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The Tao of Deception

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suggesting that “no first use” ought not to be taken quite so literally. Wortzel offers a counterbalance to this view, elucidating both the concept of preemptive counterattack and the current debate within China on the viability and utility of adherence to “no first use.” His conclusion on this crucial issue is that the debate within China on “no first use” is real, that a new generation of officers, diplomats, and scholars leans significantly toward modifying or jettisoning such a declaratory policy. In fact, this conclusion is quite in accord with the one developed and briefed by the Mahan Scholars student research team at the Naval War College in the spring of 2007.

Regarding nuclear command and control, Wortzel finds that the originator of valid firing orders for the Second Artillery is the Central Military Commission (CMC), “the highest and most centralized level of military leadership in the Chinese Communist Party.” While we would agree that *tongshuaibu*, or “supreme command,” probably refers to the CMC in the context of nuclear release authority, this is not completely clear, and explicit phraseology to bolster that conception was uncomfortably dropped from defense white papers of 2004 to 2006. Furthermore, in other writings it appears that conventional-missile firing authority during conflict is certainly delegated downward, to the Second Artillery itself. Such delegation is, of course, to be expected, but in a conflict that involved the movement of nuclear forces and became intense, the concomitant risks of unauthorized or inadvertent nuclear missile launch would grow alarmingly.

In addition to solid scholarship regarding the question of “no first use” and

nuclear command and control, this monograph offers substantial original material on missile-force readiness levels, survivability issues, and targeting. Overall, as expected from an academician of Wortzel’s caliber, this work expands our understanding of the Chinese nuclear posture. As such, it demands the attention of all China specialists and nuclear strategists.

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Sawyer, Ralph D. *The Tao of Deception: Unorthodox Warfare in Historic and Modern China*. New York: Basic Books, 2007. 489pp. \$29.95

Ralph D. Sawyer, noted scholar of Chinese strategic thought, has produced an enlightening study of the beginnings and the evolution of deception in Chinese political and military history. Contrary to some contemporary commentators, China has a long martial tradition. Warrior leaders and military heroes permeate both historic and contemporary Chinese literature, as well as modern movies. Deception has long been an integral part of Chinese warfare. Drawing on the classic works of Chinese military thought, Sawyer demonstrates that deceptive practices and unorthodox approaches are the norm rather than the exception. Deception is a fundamental tenet of Chinese strategic culture, one that permeates strategic thinking not only in the military realm but also in the diplomatic, information, political, and economic spheres. (Readers of Sawyer’s previous work, *The Tao of Spycraft*, reviewed in the Winter 2007 issue of this journal, will recall that

Chinese states were using “all elements of national power” several millennia ago.)

The reader can conclude from this work that Chinese military thought places deception on an equal level with fire and maneuver. In this it differs from Western military thought, which fundamentally considers deception as “unsportsmanlike” and relegates it to the operational and intellectual fringes. Deception and unorthodox approaches afford ways for the inferior to defeat the superior force. The “stronger” force, as judged by conventional military standards, is not necessarily more likely to win in battle. Rather, the force that applies the orthodox and the unorthodox in a way that fits the situation better is more likely to prevail. The book abounds with examples of how a little deception or unconventional application can have a great effect on outcomes.

The relationship between military operations and statecraft is another fundamental thread through this book. Subversion of an enemy state begins well before military conflict, and ideally it makes conflict unneeded. Bribery, assassination (both physical and character), dissension, and distraction are all basic tools of statecraft, as well as of war. Fundamentally, Chinese thought makes no real distinction between the two.

The final chapters address the ongoing renaissance of traditional Chinese military thought in the People’s Liberation Army (PLA). The once-despised classic works are now widely used in PLA institutions.

Several years ago, two PLA officers published a book, *Unrestricted Warfare*, that describes unconventional approaches for defeating a superior force. In light of Sawyer’s new work, Western

scholars should reinterpret *Unrestricted Warfare*. Rather than being an exception to PLA military thought, it may well reflect current, core thinking.

Sawyer argues that “China has a lengthy heritage of conceiving and implementing systemic programs for subverting other states.” It would be interesting for scholars of contemporary Chinese diplomacy to compare the “active measures” stratagems outlined in the book against current U.S.-China events.

This book reads well. A dynastic chronology helps place the events in historical (Chinese, if not world) context. However, maps would have greatly assisted understanding.

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Shirk, Susan. *China, Fragile Superpower: How China’s Internal Politics Could Derail Its Peaceful Rise*. New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2007. 336pp. \$27

According to Susan Shirk, China suffers terribly from the “wag the dog” syndrome. Shirk argues rather persuasively that China is saddled with a host of internal problems, ranging from widespread social unrest to rampant political corruption, that have sharply intensified insecurities among Chinese leaders with respect to their hold on power. Such perceptions of vulnerability have in turn heightened Chinese sensitivities to slights by Japan, Taiwan, and the United States, slights that accordingly threaten to arouse potentially uncontrollable national passions and, in the process, stimulate regime-toppling impulses at home. For Shirk, this volatile