

September 15, 2005

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Chinese Grand Strategy and the Chinese Way of War

U.S.-China Economic & Security Review Commission

The reach of China's impact on world affairs is growing and poised to grow further in decades to come. Whether the People's Republic continues to grow and prosper, or encounters severe crises, whether it manages to maintain a strong measure of domestic stability and control, or founders amidst the many crises that could pull it apart, the waves that originate in Beijing will reach the neighborhood, the strategic region, the world and U.S. interests in a major way.

Discerning China's Grand Strategy then becomes a must. Beijing has given enough clues and indications of its belief that some time in the middle of the century the PRC will become the premier economic power on Earth, and will require, demand and work toward a commensurate position in world affairs – in global decision-making, in strategic affairs, in military power. Beijing will reach for its “rightful place in the Sun,” which in traditional Chinese terms happens to be the Sun itself.

The strong persistence of an imperial ideology, increasingly divested of its “Communist” gear, the reassertion of hegemonic status in the broad regions around China and the assumption by the PRC of all the trappings of empire, all point to a strong reassertion of a Chinese self-conception as *zhongguo*, the country of the middle – the middle of the world around which all revolve and to which all must pay homage and obeisance.

The possibility of a strategic conflict between the United States and China is real. While it is neither inexorable nor inevitable, its likelihood cannot be ruled out by some legerdemain. The effort at developing and acquiring military capabilities that go way beyond mere self-defense, the ability to resort to belligerent tones, to saber-rattling and naked threats, and a track record of military interventions as a normal instrument of diplomacy, suggest that this potential conflict should be anticipated and its possible shapes explored: to China after all, there is only one peer, only one competitor – the United States.

In order to explore China's Grand Strategy, it seems to me of prime importance not to put ourselves in Beijing's shoes, but to put Beijing in Beijing's shoes. It is minds that hold

* Mr. Murawiec's presentation is based on his study *Vulnerabilities in the Chinese Way of War*, prepared for the Director of Net Assessment, OSD, Department of Defense, March 2004. His book on the “revolution in military affairs,” *La Guerre au XXI^e siècle*, was published in Chinese translation in Beijing in 2003.

guns, and ICBMs, not guns and ICBMs that determine minds: can we understand how the Chinese strategic mind looks at conflict in general, and at this conflict in particular?

The Chinese Way of War

Peoples, cultures, nations, do not treat conflict in identical fashion, they do not understand and practice war in the same way. Just as their statecraft differs, so does their manner of going to war. I would like to explore the Chinese Way of War and its underpinning, the status of conflict in Chinese statecraft. Is this too abstract or too theoretical a manner of looking at the subject? What we may learn from this will decide. I am afraid that our recent encounter with a way of war profoundly alien to the “European,” writ large, including the American – to wit, terror – suggest that we only shrug such investigations at our own expense.

China enjoys an enviable strategic and military reputation. But from its first modern encounter with the West some 170 years ago, she lost most of her wars. Still, its strategic reputation radiates an aura of invincibility. Her chief military theorist Sun Zi has become an unchallenged icon of strategic acumen, even though “iron and fire,” in Otto von Bismarck’s formula, have decided the outcome of most of history’s wars - with a little help from industry, technology and science in recent times - rather than Sun Zi’s trademark of deception and battle-avoidance.

In most cases, since their original encounters with Western-style armies, in 1830, in 1842, in 1860 and then with the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-95, Chinese armed forces were comprehensively defeated on the battlefield, and China’s wars lost. China lost its wars against the British, the French, the Japanese (1894-95, 1931, 1937-45), Russia (1927, 1969) and Vietnam (1979). The Chinese Army did score a victory against the politically hamstrung Indian Army (1962). It initially manhandled the U.S. Army in Korea, but ended up being rolled back and stalemated, leaving China’s war aims unfulfilled.

The greatest exploits of Chinese armies were scored against Chinese armies: the Taiping Army in the 1850s; the Nian and other internal rebellions in the second half of the 19th century were ultimately put down by the Qing; Chiang Kaishek subdued the Warlords in the course of the 1927 “Northern Expedition,” though he failed to stamp them out and merely forced them to accept his nominal primacy. The People’s Liberation Army (PLA) beat Chiang in turn in 1945-49. The PLA crushed organized rebellions of the Red Guards during the Cultural Revolution and unorganized civilians at Tiananmen Square.

Over a period of 170 years the military balance sheet is less than stellar. The Chinese military machine, even when it had the initiative of time and space and where it created tactical or strategic surprise, failed on the battlefield.

Mao Zedong’s military and strategic doctrines have been granted a status of omnipotent virtue and power, and have gained virtual immunity from criticism, possibly as a result of

the Chinese Communist Party's victory in the Civil War: winners are always right – they won because they had to win, post hoc – at the very least, victors write history or have it written as if victory had been inevitable.

Mao's doctrine of the "People's War" has been adjudicated as the source and driving force in the victory of Third World guerillas against Western armies, prominently so in the case of the two Vietnam wars, thus enhancing its fame as an ever-victorious doctrine – in spite of the utter failure of the Mao-Lin Biao doctrine of the "encirclement of the world-cities by the world-countryside." The People's War is credited with victory in each and every case, even though it turned out in most cases to be a disastrous flop, from Latin America to Black Africa, from India to Southeast Asia, with the principal exception of Vietnam, a nation that forged its fighting spirit in defending and expelling the Chinese across two thousand years.

How can we explain the chasm between reputation and performance? There is indeed an abyss between Chinese military performance on the battlefield and Chinese statecraft. Chinese statecraft is based on political warfare and psychological warfare; it aims at manipulating foes into compliance by means of the creation of an awesome aura of power, for which the military and military action are but an adjunct. As Sun Zi, the father of the Chinese "art of war," famously wrote:

To subdue the enemy without fighting is the acme of skill.

and

Thus the highest form of generalship is to foil the enemy's plans; the next best is to prevent the junction of the enemy's forces; the next in order is to attack the enemy's army in the field; and the worst policy of all is to besiege walled cities.

Now, the idea of "foiling" - destroying, shattering, disrupting and neutralizing the enemy strategy, certainly is a thrilling one. The reality of it, common sense tells us, might be different: how often in real history have the plans or the strategy of the enemy been "foiled" without the engagement of forces? Is war merely, or fundamentally, a mind game?

The explanation of the chasm between real performance and perceived power lies with Sun Zi's other, well-known dictum that "All warfare is based on deception" – or in the Chinese conception underlying it, that of military wizardry. I believe in turn that we can apply this understanding to China's Grand Strategy.

The Sword and the Bow

Battle in the West and battle in China are fundamentally different: from the Greek hoplite, the Macedonian Phalanx, the Roman Legion, shock is the hallmark of the

Western way of war, the sword is the weapon of choice, hand-to-hand combat the norm. Through the long history of warfare in Europe, the sword also is the symbol of nobility, and of war. As a prominent British historian of war wrote not without hyperbole, “the history of the sword is the history of humanity.” This holds for Europe, and Japan. Scripture itself bears the mark of the sword: “sword of God,” “sword of Gideon,” “I came not to send peace but a sword.”

Not so in China: neither in the symbolic realm nor in war was the sword the distinctive, the principal, the noble weapon. That weapon throughout Chinese history is the bow. The bow and its mechanical variant the crossbow was and remained through the 16th century the predominant tactical weapon of field armies. The set Chinese expression of “The Five Weapons” refers to bows, sticks, spears, pikes and halberds – no sword. Read the characters *Zhong guo*, China’s name in Chinese; the glyph for *guo*, country, includes a square – the kingdom – and a halberd. The glyph for *zhong* represents an arrow that hits the center of a square target – Chinese archery targets are square, not round. China’s very name embodies bow, arrow and halberd.

Archery is endowed with magical and even mystical origins and qualities. The putative inventors of the bow in Chinese lore: King Wen of the Zhou dynasty, whose name is eponymous with ‘writing’ and ‘civilization,’ *wen*. The Yellow Emperor, the mythical founder of Chinese civilization, gave it to men. One of the ‘Three August’ emperors, Fu Xi, who endowed men with all the arts of civilization, and the creator of the *Yi Jing*, is also one of the inventors. The archer has supernatural powers – he is a shaman, the priest of archaic Chinese religion. Fabulous bows are a recurring object in Chinese literature and history. “Archery formed a part of a form of magic representing or celebrating not only the domination of men over the physical world, but also harmony with the supernatural world which created the elements governing wind, drought and flood,” a historian wrote.

What is the relevance to war? A Chinese battle (until modern times) is not the shock between two advancing armies, as we all picture battle, from Marathon to Alexander the Great’s battles, from Cannae to Gettysburg, from Kursk to Patton’s Third Army rush into Germany. Eleventh-century Song author Zeng Gongliang describes: “The arrows must be shot with saturation fire then no enemy can stand before you and no troops can keep their ranks in formation facing you.” A Chinese battle pitches two armies standing still on a battlefield. Huge volleys of arrows fly from each side, in their thousands, and rocket down upon the other side. Men fall, wounded or killed. The lines stand firm. When enough men have collapsed, when the lines have been thinned out by death and injury, panic suddenly breaks out – one army runs. At that point, the opponent’s line, or what remains of it, rushes in hot pursuit and slaughters the fleeing enemy soldiers. Battle has been fought at a distance, and not in shock. It has been won by the bow, the weapon par excellence of fight at a distance. The decisive moment, the tipping point, however, was mental.

Allow me to quote from the *Tao Wu*, the Annals of [the kingdom of] Chu: “In Ting Chang, in the state of Chu, there was a miraculous white ape. Not even the best

marksmen of Chu could hit it. King Zhuang himself shot at it but the ape caught the arrow [in full flight] and capered about. Yang Youji was summoned to shoot it. He straightened his bow and grasped an arrow: but before he had started to shoot, the ape clung to the trunk of its tree and howled! When [Yang] fired, the ape took an arrow and down he came.” Yang Youji is a semi-legendary “Robin Hood” archer who lived in the 6th century BC. The ape’s ability to sense that it is going to be hit reflects the ancient Chinese theory that archers could achieve a sort of thought transference over their targets.

With this “thought transference” we enter the inner core of the Chinese art of war, symbolically carried out by means of the magic weapon. Thought transference really is the acumen of skill; that which allows the general *to subdue the enemy without fighting is the acme of skill*, to repeat Sun Zi, and *Thus the highest form of generalship is to foil the enemy’s plans*.

War is a mind game. It is in that sense mind over matter, or in other terms, of strategy over combat. Let me briefly return to Yang Youji. According to another tale, written in the 3rd century BC, “Yang Youji shot at a rhinoceros, but what he hit turned out to be a rock, yet the arrow still penetrated to the flesh, because he had truly taken the rock for a rhinoceros.” The successful archer is he who has succeeded in mustering and harnessing all the physical and mental resources available to the human body, known collectively as *qi*. A historian comments: Now, as in ancient times, it is believed that the effects that can be produced through mastery of *qi* verge on the supernatural.”

Now? Some of you may have seen the remarkable Chinese movie *Hero*, starring the stunning martial arts actor Jet Li, directed by Zhang Yimou, the premier Chinese filmmaker of his generation. The movie is notable from many standpoints: first, it presents an unabashed acclamation of Mao’s model, the emperor who unified China by spilling rivers of blood, Qin Shi Huang Di; next, its art of war is exactly that described here: mind over matter. Third, the way in which the emperor, who embodies Sun Zi’s generalship, wins over his opponents, is by mind-strategy: he has accumulated unto himself the greatest amount of *qi*.

This is the application to strategy of the Daoist principle of *wu wei*, or non-acting, or even better “refraining from activity contrary to nature,” that is, refraining from insisting on going against the grain of things, from trying to make materials perform functions for which they are unsuitable, from exerting force in human affairs when the man of insight could see that it would be doomed to failure, and that subtler methods of persuasion, or simply letting things take their own course, would bring about the desired result.” (Joseph Needham). In the analysis of French sinologist Marcel Granet: “The leader, the magician, always needs to gather power, substance, life, for he must expend his vitality for the benefit of all (...) the leader, as a direct effect of his power to influence..., succeeds in causing that the horses [of the chariot] march straight as soon as he thinks straight, that his subjects’ arrows hit right at the center [of the target] as soon as he thinks right. It suffices that the magician touch his enemy with his saliva, or breathe upon his shadow, for the hapless to die, burnt by ulcers; in [the magician’s] saliva, in his breath, the magician has concentrated the essence of his magical virtues. But the royal mission

requires the concentration of a truly complete power to animate. In all warriors circulates the leader's breath: the latter, by beating the drum, conveys to the entire battle the myth of his own ardor." What the leader is to the others, China is to the world.

In the first century AD *Romance of Wu and Yue*, a historical romance considered to be of real historical value, a character called the "Young Woman of Yue," renowned for her martial skills, is summoned by the King; she travels for her audience. The King asks her for the best method of fighting with the staff. Hear her, and keep in mind Sun Zi's dictum about strategy and about deception:

"The method involves great subtlety and constant change [of movement]; its principles involve great mystery and depth. The method involves both 'front doors' and 'back doors' as well as hard and soft aspects. Opening the 'front door' and closing the 'back door' closes off the soft aspect and brings the hard aspect to the fore. Whenever you have hand-to-hand combat, you need to have nerves of steel on the inside, but be totally calm on the outside. I must look like a demure lady and fight like a startled tiger. My profile changes with the action of my body, and both follow my subconscious. Overshadow your adversary like the sun, but scuttle like a flushed hare. Become a whirl of silhouettes and shadows; shimmer like a mirage. Inhaling, exhaling, moving in, moving back out, keeping yourself out of reach, using your strategy to block your adversary, vertical, horizontal, resisting, following, straight, devious, and all without sound. With a method like this, one man can match a hundred; a hundred men can match ten thousand..."

Here again, what is the relevance of *qi* and Chinese sword and dagger – bow and halberd – movies to China's Grand Strategy? I submit to you that we have there a short description of the fundamental method of Chinese strategy, and that it may imbue us with a deeper understanding of China's Grand Strategy for the next decades.

In the Dialogue Between Emperor [Tang] Taizong and Duke Wei, the remarkable emperor develops an elaborate notion of going to war with *wenfa*, i.e., to attack with non-military methods and strike without arms – largely in the realm of psychological manipulation. Bribery; sexual bait; secret agents who corrupt leaders, sow discord and buy people out; blinding the enemy with parade of feigned weakness – the spectrum of ruses already covered by Sun Zi. Taizong also has a Daoist theory of the interplay between foes: "To me, there is no book on the art of war better than Sun Zi, in which nothing is more important than the principle of *xu* and *shi*" – *xu* is "the empty," "the void," the enemy's weak points, and *shi* is "the full," "the solid," the enemy's strong points. It will come as no surprise that *xu* should be associated with *yin*, and *shi* with *yang*. Further, these categories and modes of action will be associated with another conceptual pair, that of *zheng* (short for *zhengbing*), normal force, the troops used by the commander to engage the front and hold the opponent, and of *qi* (short for *qibing*), or extraordinary force – the force the commander uses to flank or attack the enemy at reversed front. The interplay of "normal" (ordinary) and "extraordinary" forces is developed by Sun Zi. Tang Taizong proceeds: "Teach the generals how to apply *qi* and *zheng* to operations first, and then the disposition of *xu* and *shi*. When they do not know

how to use *qi* as *zheng* or *zheng* as *qi*, you cannot expect them to know that *xu* can be made like *shi*, and *shi* as *xu*. The use of *qi* or *zheng* can basically be decided by oneself, but the situation of *xu* and *shi* is based on the array of the enemy. The alternative use of *qi* and *zheng* in operations is to match the enemy disposition of *xu* and *shi*. If the enemy position is solid, we should use the normal force; if void, extraordinary force. Should a general not know the use of *qi* and *zheng*, even if he knows how to take advantage of the weakness and strength in the enemy position, he is unlikely to apply it properly.”

War as Psychology

“To the Chinese, war is not just a continuation of diplomacy, war is diplomacy,” writes Bruce A. Elleman. War is the way to rectify the order threatened by things and people gone astray: this is the criterion of the just war. As John Fairbank put it, “The emperor is at the center of a series of radial zones of influence... Emanating outward from the center of civilized order, the emperor’s example thus commands obedience not only from his immediate subjects within China but also from non-Chinese rulers roundabout, although this influence may naturally decrease with distance. The result is that any violent armed infractions of the social order that may occur within China or abroad, are of concern to him. In either case they are to be viewed as rebellious, as offenses against the correct order of things.”

“War” is understood as “the political use of violence,” or “the calculated use of force.” But Sun Zi has taught every generation of Chinese leaders for 26 centuries that “all war is deception.” Now, ruse, cunning and deception are not absent from the Western Way of War: from Ulysses’ Trojan Horse to the Double-Cross Deception in World War II, or MacArthur’s surprise attack at Inchon, they abound. The fundamental difference between the Western and the Chinese way of war is that ruse, cunning and deception are adjuncts to the Western way, and central to the Chinese way. The Chinese warrior is not a swordsman, he is an archer. The entire Art of War of Sun Zi bears witness to that. As the regretted military historian Michael Handel wrote: “As any content analysis would be quick to point out, deception is the most frequently discussed theme in the Art of War. Sun Zi’s definition is very broad indeed: it includes both active and passive measures, from elaborate deception plans, simple baits, and diversion to secrecy and concealment. According to Sun Zi, deception must be employed at all times (before and during war) and on all levels, whether diplomatic (to drive a wedge between the enemy and his allies), political (to sow the seeds of suspicion and discord in his army through political subversion) or military.” Not only is deception pervasive, it is “the key to success in war.” It is an overriding factor: “The weight Sun Zi assigns to pre-war deception operations and political subversion of all types also helps to explain his belief in the feasibility of attacking the enemy’s plans at their inception.”

The essential aim of deception is to create an illusion in the mind of the enemy command, to create what this author has called elsewhere a “phantom image” in the mind of the enemy command. The Art of War is an art of manipulating the others with a view to create a phantom image in their minds, and have them pursue the phantom image rather

than reality. The deceiver pursues reality while the deceived pursues the phantom image. A potentially lethal asymmetry is created. The stratagem is the device by which this can be made to occur.

War by stratagem, war by deception, war by mind games: “Stratagems have been considered significant in China since ancient times. Over the course of the centuries, there gradually crystallized a body of idiomatic expressions, colorful metaphoric phrases that describe a whole range of stratagems. These idioms were fashioned in part by popular speech and in part by military theorists, philosophers, historians and literary figures. Among the stratagems-metaphors, some expressions refer to historic events of 2,000 years ago and earlier; others are rooted in popular folk-tales; some phrases merely allude to tactics, others indicate the specific steps to be taken in carrying out a particular stratagem. In terms of style, the catalog of the 36 stratagems is for most part a list of maxims,” writes Swiss sinologist Harro von Senger.

Written in 4- or 3-character form, in the same aphoristic style observed with respect to Lao Zi or Sun Zi, the stratagems are euphonic, rhythmic, “square” like a catch-phrase, a jingle, a motto. “Many of the individual idioms were familiar to most Chinese from childhood on. The great popularity of the stratagems is due largely to Chinese popular literature. The classic novels and novellas known to almost every Chinese include tales involving stratagems,” the most prominent of which is *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, “which might almost be characterized as a stratagem textbook. There is hardly a trick of war the planning and the execution of which is not described in its pages, sometimes in great detail. There is even an old Chinese saying: « He who has read the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* knows how to apply stratagems ».”

War by stratagem, then, is not merely a hallowed tradition, it is an ever-present, inherent turn of mind, and one very much alive: “Today’s Chinese mass media help keep familiarity with the stratagems alive. The aphoristic formulas crop in in reports on domestic political developments (...) and analyses of foreign developments...” von Senger quotes in the foreword of the 19th Taiwanese edition of *Tricks in Combat: The 36 Stratagems* (Taipei, 1985): “The stratagems are like invisible knives which are hidden in the mind of man and flash out only when they are put to use. They are used by the military, but also by politicians, businessmen and academics. He who is versed in the application of stratagems can plunge an orderly world into chaos or bring order to a chaotic world; he can produce thunder and lightning from a clear sky, can transform poverty into riches, insignificance into prestige, the most hopeless situation into a promising one... he who understands how to use stratagems will always hold the initiative in his own hands.” Invisible knives, or invisible arrows, able to turn the world inside out and upside down !

Who is it that can thus wage war? Sun Zi himself is a **Daoist** thinker. Daoism is the source of the “operational code” of China; it is the “default code” of Chinese thought. The *wu wei* principle of least action, or of no action, stems entirely from Sun Zi’s Daoist roots. Sun Zi’s treatise is a Daoist textbook of recipes to win wars. Three motifs shape his celebrated *Art of War*: to be successful, war must be waged according to the *Dao*; the

warrior must be in the image the Daoist saint (or sage), who is himself modeled on the *Dao*; to wage war successfully is to minimize one's expenditure of energy and to maximize the enemy's outlay of energy – the acme of skill is to spend no energy: the *Dao*, the Daoist saint and the Daoist general operate in the mode of non-acting, *wu wei*; consequently, all war is deception, in war, deception is one of the principal means of forcing the opponent to expend his energies in vain while conserving one's own.

China's Grand Strategy

Peoples, nations, and cultures have a strong, built-in tendency to behave like pre-stressed materials: they tend to revert to form, in the event, to deep-seated "default" conceptions. Sun Zi's is one of those, because it is itself based on the fundamental substratum of Chinese thought, Daoism. "The development of modern military technology, the exposure to foreign military theories, and the repeated defeats in wars against the Western powers, have broken the monopoly of the ancient military theories but they are still highly respected and continually influence the thinking of Chinese military leaders," writes Chinese military historian Chen-Ya Tien."

What does the Daoist sage, or his post-Maoist successor, do in the age of ICBMs and cyber-warfare? He will tend to resort to his "pre-stressed" posture: the application to strategy of the Daoist principle of *wu wei*, or non-acting – indirect strategy: never confront a stronger enemy, this commonsensical dictum was elevated by Sun Zi and Mao to the pinnacle of strategy. America is stronger? Never go into battle frontally. Use the hollows and the back doors.

Chinese strategy will not go against America's strengths, but her weaknesses. Her strategy will be one of battle-avoidance. She will follow Sun Zi: she will employ deception at all times (before and during war) and on all levels, whether diplomatic (to drive a wedge between the enemy and his allies), political (to sow the seeds of suspicion and discord in his army through political subversion) or military. I hear with great interest of Chinese forays in military agreements in Greece, in Latin America, in Africa, in the Persian Gulf, in Central Asia, with Russia. I do not believe that these entail or imply Chinese war plans. Far more, they represent, as the game of Chinese chess *xiangqi* (*go* in Japanese), ways of encircling and miring the opponent: let the opponent be bogged down in a thousand rut, let his alliances be disrupted, force his to flail about aimlessly, while conserving our own strength, and only pouncing when sure of victory. One possible exception would be the issue of Taiwan.

Taiwan will not be invaded: it is slated to be cowed into obedience and subservience. There is a case where actual war could erupt, out of miscalculation by the Beijing leadership. In the case of massive discontent and unrest on the Mainland, the leadership has already shown its readiness to drum the beat of Chinese nationalism, a mighty and ferocious tiger. Beijing always try to modulate carefully the use of the beast, and use it mostly for show, to impress and frighten other countries. Time and again, the leaders

must precipitously backtrack and repress it back to regain control, as it time and again threatens to devolve into complete chaos, *luan*, the elemental, destructive power of rising Chinese masses. Either way, an explosion of nationalism could force the leadership into going to war on Taiwan, miscalculate the U.S. posture and provoke a direct showdown.

Is this a forecast of China's Grand Victory? I do not think so. Chinese military history offers at least as many strategic defeats as victories to "Northern Barbarians," Westerners and East Asians. As Handel puts it, the quest for cost-free victory thank to psycho-manipulation is elusive: "Sun Zi seldom alludes to the fact that the enemy can be expected to follow the same advice. In this case, his one-dimensional analysis seems to assume that the enemy is passive and will not pursue similar stratagems." Sun Zi's reliance on spies is equally misplaced: "Indeed, as Sun Zi's detailed discussion of this subject suggests, what can be done to the enemy can of course also be done by the enemy. Sun Zi's confidence in espionage as an effective means of obtaining information is therefore rather exaggerated if not misplaced, and must be viewed as part of his quest for less costly, indirect methods of winning wars." Finally, Sun Zi altogether ignores those unquantifiable and unpredictable quantities: friction, "the chaos of war" or the fog that obscures the battlefield, and unpredictability itself, since Sun Zi confidently asserts that he can forecast who will win and who will not. In other words, Sun Zi rules as long as Clausewitz does not show up on the battlefield. At that point, Clausewitz takes over. After all, the Japanese Army – students of both – did not apply Sun Zi's method to conquer China, but Clausewitz (and, granted, many atrocious way sof war by terror).

China will play to its own strengths, of which its psycho-political manipulation, mind games, and actions at distance are the best honed. She will inevitably overestimate their efficacy, and overextend itself on that count. She will believe in the "silver bullet" and expend considerable energy at finding it and deploying it, elusive though it may be. She will try to avoid the terrain of her weaknesses, technology and actual war-fighting. The United States should not play on China's strengths: it should not allow China to dictate the terrain, the weather, the time and the space. It should be aware of China's bypasses, e.g., foiling our alliances, miring us in countless conflicts, bleeding the United States with a thousand cuts without ever risking a frontal showdown. China's aura is a manipulative myth: this is the way China goes to war. Sun Zi works – until Clausewitz shows up on the battlefield. Then – but only then – does the silver bullet turn to lead.