

1970

## The Protracted Game

J.M Roberts

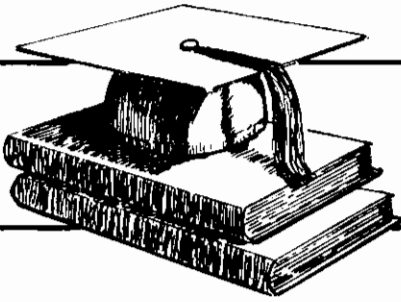
Follow this and additional works at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review>

---

### Recommended Citation

Roberts, J.M (1970) "The Protracted Game," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 23 : No. 8 , Article 9.  
Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol23/iss8/9>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Naval War College Review by an authorized editor of U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [repository.inquiries@usnwc.edu](mailto:repository.inquiries@usnwc.edu).



## PROFESSIONAL READING

Boorman, Scott A. *The Protracted Game*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1969. 242p.

*The Protracted Game* states that it is possible to analyze Maoist revolutionary strategy by using the Chinese game of Wei-ch'i (i.e., the Japanese game of Go) as a strategic decision model. Certainly, there is evidence that Mao has used this very model in communicating with others, but the degree to which he has used it in a metaphorical sense as a means of easy communication to people who knew something about the game rather than in a cognitive sense has not been determined. Still it is clear that this model can be used, even on a metaphorical basis, to yield insights into Maoist revolutionary strategy which could not be developed through the use of the conventional models now available to the Western world.

The author, Scott A. Boorman, is one of the most promising young intellectuals concerned with this entire field of inquiry. He has a strong mathematical background, a good knowledge of the Chinese language and culture, and a developed interest in Wei-ch'i. As a matter of interest, the manuscript for this book was completed when he was 19 years old, but it should be quickly added that it is a mature, scholarly work all the same. Boorman argues that the Maoist revolutionary war is comparable to Wei-ch'i in structural characteristics, in the development of patterns of force, in strategic objectives, in territory-making policies and

techniques, in strategies pertaining to base areas, and in strategies pertaining to forces. He elaborates on these points at some length in the book, using a nonquantitative treatment based on historical analysis. As illustrative of his views, one of his summary statements can be quoted:

In *structural characteristics*, the Maoist version revolutionary war is comparable to Wei-ch'i in respect to time and space.

One: Both are protracted struggles of slow but gradually increasing tempos.

Two: Maoist warfare profits by, and Wei-ch'i provides, an extensive theater of operations.

Three: For both, the extent of the theater combined with the slowness of play permits dispersion of strategic forces in discontinuous arrangements.

The conclusions of the book as a whole are too complex to be summarized easily. They are provocative in the cases where they are not convincing. Anyone—whether specialist or general reader—interested in Maoist revolution strategy, should read this book.

J.M. ROBERTS  
Comparative Cultures Chair