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This treatise embodies much of the military philosophy of the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese. It is reprinted in this Command Information pamphlet as background and study material for commanders and advisors.

A source of inspiration to Mao Tze Tung and to General Vo Nguyen Giap, former commander of the Viet Minh and now Minister of Defense of North Vietnam, was a Chinese writer who lived 25 centuries ago.

Sun Tzu's essays on "The Art of War" are the earliest of known writings on the subject and shed a penetrating light on the Oriental philosophy of war.

Sun Tzu believed that moral strength and intellectual faculty are decisive in war. His primary target was the mind of the opposing commander. He considered that war should be preceded by measures designed to make it easy to win, and that an indispensable preliminary to battle was an attack on the mind of the enemy.

In his view, the expert commander strikes only when the situation assures victory. To create such a situation is the ultimate responsibility of generalship.

Before he gives battle the superior general causes the enemy to disperse. When the enemy disperses and attempts to defend everywhere, he is weak everywhere; and at the selected points many will be able to strike his few.

Basic to his thesis is that those deprived of the initiative usually lose.

Sun Tzu's works survive in the form of 13 chapters, each devoted to some aspect of war. In this paper they have been edited to reduce redundancy and to eliminate some material applicable only to the specific weapons of his time. From time to time in this paper, other authors are quoted in extension of Sun Tzu's precepts, the quotations winnowed from voluminous commentaries on "The Art of War" published through the centuries.

Sun Tzu has been the bedrock on which most Oriental writings on war are based. A thorough understanding of Sun Tzu will enable the modern practitioner of warfare in Southeast Asia to comprehend better the "War of Liberation" as conducted by the communists.

The translation used in this paper is that of Samuel B. Griffith from his excellent treatise, "Sun Tzu, The Art of War" (Oxford, Clarendon Press 1963).

Strategy

On general strategic considerations Sun Tzu writes:

"Generally in war the best policy is to take a state intact; to ruin it is inferior to this.

"To capture the enemy's army is better than to destroy it; to take intact a battalion, a company, or a five-man squad is better than to destroy them.

"When your weapons are dulled and ardor damped, your strength exhausted and treasure spent, neighboring rulers will take advantage of your distress to act. And even though you have wise counsellors, none will be able to lay good plans for the future.

"He who intimidates his neighbors does so by inflicting injury upon them."

Chia Lin, a later commentator, expands:

"Plans and projects of harming the enemy are not confined to any one method. Sometimes entice his wise and virtuous men away so that he has no counsellors. Or send treacherous people to his country to wreck his administration.

"Sometimes use cunning deceptions to alienate his ministers from the sovereign. Or send skilled craftsmen to encourage his people to exhaust their wealth. Or present him with licentious musicians and dancers to change his customs. Or give him beautiful women to bewilder him."

Sun Tzu continues:

"To win one hundred victories in one hundred battles is not the acme of skill. To subdue the enemy without fighting is the acme of skill.

"Thus, what is of supreme importance in war is to attack the enemy's strategy.

"Next best is to disrupt his alliances.

"The next best is to attack his army.

"Thus, those skilled in war subdue the enemy's army without battle. They capture his cities without assaulting them and overthrow his state without protracted operations.

"Thus a victorious army wins its victories before seeking battle; an army destined to defeat fights in the hope of winning.

"While we have heard of blundering swiftness in war, we have not yet seen a



clever operation that was prolonged.

"Hence what is essential in war is victory, not prolonged operations. And therefore the general who understands war is the minister of the people's fate and arbiter of the nation's destiny."

Estimates

Dealing with estimates of the situation, Sun Tzu says:

"War is a matter of vital importance to the State; the province of life or death; the road to survival or ruin. It is mandatory that it be thoroughly studied.

"Therefore, appraise it in terms of the five fundamental factors and make comparisons of the seven elements later named, so you may assess its essentials.

"The first of these factors is moral influence; the second, weather; the third, terrain; the fourth, command; the fifth, doctrine.

"By moral influence I mean that which causes the people to be in harmony with their leaders, so that they will accompany

them in life and unto death without fear of mortal peril.

"By weather I mean the interaction of natural forces; the effects of winter's cold and summer's heat and the conduct of military operations in accordance with the seasons.

"By terrain I mean distances, whether the ground is traversed with ease or difficulty, whether it is open or constricted, and the chances of life or death.

"By command I mean the general's qualities of wisdom, sincerity, humanity, courage, and strictness.

"By doctrine I mean organization, control, assignment of appropriate ranks to officers, regulation of supply routes, and the provision of principal items used by the Army.

"There is no general who has not heard of these five matters. Those who master them win; those who do not are defeated.

"The wise general in his deliberations must consider both favorable and unfavorable factors.

"By taking into account the favorable factors, he makes his plan feasible; by taking into account the unfavorable, he may resolve the difficulties."

Intelligence

Sun Tzu was a deep believer in the value of intelligence and the virtues of reconnaissance. Secret agents were extensively used in his days as well as ours. As he explains:

"Now there are five sorts of secret agents to be employed. These are native, inside, double, expendable, and living.

"When these five types of agents are all working simultaneously and none know their method of operation, they are called 'The Divine Skein' and are the treasure of a sovereign.

"Native agents are those of the enemy's country people whom we employ.

"Inside agents are enemy officials whom we employ.

"Double agents are enemy spies whom we employ.

"Expendable agents are those of our own spies who are deliberately given fabricated information."

Tu Yu explains:

"We leak information which is actually false and allow our own agents to learn it. When these agents operating in enemy territory are taken by him they are certain to report this false information. The enemy will believe it and make preparations accordingly. But our actions will of course not accord with this, and the enemy will put the spies to death."

Chang Yu adds:

"In our dynasty, Chief of Staff Ts'ao once pardoned a condemned man whom he then disguised as a monk, and caused to swallow a ball of wax and enter Tangut. When the false monk arrived, he was imprisoned.

"The monk told his captors about the ball of wax and soon discharged it in a stool. When the ball was opened, the Tanguts read a letter transmitted by Chief of Staff Ts'ao to their Director of Strategic Planning. The chieftain of the barbarians was enraged, put his minister to death, and executed the spy monk.

"This is the idea. But expendable agents are not confined to only one use. Sometimes I send agents to the enemy to make a covenant of peace and then I attack."

Sun Tzu once more:

"Living agents are those who return with information.

"Of all those in the army close to the commander, none is more intimate than the secret agent; of all rewards, none more liberal than those given to secret agents; of all the matters, none is more confidential than those relating to secret operations.

"Generally in the case of armies you wish to strike, cities you wish to attack and people you wish to assassinate, you must know the names of the garrison commander, the staff officers, the ushers, gatekeepers, and bodyguards. You must instruct your agents to inquire into these matters in minute detail.

"And therefore only the enlightened sovereign and the worthy general who are able to use the most intelligent people as agents are certain to achieve great things. Secret operations are essential in war; upon

them the army relies to make its every move.

"Therefore, determine the enemy's plans and you will know which strategy will be successful and which will not.

"Agitate him and ascertain the pattern of his movement.

"Determine his dispositions and so ascertain the field of battle.

"Probe him and learn where his strength is abundant and where deficient.

"Conformation of the ground is of the greatest assistance in battle. Therefore, to estimate the enemy situation and to calculate distances and the degree of difficulty of the terrain so as to control victory, are virtues of the superior general. He who fights with full knowledge of these factors is certain to win; he who does not will surely be defeated.

"Those who do not know the conditions of mountains and forests, hazardous defiles, marshes and swamps, cannot conduct the march of any army.

"Those who do not use local guides are unable to obtain the advantages of the ground.

"And therefore I say: Know the enemy, know yourself; your victory will never be endangered. Know the ground, know the weather; your victory will then be total.

"One ignorant of the plans of neighboring states cannot prepare alliances in good time; if ignorant of the conditions of mountains, forests, dangerous defiles, swamps and marshes, he cannot conduct the march of an army; if he fails to make use of native guides, he cannot gain the advantages of the ground. A general ignorant of even one of these matters is unfit to command the armies of a Hegemonic King.

"Now the reason the enlightened prince and the wise general conquer the enemy whenever they move and their achievements surpass those of ordinary men is foreknowledge.

"What is called 'foreknowledge' cannot be elicited from spirits, nor from gods, nor by analogy with past events, nor from calculations. It must be obtained from men who know the enemy situation."

Sun Tzu also gives his attention to a sometimes neglected aspects of war, negotiations, and to the inferences to be drawn therefrom.

"When the enemy's envoys speak in humble terms, but he continues his preparations, he will advance.

"When the envoys speak in apologetic terms, he wishes a respite.

"When without a previous understanding the enemy asks for a truce, he is plotting."

Tactics

On tactics, Sun Tzu considers:

"The art of using troops is this: When ten to the enemy's one, surround him.

"If double his strength, divide him."

(Tu Yu, a later writer, comments: ". . . if a two-to-one superiority is insufficient to manipulate the situation, we use a distracting force to divide his army.")

"If equally matched you may engage him. (Ho Yen-hsi explains: "In these circumstances only the able general can win.")

"If weaker numerically, be capable of withdrawing.

"And if in all respects unequal, be capable of eluding him, for a small force is but booty for one more powerful.

"Now there are five circumstances in which victory may be predicted:

"He who knows when he can fight and when he cannot will be victorious.

"He who understands how to use both large and small forces will be victorious.

"He whose ranks are united in purpose will be victorious.

"He who is prudent and lies in wait for an enemy who is not, will be victorious.

"Therefore I say: Know the enemy and know yourself; in a hundred battles you will never be in peril.

"When you are ignorant of the enemy but know yourself, your chances of winning or losing are equal.

"If one knows where and when a battle will be fought, his troops can march a thousand li (about 340 miles) and meet on the field. But if one knows neither the battleground nor the day of the battle, the left will be unable to aid the right, or the right the left; the van to support the rear, or the



rear, the van. How much more is this so when separated by several tens of li, or, indeed, by even a few!

"He (the successful general) wearies them (the enemy) by keeping them constantly occupied, and makes them rush about by offering them ostensible advantages.

"Generally, he who occupies the field of battle first and awaits his enemy is at ease; he who comes later to the scene and rushes into the fight is weary.

"And therefore those skilled in war bring the enemy to the field of battle and are not brought there by him.

"Appear at places to which he must hasten; move swiftly where he does not expect you.

"That you may march a thousand li without wearying yourself is because you travel where there is no enemy.

"When I wish to give battle, my enemy, even though protected by high walls and deep moats, cannot help but engage me, for I attack a position he must succor.

"If I am unable to determine the enemy's dispositions while at the same time I conceal

my own then I can concentrate and he must divide. And if I concentrate while he divides, I can use my entire strength to attack a fraction of his.

"There, I will be numerically superior. Then, if I am able to use many to strike few at the selected point, those I deal with will be in dire straits.

"Thus, those skilled at making the enemy move do so by creating a situation to which he must conform; they entice him with something he is certain to take, and with lures of ostensible profit they await him in strength.

"If I first occupy constricted ground, I must block the passes and await the enemy. If the enemy first occupies such ground and blocks the defiles, I should not follow him; if he does not block them completely, I may do so.

"Anciently, those described as skilled in war make it impossible for the enemy to unite his van and his rear; for his elements both large and small to mutually cooperate; for the good troops to succor the poor and for superiors and subordinates to support each other.

"Now the troops of those adept in war are used like the 'simultaneously responding' snake of Mount Ch'ang. When struck on the head, its tail attacks; when struck on the tail, its head attacks, when struck in the center, both head and tail attack.

"When the enemy presents an opportunity, speedily take advantage of it. Anticipate him in seizing something he values and move in accordance with a date secretly fixed.

"The doctrine of war is to follow the enemy situation in order to decide on battle.

"Therefore at first be shy as a maiden. When the enemy gives you an opening be swift as a hare and he will be unable to withstand you."

Surprise

Concerning the ever current theme of surprise and the ways of achieving surprise, he writes:

"All warfare is based on deception.

"Therefore, when capable, feign incapacity; when active, inactivity.



"When near make it appear that you are far away; when far away, that you are near.

"Offer the enemy a bait to lure him; feign disorder and strike him.

"When he concentrates, prepare against him; where he is strong, avoid him. Attack where he is unprepared; sally out when he does not. Again, attack the mind of the opponent!

"Move when it is advantageous and create changes in the situation by dispersal and concentration of forces.

"The experts in defense conceal themselves as under the ninefold earth; those skilled in attack move as from above the ninefold heavens. Thus they are capable both of protecting themselves and of gaining a complete victory."

Deception

Again and again Sun Tzu stresses deception and speed.

"The enemy must not know where I intend to give battle. For if he does not know

where I intend to give battle, he must prepare in a great many places. And when he prepares in a great many places, those I have to fight in any one place will be few.

"For if he prepares to the front, his rear will be weak; and if to the rear, his front will be fragile. If he prepares to the left, his right will be vulnerable, and if to the right there will be few on his left. And when he prepares everywhere, he will be weak everywhere.

"Speed is the essence of war. Take advantage of the enemy's unpreparedness; travel by unexpected routes and strike him where he has taken no precautions.

"He (the general) should be capable of keeping his officers and men in ignorance of his plans.

"He changes his methods and alters his plans so that people have no knowledge of what he is doing.

"He alters his campsites and marches by devious routes, and thus makes it impossible for others to anticipate his purpose.

"Now the crux of military operations lies in the pretense of accommodating one's self to the designs of the enemy.

"Thus I say that victory can be created. For even if the enemy is numerous, I can prevent him from engaging.

"Weigh the situation, then move."

Morale

Concerning morale, its indications and ways to enhance it, Sun Tzu writes:

"When at night the enemy's camp is clamorous, he is fearful.

"When his troops are disorderly, the general has no prestige.

"When his flags and banners move about constantly he is in disarray.

"If the officers are short-tempered they are exhausted.

"Too frequent rewards indicate that the general is at the end of his resources; too frequent punishments that he is in acute distress.

"Anger this general and confuse him.

"Pretend inferiority and encourage his arrogance.

"Keep him under a strain and wear him down.

"When he is united, divide him.

"Now an army may be robbed of its spirit and its commander deprived of his courage.

"And therefore those skilled in war avoid the enemy when his spirit is keen and attack him when it is sluggish and his soldiers homesick. This is control of the moral factor.

"If the army is confused and suspicious, neighboring rulers will cause trouble. This is what is meant by the saying: 'A confused army leads to another's victory.'

"Pay heed to nourishing the troops; do not unnecessarily fatigue them. Unite them in spirit; conserve their strength. Make unfathomable plans for the movements of the army.

"The reason troops slay the enemy is because they are enraged.

"Those skilled in war cultivate the Tao and preserve the laws and are therefore able to formulate victorious policies."

Tu Mu explains: "The Tao is the way of humanity and justice; 'laws' are regulations and institutions. Those who excel in war first cultivate their own humanity and justice and maintain their laws and institutions. By these means they make their governments invincible.

"Set the troops to their tasks without imparting your designs; use them to gain advantages without revealing the dangers involved. Throw them into a perilous situation and they survive; put them in death ground and they will live. For when the army is placed in such a situation, it can snatch victory from defeat."

Logistics

On logistics and recruiting Sun Tzu has these observations:

"Where the army is, prices are high; when prices rise, the wealth of the people is exhausted. When wealth is exhausted, the peasantry will be afflicted with urgent exactions."

Chia Lin shows that inflation is an age-old problem: "Where troops are gathered, the price of every commodity goes up because everyone covets the extraordinary profits to be made."



"The wise general sees to it that his troops feed on the enemy, for one bushel of the enemy's provisions is equivalent to 20 of his; one hundredweight of enemy fodder to 20 hundredweight of his.

"Therefore, when in chariot fighting more than 10 chariots are captured, reward those who take the first. Replace the enemy's flags and banners with your own, mix the captured chariots with yours, and mount them.

"Treat the captives well, and care for them." **Chang Yu explains:** "All the soldiers taken must be cared for with magnanimity and sincerity so that they may be used by us.

"This is called 'winning a battle and becoming stronger.'"

Do's and Don'ts

Sun Tzu gives some practical Do's and Don'ts:

"Do not gobble proffered baits.

"Do not attack his elite troops.

"To a surrounded enemy you must leave a way of escape.

"Do not press the enemy at bay." Tu Yu, a later writer, quotes Prince Fu Ch'ai who said: "Wild beasts when at bay, fight desperately. How much more is this true

of men! If they know there is no alternative, they will fight to the death!"

"When an advancing enemy crosses water, do not meet him at the water's edge. It is advantageous to allow half his force to cross and then strike.

"In war, numbers alone confer no advantage. Do not advance relying on sheer military power.

"One defends when his strength is inadequate; he attacks when it is abundant.

"The skillful commander takes up a position in which he cannot be defeated and misses no opportunity to master his enemy."

Conclusion . . .

A careful reading of the foregoing will give an indication of how the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese Army can be expected to operate. For knowingly or not they are steeped in the philosophy of warfare enunciated by Sun Tzu.

The Viet Cong emphasis on careful reconnaissance and detailed planning, their use of secret agents, their careful camouflage and use of surprise, their unwillingness to engage except when all factors are in their favor—all these are traits that are 2,500 years old.

This paper will help you to "Know your enemy and know yourself; in a hundred battles you will never be in peril."