign, and military tactics in order to obtain victory. Military stratagem is a product of the development of war, the concrete manifestation of human subjective actions on material forces, and reflects the general principles of military struggles, possessing a corresponding stable nature and vigorous liveliness. See the *Chinese People's Liberation Army Officer's Handbook* (China: Qingdao Publishing House, June 1991), 197. Hereafter *PLA Handbook*.

2. *Chinese Military Encyclopedia* (Beijing: Junshi Kexue Chubanshe, July 1997), index. Hereafter CME.

3. *PLA Handbook*.

4. Li Bingyan, "Applying Military Strategy in the Age of the New Revolution in Military Affairs," in *The Chinese Revolution in Military Affairs*, ed., Shen Weiguang (China: New China Press, 2004).

5. *Ibid.*, 2-31.

6. Wang Xingsheng, "Chinese Intellectuals Paying Close Attention to Military Issues: Tradition and Its Impact on Military Culture," *China Military Science* 6 (2002): 23-27.

7. *Ibid.*

8. Sun Tzu, *Art of War* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1971).

9. Peng Guangqian and Yao Youzhi, eds., *The Science of Military Strategy*, English version (China: Military Science Publishing House, Academy of Military Science of the Chinese People's Liberation Army, 2005).

10. *Ibid.*

11. CME, vol. 3, 699.

12. *PLA Handbook*.

13. Peng and Yao list the three stages of protracted war as the enemy's strategic offensive and friendly strategic defense, the enemy's strategic consolidation and friendly preparation for the counteroffensive, and friendly counteroffensive and the enemy's strategic retreat (57).

14. *Ibid.*, 130.

15. Mao Tse-tung, "Problems of Strategy in China's Revolutionary War" in *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung* (China: 936), online at <www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-1/mswv1_12.htm>, accessed 27 July 2007; *Military Terms of the Chinese People's Liberation Army* (China, 1997) as cited in Peng and Yao, 9.

16. *Ibid.*, 10.

17. J. Boone Bartholomees, ed., "A Survey of the Theory of Strategy," in U.S. Army War College Guide to National Security Policy and Strategy, 2d ed (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute [SSI], 16 June 2006), 81, <www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/ssi/policy_strategy.pdf>, accessed 27 July 2007.

18. *Ibid.*, 110.

19. U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication (JP) 1-02, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office [GPO], 12 April 2001, as amended through 31 August 2005), <www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/doddict/index.html>, accessed 27 July 2007.

20. *Ibid.*, as amended through September 2006.

21. Peng and Yao, 53-55.

22. *Ibid.*, 62-72.

23. *Ibid.*, 9.

24. U.S. Department of the Army, "Guidelines for Strategy Formulation" in *U.S. Army War College Guide to National Security Policy and Strategy* (Carlisle, PA: SSI, 16 June 2006), appendix 1.

25. Bartholomees, 387-89.

26. *Ibid.*, 390.

27. *Ibid.*, 389, 390.

28. *Ibid.*, 391.

29. Peng and Yao, 2.

30. *Ibid.*

31. *Ibid.*, 27.

32. *Ibid.*, 5.

33. *Ibid.*, 27.

34. *Ibid.*

35. *Ibid.*, 94.

36. *Ibid.*, 26.

37. *Ibid.*, 28.

38. The words that served as the basis for the figure are from Peng and Yao, 29-35.

39. *Ibid.*, 31-135.

40. *Ibid.*, 39.

41. *Ibid.*, 30.

42. *Ibid.*, 39-44.

43. *Ibid.*, 55-62.

44. *Ibid.*, 62-72.

45. *Ibid.*, 31.

46. *Ibid.*

47. *Ibid.*, 128.

48. *Ibid.*, 130.

49. *Ibid.*, 132, 133.

50. The other models are open and closed thinking, conservative versus creative strategic thinking, and unitary versus systematic strategy thinking (Peng and Yao, 136, 137).

51. Peng and Yao., 134, 135.

52. *Ibid.*

53. *Ibid.*, 135.

54. *Ibid.*, 34, 35.

55. *Ibid.*, 13, 14.

56. *Ibid.*, 59.

57. *Ibid.*, 59, 60.

58. *Ibid.*, 15-18.

59. *Ibid.*, 32.

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

61. *Ibid.*

62. *Ibid.*

63. *Ibid.*

64. *Ibid.* Situations that commanders' talk about in military strategy refer to different locations in space and different distributions of forces. Creating a situation that strategy can exploit requires mastery of the following principles: high-position situations restrict low-position situations; external situations (exterior lines) restrict internal situations; network situations restrict satellite-point situations (force must be dispersed, extended, multipoint); one flank situations (focusing the flow of energy, grasping the heart of an operation) restrict multiple flank situations; bearing situations (those that are mutually codependent and interact—an example is ball bearings that play a role together) restrict plate situations (if you injure one, you injure all); and important-point situations restrict line situations and surface situations. (Point refers not to size but to the location in the overall situation. For example, the U.S.'s 16 seaports, as well as its high-technology campaign operations and precision attacks, are point operations.)

65. *Ibid.*

66. *Ibid.*

67. *Ibid.*

68. Peng and Yao, 503.