Secrecy & Stratagem: Understanding Chinese Strategic Culture

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Contents

1. Introduction

It appears that the United States is in a military competition with China that, for planning purposes, can be assumed to go on for the foreseeable future.[1] As the 2008 *National Defense Strategy* states, "The Department will respond to China's expanding military power, and to the uncertainties over how it might be used, through shaping and hedging. This approach tailors investment of substantial, though not infinite, resources in ways that favor key enduring U.S. advantages. At the same time, we will continue to improve and refine our capabilities to respond to China if necessary."[2]

To have any hope of success, any strategy for dealing with China over the long term should be based upon an understanding both of the United States' enduring strengths and weaknesses and those of China. These features should flow from sources that are immutable, such as geography, or that change slowly and predictably, such as culture or demography.

During the Cold War, the United States over time developed a good understanding of key features of Soviet strategic culture. These features, which included the imperative of defending the Russian Motherland (*Rodina*) from attack and a centralised style of command and control, served as the basis for strategy development and force modernisation. For example, recognition of the importance that the Soviet government placed on defending the Motherland, manifested in the existence of national air defence forces (*Protivovozdushnoi Oborony Strany*, or *PVO Strany*) as a separate service with high levels of investment in air defence, informed U.S. decisions to maintain a manned penetrating bomber force as well as develop new systems such as the B-2 stealth bomber.[3]

The United States currently lacks a similar appreciation of the main tenets of Chinese strategic culture. This paper presents an initial attempt to redress this gap. In particular, it seeks to understand the enduring features of Chinese strategic culture, develop indicators that could be used to validate whether these features are indeed operative and enduring, and explicate potential implications of these features for strategy development. It is based upon three types of evidence: (1) translations of both ancient Chinese texts on strategy, such as Sun Tzu's *The Art of War*, and a sampling of modern official documents, such as the Chinese defence white papers and *The Science of Military Strategy*; (2) analyses of Chinese strategic culture by American, French, and Chinese scholars; and (3) other evidence, such as accounts of Chinese crisis decision-making and patterns of military deployments.

There are two compelling reasons to study Chinese strategic culture. First, it may give us insight into Chinese decision-making. Indeed, it may help us understand

behaviour that on the face of it seems irrational. Moreover, certain features of strategic culture may promote misperception. For example, one would expect a state possessing a highly ethnocentric strategic culture to overestimate its capabilities relative to those of potential adversaries.

A second reason to study Chinese strategic culture is that the Chinese themselves see it as an important determinant of their behaviour and that of others. Indeed, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) has published a book on the subject entitled *Analysis of China's Strategic Culture*, which explores Chinese strategic culture in depth and contrasts it with "Western" strategic culture.[4] In the words of Lieutenant General Li Jijun, the former Vice President of the Chinese Academy of Military Sciences, "Culture is the root and foundation of strategy. Strategic thinking, in the process of its evolutionary history, flows into the mainstream of a country or a nation's strategic culture. Each country or nation's strategic culture cannot but bear the imprint of cultural traditions, which, in a subconscious and complex way, prescribes and defines strategy making."[5] Similarly, the authors of the Chinese handbook *The Science of Military Strategy* argue that, "Strategic thought is always formed on the basis of certain historical and national cultural tradition, and formulation and performance of strategy by strategists are always controlled and driven by certain cultural ideology and historical cultural complex."[6]

Most Chinese military leaders believe that ancient Chinese values and warfighting principles remain relevant today. Ancient Chinese philosophical texts, military treatises such as *The Art of War* and the *Seven Military Classics of Ancient China*, and literary classics such as *Journey to the West* and *The Water Margin* are central to the identity of the PLA. The PLA teaches that its members are heirs to an ancient Chinese legacy and the Chinese Communist Party's revolutionary struggles. PLA military handbooks routinely refer to battles fought 4,000 years ago as object lessons, and PLA leaders seek guidance from 2,500-year-old writings for modern operations.[7] Indeed, even today, Chinese officers freely distribute translations of the Chinese military classics to their hosts.[8] Chinese strategists also view others as possessing their own unique strategic culture. For example, they contrast an expansionist, bellicose "Western" way of war with what they see as their own pacifist tradition.[9]

The Terracotta Army of First Emperor Qin
210BC

Organisation of this paper

Chapter 2 begins by defining the concept of strategic culture and discussing challenges to operationalising it.

Chapter 3 describes the four tenets of China's *national strategic culture*:

- China is culturally superior
- China's natural position is that of the "Middle Kingdom"
- China must be unified internally and free from external meddling, and
- war is costly, destructive, and leads to internal dissension.

Chapter 4 describes the four tenets of China's *military strategic culture*:

- safeguarding Chinese territorial integrity is an important military mission
- the goal of strategy is to exploit the propensity of things, or *shi*, to achieve one's objectives
- war is a scientific process, and
- through secrecy and stratagem, it is possible to achieve a decisive victory against a superior adversary.
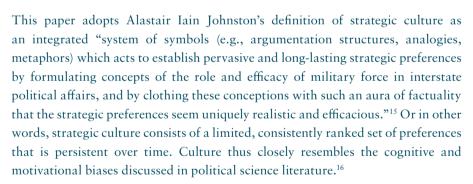
Chapter 5 contains recommendations for further research.

2. Defining Strategic Culture

The literature examining culture and its application to international affairs is rich.[10] The sociologist Clifford Geertz, for example, defined culture as a "system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes towards life."[11] Similarly, Jack Snyder has termed culture "a set of semi-permanent elite beliefs, attitudes, and behavior patterns socialized into a distinctive mode of thought."[12]

Definitions of strategic culture similarly vary somewhat. Andrew Scobell has defined it as "a persistent system of values held in common by the leaders or group of leaders of a state concerning the use of military force."[13] The Defense Threat Reduction Agency's Comparative Strategic Cultures project proposed that strategic cultures consist 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."[14]

Chinese chess pieces

This paper adopts Alastair Iain Johnston's definition of strategic culture as an integrated "system of symbols (e.g., argumentation structures, 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 realistic and efficacious."[15] Or in other words, strategic culture consists of a limited, consistently ranked set of preferences that is persistent over time. Culture thus closely resembles the cognitive and motivational biases discussed in political science literature.[16]

The line between culture and cognitive processes is less distinct than was once thought. Recent research by Richard E. Nisbett and others challenges the long-held belief that cognitive processes are universal. To the contrary, Nisbett and his colleagues have provided some evidence that the considerable social differences that exist between cultures affect not only beliefs about specific aspects of the world but also the nature of cognitive processes. Social organisation directs attention to certain aspects of reality at the expense of others. What people pay attention to, in turn, affects their beliefs about the functioning of the world and causality. For example, whereas Western civilisation is dominated by personal agency, Chinese culture emphasises reciprocal social obligation and collective agency. The Chinese believe that people are part of a collective and that the behaviour of the individual should be guided by group expectations.[17]

Nisbett's research shows that cultural traditions in general influence systems of thought, and that Asians in particular possess systems of thought that are highly influenced by their holistic cultural tradition. In a series of psychological experiments, Nisbett and Takahiko Masuda showed that Asians, more than Americans, explain events in their context.[18] In separate research, Nisbett and Incheol Choi have shown that Asians, because of their holistic reasoning, take inconsistency for granted and are consequently less likely than Americans to experience surprise.[19]

Strategic cultures may share features. For example, just because a belief in the efficacy of deception is a feature of Chinese strategic culture, it does not follow that such a belief is *uniquely* Chinese. Other cultures, such as that of Persia (Iran), also put great weight on stratagem.[20] Similarly, just because culture is influential, it is not necessarily determinative. As Alexander L. George wrote forty years ago, culture "influences, but does not unilaterally determine, decision-making; it is an important, but not the only, variable that shapes decision-making behavior."[21] Or, as the Chinese military authors Peng Guangqian and Yao Youzhi put it, "Culture is not tantamount to behavior, nor is tradition to realities. However, cultural tradition, no doubt, may influence on choice of behavior in realities."[22] *Key to understanding strategic culture, therefore, is understanding just how much of an effect strategic culture has on behaviour.*

Culture must, of course, be applied carefully. Not to do so "risks replacing strategy with stereotypes," as Patrick Porter observed.[23] One of the central challenges that the student of any nation's strategic culture faces is determining which institutions serve as the keeper and transmitter of strategic culture. Is it the state? The military as a whole? Or some subset of the military? Another challenge lies in identifying the content of strategic culture, the most salient beliefs and attitudes that make up culture. Last but not least is the challenge of determining the extent to which strategic culture, rather than power considerations, actually determines attitudes and behaviour.[24]

One particular challenge in dealing with Chinese strategic culture involves disentangling how Chinese leaders portray themselves from how they act. As Andrew Scobell has noted, most Chinese elites believe that China possesses a uniquely pacifistic strategic culture, that China has never been an expansionist state, and that China has never fought an aggressive war in its history.[25] The stereotypical view of China adopted by scholars in China, as well as in the West, is one of a state possessing a weak martial tradition and a cultural predisposition to seek non-violent solutions to problems of state. However, this self-image has not always influenced practice. As Warren I. Cohen has observed, "In the creation of their empire, the Chinese were no less arrogant, no less ruthless, than the Europeans,

Japanese, or Americans in the creation of theirs."[26] Rather, successive generations of Chinese scholars created a narrative that shows that foreign nations have long sought to deny China its sovereignty. At the military strategic level, this narrative argues that the PLA saved China from foreign aggression and domestic tyranny and prevented more powerful adversaries from interfering in Chinese affairs. The military narrative stresses that China has only fought when forced to do so, and has always fought in a defensive and moral fashion. It also highlights the fact that the PLA has won every war even when it faced more advanced adversaries.[27]

A portrait of Chairman Mao looks over Beijing's Forbidden City

Alastair Iain Johnston's careful work on the Ming period (1368–1644) concluded, however, that no pacifist bias appeared in the Chinese strategic tradition. By contrast, China's leaders operated according to the dictates of *Realpolitik* even if they often cloaked their actions in Confucian rationalisations. Johnston concluded that there were, in fact, two Chinese strategic cultures: "one a symbolic or idealized set of assumptions and rank preferences, and one an operational set that had a nontrivial effect on strategic choices in the Ming period."[28] Others have corroborated the view that *China possesses a dualistic strategic culture: one that is conflict averse and defensive minded, and one that favours military solutions and is offensive minded.* As Andrew Scobell wrote, "The mixture of these two outlooks is a worldview that rationalizes the use of force, even when used in an offensive capacity, as a purely defensive measure. This mixture predisposes Chinese leaders to offensive military operations while rationalizing them as being purely defensive."[29]

Both Nathan Leites and Alexander George have categorised strategic culture on two levels, which George dubbed the *philosophical context* and *instrumental beliefs*.[30] The *philosophical context* concerns itself with the following questions:

- What is the essential nature of political life? Is it harmonious or conflictual?
- What are the prospects for the eventual realisation of one's fundamental political values and aspirations? Optimist or pessimist?
- Is the political future predictable? In what sense and to what extent?
- How much control or mastery can one have over history?
- What is the role of chance in human affairs?

Instrumental beliefs include answers to the following questions:

* What is the best approach for selecting goals or objectives?
* How are goals of action pursued most effectively?
* How are risks of political action calculated, controlled, and accepted?
* What is the best timing of action?
* What is the utility and role of different means of advancing interests?[31]

Alastair Iain Johnston has similarly argued that strategic culture can usefully be divided into two parts:

* Assumptions about the role of war in human affairs (e.g., whether it is inevitable or an aberration), about the nature of adversaries and the threats they pose (e.g., whether or not relations are zero-sum), and about the efficacy of the use of force (e.g., about the ability to control outcomes and the conditions under which the application of force is useful).
* Assumptions at a more operational level about what strategic options are most efficacious for dealing with the environment.[32]

I have argued elsewhere that strategic culture can usefully be considered on three levels: nation, military, and military service.[33] At the national level, strategic culture reflects a society's values regarding the use of force. At the military level, strategic culture (or a nation's "way of war") is an expression of how the nation's military wants to fight wars. Although practice does not have to conform to this desire, success in waging wars that run counter to national ways of war requires painful adaptation. Finally, strategic culture at the service level represents the organisational culture of the particular service – those values, missions, and technologies that the institution holds dear.[34]

This paper seeks to define key features of Chinese strategic culture on two levels: national and military. It will be left to further studies to examine the organisational culture of the PLA.

3. National Strategic Culture

Arthur Waldron has usefully summarised a number of the central features of Chinese national strategic culture into a single paragraph: "[A] sense that China should be preeminent, and should sit at the top of the political pyramid, joined paradoxically by a distrust, moral and practical, of the use of force, and the conviction that, by dint of deception, persuasion, and stratagem, great victories can be won at minimal cost. Versions of these traits have been identified by Westerners ever since the Enlightenment."[35]

This paper identifies the four tenets of China's national strategic culture:

A. China is culturally superior
B. China's natural position is that of the "Middle Kingdom"
C. China must be unified internally and free from external meddling, and
D. war is costly, destructive, and leads to internal dissension.

Each tenet is discussed, along with indicators which analysts may use to determine whether the tenet is operative, as well as possible implications.

A. China is culturally superior

China's sense of its cultural superiority derives from its history and the Chinese cultural narrative. As Ross Terrill has noted, visitors to China from across the globe have for centuries observed that "China's sense of superiority was all-round, fundamental, a cosmological given".[36] Historically, the Chinese perceived their state as coinciding with the civilised world; those who lived beyond were categorised as "barbarians."[37] The Chinese world-view dismissed the notion that any other polity could stand equal to the Chinese.

Confucian ideology served as both the expression of Chinese cultural superiority and the vehicle for enlightening the "barbarians" dwelling on China's periphery.[38] It is notable that the Chinese government has in recent years begun once again to use Confucius to promote Chinese values abroad through the establishment of "Confucius Institutes." To date the Chinese government has sponsored more than 300 such institutes worldwide, offering Chinese language instruction and cultural seminars.

Confucius: role model and teacher
for the past, present, and future

Chinese culture thus displays ethnocentrism. As William Graham Sumner first noted more than a century ago, ethnocentrism occurs when "one's own group is the center of everything, and all others are scaled and rated with reference to it. Each group nourishes its own pride and vanity, boasts itself superior, exalts its own divinities, and looks with contempt on outsiders."[39] Groups privilege their own values, thereby distorting their view of the behaviour of other groups. They emphasise the positive aspects of their own behaviour and the negative elements of others'.[40] Hostility magnifies ethnocentrism, increasing cohesion within a group and sharpening stereotypes of outsiders.[41]

Ethnocentrism is, of course, not a uniquely Chinese attribute.[42] *However, it is a key feature of Chinese strategic culture.* The Chinese believe that they possess special gifts when it comes to the art and practice of statecraft.[43] Similarly, the PLA teaches its officers that longstanding Chinese ethical and military traditions are morally and strategically superior to those of the West and that Chinese cleverness is more than a match for material strength. Peng Guangqian and Yao Youzi reflected this ethnocentrism when they wrote in *The Science of Military Strategy*, "The leading position of ancient China in the realm of strategy has been universally acknowledged."[44]

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One way for analysts to determine the extent to which a sense of cultural superiority colours Chinese strategy would be to examine Chinese writings on international relations and strategy. A textual analysis of such literature may, for example, reveal the extent to which Chinese exceptionalism informs, explicitly or implicitly, Chinese views of the world. It might also reveal the extent to which Chinese authors have tended to denigrate or underestimate China's foes.

To the extent that a sense of cultural superiority affects Chinese perceptions, one would expect the Chinese to overestimate their own capabilities relative to potential adversaries'. As a result, the Chinese leadership might believe that China possesses a broader array of options than it in fact does. This could, conceivably, lead China to use force in a situation in which it is at a disadvantage relative to its adversaries. *To avert such a situation, the United States might need to demonstrate its capabilities early and often as a way of undermining China's confidence in its perceived superiority.*

B. China's natural position is that of the "Middle Kingdom"

The second tenet of Chinese national strategic culture relates to China's perceived cultural superiority, as well as its geographic position, and pertains to Chinese views of the natural order of the international system. Throughout much of its history, China saw itself at the core of a hierarchical international system, with tributary states arrayed around its periphery. This historical experience is a marked contrast to that of the classical European state system, in which states, regardless of their power, enjoyed at least formal equality by exchanging ambassadors, establishing embassies, and drawing up treaties.[45] Similarly, whereas the European state system was historically characterised by a series of shifting alliances, China has traditionally not concluded alliances with other states. China has, however, engaged in activities generally reserved for close alliance relationships such as its alleged supply of nuclear materials and nuclear designs to Pakistan in the early 1980s.[46]

A 1602 Chinese map guides Chinese naval exploration

China traditionally maintained hierarchical relations between the centre (China) and its vassals or tributaries on its periphery. To the Chinese, this arrangement represented the natural order of things.[47] In the Chinese view, as long as the tributary states observed the hierarchy, there was little need for war.[48] A hierarchy of power with China at the apex was, in other words, seen as a *precondition for stability and order.*[49] As David Kang has written, "In Chinese eyes – and explicitly accepted by the surrounding nations – the world of the past millennium has consisted of civilization (China) and barbarians (all the other states). In this view, as long as the barbarian states were willing to kowtow to the Chinese emperor, and in so doing demonstrate formal obedience to their lower position in the hierarchy, the Chinese had neither the need to invade these countries nor the desire to do so."[50] Moreover, the Chinese often invented fictions to cover up instances when reality did not adhere to the hierarchical ideal, such as when European powers refused to pay tribute to the Emperor.[51]

The "Middle Kingdom" view of international relationships was reinforced by China's geopolitical position as a land power. Traditionally, the Chinese government did not send out parties of explorers to discover new lands or diplomatic missions to establish relations with other states. An exception was Admiral Zheng He's

15th-century maritime exploration expedition, remarkable for its uniqueness. Rather, it was expected that others would come to the Imperial City to seek favour with the emperor and his court.

Classical Chinese foreign policy was really an extension of a paternalistic domestic policy. In the words of Emperor Gao Zu, "China is to the lesser peoples as the Sun is to the stars." The foreign policy of this emperor and his successors can be distilled into four principles: keeping a firm rein on the territory of inner China; neutralising Mongolia, Tibet, and Turkistan; achieving hegemony over outlying regions, such as Korea and Vietnam; and working out a relationship with the rest of the world.[52]

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It appears that the "Middle Kingdom" approach continues to shape Chinese foreign policy. As Robert J. Samuelson recently noted, China's policies reflect the notion of "China First … China accepts and supports the existing order when that serves its needs … Otherwise, it plays by its own rules and norms."[53]

There are two ways that analysts may determine the extent to which a hierarchical view of international relations continues to influence Chinese statecraft:

- First, a careful textual analysis of contemporary Chinese writings on international affairs and national security may reveal the extent to which a hierarchical approach to international relations continues to hold sway.
- Second, case studies of China's relations with its neighbours may be used to determine whether traditional approaches to statecraft continue to inform Chinese foreign policy.

Chinese commentators frequently talk about their country's "century of humiliation," which stretched from the mid-19th century through the mid-20th century, and see China's current rise as representing a return to China's natural place in the international system.[54] To the extent that a desire to restore China's rightful position motivates Chinese behaviour, one would expect three sets of developments.

First, one would expect the Chinese to engage in behaviour designed to increase foreign perceptions of China as a regional and perhaps global leader. China has undertaken a number of "prestige projects" to demonstrate China's stature as a great power: the construction of the Three Gorges Dam (the largest dam in the world), the 2008 Beijing Olympic games and completion of the Beijing air terminal (the largest air terminal in the world), the development of a jumbo jet to rival the Boeing 747 / Airbus A380, and the pursuit of a manned space program with the goal

A Chinese trawler attempts to snag the *USNS Impeccable* in international waters 75 miles south of Hainan Island

of landing on the moon.[55] Robert Ross has argued that we should also see China's naval expansion in the same light as a concrete expression of China's international ambitions.[56] However, such prestige projects represent a double-edged sword: to the extent they succeed, they may breed overconfidence, even *hubris*; to the extent they fail, they may undermine confidence in the legitimacy of the regime.

Second, one would expect the Chinese to be particularly sensitive to events that they perceive as affronts to their dignity as individuals and as a nation. Interestingly, Chinese military authors emphasise the preservation of national dignity as being a cause of war. In the words of Peng Guangqian and Yao Youzi, "As for a state when national dignity is humiliated, its influence and consequences sometimes may be graver than that of material damage … In history it was not rare that war broke out for protection of national dignity."[57] The Chinese may, in fact, be sensitive to activities or actions that others see as uncontroversial.

Third, one would expect the Chinese to react strongly to activity by powerful states on their periphery whether these states are actually encroaching or not. In recent years, for example, China has taken an increasingly active stance in asserting what it sees as its sovereignty over the airspace and waters adjacent to its territory, most notably in its downing of a U.S. EP-3 aircraft in April 2001 and its reaction to the USNS *Impeccable*'s hydrographic survey operations in international waters off Hainan Island in March 2009.

C.   China must be united internally and free from external meddling

The third tenet of Chinese national strategic culture pertains to threats to what Chinese perceive as the *natural order*. In the Chinese view, a strong, stable China is a prerequisite for regional stability. Strength and stability, in turn, require both internal unity and freedom from external interference.

The course of Chinese history is marked by an ebb and flow between unity and fragmentation, centralisation and decentralisation. Across this span of time, unifying and protecting the Chinese heartland has formed a consistent goal of Chinese statecraft. As Tiejun Zhang notes, "For roughly two millenniums (sic) … the central goal of China's security strategy had been defending the economic, political, social and cultural heartland of China."[58] Throughout much of China's history, nomads from the north and northwest of the Chinese heartland posed a constant and at times serious threat. The Chinese pursued a strategy of indirect control and influence over the states on the Chinese periphery, including Inner and Outer Mongolia, Xinjiang, Tibet, northeast China, and northern Korea.

In the Chinese view, internal unity produces stability, whereas internal divisions lead to instability and regime change. Throughout Chinese history, large-scale peasant rebellions led to dynastic collapse.[59] Chinese history is littered with religiously inspired movements, popularly supported insurrections, and campaigns by dissident generals that changed the leadership of China. The Late Ming uprisings, Taiping Rebellion (1850–1864), and Xinhai Revolution (1911–1912) all caused or threatened political change.[60] As Bruce Elleman has written, "Under the Qing, and later under the Nationalists and Communists, keeping China unified arguably became the army's almost full-time occupation."[61]

The need to maintain internal unity is apparent in the concept of the "Mandate of Heaven," which manifests itself through the acceptance of a ruler by the people. When the populace accepts a government's hold under the Mandate of Heaven, they accede to its rule and civil unrest is minimised. Conversely, once the people believe that the government lacks the Mandate, they will rise up and it will collapse.[62] As a result, in Chinese strategic culture the government is justified in using force as a sign that it retains the Mandate.[63]

In Chinese eyes, internal weakness and external meddling are linked. Both the Warring States period (475–211 BC) and the "century of humiliation" that began in the late Qing Dynasty are frequently cited by Chinese authors as examples of this linkage.[64] These experiences emphasise the dangers of internal conflict and suggest that the international arena is violent and predatory. It has led to high levels of concern with maintaining stability at home *at whatever cost*.[65]

The Chinese Communist Party values stability and unity above all else and views ethnic groups (such as the Uighurs), religious movements (such as Tibetan Buddhism), and social movements (such as the Falun Gong) as threats to its legitimacy. Given its history and its close links to China's authoritarian political structure, the PLA's doctrine also places a high value on ensuring national unity and freedom from external meddling. In the words of the authors of *The Science of Military Strategy*, "Unification occupies [an] important position in the strategic thinking of Chinese nation (sic)."[66]

China during the warring states period

China's ethnic geography as a multicultural empire means that Chinese link political unrest on the frontiers to defence against external threats. Although Han Chinese make up 92% of the People's Republic of China's population, 60% of its territory is largely occupied by China's 56 minorities. Indeed, China's three largest provinces – Xinjiang, Tibet, and Inner Mongolia – are all non-Chinese. Mao Tse-Tung acknowledged the contradictions: "We say China is a country vast in territory, rich in resources, and large in population; as a matter of fact, it is the Han nationality whose population is large and the minority nationalities whose

territory is vast and whose resources are rich."[67] Even the Han are divided among speakers of nearly incomprehensible regional dialects.

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There are several ways that analysts may be able to determine the extent to which a belief in internal unity and freedom from external meddling continues to infuse Chinese strategic culture.

First, if this were the case, one would expect to see a Chinese communist leadership that is sensitive, even hypersensitive, to perceived threats to the regime. From what little we know about Chinese decision-making, this indeed appears to be the case. *The Tiananmen Papers*, for example, portray a Chinese leadership that greatly overestimated the size and importance of the student protests in the run-up to the 1989 Tiananmen Massacre.[68] This is corroborated separately by Zhao Ziyang's secret memoirs, *Prisoner of the State*.[69] Bruce Elleman has argued that the Chinese communist leadership treated Tiananmen much the same way as the Imperial Court treated the nineteenth-century White Lotus (1796–1804) and Eight Trigram (1813) uprisings – as threats to its rule that had to be crushed rapidly before they jeopardised the Mandate of Heaven.[70]

Perhaps more striking was the Chinese leadership's response to a rally in Tiananmen Square in April 1999 by some 10,000 followers of the Falun Gong movement. The movement, which is influenced by Buddhism, gathered in a bid not for political freedom but merely to be recognised as a legitimate entity within Chinese society. The Chinese communist leadership, surprised by the gathering, apparently interpreted it as a threat to Chinese Communist Party rule. Many Falun Gong members were arrested and some died in prison.[71]

Second, one would expect to see China deploy its military forces in ways designed not only to resist outside aggression but also maintain control over a multiethnic empire. Again, this appears to be the case. For example, China maintains more troops in the province of Xinjiang now than it did when it faced the possibility of Soviet aggression in the region.[72] As M. Taylor Fravel has noted, Chinese military doctrine views ethnic unrest as a source of direct conflict with neighbours and a pretext for external intervention. As a result, it belies a fear of unrest spreading to China's core. Fravel has also noted the growing prominence of the concept of "frontier defence" in Chinese military writings in the post-Cold War era.[73]

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To the extent that a belief in internal unity and freedom from external meddling continues to infuse Chinese strategic culture, one would expect Chinese analysts to ascribe interventionist motives to outside powers.

This is demonstrably the case. China scholars argue that Beijing's threat perceptions continue to be shaped by the need to maintain internal stability and resist foreign pressure.[74] For example, David Shambaugh's thorough analysis of the Chinese Communist Party's own examination of the collapse of the Soviet Union notes that Chinese analysts viewed the fall of communism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe as the result of a U.S. plot.[75] Similarly, Shu Guang Zhang has argued that Beijing continues to worry about the vulnerability of China's coast to outside intervention.[76]

D. War is costly, destructive, and leads to internal dissension

The fourth tenet of Chinese strategic culture pertains to the role of war in international affairs. It holds that war is costly, destructive, and leads to internal dissension. Such a view is deeply rooted in Chinese history. China is too big and its population too numerous to be ruled by force alone. As Arthur Waldron put it, "An army of a size that is reliable is not large enough to coerce all of China; and an army large enough to coerce all of China will not be reliable."[77]

The classics of Chinese military strategy consistently emphasise that war should be avoided wherever possible. In all thirteen chapters of Sun Tzu, the word *li*, or force, appears only nine times, and several of those instances are negative or cautionary.[78] Chinese military texts also stress that victory should be achieved at the lowest possible cost, with the highest ideal being to conquer without actually engaging in bloodshed.[79] In addition, the concept of risk has a negative connotation in Chinese culture. As Kurtis Hagen has noted, "In Western culture we celebrate risk; risk taking is the mark of bravery. But in the Chinese tradition to take risk is to be remiss."[80]

Chinese writings on warfare – at least those prior to the Chinese Civil War – also display extreme caution regarding protracted warfare. As Sun Tzu wrote, "There has never been a protracted war from which a country has benefited."[81] However, these same writings display overweening confidence in the ability of a brilliant general or clever stratagems to overcome the inherent chaos of warfare. As Arthur Waldron has noted, science and technology have reinforced the already powerful cultural conviction that China can get more with less because it is superior to its adversaries.[82]

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The best way that an analyst may determine the extent to which a belief that war is costly and destructive and influences Chinese strategic culture would be to examine how Chinese leaders have discussed the use of force, both in public and in private. Moreover, it would be useful to determine whether there has been continuity or a change over time in the way that China's leaders have talked about the use of force.

Historically, Chinese scholars have argued that China's wars were inherently just and defensive. According to one Chinese military scholar, virtually all of the approximately 3,700 to 4,000 wars China has fought in more than 4,000 years of dynastic rule were civil wars or wars to unify the country, while all of the eight military actions China has fought since 1949 were in self-defence.[83] It would be worthwhile to monitor the use of historical justifications for military action in the context of current disputes.

Two implications flow from the belief that war is costly, destructive, and leads to internal dissension. First, China's historical emphasis on the negative ramifications of war could represent a significant barrier to the Chinese leadership's use of force. Second, however, the considerable downside to using force would suggest that China would fight with great determination once the decision to use force has been taken.

4. Military Strategic Culture

This paper identifies the four tenets of China's military strategic culture:

A. safeguarding Chinese territorial integrity is an important military mission
B. the goal of strategy is to exploit the propensity of things, or *shi*, to achieve one's objectives
C. war is a scientific process, and
D. through secrecy and stratagem, it is possible to achieve a decisive victory against a superior adversary.

Each tenet is discussed, along with indicators which analysts may use to determine whether the tenet is operative, as well as possible implications.

A. Safeguarding Chinese territorial integrity is an important military mission

China's emphasis on safeguarding its territorial integrity flows naturally from its geography and history, and from the Chinese cultural narrative. China is a continental power that shares borders with 14 countries, four of which (Russia, India, Pakistan, and North Korea) possess nuclear weapons. Most threatening to China in the past two centuries have been the ground invasions by Russia and Japan, through Mongolia and Manchuria, respectively.

China's emphasis on territorial defence both shapes and reflects the organisational culture of the Chinese military, which historically has been dominated by the army. Ground forces today make up approximately two-thirds of the PLA; the navy, by contrast, accounts for only one-tenth of the PLA's manpower.

In Chinese government eyes, domestic threats are as dangerous as foreign threats, if not more so.[84] Indeed, M. Taylor Fravel has argued that defending the territorial integrity of the PRC is the core mission of the PLA. He notes that almost half of the PLA's infantry and armoured manoeuvre force, together with approximately 225,000 army and paramilitary border guards, are charged with the defence of China's borders. It is also reflected in Chinese military thought. In Chinese doctrine, the mission of "frontier defence" (*bianfang*) involves ensuring the internal political stability of China's frontier regions and protection of borders from external aggression.[85]

A Chinese border military
installation in 1793

Chinese military sources also describe what they term "sudden incidents" that could lead to instability. These include terrorist attacks, riots or rebellions near borders, and illegal refugee flows.[86] Moreover, as noted above, these writings often link internal unrest to foreign intervention or provocation. As one Chinese National Defense University study notes, "When foreign enemies in the future want to undertake military operations in border areas, it is highly likely that while actively engineering ethnic separatists to make trouble in the interior, they will use this opportunity to launch an attack suddenly to occupy some territory in border areas." The same Chinese military sources also believe that foreign powers may exploit internal unrest: "international hostile forces will also seize this opportunity to intervene or get involved, strategically advancing containment and intervention."[87]

As the 2008 Tibet and 2009 Xinjiang uprisings show, China faces the persistent threat of ethnic unrest within its frontier regions. Chinese leaders fear that such unrest could become the focus of conflict with neighbours or attract foreign intervention. As a result, Chinese leaders believe that in a future crisis or conflict, the PLA would not be able to take for granted the security of its rear areas. As one study by the Urumqi Army Academy warned, "ethnic separatist forces within our country's borders are always an internal power of foreign enemy forces to carve off our frontier land."[88]

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There are several ways that an analyst may determine the extent to which a belief in safeguarding Chinese territorial integrity influences Chinese behaviour. The first would be to examine Chinese doctrinal statements on the use of the military, especially for internal use. For example, the first two of the PLA's four "New Historic Missions" focus on internal missions: "(1) providing an important guarantee of strength for the party to consolidate its ruling position, (2) providing a strong security guarantee for safeguarding the period of important strategic opportunity for national development."[89] Similarly, China's defence white papers reflect the perception that China faces threats from internal groups. As the 2008 white paper notes, "Separatist forces working for 'Taiwan independence,' 'East Turkistan independence' and 'Tibet independence' pose threats to China's unity and security." Moreover, these movements are, in Chinese eyes, linked to outside powers. The 2008 white paper goes on to say that "China is faced with the superiority of the developed countries in economy, science, and technology, as well as military affairs. It also faces strategic maneuvers and containment from

the outside while having to face disruption and sabotage by separatist and hostile forces from the inside."[90]

A second way to determine the extent to which a belief in safeguarding Chinese territorial integrity influences Chinese behaviour would be to look at Chinese military deployments. The PLA is deployed in such a manner as to defend China's key population centres. More than half of China's infantry divisions and more than a third of armoured divisions are in provincial military districts with a land border with a foreign country. Indeed, manoeuvre units are deployed to defend an "inner line" roughly at the edge of China proper. Moreover, that deployment pattern has remained constant for the last 20 years.[91] Similarly, it appears that from its founding the PLA has given priority to protecting China's population centres.[92] During the Korean War, for example, the government sought Soviet assistance in defending Chinese cities and industrial centres against air attack.[93]

A third way to determine the influence of territorial defence on China would be to examine the pattern of Chinese military exercises. It would be worthwhile, for example, to determine the number, size, and duration of exercises devoted to internal missions and power projection. It would similarly be illuminating to determine whether that balance has shifted over time.

A final way would be to examine resource allocation. Specifically, it would be instructive to see whether the balance of resources for the Chinese military, which has historically favoured the army, has stayed relatively constant over time or has shifted in favor of the PLA Navy and PLA Air Force.

An emphasis on territorial defence would have a number of implications. Perhaps most significantly, to the extent that China is concerned about the prospect of internal instability, perceived threats to its internal cohesion may provoke a disproportionate response. One would expect, for example, China to be highly sensitive to perceived actions by the United States, Russia, or other great powers on its land borders. As noted in the previous section, one would also expect Chinese leaders to tie internal developments to external ones.

Finally, China's historical emphasis on territorial defence offers a caveat to Beijing's naval expansion. Given the importance of defending the Chinese heartland against ground threats, and the bureaucratic power of the ground forces, the navy's ability to sustain a protracted expansion will necessarily contend with the army's demand for resources, the vulnerability of China's borders, and the threat of domestic instability.[94]

Officers of the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) oiler *Qinghai Hu* man the rails as the ship prepares to get under way from Guam in March 2003

B.　The goal of strategy is to exploit the propensity of things, or *shi*, to achieve one's objectives

Chinese strategists ancient and modern have set as a goal the ability to promote the propensity of things (*shi*) to achieve one's objectives. In the view of Chinese strategists, the art of war is about using intelligence to determine the propensity of things while keeping the adversary from doing so. *Strategy thus aims not at fighting an adversary but to create a disposition of forces so favourable that fighting is unnecessary.*

Chinese strategic culture emphasises minimising the number of armed engagements. Rather, the ideal is that of winning without fighting. As Sun Tzu famously wrote, "To subdue the enemy without fighting is the acme of skill."[95] This arises not out of any humanitarian impulse but out of the desire to capture resources intact so that the victor may use them for his own purposes.[96] This, in turn, depends on accurate assessment of the situation. If a general assesses the full range of variables correctly, victory will be determined before engaging in battle and may even make battle superfluous. As the French Sinologist Francois Jullien has written, "If a good general's 'action' is taken at the ideal moment, it is not even detectable: the process that leads to victory is determined so far in advance."[97]

Chinese strategic thought holds that with little effort, a belligerent can produce great effects. In the words of Jullien, "According to the ancient treatises, the key to Chinese strategy is to rely on the inherent potential of the situation and to be carried along by it as it evolves. Right from the start, this rules out any idea of predetermining the course of events in accordance with a more or less definitive plan worked out in advance as an ideal to be realized." The role of the general is to make a painstaking study of the situation that allows him to discern a particular potential; the act of exploiting that potential to achieve one's objectives is a secondary task. In Jullien's words, "his whole strategy consists in allowing the situation to evolve in such a way that the effects result progressively of their own accord and cannot be avoided."[98]

Contemporary Chinese doctrinal writings appear to bear the imprint of this philosophical legacy. *The Science of Military Strategy*, for example, embodies a holistic view of strategy. The authors argue, for example, "All the components of war strength and war potential are not separated in isolation but [are] an organic whole of its parts combined together and mutually promoted and influenced. They manifest themselves as a comprehensive war power and become a big stage for conductors of strategy to 'sit within a command tent and devise strategies that will assure victory a thousand li away.' "[99] Moreover, this book lays great emphasis on

the commander's powers of assessment as holding the key to victory.[100] Finally, the document discusses a "theory of victory in advance," according to which the conditions of victory are sown in advance, as well as a "theory of complete victory," by which the victor wins at minimum cost.[101]

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The quotations in the previous section suggest that traditional Chinese thinking regarding *shi* may continue to operate in the Chinese military today. To determine whether that is the case, it would be worthwhile to undertake a more comprehensive assessment of Chinese doctrinal writings to see whether they do, in fact, emphasise the need to follow the propensity of things rather than plan deliberately.

If indeed *shi* strategy governs Chinese strategic culture, then one would expect the Chinese to pay close attention to the configuration of power and to act opportunistically when they perceive a particularly favourable propensity of things. If one could understand how the Chinese conduct assessments, one could conceivably influence their assessments and, indirectly, their behaviour.

C.   War is a scientific process

Both ancient and modern Chinese strategic theorists and practitioners advance the view that war follows "scientific" principles that should be studied and followed. In particular, Chinese strategic culture stresses the importance of analysing the adversary as a precondition for success.

Chinese military classics emphasise a thoroughly analytical approach to campaigns and battles, an approach that stresses pre-war calculation, intelligence gathering, planning, and preparation.[102] As Francois Jullien writes, "From early on, Chinese thinkers believed that they could detect in warfare's unfolding a purely internal necessity that could be logically foreseen and, accordingly, perfectly managed."[103]

Chinese doctrinal publications carry the imprint of the scientific approach. In the words of the authors of *The Science of Military Strategy*, the "Science of strategy is the military science to study laws of war, laws of conduct of war and laws of strategic evolution." It provides a "scientifically theoretical basis for making correctly strategic decision."[104] Chinese doctrine also emphasises *prediction*, which is listed as one of the six main characteristics of military science.[105] Prediction involves the timing, pattern, scope, orientation, progress, and outcome of war. As *The Science of Military Strategy* puts it, "Without strategic prediction the science of strategy will lose its value of guidance in practice." Similarly, "Strategic thinking without certainty is not strategic thinking in the real sense and could not follow

the correct way to direct war." Through study of historical and current factors, analysts will be able to "draw up the blueprint of future wars."[106]

Chinese writers also emphasise the value of quantitative assessment methodologies such as operations research. In the words of the authors of *The Science of Military Strategy*, "One of the important forms of mathematical deduction is the method of military operations research, a scientific method which, [when] applying mathematical theories and computing technology, makes quantitative analysis, description and operation of war factors and grasps the essence and laws of war by linking quality with quantity."[107]

A reproduction of a 1418 Chinese military map

It is worth noting that what little we know about contemporary Chinese decision-making appears to corroborate the importance of assessment. *The Tiananmen Papers*, for example, portray a Chinese leadership that is desperate for massive amounts of information throughout the crisis.[108]

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Perhaps the best way to determine whether a belief in war as a scientific process governs Chinese strategic culture would be to analyse Chinese decision-making in conflict and crisis. First, it would be useful to analyse Chinese writings regarding warfare to determine the extent to which Chinese strategists view war through a scientific prism. Second, it would be useful to determine whether the strategists' views have had any influence in practice. Specifically, it would be worthwhile to determine whether Chinese military science has affected decision-making in crisis and war – and at what level.

To the extent that the Chinese treat war as if it were a scientific endeavour rather than a violent clash between belligerents, they may be unprepared to deal with the innate friction of warfare. Their faith in assessment and calculation may, in other words, be enough to get them into a war but not to win it.

D. Through secrecy and stratagem, it is possible to achieve a decisive victory against a superior adversary

A final feature of Chinese military strategic culture is the enduring belief that through secrecy and stratagem, it is possible to achieve a decisive victory against even a superior adversary. As Sun Tzu put it, "All warfare is based on deception."[109]

The Chinese approach to warfare focuses on the mind of the adversary, with the goal being to have the greatest psychological effect. The ideal operation is one that is timed perfectly to be both quick and decisive, leaving the enemy at a material and psychological disadvantage.[110] Such a strategy depends on an intelligence advantage sufficient to catch the adversary off guard.

The concept of stratagem (*mou*, *ji*, *ce*) has a long history in Chinese strategic thought. Classical Chinese writings on warfare place a heavy emphasis on the role of deception in warfare. Indeed, Sun Tzu's emphasis on and confidence in stratagem is one of the elements that distinguish his writings most clearly from those of Western strategic theorists such as Carl von Clausewitz. Sun Tzu is hardly alone in this belief, however. The corpus of Chinese strategic thought contains entire volumes devoted to deception.[111]

Chinese military history contains many examples of the use of "capturing one's enemy whole" through defection. To choose just a couple of examples from the Chinese Civil War, during the Battle of Huai Hai (1948), fought over control of the road to Nanjing, the communists were able to induce two Nationalist divisions to defect.[112] Similarly, between 1946 and 1948, the Chinese Communist Party was able to recruit 800,000 Nationalist Army prisoners of war into the PLA.[113]

Such a belief is present in contemporary Chinese writings was well. *The Science of Military Strategy* lists "stratagem" as one of the six main characteristics of military science. Indeed, as the authors of that work noted, "In a sense it can be said that science of strategy is a science of wisdom to sum up the laws of using stratagems."[114]

Stratagem also holds an important place in Chinese diplomacy. It was a central element of Deng Xiaoping's famous twenty-four-character strategy to "watch and observe calmly, secure our own position, behave with confidence and patience, hide our capacities and bide our time, be good at keeping a low profile, never play the leader."[115]

Chinese strategists throughout the ages believe that through *strategic cleverness* they can secure a decisive victory at little or no cost.[116] Conversely, as Kurtis Hagan has written, the concept of fair play is absent in Chinese classics; rather, "Any atrocity which expeditiously achieves one's purposes is acceptable."[117]

As Jason E. Bruzdzinski has argued, Chinese interest in trickery is an outgrowth of a strategic culture that has required China to rely on superior asymmetric strategies and tactics to compensate for inferior weapons and equipment. A central concept is that of the *shashoujian*, or "assassin's mace". Chinese authors advanced different definitions for what constitutes an "assassin's mace." One Chinese writer argues, "A *Shashoujian* is a weapon that has an enormous terrifying effect on the enemy and that can produce an enormous destructive assault … Under conditions where military funding was constrained and scientific/technical forces were limited, China could focus on the development of a few *shashoujian* weapons." By contrast, PLA Air Force Senior Colonel Yang Zhibo, Deputy Researcher at the PLA Air Force Command College argues, "Basically, it is whatever the PLA needs to win future local wars under modern high-tech conditions."[118]

Regardless of the exact definition, Chinese operations researchers believe that the use of secret, deceptive, or otherwise unorthodox methods that are unknown to an adversary can significantly aid the employment of *shashoujian* weapons. To be effective, the weapon must remain hidden from the adversary.[119] Thus, Chinese strategic thought faces the dilemma of seeking to use the *shashoujian* as a credible deterrent but also an effective means of prosecuting a conflict.

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We have three ways to determine whether faith in secrecy and stratagem governs Chinese strategic culture. The first would be to systematically examine Chinese doctrinal publications (as opposed to general statements about strategy and operational art) to determine the extent to which they embody these principles. The second would be to examine Chinese military exercises to determine whether secrecy and strategy are routinely practised. The third would be to examine some of China's more important weapon system programs, such as its anti-ship ballistic missile program, to see whether it is possible to detect attempts at denial and deception.

Years ago, Michael Handel noted that Chinese strategic thought carried with it an inherent contradiction. On the one hand, it emphasised the ability to assess and forecast accurately what an adversary is going to do. On the other hand, it emphasised the use of denial and deception by friendly forces. However, the use of denial-and-deception *by an adversary* would render accurate assessment

problematic at best.[120] The danger inherent in this approach is that it will lead to self-delusion.

Nowadays, cognitive research appears to show that the Chinese themselves may be particularly vulnerable to deception. Experiments by Richard Nisbett and Incheol Choi provide some evidence that Asians in general, because of their holistic reasoning, take inconsistency for granted. As a result, they are less likely than Americans to experience surprise.[121] In other words, Asians assimilate behaviour that contradicts expectations into their world-view. One potential implication of this research is that the Chinese might themselves be more easily deceived, because of their propensity to assimilate contradiction.

5. Topics for Further Study

This paper has provided an initial effort to outline the dominant features of Chinese strategic culture. The research effort is but a preliminary one. Three areas for further study appear particularly promising.

First, it would be worthwhile to explore one or more of the features of Chinese strategic culture identified in this paper in greater depth, applying the indicators that the author has outlined.

Second, although this paper confines itself to national strategic and military strategic cultures, the author firmly believes that future work should examine the organisational culture of the PLA. Whereas the U.S. armed forces are divided into four services (Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps), the PLA has a much different structure. The Chinese navy and air force are arms of the PLA. Official Chinese publications describe the Army as the "basis of the PLA", whereas the Navy and Air Force are described as "strategic services" of the PLA.[122] China also has a separate missile force, the 2nd Artillery, which is described as "a strategic force under the direct command and control of the CMC [Central Military Commission], and the core force of China for strategic deterrence."[123] These services undoubtedly have different cultural attributes and preferences.

Finally, it would be worthwhile to incorporate the insights of this research into wargaming and red teaming activities to determine the extent to which they lead the United States and allied strategists to expect very different types of behaviour by China in a crisis or conflict.

PLA officers at a 2009 military parade to celebrate the 60th Anniversary of the People's Republic of China

Notes

1　Malcolm Cook, Raoul Heinrichs, Rory Medcalf and Andrew Shearer, *Power and Choice: Asian Security Futures* (Sydney: Lowy Institute for International Policy, 2010), 28-29, 32-33.

2　*National Defense Strategy* (Washington, D.C.: Department of Defense, 2008), 10.

3　See Thomas G. Mahnken, *Technology and the American Way of War Since 1945* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 164–5.

4　Gong Yuzhen, *Analysis of China's Strategic Culture* (Beijing: Military Science Press, 2002).

5　Quoted in Andrew Scobell, *China and Strategic Culture* (Carlisle, PA: U.S. War College, Strategic Studies Institute (SSI), 2002), 1.

6　Peng Guangqian and Yao Youzhi, eds., *The Science of Military Strategy* (Beijing: Military Science Publishing House, 2005), 31. See also 72–77.

7　See Guangqian and Youzhi, eds., *The Science of Military Strategy*, 87.

8　During an October 2009 visit to Washington, D.C., for example, General Xu Caihou, vice chairman of the People's Liberation Army Central Military Commission, gave out hundreds of copies of *The Wisdom of Sun Tzu* to his hosts, including the author of this paper.

9　Scobell, *China and Strategic Culture*, 17.

10　In recent years, culture has emerged as an important approach to the study of organisations. See, for example, Gareth Morgan, *Images of Organizations* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1986), ch. 5; William G. Ouchi and Alan L. Wilkins, "Organizational Culture," *Annual Review of Sociology* 11 (1985); Andrew M. Pettigrew, "On Studying Organizational Cultures," *Administrative Science Quarterly* 24, no. 4 (December 1979); Edgar H. Schein, "Coming to a New Awareness of Organizational Culture," *Sloan Management Review* 25, no. 2 (Winter 1984); Edgar H. Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 2d. ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1992); Linda Smircich, "Concepts of Culture and Organizational Analysis," *Administrative Science Quarterly* 28, no. 3 (September 1983).

　　Recent years have also witnessed a resurgence of interest in the study of culture in international relations. Important early works include Jack Snyder, *The Soviet Strategic Culture: Implications for Limited Nuclear Operations*, R-2154-AF (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, September 1977); Colin S. Gray, "National Style in Strategy: The American Example," *International Security* 6, no. 2 (Fall 1981); Colin S. Gray, *Nuclear Strategy and National Style* (Lanham, MD: Hamilton Press, 1986); and Carl G. Jacobsen, *Strategic Power: USA/USSR* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1990). Important recent works that employ a cultural approach are Alastair Iain Johnston, *Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Chinese History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995); Alastair Iain Johnston, "Thinking About

Strategic Culture," *International Security* 19, no. 4 (Spring 1995); Elizabeth Kier, "Culture and Military Doctrine: France Between the Wars," *International Security* 19, no. 4 (Spring 1995); Jeffrey W. Legro, Cooperation *Under Fire: Anglo-German Restraint During World War II* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995); Jeffrey W. Legro, "Culture and Preferences in the International Cooperation Two-Step," *American Political Science Review* 90, no. 1 (March 1996); Jeffrey W. Legro, "Military Culture and Inadvertent Escalation in World War II," *International Security* 18, no. 4 (Spring 1994).

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12 Snyder, *The Soviet Strategic Culture*, 8.

13 Andrew Scobell, "Soldiers, Statesmen, Strategic Culture and China's 1950 Intervention in Korea," *Journal of Contemporary* China 8 (1999), 479.

14 Jeffrey S. Lantis, "Strategic Culture: From Clausewitz to Constructivism," in *Strategic Culture and Weapons of Mass Destruction: Culturally Based Insights into Comparative National Security Policymaking*, Jeannie L. Johnson, Kerry M. Kartchner, and Jeffrey A. Larsen, 39 (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

15 Johnston, "*Thinking About Strategic Culture*" 46.

16 See, for example, Alexander George and Richard Smoke, *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974); Robert Jervis, "Hypotheses on Misperception," *World Politics* 20, no. 3 (April 1968); Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976); Robert Axelrod, ed., *Structure of Decision: The Cognitive Maps of Political Elites* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976); and Ole R. Holsti, "The Belief System and National Images: A Case Study," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 6, no. 3 (September 1962).

17 Richard E. Nisbett, Incheol Choi, Kaiping Peng, and Ara Norenzayan, "Culture and Systems of Thought: Holistic Versus Analytic Cognition," *Psychological Review* 108, no. 2 (2001), 291–310.

18 Takahiko Masuda and Richard Nisbett, "Attending Holistically Versus Analytically: Comparing the Context Sensitivity of Japanese and Americans," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 81, no. 5 (2001), 922–934.

19 Incheol Choi and Richard E. Nisbett, "Cultural Psychology of Surprise: Holistic Theories and Recognition of Contradiction," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 79, no. 6 (2000), 890–905.

20 See, for example, Andrew Campbell, "Iran and Deception Modalities: The Reach of Taqiyya, Kitman, Khod'eh and Taarof," *National Observer* 70 (Spring 2006), 25–48.

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22   Guangqian and Youzhi, eds., *The Science of Military Strategy*, 74.

23   Patrick Porter, "Good Anthropology, Bad History: The Cultural Turn in Studying War," *Parameters* (Summer 2007), 46.

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25   Scobell, *China and Strategic Culture*, 4–10.

26   Warren I. Cohen, "China's Rise in Historical Perspective," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 30, no. 4–5 (August–October 2007), 683.

27   *The Culture of the Chinese People's Liberation Army*, ix.

28   Johnston, *Cultural Realism*, x.

29   Huiyun Feng, "The Operational Code of Mao Zedong: Defensive or Offensive Realist?" *Security Studies* 14, no. 4 (October–December 2005), 647; Andrew Scobell, *China's Use of Military Force: Beyond the Great Wall and the Long March* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 15.

30   Nathan Leites, *The Operational Code of the Kremlin* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1951); George, "The 'Operational Code.' "

31   George, "*The 'Operational Code.' "*

32   Johnston, "*Thinking About Strategic Culture*," 46.

33   Thomas G. Mahnken, "U.S. Strategic and Organizational Subcultures" in *Strategic Culture and Weapons of Mass Destruction: Culturally Based Insights into Comparative National Security Policymaking*, Jeannie L. Johnson, Kerry M. Kartchner, and Jeffrey A. Larsen, 69–84 (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

34   As Edgar Schein puts it, organisational culture is "[t]he pattern of basic assumptions that a given group has invented, discovered, or developed in learning to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, and that have worked well enough to be considered valid, and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems." Edgar H. Schein, "Coming to a New Awareness of Organizational Culture," *Sloan Management Review* 25, no. 2 (Winter 1984), 3.

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Under Threat of Intergroup Competition," *Journal of Social Psychology* 13, no. 1 (1991); Sumner, Folkways, 12–13.

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44 Guangqian and Youzhi, eds., *The Science of Military Strategy*, 5.

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58 Tiejun Zhang, "Chinese Strategic Culture," 74.

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62 Elleman, *Modern Chinese Warfare*, 303.

63 Shu Guang Zhang, "China: Traditional and Revolutionary Heritage," 31.

64 Christopher P. Twomey, *Chinese Strategic Culture: Survey and Critique*, 7; Tiejun Zhang, "Chinese Strategic Culture: Traditional and Present Features," 81.

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83   Scobell, *China and Strategic Culture*, 8.

84   Scobell, *China and Strategic Culture*, 4.

85   Fravel, "Securing Borders," 706, 709–710.

86   Fravel, "Securing Borders," 715.

87   Fravel, "Securing Borders," 715–716.

88   Quoted in Fravel, "Securing Borders," 716.

89   The other two are "(3) providing a powerful strategic support for safeguarding national interests, and (4) playing an important role in safeguarding world peace and promoting common development." See *China's National Defense in 2006* (Beijing: Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, 2006) http://www.china.org.cn/english/features/book/194485. htm. See also James Mulvenon, "Chairman Hu and the PLA's 'New Historic Missions,' " China Leadership Monitor, no. 27 (2009): 1–11.

90 *China's National Defense in 2008* (Beijing: Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, 2009), 6.

91 Fravel, "Securing Borders," 725.

92 This may be attributable in part to the PRC's early experience of being subjected to Kuomintang bombing raids. See Xiaoming Zhang, *Red Wings Over the Yalu: China, the Soviet Union, and the Air War in Korea* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2002), 79.

93 Zhang, *Red Wings Over the Yalu*, 85.

94 Ross, "China's Naval Nationalism," 58.

95 Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, 77.

96 Francois Jullien, *The Propensity of Things: Toward a History of Efficacy in China*, trans. Janet Lloyd (New York: Zone Books, 1999), 59–60.

97 Jullien, *The Propensity of Things*, 26.

98 Jullien, *The Propensity of Things*, 20, 39.

99 Guangqian and Youzhi, eds., *The Science of Military Strategy*, 57.

100 Guangqian and Youzhi, eds., *The Science of Military Strategy*, 107.

101 Guangqian and Youzhi, eds., *The Science of Military Strategy*, 90.

102 Sawyer, "Chinese Warfare."

103 Jullien, *The Propensity of Things*, 25.

104 Guangqian and Youzhi, eds., *The Science of Military Strategy*, 2.

105 The other five characteristics are practice, politics, comprehensiveness, antagonism, and stratagem. Guangqian and Youzhi, eds., *The Science of Military Strategy*, 26.

106 Guangqian and Youzhi, eds., *The Science of Military Strategy*, 28, 132, 133.

107 Guangqian and Youzhi, eds., *The Science of Military Strategy*, 140.

108 Liang, *The Tiananmen Papers*.

109 Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, 66.

110 Waldron, "The Art of *Shi*," 39.

111 See, for example, *One Hundred Unorthodox Strategies: Battle and Tactics in Chinese Warfare*, trans. Ralph D. Sawyer (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996); Harro von Senger, *The Book of Stratagems: Tactics for Triumph and Survival*, ed. and trans. Myron B. Gubitz (New York: Viking, 1988).

112 Elleman, *Modern Chinese Warfare*, 230.

113 Li, *A History of the Modern Chinese Army*, 75.

114 Guangqian and Youzhi, eds., *The Science of Military Strategy*, 28.

115 Terrill, *The New Chinese Empire*, 256.

116 Waldron, "The Art of *Shi*," 39.

117 Hagen, "A Chinese Critique on Western Ways of Warfare," 207–218.

118 Jason E. Bruzdzinski, "Demystifying Shashoujian: China's 'Assassin's Mace' Concept," in *Civil-Military Change in China: Elites, Institutes and Ideas after the 16th Party Congress*, Andrew Scobell and Larry Wortzel, eds., 334, 316 (Carlisle, PA: U.S. War College, Strategic Studies Institute (SSI), 2004).

119 Bruzdzinski, "Demystifying Shashoujian," 341.
120 Michael I. Handel, *Masters of War: Classical Strategic Thought*, 3 ed. (London: Frank Cass, 2001), ch. 15.
121 Choi and Nisbett, "Cultural Psychology of Surprise," 890–905.
122 *China's National Defense in 2008*, 27, 31, 35.
123 *China's National Defense in 2008*, 40.

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To cope with a rising China, other powers will need a close understanding of Chinese strategic culture. This paper presents an initial attempt to redress this gap. It seeks to identify the enduring features of Chinese strategic culture, assess their role in Chinese policy, and consider their implications for the future posture and responses of the People's Liberation Army. Drawing on ancient texts, modern official documents and accounts of Beijing's decision-making during crises, *Secrecy & Stratagem* raises important questions about the potentially risky relationship between Chinese strategic culture, misperception and miscalculation in Asia's uncertain security future.

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