The Sharp End of Political Aims: Military Strategy in the Age of Taoism, Marxism, and Modernism

A Monograph

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Abstract

The Sharp End of Political Aims: Military Strategy in the Age of Taoism, Marxism, and Modernism, by MAJ Robert Silvas, US Army, 70 pages.

The western strategist struggles to look out at the world and see any other perspective except their own reflected back because of how they define and assume the primacy of their dominant world view. When it comes to developing a military strategy, how a strategist makes sense of the world, the overall direction of their logic, as they assemble strategy, is at the heart of this inquiry. The purpose of this paper is to examine and explore Taoism, Marxism, and Modernism as three different approaches to developing a military strategy. How each develops knowledge and frames reality shapes how they crystallize their thinking about the interaction of power, war, warfare, and morality in the development of military strategy. By understanding the broad assumptions about the knowledge and reality of each approach it helps to expose the differences between in the processes of making strategy. Exposing the gaps helps to increase the practice wisdom, the interaction of theory, philosophy, and subjective experience, of the western strategist. This more comprehensive understanding improves the process of strategy development by decreasing complexity of meta-assumptions, which facilitates capturing emergence and enabling the strategist to respond with spontaneity.

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Acknowledgments

Acronyms

ADP	Army Doctrine Publication
ADRP	Army Doctrine Reference Publication
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
DIME	Diplomatic, Information, Military, Economic
NDS	National Defense Strategy
NMS	National Military Strategy
NSS	National Security Strategy
PLA	Peoples Liberation Army
PRC	People's Republic of China
UW	Unrestricted Warfare

The Sharp End

> Strategy is about how nations use the power available to them to exercise control over people, places, things, and events to achieve objectives in accordance with their national interests and policies. The challenge for the strategist is to coordinate the various levers of national power in a coherent or smart way.
>
> —Joint Doctrine Note 1-18, *Strategy*

> We function in a field of knowledge and practice that is quite inexact and frequently unpredictable, and where there is considerable discrepancy between self-expectations (not to mention public expectations) and achievable results. How are students and practitioners to manage their own human hopes and disappointments within each setting?
>
> —Don Krill, *Practice Wisdom*

This paper advances a simple argument. If a strategic thinker understands the logic that underpins the military strategy of an adversary, the basis of his assumptions about reality, it allows them to recognize emergence and spontaneously respond as the two strategic approaches collide. He can be relevant. Recognition of the adaptation of strategy occurs in the learning space between deliberate and realized strategy.[1] Spontaneity erupts from an opportunity to use the new learning to make on-the-spot adjustments to give expression to action.[2] These two ideas, emergence and spontaneity, merge as crucial elements of practice wisdom. More specifically, a strategist comes to know how theirs and an opponent's approach is a derivative of converging logics.

The problem under consideration is a failure of epistemic cognition by the western strategist.[3] Developed by cognitive psychologist William Perry in the late 1970s, the process of how a thinker arrives, through reflection, at facts, beliefs, and ideas bounds epistemic cognition.[4] Pulling apart the individual theory of knowing and reality to understand how a military

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[1] Henry Mintzberg, *The Rise and Fall of Strategic Planning: Reconceiving Roles for Planning, Plans, Planners* (New York: Free Press, 2013), 27.

[2] Donald F. Krill, *Existential Social Work* (New York: Free Press, 1978), 121.

[3] For this inquiry, "western strategist" can refer to either a strategic thinker from either the United States or European strategic community.

[4] Laura E. Berk, *Development through the Lifespan*, 5th ed. (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 2010), 451.

practitioner comes to formalize a coherent strategy, facilitates the western strategists capacity for responding.

Today, the western strategist struggles to look at the world and see any other perspective, except their own, reflected back, because of how they define and assume the primacy of their reality and knowledge into concrete categories of ends, ways, and means. At worst this is a dangerous assumption about the validity of a perspective. At best, it is developing a strategy's activities based on ends or goals in pieces, leaving it void of coherence. The application of military power by a western strategist assumes a set of expected results from the application of mass and destruction. Seventeen years after the United States (US) Army attacked into Iraq and Afghanistan, and after multiple iterations of strategy formulation, confusion and disarticulation reign in the cognitive space of those charged with strategy development.

How a strategist makes sense of the world, the origin of their logic as they design a strategy, is one of the primary questions of this investigation. The Prussian military theorist, Carl von Clausewitz remarked in his treatise that "war has its own grammar, but not its own logic."[5] Often used as the western thinker's anchor for the subordination of a military aim to the aims of policy, Antulio Echevarria assesses global war since World War II may function more like logic than grammar. Echevarria finds Clausewitz's description of logic and grammar unsatisfying when it comes to developing strategy because the grammar, or war's imperatives, can trend towards taking over the logic.[6] However, developing strategy, according to Colin Gray, requires the "expenditure of effort and the commitment of scarce resources for which there will always be

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[5] Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Michael Eliot Howard and Peter Paret, First paperback printing. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), 649.

[6] Antulio J. Echevarria, "Does War Have Its Own Logic After All?," *Infinity Journal* 3, no. 3 (Summer 2013): 5, accessed March 1, 2019, https://www.infinityjournal.com/article/99/Does_War_Have_its_Own_Logic_After_All/.

politically competing needs."[7] Consequentially, pulling back the layers of logic driving conflict helps the strategist broadly understand and focus a military strategy to confront problems requiring examination beyond what is readily visible on the surface.

When a thinker reaches conclusions that differ from others, they look to justify those conclusions through different interpretations of knowing and defining reality. If justification remains untenable, those with a higher degree of epistemic cognitive development revise their approach. They can adapt to it with reasoned spontaneity; especially in the face of the emergence of a new strategy.[8]

A second aspect of the problem at hand is misunderstanding an adversary's strategic sense-making process creates the potential for misaligned operational approaches. The misunderstanding stems from a strategist's lack of appreciation for a perspective that originates within another culture. It assumes sameness across what many consider a general theory of strategy.[9] Additionally, this misalignment fails to consider how the opposition organizes for application of military power. It also fails to consider that culture impacts a strategist's thinking as well. The failure to understand a different perspective is a result of the strategist that lacks an appreciation for learning before, during, and after the planning process resulting in a military strategy. According to Henry Mintzberg "every failure of implementation is, by definition, also a failure of formulation."[10]

Two areas for discussion thread through this paper. The first proposes that there are differences in the logic framing knowing and reality of a strategic thinker when it comes to developing a military strategy. The logic is how they conceptualize their thinking about power,

[7] Colin S Gray, "Politics, Strategy, and the Stream of Time," *Infinity Journal* 3, no. 4 (Winter 2014): 5, accessed March 1, 2019, https://www.infinityjournal.com/article/118/Politics_Strategy_and_the_Stream_of_Time.

[8] Berk, *Development through the Lifespan*, 451–452.

[9] See Colin S Gray, *Strategy Bridge* (Oxford: Oxford Univ Press, 2016).

[10] Mintzberg, *The Rise and Fall of Strategic Planning*, 25.

war, warfare, and morality when developing a military strategy. Military strategy emerges from different epistemological assumptions about the world, how it works, and who they are in the world. Exposing these differences helps to inform improvements of a strategist's self-awareness, understanding the nature of strategy, and highlighting the significance of the basic underlying assumptions formed about reality. These three areas have a direct bearing on how a strategist thinks about acting, understands success and failure, and organizes resources to act and think about acting in war. These three areas enable the recognition of emergent strategy and provide the impetus to act with spontaneous intentionality.

The second discussion focuses on the broad meta-assumptions and organizing principles structuring how strategists look at the world, how they construct their worldview. There is a component of culture that informs this process. There is a negative connotation associated with examinations of culture as a component of the strategy. Echevarria argues that culture fails to account for change and commonality over and within time.[11] Instead of facing it directly, Echevarria chooses to avoid "at least for another generation or two," the complexities of understanding the impact of culture on the development of the military strategy.[12]

However, the March-April 2019 edition of *Foreign Affairs* addressing the issue of growing global nationalism defines a nation as "unified social groups," and a state as "sovereign political structures."[13] It is at this juncture between social groups and the politics that aggregate values to guide people, the culture junction, where a strategist should focus attention. If the struggle points towards the fraying of the definitions bounding a nation-state into one or the other,

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[11] Antulio J. Echevarria, "Strategic Culture: More Problems than Prospects," *Infinity Journal* 3, no. 2 (Spring 2013): 4, accessed March 1, 2019, https://www.infinityjournal.com/article/92/Strategic_Culture_More_Problems_than_Prospects/.

[12] Ibid., 4.

[13] Gideon Rose, "The New Nationalism," *Foreign Affairs*, February 12, 2019, accessed March 31, 2019, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2019-02-12/new-nationalism.

developing military strategies to address the stickiest of problems, those stemming from human disagreement, cannot ignore the perspective of culture.

Forming the basis of this inquiry is understanding how a strategist's world view extends understanding that helps to increase their capacity for developing capacity to know, to recognize, a different perspective working against their own world view. How knowledge and reality, as aspects of a world view, shape the strategist's ability to shape responses to complex problems is critical to responding to different military strategies. Understanding an opposing military strategy comes from the difficulty of working with critical and creative thinking to tackle complex problems.

By using the example of "unrestricted warfare," popularized in a book of the same name, the western strategist often falls victim to using it interchangeably as both a strategy and an operational approach.[14] However, if warfare is one component of several to a military strategy's logic, then by pulling apart the meta-assumptions about the formation of knowledge and reality allows access to placing the concept into the proper context. Contextually understanding it as part of holistic military strategy prevents the novelty of accepting "unrestricted warfare" as both a whole-of-government strategy and an operational approach. Instead, "unrestricted" applied to warfare becomes about helping to shore up the strategy from complete failure, which comes with the violent outbreak of war.[15] Therefore, increasing strategists self-awareness, understanding of other perspectives, and gaining insight into how a military strategy develops aids future military thinkers to understand the thinking required at the sharp end of the pursuit of political aims.

The metaphor of a lead climber can illustrate the hard thinking necessary for strategic design. As the first climber on the route, the lead climber decides on what approach to employ.

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[14] See Liang Qiao and Xiangsui Wang, *Unrestricted Warfare*, trans. Al Santoli (Beijing: PLA Literature and Arts Publishing House, 1999).

[15] François Jullien, *The Propensity of Things: Toward a History of Efficacy in China*, trans. Janet Lloyd (New York: Zone Books, 1995), 26.

The climber ties into one end of the rope with a figure-eight knot to begin the climb. Climbers refer to this as the 'sharp end.' Climbing at the sharp end requires an extreme psychological effort to conduct climbing involving route finding combined with longer and harder falls. It is here, at the sharp end, where the strategic thinker finds their domain of activity. Bringing into focus that extreme psychological effort is what will allow for an increase to strategists' self-awareness of their own and other's processes of strategy development. At the conclusion of this paper, the strategic thinker is better able to incorporate increased understanding of what it takes to maneuver at the sharp end of the rope.

An examination of the broad assumptions about reality and knowledge of a Taoist, Marxist, and Modernist approach helps a strategist to expose the differences in epistemic theory of reality and military strategies. For the western thinker, the insights gained from each approach help to highlight potential gaps in their understanding of the process of developing a military strategy. The underlying assumptions shapes how a strategist would think about, understand, and practice from the exercise of war, power, warfare, and morality in their pursuit of military and political aims. The Taoist approach is holistic, requiring consideration for the interdependencies of each part of the system to gain a positional advantage without confrontation. The Marxist approach seeks an ultimate objective but utopian vision for society through the disruptive forces of revolutions that usurp the dominant power structures of socio-economic classes. Lastly, the Modernist aims to control the adversary through the scientifically empirical controls of evolution and adaption.

The structure of this discussion consists of five main sections. The first section, the Sharp End, introduces the problem, explains the three approaches and the challenges for understanding culture within the development of the strategy. It also defines power, war, warfare, and morality from each perspective as a baseline to help with understanding how they change given the distinct epistemological differences of each. The introduction also lays out the concept of practice

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wisdom as a means to broaden the military practitioner's world view as they work at the sharp end.

The next three sections split into the examinations of the Taoist, Marxist, and Modernist systems of thinking. Each approach begins with a broad overview of the underlying epistemological and ontological foundation of each before moving into their logic, bounded by the understanding and practice of power, war, warfare, and morality. The last part of each section encapsulates a discussion about the practical implications of understanding the gaps between the expectations and outcomes of each approach to increase practice wisdom. Ultimately, the military practitioner should come away with insight into their own predispositions, and an understanding of the reasons for the gaps between expectations and outcomes of military strategies. The insight also serves to make military strategists and operational artists more relevant in the future.

Finally, in order to aid the development of military strategy as operational solutions, two ideas shape the conclusion, emergence and spontaneity. These two factors are significant for the synthesis of the epistemological understanding that drives practical developments of a military strategy. Recognizing emergence and responding with spontaneity triggers the growth of practice wisdom, helping to mitigate the risk of a catastrophic fall while thinking as the lead climber.

The Logic of Strategy

The logic of military strategy conceptualizes and integrates ideas and produces actions about power, war, warfare, and morality into an approach that is often different from ways the other actors in the competitive space similarly conceptualize strategic thought. As a strategic thinker develops a military strategy, their conceptual framework rests on an understanding of the way the world works and what is of value. Therefore, the strategy and the planners who merely rely on their theoretical assumptions when assessing the belligerent look different because one or both sides did not understand the logic that brought them to developing a military strategy against the other.

Imagine the three approaches of Taoism, Marxism, and Modernism as climbers standing at the base of a mountain. Each stand separated from one another and therefore have a distinct and separate perspective of the mountain. However, the climbers are still committed to a similar goal: to reach the summit before the others. Each climber must decide how they will reach that goal. Just as Clausewitz claimed war possesses its own grammar and logic, it is the same for each climber. The logic structures the approach each will take to the summit. The grammar is the sum of their principles. Strategy unites the logic and grammar into a narrative for execution.

Traditional questions for each climber include some variant of a style, tactic, method, or approach to achieving the aim to reach the summit. The free soloist aims to climb within the conditions presented to him. Free soloists climb without ropes or other safety equipment, trading an umbilical cord to safety for the opportunity to generate power within the conditions they feel are most advantageous to them. They engage the context directly.

The second climber, the alpinist, climbs with a reliance on combining all the different modalities of climbing (e.g., mix, ice, trad, boulder). Alpinists yield to a minimalist approach using only a small rack of equipment to get to the top, in order to trade risk for speed. There is less subjectivity with this approach to climbing. Reality becomes bounded by an objective study of the route to the top to gain as much control as possible. However, both the free soloist and the alpinist climb with the tacit understanding that the mountain is in a constant state of change and subject to sweeping them off at any moment.

The third climber, the siege climber, is not as prone to the acceptance of risk as the other two approaches. Siege climbers establish a series of base camps to the top, mitigating risk as much as possible. For this style of climbing, underestimating the value and impact of the material on the mountain can lead to failure. While each approach typifies action, there is also an underlying pattern of sense-making that directs that action before the climbers' step onto the rock.

Bringing into focus the organizing principle and assumptions of reality for the Taoist, Marxist, and Modernist climber helps to develop an understanding of the process of epistemic

cognition before execution on the mountain. It helps the thinker to pose a series of questions. How do they project power to reach their goal? What is the best practice to employ resources to the summit? What makes the chosen approach morally right in relation to the other approaches? These are the questions for consideration that help to expose the underlying logic that leads to the selection of a strategy, an operational approach, and the tactical actions to achieve aims.

For this paper, the following definitions provide a starting point for a collective understanding of the elements of strategic logic and practice of military strategy as a basis for designing operations. A strategy is a plan. However, according to Roger Ames, military strategy for the Taoist thinker is a "metaphor to shape philosophical distinctions and categories."[16] For the modernist, Heuser defines military strategy as a way to think about the quantification of the "link between political aims and the use of force, or its threat."[17] Svenchin defines a military strategy for the Marxist as the "art of combining preparations for war and the groupings of operations to achieve the goal set by the war for the armed forces."[18]

Power is "generally, the ability to achieve one's purposes or goals; more specifically, the ability to affect others to get the outcomes one wants."[19] Power is not quantifiable in the Taoist approach because it considers context above goals. Power emanates from within individuals as a product of their interaction with the natural world.[20] According to Hannah Arendt "power corresponds to the human ability not to just act but to act in concert."[21] For the Marxist strategist,

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[16] Roger T. Ames, *Sun-Tzu: The Art of Warfare: The First English Translation Incorporating the Recently Discovered Yin-Ch'üeh-Shan Texts* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1993), 41.

[17] Beatrice Heuser, *The Evolution of Strategy: Thinking War from Antiquity to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 3.

[18] Aleksandr A. Svechin, *Strategy* (Minneapolis, MN: East View Publications, 2004), 69.

[19] Joseph S. Nye and David A. Welch, *Understanding Global Conflict and Cooperation: An Introduction to Theory and History*, Tenth edition (Boston: Pearson, 2017), 397.

[20] Ames, *Sun-Tzu*, 49.

[21] Hannah Arendt, *On Violence* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1970), 44.

power is about the use of material and people under dystopian power structures.[22] Under a modernist model of strategy development, power is quantifiable. It emanates from the synchronization of efforts and resources from the instruments of national power: diplomatic, information, military, and economic (DIME). A strategy serves to link each instrument of the DIME with means into operational approaches. Its application and ultimate purpose are to control, to work towards winning. It is zero-sum.

War's aim remains insolubly tied to the direction of the political will. The Modernist defines war in the words of the Prussian theorist Carl von Clausewitz, "an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will."[23] It is about the physical manifestation of confrontation to achieve a victory. Within US Joint Doctrine, war is "socially sanctioned violence to achieve a strategic purpose."[24] Arendt, providing additional context to the social sanctioning of violence adds "violence appears where power is in jeopardy, but left to its own course it ends in power's disappearance."[25] The violence of war is inseparable from the generation of military power. Thus, war's violence directs its energy against an armed objector to policy.[26]

However, the modernist approach to war diverges from the Taoist and Marxist concept. The Taoist military strategist views war as a failure because it produces a destructive force that destroys life.[27] The Marxist strategist approaches war as a process of revolution, a special form of political violence, that moves history forward.[28]

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[22] Martin Kitchen, "Friedrich Engels' Theory of War," *Military Affairs* 41, no. 3 (October 1977): 121.

[23] Clausewitz, *On War*, 75.

[24] US Department of Defense, *Joint Doctrine Note 1-18* (Washington, DC, 2018), I-1.

[25] Arendt, *On Violence*, 56.

[26] William F. Owen, "Modern Errors in Discussions of Strategy," *Infinity Journal* 5, no. 5 (Summer 2017): 38.

[27] François Jullien, *A Treatise on Efficacy: Between Western and Chinese Thinking*, trans. Janet Lloyd (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004), 23.

[28] Karel Kára, "On the Marxist Theory of War and Peace," *Journal of Peace Research* 5, no. 1 (1968): 2.

Each strategic approach employs concepts, or forms of warfare, to turn potential power into kinetic power. Warfare is the expression for the conduct of war. For the modernist, with a preference for the annihilation of an enemy, how a nation chooses to fight a war, its ways, provides the assessment for the measure of military power.[29] For the Taoist strategy, context transforms through deception and exploitation of conditions.[30] Employing disruption that is offensive, avoiding time behind barricades, drives the Marxist forms of warfare.[31] These ideas inform the military practitioner's employment of socially or politically sanctioned violence to achieve aims.

Therefore, power matched with context and intention aides achieving the desired outcome. War is an expression of variously understood power and movement expressed by warfare. However, it is important to note that a form of warfare can overlap across dual and even multiple approaches. It would be overly reductionist to say each cultural perspective could only employ one form of warfare.

Lastly, morality provides a structure for the justification of actions occurring as a result of the chosen military strategy. Each system of thinking sees moral imperatives and expedients of action differently based on the aims of war and methods of warfare. The moral justification for violent action is a function of summation from the other components of strategic logic. Moral considerations help to answer the question of what makes one approach appropriate and preferred in relation to other approaches.

The Western paradigm of military strategy presumes military forces serve as the primary means for the military instrument of national power. The employment of military forces occurs in conjunction with diplomatic and economic means in the pursuit of political aims or ends. For the

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[29] Glenn P. Hastedt, *American Foreign Policy*, 9th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2011), 314.

[30] Jullien, *A Treatise on Efficacy*, 23.

[31] Kitchen, "Friedrich Engels' Theory of War," 122.

US perspective, the Lykke Model of strategy sufficiently expresses the dominant logic of strategy within the institution of the US Army. Developed by Arthur Lykke at the US Army War College, this model expresses strategy in the following formula: Strategy = Ends + Means/Risk.[32] This model lends itself to Modernist thinking that calls for control, finality, and success defined as the annihilation of the enemy.

This study examines those characteristics of each approach that are holistic, utopian, and empirical when viewed through the lenses of Taoism, Marxism, and Modernism. Understanding the strategic thinker's worldview, the epistemological and ontological layers, as they inform and structure their logic of strategy is critically important. This analytical approach provides the opportunity to think deeply and systematically about different conceptualizations of potential military strategies.

Practice Wisdom

The challenge that lies ahead is to increase the practice wisdom of the strategic thinker to respond to instances of emergent learning and then to act with spontaneity. Practice wisdom encapsulates both the art and science to serve as the bridge between theory and practice. It is similar to the US Army's concept of operational art, which is the "pursuit of strategic objectives, in whole or part, through the arrangement of tactical actions in time, space, and purpose."[33]

Practice wisdom is the interaction of three areas of knowledge: theory, philosophy, and subjective experience. The theory explains why people do what they do. Philosophy goes a step further to answer broader questions about the critical assumptions undergirding the theory. The Taoism, Marxist, and Modernist approaches encapsulate a cultural dimension of developing a military strategy. How a strategic thinker crystalizes their thoughts on war, power, warfare, and

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[32] H. Richard Yarger, "Toward a Theory of Strategy: Art Lykke and the U.S. Army War College Strategy Model," in *Theory of War and Strategy: Vol I.* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2012), 45–52.

[33] US Army, *Army Doctrine and Reference Publication 3-0, Operations* (Washington, DC: General Accounting Office, 2017), 2–1.

morality buttresses the process of developing a strategy from among the multiple theoretical approaches. Subjective experience is the collection and combination of thoughts, emotions, intuitions, and sensations that help the practitioner support a sense of identity.[34] Understanding each approach's different logic brings with it the potential to identify practical implications to understand the nature of strategy before encountering it as an operational approach.

Practice wisdom, as a broadening idea, aids in the understanding of how to increase the strategist's sense-making capabilities and structure rational thought which serves to increase self-awareness. It is similar to the US Army's concept of the elements of operational art as intellectual tools used to link the strategy to tactical actions. Practice wisdom is "how a particular worker integrates what he or she knows about him- or herself and the client, and the present happening between the two (the creative factor)."[35] It is used here because it goes one step further than operational art in its discussion of the subjective experience of the practitioner.

Practice wisdom has three areas of knowledge that tell the practitioner something about the human experience. Understanding elements of the human experience are essential for the strategic thinker because Army doctrine defines war as "fundamentally a human endeavor."[36] At times, all three areas of knowledge conflict resulting in compartmentalization. When that happens, it reduces the creative energy needed to solve complex human problems. The challenge to increase practice wisdom is to find ways of integrating theory, philosophy, and subjective experience into creative ways to influence, help, and exert power.[37]

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[34] Donald F. Krill, *Practice Wisdom: A Guide for Helping Professionals* (New York: Free Press, 1990), 13–14.

[35] Ibid., 13-14.

[36] US Department of the Army, *Army Doctrine Reference Publication 3-0, Operations* (Washington, DC, 2016), 1-4.

[37] Krill, *Practice Wisdom,* 12.

Limitations

It is important to distinguish what this monograph is not. This inquiry is not a critique of strategy development methodologies. Unlike Colin Gray's "*The Strategy Bridge*," this paper does not attempt to account for a universal theory of strategy. Neither is this paper a critique of specific theorists behind each approach. Specifically, for the section on Marxism, there is no consideration of any of the more granular distinctions between socialist thinking or 'soviet-isms' (e.g., Leninism, Stalinism, Maoism) that dominated the international geopolitical landscape from the end of World War II to present day.

Neither does this paper attempt to define winning or victory. It is about developing an understanding of the logic that informs the development of a military strategy. J. Boone Bartholomees offers "[That]…war is about winning does not mean it is about victory. One can win a war, especially a limited war, without achieving victory."[38] Winning is a political condition, defined in political terms, and based on assessments. Victory is an opinion, not a fact or condition, and is heavily dependent on perspective. What counts for this discussion is to understand that war remains inherently coupled to the direction of politics. The logic of a military strategy, not claims of winning or victory, is what matters to this paper.

The significance of this study is the examination of the metacognitive approach vice more traditional ends, ways, and means discussion towards the praxis of military strategy.[39] Examining and comparing the underlying assumptions involved in a strategic thinker's approach as they conceptualize war, power, warfare, and morality highlights gaps in the expectations and outcomes of actions. A strategic thinker's theoretical and philosophical understanding must expand to avoid the shock of having to make large jumps in their subjective experiences. As a

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[38] J. Boone Bartholomees, "Theory of Victory," *Parameters* 39, no. 2 (Summer 2008): 36.

[39] "All strategies entail the same fundamental logic of ends, ways, and means…context, applicability, capability, and purpose determine the specific factors that are considered in its development." US Department of Defense, *Joint Doctrine Note 1-18, Strategy* (Washington, DC: General Accounting Office, 2018), I–1.

climber works a route, mitigating the risk of a devastating fall comes from developing a broader understanding of the Taoist, Marxist, and Modernist approaches because it helps to identify those principles that are holistic, utopian, and linear. These principles cue the strategic thinker onto the logic of strategy employed against the US military. When cued to the opposing logic of an adversary, the strategist can refine and adjust operational approaches to help their political and military leaders achieve aims.

How Culture Impacts

The intent of this paper is not to argue for a theory of strategic culture. Everyone exists in a particular social, economic, and cultural context. It shapes how they think, act, and what they want from the action. The more a strategist understands diverse cultural perspectives the more they can "constrict an enemy's choices and exploit these for political purpose."[40] Strategists operate within a particular cultural context; everything relies on the decision made in relation to other actors in the environment.

It is an overgeneralization to assume Taoist thinkers only come from China, or Marxists strategist from Russia. Besides an apparent cultural misappropriation, it traps the researcher in assumptions of national and cultural stereotypes. However, culture does impact a country's tendency to use force. Commenting on the development of his understanding of war and society, the historian Sir Michael Howard highlights the importance of the subjective experience by noting, "The history of war I came to realize, was more than the operational history of armed forces. It was the study of entire societies. Only by studying their cultures could one come to understand what it was they fought about and why they fought the way they did."[41] Drawing from this perspective helps to contextualize the influence of culture on strategic planning.

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[40] John Baylis, James J. Wirtz, and Colin S. Gray, eds., *Strategy in the Contemporary World: An Introduction to Strategic Studies*, 4th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 365.

[41] Michael E. Howard, *Captain Professor: The Memoirs of Sir Michael Howard* (New York: Continuum, 2006), 145.

Cultural awareness colors how states interpret the images of strategic action in response to potential and perceived threats. The "fundamental and enduring assumptions about the role of war (both interstate and intrastate) in human affairs and the efficacy of applying forces held by political and military elites in a country" are what Andrew Scobell labels strategic culture. [42] As an example, to demonstrate a contemporary example of culture, the current Chinese Communist Party (CCP) leadership often speak of their goal to create a 'community of common destiny.' First used by Hu Jianto in 2007 it also links back to 1954 when Zhou Enlai spoke of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence: mutual respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty, mutual non-aggression, mutual non-interference in internal affairs, equality and cooperation, and peaceful existence.[43] The cultural history of China as the center of the universe permeates each leader's approach to a common destiny. More recently, Xi Jinping, in October of 2018, published a book which defined his concept for creating a "community of common destiny."[44] However, this is not the first time Chinese leaders have used similar language to reject the old structure of military alliances and modernization of armaments as critical requirements for security.

Liza Toobin argues that western observers ignore culture when unpacking China's strategic intent of a 'common destiny.' Ignorance comes at the risk of misunderstanding the key aspects of China's current efforts at global engagement strategy. Toobin states that concerning hard power approaches to foreign policy, Chinese culture remains the most far-reaching and least understood by western audiences.

Instead, western planners focus on the traditional variables of political, security, and economic drivers. Toobin warns the strategic observer not dismiss the cultural aspect of

[42] Andrew Scobell, "China and Strategic Culture" (Monograph, Army War College, 2002), 2, accessed October 31, 2018, http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep11270.

[43] Liza Toobin, "Xi's Vision for Transforming Global Governance: A Strategic Challenge for Washington and Its Allies," *Texas National Security Review* 2 (December 12, 2018), 2, accessed December 24, 2018, https://tnsr.org/2018/12/xis-vision-for-transforming-global-governance-a-strategic-challenge-for-washington-and-its-allies/.

[44] Ibid., 4.

"community of common destiny" as overly "vague or empty propaganda."[45] It is from this concept that China pronounces its desire to develop "socialism with Chinese characteristics."[46] The CCP claims that achieving a common destiny stems directly from the depiction of China with a global mandate of heaven. Their depiction is of China at the center of the global community with pacifist tendencies and promoting global harmony within their ideal of socialism.

However, Scobell cautions enamored audiences against the perception of a pacifist China. China's guard of "active defense" allows justification for the use of almost any force shrouded in defensive action.[47] What then is China about? Graham Allison challenges the strategist to consider and better understand China's core interests.[48] Are China and the US at war? From the perspective of each strategic thinker, the answer changes. To the modernist thinking, war exists as a physical manifestation sensed by the five senses. To the Taoist thinker, war represents the complete failure of the system. War consists of the most destructive forces which risk the natural tension, or harmonious balance, between man and nature. For the Marxist, war is the armed struggle between social classes; violence can play dual roles in revolution and control but remains a requirement.

This discussion draws on the principles of each approach and looks at those that represent the holism of Taoism, the utopianism of Marxism, and the empiricism of Modernism. While an application of a universal general theory of strategy is helpful, it also clouds the ability to discern the deliberate and difficult thought that comes with developing strategic and operational approaches emanating from a cultural perspective. It suppresses self-awareness.

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[45] Ibid., 3.

[46] Toobin, "Xi's Vision for Transforming Global Governance: A Strategic Challenge for Washington and Its Allies.," 5.

[47] Scobell, "China and Strategic Culture," 3.

[48] Graham T. Allison, *Destined for War: Can America and China Escape Thucydides's Trap?* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017), 235–237.

Taoism

In the 1977 movie, *Star Wars: A New Hope,* the character Obi-wan Kenobi, a Jedi-sage, explains the mystical concept of 'the force' to a young Luke Skywalker as "…an energy field created by all living things. It surrounds us and penetrates us. It binds the galaxy together."[49] Taoist thinkers carved out a similar definition of their version of the force, the *Tao,* which recognizes the flow of nature in relation to human actions as affording the only opportunity to make sense of actions.[50]

As this paper begins to unpack the Taoist logic of strategy, it also begins at the same metaphysical juncture as *Star Wars.* It is here that a requirement exists to suspend the mysticism. If left in its mystical shroud, understanding the nature of Taoism's approach to military strategy remains unilluminated. Its context remains a mixture of simple and misunderstood axioms. While the mystical overtures help Taoism define reality and generate knowledge, suspension of the mysticism helps to understand the formulation of military strategy as it applies the holistic, contradictory, and paradoxical logic of concepts like *shi*, propensity, efficacy, *Yin-Yang,* deception, and harmony.

Tao is the way or path focused on the idealization of nature, not man, as the harmonizing force in the universe.[51] Developed during the Warring States period (475 – 221 BCE), where it splits with Confucianism, Taoism disavows as unnatural any action not keeping within the context of seeing the path.[52] Therefore, Taoism rejects any action that risks unbalancing the harmonizing force that sustains life.

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[49] George Lucas, *Star Wars: Episode IV, A New Hope*, 1977, accessed January 20, 2019, https://www.imsdb.com/scripts/Star-Wars-A-New-Hope.html.

[50] Asia for Educators. "Weatherford East Asia Institute," last modified 2018, accessed September 4, 2018, www.afe.easia.columbia.edu/special/china_1000bce_daoism.htm.

[51] Frederick W. Mote, *Intellectual Foundations of China* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1993), 62–65.

[52] For additional understanding of Chinese cultural timelines see, Columbia University's Weatherford East Asia Institute at http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/timelines/china_timeline.htm.

Harmony is at the core of a Taoist worldview. Harmony encapsulates the Taoist concept for creating knowledge and defining the boundaries of reality. Taoism's lack of an origin story creates a requirement to cultivate harmony.[53] Unlike a recipe, reducing Taoism's origin down to a list of ingredients is too reductionist. Harmony, according to Roger Ames is about making the most of the potential of any situation. It begins with what is most concrete and immediate.[54] Forging the path of *Tao* is to act upon or in the world. In acting, the Taoist thinker comes into a realization, a knowing, of how to shape their world.

Both Taoism and Confucianism serve as the bedrock of Chinese intellect, two sides of the Chinese mind. However, both lack a creation story. In Chinese culture, existence precedes essence. Nor do the two schools of thought turn to or commit to the pursuit of truth.[55] According to Ames, the "this-world" understanding of Chinese culture did not start from abstraction as the Judeo-Christian tradition did.[56] It started with a specific place within the natural world. It holds as its aim the realization of what already exists, not necessarily the pursuit of knowledge. To this end, Fredrick Mote accepts 1500 B.C.E., the last Shang civilization, as the starting point of Chinese civilization.[57]

For the western thinker, accustomed to the Judeo-Christian origin story, the closest association in China is that of the Yellow Emperor around the same period that Mote labels the starting point. However, keeping in mind that existence proceeded essence, China predates its first recognized unifying leader. He did not create China; it already existed. The Yellow Emperor restored China to the center of the universe via the reinvigoration of the principles of harmony

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[53] Ames, *Sun-Tzu*, 63.

[54] Ames, *Sun Tzu*, 62.

[55] François Jullien, "Did Philosophers Have to Become Fixated on Truth?," trans. Janet Lloyd, *Critical Inquiry* 28, no. 4 (2002): 803.

[56] Ames, *Sun-Tzu*, 49–51.

[57] Mote, *Intellectual Foundations of China*, 5.

which become Taoism and Confucianism.[58] Out of the Shang dynasty arose the Chou dynasty which ushered in the "Golden Age" of Chinese thought, which included the Confucius codification of the principles of harmony into Chinese culture. More specifically, the *Tao*, the path, and *Te*, the inward originating powers, emerged in the several centuries between the birth of Confucius in 551 B.C.E. before the sunset of the Chou dynasty around 256 B.C.E. Both Lao Tzu's "*Tao Te Ching*" and Sun Tzu's "*The Art of War*," are the two essential texts that emerge from two tumultuous periods known as the Spring and Autumn period (770-475 B.C.E.) and the Warring States period (475-221 B.C.E.), which brings China out of chaotic warlord-ism into ordered society.

Mote cautions against the bias of associating the western paradigm with the eastern paradigm. For Mote, an unexamined modernist European or American bias gives way to the "quite unsupportable assumption that all people…have regarded the cosmos and man as the products of a creator external to them." [59] One paradigm emphasizes the discovery of objective reality via the scientific method. The other occupies the realm of subjectivity, prone to fluctuation due to the natural patterns of nature. Juxtaposed against the dominant metaphysical understanding of the western paradigm that aims to discover "that which creates" and "that which is created," the contradiction is brilliantly highlighted.[60] According to Mote, three dominant themes become essential to understanding the contradiction of creation from the two paradigms: continuity, wholeness, and dynamism.[61]

The risk of western bias is to trap Taoist strategic logic in the shroud of mysticism. Keeping it as something as arbitrary as Obi-wan Kenobi's 'force.' Pulling the mystical cloak aside requires exploring Mote's three themes as the holism of systems, the continuity of time and

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[58] Henry Kissinger, *On China* (New York: Penguin Press, 2011), 5.

[59] Mote, *Intellectual Foundations of China*, 17.

[60] Ames, *Sun-Tzu*, 47.

[61] Mote, *Intellectual Foundations of China*, 21.

change, and the dynamism of propensity. The idea that behavior extends from an inherent natural tendency to respond in a particular way captures the concept of propensity.

Taoism's logic is inherently strategic in its approach. It provides the strategic thinker a holistic representation to guard against linear thought. Linear thinking traps the strategist in models based on Platonic notions of ideal forms resulting in strategy's pursuit of a goal, of trying to achieve final victory. The risk of relying on the Greek models for the strategic thinker is to miss opportunities to recognize the conditions of the current reality.[62]

To fight a war is to fail in the Taoist construction of the world. The most significant risk to the balance of nature and man is the violent and destructive forces found in war. The point of strategizing from a Taoist perspective is to "minimize armed engagement."[63] Instead, the Taoist strategist aims to fix its operational approach in knowing. To know is to unlearn, to leave the uncarved block untouched. To know, according to Ames is the process of discovery as " [what] is…to trace out the connections among its joints and sinews."[64] To know is to begin to assemble the connections that define the dependent and interdependent relationships within the holistic system encompassing the Taoist perspective.

According to Jullien, Taoism is a shift away from achieving effects. It is instead about efficacy, which he defines as a pedagogical tool that "teaches one to learn how to allow an effect to come about; not to aim for it (directly) but to implicate it (as a consequence)…not to seek it…to allow it to result."[65] From Jullien's idea of knowing comes the powerful tool of *Shi*, strategic advantage or disposition.

Roger Ames calls *shi* the strategic advantage. *Shi* helps the Taoist thinker to understand and utilize context. It also lends itself to assisting with the exploitation of energy from within a

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[62] Jullien, *A Treatise on Efficacy*, viii.

[63] Jullien, *The Propensity of Things*, 26.

[64] Ames, *Sun-Tzu*, 57.

[65] Jullien, *A Treatise on Efficacy*, vii.

context. Most importantly, *shi* is naturally holistic, encompassing the entirety of an individual's context in relation to another; it can insinuate multiple meanings.[66] *Shi* is a force or energy that builds from understanding the conditions without specific consideration of power and disposition as unrelated and one dimensional. *Shi* aids the strategist to consider the system as a complex and interconnected whole vice breaking it into individual parts for consideration. As understanding of context builds, *shi,* as a disposition, and not just an indirect approach, aides the Taoist military strategist to draw power to the system.[67]

Propensity, as the second aspect of *shi*, considers the potential outcomes of an action given a natural tendency to an actor within the system to behave or respond to stimuli. Propensity is an attempt to understand context as a set of potential emergent properties of change from within the changing situation.[68] Developing a military strategy first requires the Taoist operational artists to understand the context to develop the set of propensities, or responses. This set of responses enables the Taoist to take advantage of any opportunities within that changing context.

Water as an example of *shi*, often used in Taoist texts to demonstrate the various principles of its logic, always finds a way. No matter what obstacle blocks its path, water finds a way to continue its flow. The difficulty of understanding lays in knowing the water might flow under, around, and even over the obstacle; its goal is to abstain from confrontation with the obstacle.

Developing a military strategy is about context, not goals. It is identifying tensions and looking for opportunities to exploit their contradictions. The realities of the strategy become grounded in deception, concentration, diversion, and dispersion. It also incorporates change. Time is continuous. As an aspect of natural tension, conflict is perpetual. The military strategist learns

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[66] Ames, *Sun-Tzu*, 73.

[67] Jullien, *A Treatise on Efficacy*, 26–27.

[68] Jullien, *The Propensity of Things*, 27–31.

to operate within the conditions of the system, vice trying to leverage effects to achieve an end state.[69]

A simple example to understand the Taoist process of assembling context is to consider the transformation of a banana. When purchased from the store, most bananas are bright, fibrous, and green. Its taste is acrid and unsweet. In a few days, the banana naturally transforms. Its skin yellows to the moment it is most edible. This transformation required no action; it occurred naturally. It was the result of the banana's natural propensity. Then the banana changes again, and begins to soften and brown, transforming into something most people find less edible. It has not lost any of its original inherent qualities, but its function naturally adapted and changed. As a result, the banana takes on a new disposition availing itself to a new potential.

The home chef understood before purchasing their bananas that these changes occur, by way of understanding its propensity. They also understand a banana purchased from stores often starts as under-ripe and eventually transforms to over-ripe, both lacking the characteristics of good food. The home chef recognizes any action to arrest these changes might induce an acceleration in the ripening process. The home chef sees the process as possessing both logic and spontaneity; changes happen. Change demands the culinarian stands ready to adapt, less the food goes to waste completely.

Instead of sliced bananas in their breakfast cereal, the home chef achieves a new efficacy, or the desired result, born of the bananas changed disposition. The home chef makes banana bread, which benefits from the new sweetness of the browned and softened bananas. The home chef knew the banana would change. Using the bread recipe from the start, while doable, does not benefit from the transformation of the fruit. Instead of aiming for bread, the culinarian adjusted to the changing situation and made do with what the banana offered along the way.

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[69] Jullien, *A Treatise on Efficacy*, 151.

By understanding that the banana will change, the home chef 'maneuvered' into a strategic position or *shi.* Its quality as food was inherent from the beginning. Its qualities transformed with time, but instead of wasting its propensity because it changed, the home chef transformed its disposition to use the softened and browned banana to still get nutrition from it.

Power

Power is a derivative of the strategist's ability to transform the situation from the recognition of context. Power is a function of the two principles of *Shi* and *Yin-Yang.* When disruption of the natural tension occurs, nature moves to reestablish the harmonious balance. However, Taoism prefers inaction to action, which means acting within the *Tao.*[70] When viewed through this frame, war's common aim of using power and violence to achieve objectives poses the risk of becoming the most destructive force. To the Taoist strategist, attaining aims through the deliberate violence found in a confrontation is not within the aims of man and against nature. Confrontation inhibits achieving a position of strategic advantage. Taoism's power reveals itself as paradoxical and contradictory, represented by the interdependence of the *yin-yang*. It also stands in contrast to the other predominant ideology emanating from the east, Confucianism, which sees the natural tension between men vice nature.[71]

Taoism's focus is internal and not on the pursuit of external goals. Power emanates from within, what Taoism labels *Te,* the inborn powers.[72] Instead, Taoism shifts the pursuit of power to inward flowing forces. Taoism encompasses what Roger Ames labels an "immanental" existence that comes from within the natural world and precedes essence.[73] Followers of Taoism seek a

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[70] Myrtle Mae Bowers, "The Chinese and Greek Philosophies and Their Place in History," *Phylon (1940-1956)* 4, no. 1 (1943): 56.

[71] Mote, *Intellectual Foundations of China*, 62-63.

[72] Arthur Waley, *Three Ways of Thought in Ancient China* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1982), 66.

[73] Ames, *Sun-Tzu*, 49.

return of the uncarved block before Confucianism's social rules carved it up.[74] Not unlike Luke Skywalker, the Taoist strategist has to unlearn the emphasis on an external locus of power.

The natural tension held between man and nature exists within the principle of *yin-yang*. This principle holds the world in harmonious balance. It is the manifestation of the contradiction of heaven and earth. Recognized by its circular symbol of black and white bisected by an S-curve, the *Yin-Yang* recognizes the paradoxical context that all humans have a little good, the white, and a little bad, the black, within them. The S-curve that bisects each half represents a person's lifeline. The lifeline is only as good as the time the conditions it exists in remain relevant. This circle of *ying-yang* represents the Taoist system.

Understanding a systems propensity, allows the thinker to frame a system and begin to work towards giving it a narrative agency.[75] The Taoist strategist asks about the system, who am I in it? This question sets the parameters for the potential to transform the situation and generate power. Not taking advantage of the potential created by propensity, risks a change to the potential as it interacts with the environment. Propensity and potential are inherent qualities. The interdependence of relationships with the environment always involves adaptation. While capabilities are quantifiable, when it comes to war, the temporal space, the life-line of the *Yin-Yang*, maintains relevancy only so long as the situation remains unchanged. The Taoist concentration on holism, considering the entirety of a system, translates into a military strategy that centers on transformation, lacking specificity on overtly military means.

The dynamism of systems to undergo rapid change rules out predetermined courses of action for the Taoist strategist. To achieve *Shi*, the strategist focuses on creating a "potential born of disposition."[76] To do so, the strategist evaluates the system on five criteria; morale,

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[74] Richard H. Jones, "Must Enlightened Mystics Be Moral?," *Philosophy East and West* 34, no. 3 (1984): 283–284.

[75] Jullien, *A Treatise on Efficacy*, 155–156.

[76] Jullien, *The Propensity of Things*, 27.

meteorological conditions (the heavens), topographical conditions (the earth), command, and organization of the system.[77] Each set of criteria leads the strategist to ask a set of questions, similar to those proposed by the US Army's Desig Methodology,which help the military planner frame environments and problems before developing solutions.

Unlike the Modernist approach, there are no Taoist models to follow. The Taoist assessment is iterative. As forces in a system interact the situation and the context are continuously changing. The Taoist strategist introduces deception and exploitation to keep the enemy guessing and attempts to adapt to their actions. As demonstrated in the *yin-yang* contradiction, the lifeline constituting the S-curve through the middle of the symbol represents life. That lifeline and the methods of Taoist warfare are variable. The advantage is a reliance on understanding propensity. The propensity, the potential of an actor to respond across a continuum of potentialities, maneuvers the Taoists into a position of strategic advantage.[78]

These two concepts, *shi* and *yin-yang,* set the conditions for the stratagems employed in Taoist warfare. Power is not about confrontation to achieve a goal; it addresses the force of an argument through design to win through manipulation.[79] Each concept accounts for the interdependent relationships in the system, eschewing the desire to understand parts in isolation.

Shi and *Yin-Yang* contrast with the western, modernist desire to conform to a model framing power through quantifiable tools such as the DIME construct to align resources against a strategic approach. For the Taoist, power is not quantifiable. Power is a product not of the synergy of resources but emanates from the natural energy, the context, that occurs between man and nature.

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[77] Jullien, *A Treatise on Efficacy*, 21.

[78] Jullien, *A Treatise on Efficacy*., 21–24.

[79] Jullien, "Did Philosophers Have to Become Fixated on Truth?," 814.

War

Simply stated, war is the complete failure of the Taoist strategy. War, defined by the geography of chaos and unpredictability of violence, presents a very costly endeavor to the system. Resolution of conflict constitutes a primary concern in the logic of the Taoist strategist. The Taoist strategist rejects any aim that brings the system into a confrontation with another system. The objection to waging war stems from an understanding that it suppresses *Te*, the limitless inward resources of man. According to Taoism, *Te* is greater than the sum of any resources acquired through conquest or defense.[80] Therefore, the aim of war is the maintenance or reestablishment of the natural, harmonious tension between man and nature.

The evidentiary nature of failure stemming from the destructive violence of war links back to the Taoist concept of harmony. Unlike a Marxist approach, which uses war as a special form of political violence, the Taoist approach eschews political violence in exchange for a better position. The Modernist approach contextualizes war as a composition of ends, ways, and means for synchronization which facilities an action to compel an adversary. In contrast, the Taoist approach to war cultivates harmony from the bottom up, which helps it account for emergent properties.

The Taoist logic is broader when contrasted with the Clausewitzian thesis that war is about the use of force to bend the will of an enemy and that all war is subordinate to politics.[81] War is evidence of failure, because of its propensity to become nature's destructive force. However, whereas other approaches subscribe to zero-sum outcomes in war, the Taoist approach demands a different set of techniques to wage its wars.

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[80] Waley, *Three Ways of Thought in Ancient China*, 65.

[81] Clausewitz, *On War*, 75.

Warfare

If power is unmeasurable and war threatens existence, then warfare, as an expression of movement, is perpetual, it has no end goal to achieve. It is alive. It is the art of contextualizing.[82] The context derives from an examination of the system holistically, as one form, and not in pieces. The purpose of warfare in the Taoist world refrains from framing warfare as a byproduct of Modernist's material accumulation or Marxist material production. According to Jullien, it is best to understand warfare as a collection of activities that breathe and react.[83] The two primary forms of warfare are deception and exploitation. These forms constitute a limitless approach aiding the Taoist to gain a strategic advantage without confrontation.

Deception is how Taoist strategy avoids the adversary's strength. Manipulation of conditions is the *Tao* of "dissembling and secrecy."[84] It exploits the inherent tension and potential already existing under present conditions by creating movement or the appearance of moving to force the adversary also to move. If the Taoist acts of deceit are successful, when the adversary responds to movement, they do so out of a sense they are at a disadvantage.[85] Deception might be a fact or a product of anticipating the propensity of actors in a system to respond under known tendencies. Deception can run the full range of behaviors, from selling weapon technology to non-state actors to building a Mahanian navy to challenge all competitors in the sea domain. As long as it does not result in the release of war's destructive forces, and put the adversary at a disadvantage, the Taoist planner is free to employ.

Once the adversary is moving, the Taoist actions of deception create conditions to permit exploitation. Specifically, the Taoist strategy enables surprise, which focuses on tempo and

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[82] Ames, *Sun-Tzu*, 67.

[83] Jullien, *A Treatise on Efficacy*, 23.

[84] Jullien, *A Treatise on Efficacy*, 142.

[85] Frans Osinga, *Science, Strategy and War: The Strategic Theory of John Boyd* (Delft, Netherlands: Eburon Academic Publishers, 2005), 61–62.

timing to leverage weaknesses in the adversary.[86] Surprise causes the adversary to become

unbalanced and to waste resources.

Instead of trying to make the enemy conform and react to impending confrontation, the

Taoist influences their position through increasing deception and exploitation. These activities

force an opponent to adapt their system to what they think is a response to their presence.

Responding in this way is a result of artificial stimuli, and if the movement is great enough, the

Taoist opponent finds themselves off balance. An unbalanced opponent creates additional

opportunity to act, through exploitation, to gain an advantageous strategic position in relation to

the opponent.

Morality

Justification of moral action trace from the concept of harmony and the paradoxical

relationship of *yin-yang.* To the western thinker, familiar with just war theory, Taoism's approach

to morality stands in contrast to the Greek "two-world" theory discussed above.[87] The western

thinker judges moral action as an output of consequences Consequentially, the conceptualization

of "morality" only becomes an issue when the individual deviates from the *Tao.*[88] The Modernist

is not bound to rigid boundaries. Unlike the Modernist, the Taoist practitioner stepping outside

moral boundaries risks disabling their moral standing.

Charting a path that retains the harmonious balance between man and nature stands above

everything. The object of life in the Taoist approach is to cultivate the dynamism of harmony.[89]

The physical manifestation of war places only one mandate on the Taoist leader, as quickly as

possible, restore harmony. The violence associated with war risks the harmonious balance in such

a way that confrontation is untenable as an operational approach.

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[86] Ibid., 197.

[87] Ames, *Sun-Tzu*, 63.

[88] Jones, "Must Enlightened Mystics Be Moral?," 283.

[89] Mote, *Intellectual Foundations of China*, 21.

For the Taoist, to excel in the art of violence is also to ensure humility in the face of victory. There is almost no higher virtue. If everyone became a Taoist, the ideal state resembles a utopian plateau. The answer to the questions of life is to "seek *Tao* yourself; that is all you need to do."[90] One only needs to do what is necessary to draw tension in the line between nature and man.

The other organizing principle at work in the conceptualization of moral action is to understand the words "right" and "wrong" can have the same meaning.[91] Right and wrong, conceptualized within the paradoxical contradiction of *yin-yang,* are aspects that evade permanence or internalization as values because the Taoist only sees them from partial viewpoints. They are paradoxes, susceptible to change at any moment.

Additionally, under the Taoist approach, peace and harmony are not the same. Peace and harmony exist in a paradoxical relationship which tensions the energy between man and nature. The cultivation of harmony allows for a consideration of the full continuum of options to remain available to the strategist. From this outlook, it becomes easier to understand two of the primary contradictions of Taoism: the rejection of direct conflict in war and right and wrong as the same side of a coin.

Expectations

The nature of the Taoist approach to developing a military strategy lies in the ability to transform the situation with an evolving context. The principal risk is the destructive violence of war. Therefore war and warfare look different than the traditional western construction of the accumulation and employment of means. Taoist military strategy employs iterations of deception, exploitation, and perpetual energy as forms of warfare. These modes of warfare help the Taoist thinker maintain the relationship between the seen and the unseen. The black dot on the white

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[90] Waley, *Three Ways of Thought in Ancient China*, 68.

[91] Jones, "Must Enlightened Mystics Be Moral?," 284.

half of the *yin-yang* representation of the Taoist system is deception. Deception is acting non-directionally, forming the propensity to act in a way that favors intended outcomes. Acting morally right is to do what is necessary to maintain the natural tension between man and nature.

Increasing to the Taoist practitioner's self-awareness is a product of the utility of understanding how the Taoist world view makes meaning through the tracing of the sinews and joints to discover the known. When opposing two systems collide in a physical confrontation, they deliberately break the natural order by undertaking actions that pit their system against one another. Gaining awareness for the Taoist practitioner is understanding the different aims and risks of each belligerent. Whatever it may be for the other side, for the Taoist, it is to ensure survival.

To demonstrate another example of the Taoist approach is through the analogy of a wolf pack undertaking the hunt of bison. The purpose of this analogy is not to demonstrate "how" a wolf conducts its hunt. Using this analogy is to demonstrate how a wolf pack adapts its system to act within the changing context of the conditions of reality; how the pack adapts to the changing context resulting in their actions within a system. Contrary to popular misconceptions about wolves, there is no unintended mass attack or violence of action in the hunt. Images of wolves as bloodthirsty, confrontational apex predators prone to violent attacks are figments of a fiction writer's imagination.

Wolves do not hunt prey so much as they run the prey to death. Using a bison as a specific example, a wolf initiating a hasty attack chooses to attack with the potential that the bison retains their full capacity of strength. The risk is the potential for a catastrophic injury for the wolf. Neither is it enough for an unaccompanied wolf, weighing around one hundred and twenty pounds, to successfully take down a bison, which weighs around two-thousand pounds. A single kick from the hindquarters of a bison risks a mortal wound for the wolf. The same goes for an attack against the front end of the bison which risk a mortal injury from its massive head and horns.

What puts the wolf at the apex is their stamina and endurance, as well as their capacity to read the feedback of a system and adjust to it; it is not their aggression and violence. By singling out a member of a herd of bison that is weak, injured, or old, the wolf adapts its system to create potential from the conditions presented from an evaluation of their prey's system. Initially, the bison heard huddles together, finding strength in the defense. The wolf pack's process begins with a deceptive maneuver to feign an imminent attack. As the herd of bison reacts by fleeing, the wolf is just initiating its plan to run its prey to death.

Lesser understood of the inherent qualities of the biological system of most wolf prey is their limited capacity to cool their bodies quickly. The ungulates primary method to deal with overheating is to pant, which is hard to do on the run. The essence of the wolf is its endurance, the ability to cover exceptionally long distances while keeping their prey on the move. Then when the moment is right, and the prey is unable to rule the biological process of breathing, running, and defending, the wolves strike. Initially, they attack the bison's hindquarters, its source of defensive power. Then a pack member attacks the throat of the animal to cut off the source of its offensive power.

The pack's success is not due to material overmatch or adapting to change within a system. Their success begins with an examination of the aims of each system and its propensity to act or react from among a range of options. The wolf hunts and consumes ungulate mammals. It aims to sustain the pack, to continue generating life. The bison's aim is similar. The hunt of the wolf pack is about the continuation of life, the sustainment of the pack. It is also about the maintenance of the bison herd, nature's mechanism for managing its negative feedback for a harmonious balance.

The wolf pack began the hunt with a deception to exploit the conditions. Deception created movement. Just as war is an expression of power and movement expressed by warfare, the wolf used the propensity of the bison to respond to the appearance of a threat and put the herd under movement. This movement offset the bison's natural strengths which opened the door for

the pack to initiate their attack. Temporally, this process is unending. It is nature's inherent disposition to contend with and sustain harmony in the system. The next approach does not adhere to the idea of harmony as a unifying concept. Marxism is quite the opposite in its approach to ramping up the volume of the violence.

Marxism

The 2018 July-August edition of *Foreign Affairs* asks, "Which world are we living in?" The issue covers six different tracks from realism to climate change. It examines and explores the issue of the grand narrative dominating the current era of geopolitics. Robin Varghese, covering the Marxist world, argues that Marxism continues to persist because it continues to address and critique the dominant economic system of today, capitalism. She points out that while fraught with several failed attempts to establish Marxist socialism in the world, Marxist thinking perpetuates because it demands government action to actively fight capitalism's trends towards wealth inequality and market volatility.[92]

As Karl Marx and Fredrick Engels, the founders of Marxism, assert in the opening lines of their *Communist Manifesto*, "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles."[93] The rise and fall of societies litters history as efforts to advance or disrupt human productive power. Marxism sought to apply the science of economics to frame conflict as between classes.[94] The revolutionary violence Marx and Engels' theory initially espoused as the primary means to move history forward and out from under the oppression of capitalism continues to be the first pit stop for the revolutionary movements of tomorrow as they pursue answers to the ominous shadows of capitalism.

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[92] Robin Varghese, "Marxist World," *Foreign Affairs*, June 14, 2018, 34.

[93] Karl Marx and Fredrick Engels, "Manifesto of the Communist Party," 1, last modified February 1848, accessed March 4, 2019, https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/pdf/Manifesto.pdf.

[94] Bertrand Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972), 783.

Marxism emerged from the boiling cauldron of the European revolutions of 1848 as a new form of science cloaked in economic theory. Published initially in the pages of the "*Communist Manifesto*," Marxism viewed conflict initially as a disruptive, violent struggle between classes which initiates a transition from capitalism to socialism. Like Taoism, Marxist thinking is holistic and systematic. Phenomena are interdependent.[95] However, Marxism pursues an objective construction of reality. Taoism's reality is subjective.

At the heart of Marxism thought is an ultimate pursuit of the transitions from capitalism, to socialism, to communism as a final utopian plateau for its movements. With communism, the dissolution of the state, class structures, and a total victory over political institutions frees its population to live without the oppressive demands of a capitalistic society.[96] As Marx observed the widespread industrialization of Europe and its mandates on the working class, the proletariat, to produce, he saw the potential for a growing monopoly of economic resources.[97] Through the proletariat's exploitation, Marx saw an opportunity to wrestle back control of usage. Controlling the means of production mandated the working class to suffer under wage caps offering them little flexibility for financial growth. No matter how hard they worked, blistered hands could never overcome the limits set upon the proletariat. It was not only the means of production but the capacity to use the individual worker to enrich the upper class and trap the worker in an oppressed state.

According to Marxism, an upper class, the bourgeois, managed the usage of the proletariat by controlling the means of production, the material. Marxist ideology aims to grow the awareness of the working class, to see the capitalist system under which they toil only serves to sustain their oppression. Only by way of violent revolution could the proletariat undertake

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[95] G.A.D. Soares, "Marxism as a General Sociological Orientation," *The British Journal of Sociology* 19, no. 4 (1968): 370.

[96] William C. Martel, *Victory in War: Foundations of Modern Strategy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 40.

[97] Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy*, 789.

movement of human action to drive history forward, a process called the dialectical movement of historical materialism.[98]

Developed by Karl Marx and Fredrick Engels, Marxism is their attempt to operationalize theory to invert the dominant and oppressive power structures, specifically those of capitalism, inhibiting the upward mobility of the proletariat. Marx's intent was not to establish himself or his thinking as a philosopher or philosophy but to be scientific with his study of the movement of material throughout history.[99] Marx's thinking asks and answers the question of how to turn minds.[100] Upon watching the bloody government suppression of the 1848 revolutions, Marx and Engels were no longer content to sit about the smoking parlors of Europe, debating the finer details of socialism and class oppression.

Marx was born in 1818 to a Prussian middle-class family. Initially educated for a career in the legal profession, Marx joined the radical "Young Hegelians" while attending university. Organized around the thinking of the philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, the Young Hegelians celebrated his ideas on reason and freedom. However, for Marx, there was something more at work, especially as he watched the revolutions of 1848.[101] Risking the firing squads, Marx took up the pen and bully pulpit to support the pursuit of freedom by the poorest in society. Quickly, forced to move from the growing shadows of censorship, Marx found himself in France in 1843, connecting with his future collaborator, Friedrich Engels.

Engels, the son of a wealthy factory owner, was also from Prussia. He served as a reserve field artillery officer in the Prussian army where he participated in the Baden insurrection of

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[98] Martel, *Victory in War*, 39.

[99] Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy*, 783.

[100] Lawrence Freedman, *Strategy: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 247.

[101] Freedom, *Strategy*, 252–253.

1849.[102] Whereas Marx was more the political thinker and strategist, Engels concentrated on the intersection of technological advancements, social movements, and the complexity of interrelated relationships of material progress to define the components of military thought incorporated into Marxist ideology.[103] Together, Marx and Engels focused their attention on the interaction of socialism, military policy, and foreign affairs to craft their strategic thinking for a revolutionary war against capitalism.

Both Hegelian and Marxist thinking pursued an absolute idea as the driving force across history. For Hegel, the aim was to expand and understand the "why" of history.[104] Failing to understand the 'why' behind an action is to leave it without significance. The Hegelian absolute is a spiritual idea, something akin to a 'god.'[105] The Marxist pursuit of the absolute was about matter, as opposed to a metaphysical spirit. The production of matter, or the physical material, serves as the driving force to put the worker in relation to the mode of production. The driving force, according to Marxist thinking, is materialism, and more specifically, historical materialism.[106]

Hegelian and Marxist thinking conceives history as a forward movement occurring through a triadic dialectical process. This three-step process of movement begins with a thesis, moves to an antithesis, and concludes with a synthesis.[107] According to Hegel, the thesis begins with an objective statement about an aspect of reality. For example, all wars consist of large-scale combat operations. However, the existence of combat operations on a large scale implies there is

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[102] Sigmund Neumann and Mark von Hagen, "Engels and Marx on Revolution, War, and the Army in Society," in *Makers of Modern Strategy: From Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age*, ed. Peter Paret, Gordon Alexander Craig, and Felix Gilbert (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 265.

[103] Kitchen, "Friedrich Engels' Theory of War," 119.

[104] Arthur Herman, *The Cave and the Light: Plato versus Aristotle, and the Struggle for the Soul of Western Civilization* (New York: Random House, 2013), 434.

[105] Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy*, 434.

[106] Ibid., 784-785.

[107] Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy*, 731.

a scale that also includes small scale combat operations. Since nothing exists for Hegel except the absolute, then the antithesis to large is the existence of small-scale combat operations. Seeking an objective reality, the process dialectally combines to define war as having a scale that consists of both large and small types of combat operations, for Hegel this constitutes a synthesis.

Synthesis occurs after a crisis. Seventeen years of counterinsurgency operations in Iraq and Afghanistan without major strategic success drives current US Army doctrine to resolve the achievement of political and military aims. In dialectical reasoning, each synthesis creates a new antithesis. Current US Army doctrine's thesis is the reconceptualization of large-scale combat operations as a response to peer threats quickly outpacing doctrinal thinking and modernization efforts.[108] Therefore, crisis drives history in a Hegelian and Marxist world.[109] The examination of US Army doctrine represents only a small example of how Marxist thought might lay out a contemporary crisis and response.

However, the Hegelian process is unending, because the synthesis remains inconclusive to defining an absolute. For Hegel, there is an underlying assumption that "nothing can be true unless it is about reality as a whole."[110] The process is dialectical because it does not complete. Hegel contributes qualification of the holism of reality as the dialectical movement between the three processes of the thesis, antithesis, and synthesis.[111] War might consist of combat operations on a scale from small to large, but expanding the thinker's understanding includes wars that are also revolutionary, disruptive, and destructive, which becomes instrumental to understanding the Marxists strategists approach to developing a military aim for its strategy.

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[108] Michael D. Lundy, "Meeting the Challenge of Large-Scale Combat Operations Today and Tomorrow," *Military Review* (October 2018), accessed April 4, 2019, https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Journals/Military-Review/English-Edition-Archives/September-October-2018/Lundy-LSCO/.

[109] Herman, *The Cave and the Light*, 437.

[110] Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy*, 732.

[111] Ibid., 731–732.

The dialectal movement defines the pursuit of knowledge for the Marxist strategist. The process of moving history forward, of defining reality devoid of subjective sensations, is what produces knowledge for the Marxist thinker. Marxist thinking views knowledge as an interaction between subject and object to sensation or perception.[112] Hegel's construction of knowledge works in a similar triadic movement as above. It begins with only a "sense-perception" awareness of the object.[113] For the Marxist thinker, men will act without knowing the outcome of the future. Preceding any action are ideas about the outcomes, which will conflict and contradict.[114] In this way, both the thinker and the idea remain in the process of mutual adaptation.[115] To know is to allow the knower to adapt to the initial objective idea of reality as a constant, the initial thesis.

When developing his thinking on historical materialism, Marx's initial claim was that he could identify the instances of thesis-antithesis movements where matter changed hands throughout history. The materialistic analysis of history through an economic lens served as the critical inroad to understanding a Marxist approach to the socioeconomic dynamics.[116] Marx could tangibly "measure" those instances by accounting for their crisis.[117] Here, Marx diverges from the Hegelian dialectical process, which is unending, and posits that eventually, there is an objective end to historical materialism.[118] Marxism views conflict as the violent struggle between classes. It is an effort to break from the capitalist's economic and political chains that bound them to a history of servitude. At the conclusion of Marxist thought, man ascends to Marx's utopian

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[112] Ibid., 783.

[113] Ibid., 734.

[114] Frederick A. Olafson, "Existentialism, Marxism, and Historical Justification," *Ethics* 65, no. 2 (1955): 127.

[115] Michael Burawoy, "Marxism as Science: Historical Challenges and Theoretical Growth," *American Sociological Review* 55, no. 6 (1990): 780.

[116] Neumann and Hagen, "Engels and Marx on Revolution, War, and the Army in Society," 267.

[117] Burawoy, "Marxism as Science," 777.

[118] Ibid., 781.

vision of communism, the classless society. If Marxism has a stated hypothesis, it is that history ends with the dissolution of the boundaries of organized, civil society.

As the proletariat emerges from under a system that has historically oppressed them by controlling the means of production, revolutions occur which unbind the proletariat from the bourgeois. The system used by the bourgeois to bind the proletariat to economic suppression is capitalism. The central idea of Marxism is that capitalism is a system of materialistic and economic oppression that destructively exploits a working class.[119] At its essence, Marxism is about delivering action to change the world.[120] The same path traces crisis through the overturning of power through revolution to break the chains binding the producers of material. Marxism assumes the working-man can gain the self-awareness of his position to adopt it through a violent revolution as the only way to advance history.

Accordingly, the reality and knowledge that serve as the basis for developing the organizing ideas of a Marxist military strategy attempt to objectively drive the dialectical movement of mutual adaptation through history. The pursuit of objectivity relies on the assumption that "an unshakable reality exists independently of our perceptions about it."[121] Power emerges from the dietetical process as a product of human action.[122] War is a "special form of political violence."[123] Warfare begins as a violent revolution, then evolves to attempts to objectively control the mechanisms of war to annihilate any that stand against the revolution. Warfare adapts through the study and testing of science to develop better weapons and

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[119] Karl Marx and Fredrick Engels, "Manifesto of the Communist Party," February 1848, accessed March 4, 2019, https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/pdf/Manifesto.pdf.

[120] Neumann and Hagen, "Engels and Marx on Revolution, War, and the Army in Society," 264.

[121] Mary Jo Hatch, *Organization Theory: Modern, Symbolic, and Postmodern Perspectives*, 4th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 14.

[122] Aditya Nigam, "Marxism and Power," *Social Scientist* 24, no. 4/6 (1996): 7.

[123] Kára, "On the Marxist Theory of War and Peace," 3.

material.[124] The moral justification of the strategy bifurcates between the cultural Marxists and the scientific Marxists differing ideas of objectivism and trends towards relativism. As Marx viewed his theory as a science, he did not want subjective, sense-perceptions, with their appearance of universality to interfere with the action needed to usurp the dominant structures of an oppressive and rapidly decaying society.[125]

Power

The production of power is the convergence of two streams, action and awareness. The first stream is about developing the process of human action to undertake the movement of historical materialism.[126] The second stream is about harnessing the power of the working class, the proletariat.[127] Therefore, power is a product of the usage of man. Generating power in pursuit of an aim is to move the process of historical materialism through its dialectical revolutions by bringing the proletariat out of their false consciousness and into an awareness they can achieve much more than producing for a system of government that is inherently oppressive.

In trying to harness the current of the first stream, finding human action to undertake the movement of historical materialism, Marx first had to identify the group with the capacity to act. In his denunciations of democracy as the system of government which facilitates the capitalist's access to mechanisms of oppression, Marx identified the proletariat as the subjugated class.[128] Their latent power exists as labor power, defined as control of the capacity to do work. Under the model of capitalism, controlling the means of production controls the material produced. However, labor power removes and challenges the dependency and authority of the dominant

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[124] Milan Vego, "Science vs. the Art of War," *Joint Forces Quarterly* 66, no. 3rd quarter (2012): 65.

[125] Kai Nielsen, "Marxism and the Moral Point of View," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 24, no. 4 (1987): 285.

[126] Nigam, "Marxism and Power," 7.

[127] Freedman, *Strategy*, 253.

[128] Gudavarthi Ajay, "Marxism, Authoritarianism and People's Movements," *Economic and Political Weekly* 31, no. 13 (1996): 847.

class structure as a way for the working class to demand a greater share of profits from their toil. At its essence, capitalism is getting someone to produce an item for a certain price, then selling that item for a higher price.[129]

When the laborers accept these terms, they accept the domination of the system which traps them in complicity with their domination by the elites, what Marx called "false consciousness."[130] Helping to increase the proletariat's awareness was the responsibility of the intelligentsia, the professional revolutionaries, that steward enmity.[131] In their new-found awareness of their subordinate position is where the Marxist strategist first looks to develop the necessary power to generate movement to move history forward.

The second stream, harnessing the proletariat's power, comes from ideas of dominant structures of the state and how labor power is distinct from state power. The status of the individual in a capitalist society stands in relation to the institution's society bounds them to for work. Placement formalizes their status, which follows a hierarchal structure; at the top are the dominant structures. To exist in a capitalist society is to have a status defined by the dominant structures.[132] Seizing labor power for the Marxist military practitioner is a product of mediation of how to change the "conditions of existence" in the here and now.[133] This process of change can only happen under the current dialectical, under the current mode of production and how society castes its members. Operating or considering labor power outside of the current dialectical makes it an abstract ideal, moving away from Marx's desire to remain scientifically objective. The strategist asks questions such as, how does the proletariat produce material? Moreover, to what

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[129] Hatch, *Organization Theory*, 284-285.

[130] Ibid.

[131] Kitchen, "Friedrich Engels' Theory of War," 121.

[132] Nigam, "Marxism and Power," 9.

[133] Nigam, "Marxism and Power," 8.

are they given access for their efforts on behalf of civil society?[134] To initiate the movement needed to usurp the dominant power structures, the Marxist strategist pursues action as an understanding of objective human action, of not succumbing to false consciousness. There is no shortcut or way to skip dialectical movements.[135]

War

From the scientific cognition of reality that requires leveraging the mechanisms of labor power against the dominant class, war serves as a special form of political violence. A war in a Marxist system of thinking aims to assert the historical process as a historical offensive.[136] For the Marxist strategist developing the military plan to take a nation to war, they first look to disruption through revolution. Then, the Marxist planner then looks to control war within the bifurcation of strategy and tactics. As one group subjugates another, armed violence, according to Marxist thinking provides the catalyst to understanding the interaction of human action and material.[137] The purpose of war is to initiate the violence required to move through the Marxist dialectical to drive change in the dominant power structure.

War begins as a violent revolution. The purpose of a revolution is to change. In the case of revolutionary war, the change is to develop a new progressive socio-economic system that commandeers the current system of repression.[138] For Engels, a war was about the armed struggle against the state structures that impede Marxist economic movement.[139] Accordingly, war within the Marxist schema is a war amongst the class systems. It desires to uncouple the thesis of the dominant organization of a society's structures and invigorate them into the antithesis of a rising

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[134] Ajay, "Marxism, Authoritarianism and People's Movements," 848.

[135] Nigam, "Marxism and Power," 19.

[136] Richard W. Harrison, *Architect of Soviet Victory in World War II: The Life and Theories of G.S. Isserson* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co, 2010), 42.

[137] Kitchen, "Friedrich Engels' Theory of War," 119.

[138] Kára, "On the Marxist Theory of War and Peace," 5.

[139] Ibid., 2.

proletariat into a new socio-economic system. Revolution is not enough. Its also violent, and violence and power are inseparable.

Conversely, revolutionary war resists the boundaries of war as conceived by Taoist and Modernist strategists. Not only is war the violent, physical struggle, but it is also the "words, ideas, and perceptions" that play important roles in the effort to seize state power from within.[140] Revolutionary war follows a process as well, what Engels called the "little war."[141] The discontented, but newly aware, proletariat strike. Any response by the authoritarian state is too weak or too oppressive. The proletariat erects street barricades and prepares for block-by-block fighting. The erupting violence cannot stop until the defeat of the ruling groups is complete. Violence for the Marxists strategy serves a dual role. It is both reactionary and progressive. Violence is a reaction to the disconnectedness of the proletariat with the world. Violence is progressive because it is the route through oppression to a new synthesis, to socialism, and eventually onto communism.[142]

However, a 'little war' would not be enough to sustain the movement the Marxist strategist needs. Eventually, the state's allies come to their aid. Massed, modern armies with advanced technological weapons converging on small, barricaded revolutionaries ensures political power remains ensconced with the bourgeois. Just as Marx conceived his thinking as an objective study of the social and economic movements across history, military theorists from the Marxists school also examined history to delineate their logic of war.

What the Marxist military thinkers concluded is that war must transition again. Revolutionary war occurs within a state, but when the state's allies arrive with their armies, the

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[140] John Shy and Collier, Thomas W., "Revolutionary War," in *Makers of Modern Strategy: From Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age*, ed. Peter Paret, Gordon Alexander Craig, and Felix Gilbert (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 821.

[141] Kitchen, "Friedrich Engels' Theory of War," 122.

[142] Kára, "On the Marxist Theory of War and Peace," 4.

Marxist military plan must prepare to annihilate those forces.[143] A war fought with this total end in mind requires fighting offensively and destructively through penetration and encirclement to defeat the forces wanting to return the status quo power. Thinking about defeat through penetration and encirclement originated in the Russian and then Soviet observations regarding the lack of depth of battlefields, especially those of the First World War.[144] Ideologically, the Marxist understands the opposing armies will not stand with the revolutionary movement. War's transition becomes a bifurcation of strategy and tactics in pursuit of annihilation.

Warfare

As Marx worked his ideas to return the agency to the working class through economic changes, Engels studied and explored the mechanics of warfare within the Marxist construct. Two ideas become prominent for the prosecution of Marxist wars of revolution and then annihilation. The first is a requirement for a large army. The second is the incorporation of operational art as the link between strategy and tactics allowing organization of the battlefield by purpose and simultaneity.

In his observations of Napoleonic and Prussian wars, Engels observed those armies fought and performed with a resilience that possessed high degrees of training, discipline, and efficiency.[145] Engels dismissed the other socialist theorists that insisted on dismissal or abolishment of a nation's military forces Engels did not envision a revolutionary movement not involving the armed forces of the state. As previously stated, the 'little war' of the initial revolution could not satisfy the progressive forward movement needed for the Marxist to avoid total defeat at the hands of the state. For Engels, the small war had to transition to "Napoleonic battle."[146] The small wars consisting of secret organizations and underground armies of

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[143] Harrison, *Architect of Soviet Victory in World War II*, 40–41.

[144] Ibid., 70–71.

[145] Kitchen, "Friedrich Engels' Theory of War," 122.

[146] Neumann and Hagen, "Engels and Marx on Revolution, War, and the Army in Society," 263.

revolution could not satisfy the conditions needed to sustain the forward assault of history. These backroom organizations, for Engels, signaled that the conditions were not ripe enough for the revolution to occur.[147] Instead, Engels began to conceive of warfare consisting of offensive action to disrupt and then annihilate an adversary to achieve to final victory.

The problem for Engels was a contradiction requiring a new synthesis. On the one hand, the military remained a militarized force within the state, and more importantly, at the control of the state. On the other hand, Engels acknowledged that the "little war" alone would not suffice to achieve the Marxist aim of moving history.[148] The requirement that revolutionary movements must be offensive is unattainable with small armies consisting of the rogue's gallery of revolutionaries.

To fight the type of wars Marxism called for, violent revolution and annihilation, Engels views trended towards the inclusion of all citizens to universal military service which would serve to overcome the structure of the state's organized military, bounded by conservative and elitist thinking. The cross-sectional approach to producing an army for war institutionalizes the armed forces with the forces of revolution, which consist of the undesirables from the liberal and democratic corners of society. Finally, in the revolutionary struggle, those in charge of charting Marxist ideology could access a military force large enough to not only throw off the yoke of oppression, but also to "act offensively and quickly so that there can be no time for second thoughts and for there to be maximum use of popular unrest and sympathy."[149]

To fight a disruptive war that eventually transitions to a war of final victory, the Marxist practitioner draws inspiration from three Soviet theorists, Aleksandr Svechin, G.S. Isserson, and Mikhail Tuckhachevsky. Their purpose was to create a system of coordinated purpose and

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[147] Kitchen, "Friedrich Engels' Theory of War," 122.

[148] Ibid.

[149] Kitchen, "Friedrich Engels' Theory of War,"122.

sequential operations to achieve success on the battlefield.[150] To do this required incorporation of what Svechin labeled "operational art," the intermediate level of war between strategy and tactics, defined as "conglomerate of quite different actions…which lead to the encirclement or destruction of a portion of the hostile forces…as the result of a direct envelopment or as a result of a preliminary breakthrough."[151] Their thinking provides valuable insight into how to fight Marxist wars with a certain level of tactical and operational indices that are objectively capable of measurement.

Writing in the post-World War I interwar period, Svechin, Isserson, and Tuckhachevsky each developed specific doctrines related to either annihilation or attrition as dominant forms of fighting wars. From a western frame, these two ideas appear contradictory. However, maintaining the dialectical nature of Marxist thought, Svechin remarked: "Dialectics acknowledges the radically contradictory requirements of the art of war."[152] The dialectical process derived from Hegel and adopted by Marx remains in the realm of strategic thought because it is a mechanism ensuring the broadest point of view. The driving nature of thesis-antithesis-synthesis sustains the search for objective approaches aiding the military planner to reduce the dynamics of a battlefield.

The characteristics of strength, time, and space drive the strategies of annihilation consisting of operations as a means of defeating the mass of an opposing army.[153] The idea of attritional warfare is a gradual approach seeking to wear an enemy down through "measured accumulation of political, economic, and military advantages until one's opponent is forced to

[150] Wilson C. Blythe, "A History of Operational Art," Army University Press (December 2018): 42, accessed April 3, 2019, https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Journals/Military-Review/English-Edition-Archives/November-December-2018/Blythe-Operational-Art/.

[151] Aleksandr A. Svechin, *Strategy*, ed. Kent D Lee (Minneapolis, MN: East View Publications, 2004), 69.

[152] Svechin, *Strategy*, 318.

[153] Ibid., 241.

surrender."[154] It stands in opposition to annihilation, which relied on elusive and risky movements to bring the enemy to destruction between a hammer and an anvil. Working from within the newly formed Soviet Union, these three strategists fought to find answers to the lack of positional warfare of the First World War.[155] The combination of the three theorists thinking impacted the Marxist system to recognize warfare characterized by large conscript armies fighting protracted, technologically advanced war bounded by the art of wedding tactical maneuver to strategic objectives.

Morality

There is a paradox between Marxist thought and moral action. Initially, Marx's emphasis on historical materialism as an objective science rejects the subjectivity of moral arguments.[156] However, Marx's claims indicating the dominant class system, capitalism, as wrong and indifferent to the suffering it creates for the proletariat, is a moral argument.[157] Marx and Engels were reluctant to explore moral assumptions as part of their theory because of the potential impact it might have to "guaranteeing the objectivity" of their work.[158] Therefore, the paradox remains between two ideas, that of the moral wrongness of class-on-class oppression and arguments for morality playing little to no role in the objective science of historical movement.

For the strategist practicing from a Marxist perspective, acting with just cause, is to frame and contextualize their proposed actions as necessary to overcome oppression between socioeconomic classes. Especially within the raging forces of violent revolutionary war, acting when there is no dominant mode of production leaves little room for standards of justice and

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[154] Harrison, *Architect of Soviet Victory in World War II*, 42.

[155] Blythe, "A History of Operational Art," 40.

[156] William H. Shaw, "A Moral Theory for Marxists," *Polity* 20, no. 3 (1988): 481.

[157] Hongmei Qu, "Marxism and Morality: Reflections on the History of Interpreting Marx in Moral Philosophy," *Frontiers of Philosophy in China* 6, no. 2 (2011): 239.

[158] Shaw, "A Moral Theory for Marxists," 481.

rights.[159] Moral ideology is already a part of that hegemonic logic that aids class oppression.[160] The Marxist strategist that gives too much weight to acting from moral standing risks distorting the understanding hegemony reigns over some class. Therefore, to act militarily in pursuit of a political aim to overturn the dominant class system is to act with moral justification to relieve the pressures of the system that oppress and suppress human action.

The dominant mode of production at the current time and place marks the second component of the paradox determining whether moral action is just or unjust.[161] The Marxist strategist, acting within the strict objective pursuit of Marx's historical materialism, characterizes morality as part of the socioeconomic fabric of society. Moral ideology in reality only answers to the interest of the dominant class. In this sense, the morality of the proletariat is part of their false consciousness.[162] The pursuit of historical change from a purely moral perspective of oppressive class structures contributes to "the maintenance of the capitalist status quo."[163] It obscures the scientific approach to cultivating their utopian world-view Marxist planners navigate when creating the mechanisms for change in a military strategy.

Expectations

If the world existed in a deep dark cave where a flashlight only lit slivers of the darkness, a Marxist strategy would be easy to identify. It would be incredibly loud, full of firebrand revolutionaries issue damning diatribes over the roar of crowds massing together, their anger filling the air with shouts of organization against the entity holding the light. Traversing light onto that corner of the cave would trigger almost unrestrained violent action that does not stop until the light illuminates the entire cave.

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[159] Nielsen, "Marxism and the Moral Point of View," 295.

[160] Shaw, "A Moral Theory for Marxists," 482.

[161] Nielsen, "Marxism and the Moral Point of View," 295.

[162] Shaw, "A Moral Theory for Marxists," 481.

[163] Ibid., 482.

Today's strategist trying to identify a Marxist approach observes a buildup of radical ideology originating from within a state. Likely framed against the backdrop of inequality of wealth distribution or a nationwide strike that slows the economy, a Marxist strategy nurtures the narratives fomenting anger from oppression. Anger aimed at current dominant companies like Apple, Google, and Amazon will set the conditions of resentment that disarm smaller firms trying to enter their hypercompetitive markets. Recent examples such as the Occupy Wall Street and the Arab Spring serve as reminders that Marxist thought, as proposed by Rachel Varghese in *Foreign Affairs,* is never far from the surface.[164] As the movement gains momentum through words and concepts, there is an eventual violent outburst leading to the capitulation of structures within a state.

Contending with warfare after the first revolution requires the military planner to anticipate combinations of annihilation or attrition to preserve the offensive momentum of historical materialism. Marxist war and forms of warfare eschew a moral orientation that is unfamiliar to the western strategist. Asking a question such as, "how can such violence lend itself to utopian communism?" risks trapping the planner in an overly optimistic desire the powerful moment will burn itself out.

Modernism

The ideas of context and history dominated the first two perspectives examined above. Taoism, confined to limiting confrontation, works to change the context of the situation and gain a strategic position of advantage. Marxism relies on human action to drive the crisis within a historical movement to disrupt and then destroy the dominant class structure of society to relieve oppression. The Marxist approaches reality as an objective examination of empirical reality, where objects exist independently of what humans assumed to know about them. Taoist reality is subjective, created from an understanding of the propensity of a system to act or react. In the final

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[164] Varghese, "Marxist World," 34–42.

perspective for this paper, the Modernist approach is empirical in its understanding of knowledge. The empiricism feeds directly into gaining insight into cause and effect explanations feeding into a military strategy.[165]

Born of attempts to explain the pseudo-rationality of the violence and death of the First World War, Modernism "loosely" refers to "a radical yet paradoxically continuous break with the past."[166] Sparked by a litany of literary pieces from those having suffered through the terror of trench warfare, these veterans turned authors represented a disillusioned reaction to the violence of the war. Emerging from their pages were the contextualization of such experiences as those of Britain's "lost generation," those who fought and died in extraordinary numbers in the trenches along the Marne River. The modern literary agent drove the sense-making heuristics between societies and cultures of people, especially those in Europe, of a war that hopelessly fed its best and brightest to the annals of history.[167] However, despite the characterization of the violence of World War I as aimless and warrantless, there were real consequences for the world had Germany been victorious on the European continent.

As opposed to other approaches, the Modernist systematically approaches their world to understand and bring change to it. The Modernist approach aims to give voice to the margins and prevent the exclusion of ideas that could catalyze change.[168] Do not confuse giving voice to the marginal with Marxism's attempt to consolidate a global utopian movement from amongst the marginalized from within a class structure. The marginal here are the fringe thinkers, tinkerers, and others that drive jumps and shifts in knowledge from their efforts in scientific endeavors.[169]

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[165] Hatch, *Organization Theory*, 10.

[166] Sean Latham and Gayle Rogers, *Modernism: Evolution of an Idea* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 4.

[167] Azar Gat, *A History of Military Thought: From the Enlightenment to the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 653–654.

[168] Nancy Hartsock, "Rethinking Modernism: Minority vs. Majority Theories," *Cultural Critique*, no. 7 (1987): 190.

[169] Latham and Rogers, *Modernism*, 196–198.

The Modernist will try and bring these types of exploration of the unknown into the known as they seek solutions to complex problems. In this way, knowing is a process-oriented to an action.[170]

Reality for the Modernist is objective. It lies in the belief that reality is knowable as an independent object awaiting discovery. Reality is the interaction of how to think, how to compete, and how to adapt.[171] Accordingly, reality is known because it is categorizable.[172] Categorization extends from the discovery of clues in the world leading to the establishment of how the world comes together as a whole and is then made available for sense-making. For those looking to understand the world systematically in order to induce change, Modernism serves as the evolution of new ideas in pursuit of knowledge.

Accordingly, knowledge in the Modernist world is universal. The generation of knowledge comes from an empirical scientific approach involving developing hypotheses, testing them, and generalizing the results.[173] The universalization of knowledge extends from repeated replications of outcomes from tested hypotheses. Testing variables against each other validates the data that appears over and over as fact and provides assurances against drawing false conclusions from observed phenomena.[174] Knowledge derived in this way allows for decision-making from a disciplined, but flexible process; despite what could otherwise be incomplete or misleading knowledge.[175] There is a sense of assuredness provided by the validity of facts.

Accumulating knowledge through the mechanisms of scientific discovery conveys a certain social availability to the data produced. In this way, knowledge becomes socially available

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[170] Osinga, *Science, Strategy and War*, 86.

[171] Ibid., 79.

[172] Ibid., 86.

[173] Hatch, *Organization Theory*, 14.

[174] Ibid.

[175] Osinga, *Science, Strategy and War*, 82.

to all.[176] The convergence of data allows the strategist to predict and make attempts at controlling the world in which they exist. However, the resultant data is also accessible by adversaries hoping to contest the reliability and validity of data to resist the Modernist's attempt to categorize them.

The practice of using science to discover objective reality lends itself to the development of networks which also facilitate the spread of knowledge. Primarily, these networks consist of members of the scientific community. These members pursue interesting problems, especially those that might provide insight into the governance of human behavior, as attempts to uncover the universal laws guiding such behavior.[177] The problem for the Modernist is how to get to the root of a problem through validated casual explanations.[178] Science today can observe the seconds, minutes, hours, days, and years leading up to the execution of even a simple act, like pulling the trigger on a weapon.[179] As the scientific community pulls back the layers of an area of knowing such as cognition in the face of multifaceted, complex problems, they break down the phenomena under observation into buckets of knowledge.

From the pursuit of the categorization of knowledge, the scientific community develops increasingly new ways to deal with uncertainty and complexity. New sciences such as complexity theory, systems theory, complex adaptive systems, discussed below, provide creative new methodologies for the military practitioner to harness the known.[180] These new theories lend themselves to the development of military doctrine, which guides the actions of military forces across time and space.[181]

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[176] Ibid., 87.

[177] Roberta R. Greene, ed., *Human Behavior Theory and Social Work Practice*, 2nd ed. (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1999), 4.

[178] Hatch, *Organization Theory*, 10.

[179] Robert M. Sapolsky, *Behave: The Biology of Humans at Our Best and Worst* (New York: Penguin Books, 2018), 4–13.

[180] Osinga, *Science, Strategy and War*, 122.

[181] Ibid., 118–119.

Through a collection of quantifiable methods, the western strategist gains access to tools like the DIME and the ends, ways, means construct to bound reality and define knowledge. Constructs such as these provide an opportunity for the strategist to attempt to bring control to the chaotic aspect of war as they develop military strategies to tackle complex problems. Controlling the chaos of war requires the modernist to observe and measure a phenomenon to predict outcomes objectively.[182] The common themes of evolution and adaptation permeate the modernist approach.[183] Unlike Marxism, it is not looking to disrupt and usurp the dominant power structure to pursue a utopian end. Instead, the Modernist strategist pursues success as a continued existence under repeated and replicated methods ensuring survival. The Modernist's endeavor is to develop a sense of expectation, to predict outcomes. What is true is provable and repeatable.

Power

Unlike the other two perspectives of this paper, power for the modernist is quantifiable. It is useful to think of quantification as consisting of elements of resources such as population, geography, economic means, and military forces. Power for the modernist military practitioner is not only measurable, but it emanates from two places. In the first instance, power facilitates control as a means to contend with complexity. Quantifying power allows a certain concreteness to knowing, especially about the size and cumulative resources of large military forces.[184] The second form of power extends from its ability to synchronize and enable the ability to achieve, through violence, a final goal.[185] It is possible to touch, to measure, and most importantly, to know those elements of Modernist power.

Whether direct or indirect, hard or soft, power is about the ability to control. From enlightenment thinking extends the idea that creating knowledge is a linear process. However,

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[182] Hatch, *Organization Theory*, 58.

[183] Osinga, *Science, Strategy and War*, 80.

[184] Nye and Welch, *Understanding Global Conflict and Cooperation*, 46.

[185] Ibid., 45–46.

today's scientific pursuits, such as quantum mechanics, reveal there is non-linearity to the process; change extends in all direction. Additionally, change is not always in the direction intended by what the applied science predicts.[186] Non-linearity presents the idea the world is uncertain and therefore needs increasingly multifaceted responses to contend with non-linear, complex change. However, the Modernist remains tied to the idea that the universe is knowable through observation. Applying complexity theory, the idea rules remain that dictate the organization of even complex adaptive systems that demand simplicity, the Modernist can begin to contend with overcoming the perception of complexity.[187] It is what begins to unlock the mechanisms of control for the military planner.

Applying the capacity to control extends to a conversation about contextualization. Defining the relationship between the potential belligerents acting within a system is critical to understanding the dependencies between them arising in pursuit of an aim.[188] Enabling control requires contextualizing the relationships in relation to an end goal and understanding how the network is organizing itself in pursuit of that end. Control is about developing the anticipatory adaption within the system; the attempts to predict action and outcome. Possessing the ability to control, especially in the context of military power and primarily by means, distances mindless violence from the violence needed to prosecute a war to an end state.[189] Contextualizing violence by tying it to an end state, mitigates notions of senseless violence or wasted energy.

The second aspect of power for the Modernist approach lies in the capacity to synchronize critical elements of military power towards an end. Military power constitutes the competitive edge of a state's power. It is zero-sum and additive. The more the better, especially when considering military means. Military power is the comparative strength of an armed force to

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[186] Osinga, *Science, Strategy and War*, 126.

[187] Osinga, *Science, Strategy and War*, 124-134.

[188] Hatch, *Organization Theory*, 287.

[189] Freedman, *Strategy*, 86.

the enemy's armed forces. To this end, the modernist military planner is often looking to wield the accumulation of capabilities towards the decisive battle.[190] Thinking for the Modernist is about proportionality. The Modernist thinking about how to respond to the complexity of an enemy intent to employ military power possesses the requisite strength to respond with a decisive battle.

War

When it comes to war, the Modernist's logic is for control. Their prefence is for a confrontation to annihilate the opposition.[191] The interconnectivity of knowledge combined with the growing complexity of networks requires the Modernist to leverage science in the quest for universal principles to enable the total defeat of an enemy. If power is the leveraging of means to gain control of behavior, then war is the expression of control framed by quantifiable approaches which mitigate the unpredictability of conflict.[192] Modernist's desire to fight the war through a linear logic using organization schema such as the ends, way, means (EWM) construct. The EWM construct provides a navigable path, with benchmarks, to achieve the desired military aim.[193] A Modernist conception of war confronts an adversary with overwhelming military power to achieve an ultimate goal.

Warfare

The modernist approach aligns with current western strategic thinking and its reliance on systems theory. The EWM construct appears mechanistic, but when it interacts with complex adaptive systems, it begins to lose its coherence.[194] The answer for the Modernist thinker is to

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[190] Baylis, Wirtz, and Gray, *Strategy in the Contemporary World*, 231.

[191] Owen, "Modern Errors in Discussions of Strategy," 37.

[192] Vego, "Science vs. the Art of War," 65.

[193] Colin S. Gray, "So What! The Meaning of Strategy," *Infinity Journal* 6, no. 1 (Winter 2018): 5, accessed March 1, 2019, https://www.infinityjournal.com/article/198/So_What_The_Meaning_of_Strategy/.

[194] Gray, "Politics, Strategy, and the Stream of Time," 6.

snap a picture, to serve as a mental model, that represents the system.[195] The picture serves as an objective representation to mitigate doubt about the subjectiveness of reality. Representing a network as a mental model connects the Modernist's logic to weave together all of the various components of a military strategy.

The organizing principle of systems theory, which informs the techniques of warfare the Modern strategist adopts, is to provide theoretical mental models to aid the explanation, prediction, and controlling of phenomena.[196] It forces the "scientist" to observe complex interaction within a system as a matter of the whole, not separate unrelated pieces. From organizational understanding, patterns are detectable which enable insight into how the system acts. To see the organization of a system is to be able to begin to know it. Patterns are what allows the military planner to gain insight into where in the system to begin to act with intentionality to effect change.[197]

The proliferation of capabilities on today's modern battlefield increases the rate of change within the forces of complex adaptive systems. The acceleration on the battlefield restrains how much space the Modernist practitioner can afford to accumulate experience because resources are not unlimited. More and more, the Modernist will desire to develop forms of warfare whose organizing principles rely on universal principles of mathematics and physics which "enter into predictable, calculable operations."[198] However, neatly separating and universalizing knowledge into buckets comes with the risk of blurring the lines between the rightness and wrongness of human agency.

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[195] Paul Van Riper, "The Foundation of Strategic Thinking," *Infinity Journal* 2, no. 3 (n.d.): 4, accessed March 1, 2019, https://www.infinityjournal.com/article/60/The_Foundation_of_Strategic_Thinking/.

[196] Greene, *Human Behavior Theory and Social Work Practice*, 215.

[197] Osinga, *Science, Strategy and War*, 117.

[198] Bernd Hüppauf, "Experiences of Modern Warfare and the Crisis of Representation," *New German Critique*, no. 59 (1993): 74.

Morality

Justifying the moral rightness of a selected strategy exist in the examination of the consequences under a Modernist approach. Consequentialism holds a potential right or wrong action is a derivative of the collection and comparison of actions which produce a higher number of consequences.[199] If the rights add up to a greater value than the wrongs, then the Modernist can say with empirical certainty the action they are set to execute is morally right. This line of thinking keeps with the Modernist conceptualization of what is known is also universal and what is universal can be objectively quantified. What develops from the Modernist approach to morality under consequentialism are collections of categorizations to guide behavior. Specifically, what emerges is the doctrine of just war. The codification of behavior, especially behaviors found in the violence of war, traces through value-laden doctrines such as the Lieber Code, the Hague Conventions, and the current governing mechanics of the Law of Armed Conflict. Today's Modernist likes the constructs of laws, treaties, and conventions to guide behavior.

However, there is a downside to trying to capture morality in such objective terms. The downside is the stripping away of the metaphysical lattice humans attach so much meaning. When Nietzsche throws aside the entirety of the Christian moral system, he aims to imbue humanity with a new system that does not trap them in another subjective application of morality.[200] Nietzsche philosophy sits astride the boundaries of modernism and post-modernism. However, modernism serves Nietzsche's purpose, allowing him to strip away the Christian values through the end of the 19th century and begin to propose a new system that evolves morale behavior.[201]

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[199] David Fisher, *Morality and War: Can War Be Just in the Twenty-First Century?* (Oxford: UK: Oxford University Press, 2012), 135–136.

[200] Kathryn P. Parsons, "Nietzsche and Moral Change," *Feminist Studies* 2, no. 1 (1974): 58.

[201] Robert Gooding-Williams, "Nietzsche's Pursuit of Modernism," *New German Critique*, no. 41 (1987): 99.

The various moral codes of Modernism create a space "within which suffering and terror, can be experienced by the victim and located and spatially assessed by the viewer."[202] The objective pursuit of knowledge through scientific methods lends itself to an assumption that moral consciousness loses relevancy. However, taking a picture of a system, in time and space, invigorates moral consciousness between "the object and its representation."[203] The photographic image, the mental model, centers evidence as the documentation of emerging crisis. It forces the viewer to continue to decide the justification of an intentional act of violence on the system.

Expectations

What is a modernist approach to developing a military strategy? The short answer, it depends. Modernism is a movement that continually morphs into new forms.[204] The continuing adaptation and evolution of science press the modernist movement to cobble together powerful and innovative practices and ideas. Modernism is capable of pulling together disparate works of cultural expression from different areas into a coherence of action.[205] Through the deliberateness of the scientific method, Modernists strive to measure, analyze, and predict outcomes.

However, there is another step that separates Modernism. It often requires rattling cages and challenging supremacy of the dominant methodologies and models in current use to push the envelope of the possible. The literary forebearers of the Modernist movement in the wake of the First World War illuminated the problems of stale positional warfare that led to the senseless death of the best and brightest of the allied nations fighting the Germans.

While categorization is helpful to segregate knowledge, as facts, into neatly defined buckets of explanation, it also potentially inhibits the ability to think about those facts as interdependent. Segregation of facts creates arbitrary boundaries, leaving the strategist bound to

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[202] Hüppauf, "Experiences of Modern Warfare and the Crisis of Representation," 74.

[203] Hüppauf, "Experiences of Modern Warfare and the Crisis of Representation," 45.

[204] Latham and Rogers, *Modernism*, 207.

[205] Ibid.

bias and a sense that a specific category retains importance above all others. For the Modernist this is often a focus on accumulation of means to control instead of complementary efforts to develop means in coordination with ends.

The neuroendocrinologist, Robert Sapolsky uses the visual spectrum to demonstrate how artificial boundaries can serve as constraints. Color exists on a spectrum that does not include boundaries between colors. However, some cultures linguistically split the spectrum up, using different names for colors. According to Sapolsky, when showing two similar colors to someone, if the color-name boundary falls between the two colors, they overestimate the difference between the two. If the colors are in the same color-name boundary, the person underestimates the difference. It can lead to a loss of perspective that misses the completeness of a picture.[206]

Conclusion

This paper tackles the problem of a perceived deficiency of evolved epistemic cognition in the western strategist. Today's western strategist struggles with sensemaking in the world of strategy making because, from their perspective, the dominant one, everything looks similar. Power is about accumulating a mass of resources to assault an ultimate goal. War is about total defeat of an adversary; even if it is not. Warfare is systematic, accounting for rapid change and adaptation within a complex system and countering it with technology. Morality is a consequence of action. Everything is discoverable as part of the known universe, even in the face of another perspective that asserts something vastly different, like a rising China. China sees the world through its eastern tradition of Taoism and Confucianism, and Marxism influenced thinking.

Reliance on broad assumptions about how the world works creates the potential to suppress the understanding, recognition, and appreciation for how other approaches crystalize knowledge. Timothy Heath, writing about the predilection of western strategists to over analyze Chinese strategic military guidance, asserts the western strategist, observing China from the

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[206] Sapolsky, *Behave*, 6.

outside, is too quick to dismiss public policy statements by the ruling CCP. Instead, China observers proclaim there must be some top secret, hard to access, CCP policy document akin to the US National Defense Strategy (NDS) and National Military Strategy (NMS).[207] There is a sense that the Chinese would not be so simple as to publish their strategic intent publicly. There must be some other explanation; ignorance is too simple.

Similarly, in 1999, two colonels in the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) published a book titled *Unrestricted Warfare*. This type of warfare "transcends all boundaries and limits."[208] Their purpose was to undertake an examination of how to defeat a technologically superior US military establishment in the wake of its decisive victory in the 1991 war against Iraq. In the book, the authors lay out the path for how to move to a position of advantage in the world without taking on the military might of the United States. They promote ideas of international law, economics, and influence as some of the essential principles of their approach to warfare.

Throughout his book on strategic planning, Mintzberg repeatedly criticizes any methodology as the best way of planning. Part of the problem he says is an "absence of a widely accepted framework within which to discuss different forms of organization."[209] Efforts to single out a single hierarchal, centralized way of planning against a problem is a very modernist approach. Planners enjoy the appearance of an empirically based system that walks them to success. It is reflective of the desire to control. It is, according to Mintzberg, the tendency for the strategist to "favor position over perspective."[210]

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[207] Timothy R. Heath, "Why PLA Watchers Keep Missing Changes to China's Military Strategy," *American Intelligence Journal* 27, no. 1 (2009): 67.

[208] Qiao and Wang, *Unrestricted Warfare*, 213.

[209] Mintzberg, *The Rise and Fall of Strategic Planning*, 397.

[210] Ibid., 28.

The allure of *Unrestricted Warfare* for the current strategist community is it has all the appearance of the desired quantification of a military strategy. It assumes the book lays bare the plan for how China plans to challenge the United States for global dominance asymmetrically. There is no Taoist context to consider, no Marxist material or usage to fight over. Heath in his conclusions disparages the western strategist as showing "little inclination to delve into Chinese political writings, perhaps reflecting a general lack of interest in Marxism among China watchers overall."[211] Even a simple understanding of either a Confucianist or Taoist orientation would likely reveal the word 'unrestricted' immediately encounters problems if it is logically applied from an understanding of how cultural perspectives generate knowledge. The most dangerous force for the Taoist is war; especially war fought in an unrestricted environment where anything becomes everything, to exist without context. The same applies to taking warfare to represent the holism of a strategy. It becomes even more problematic when used interchangeably as both a strategy and an operational approach.

Pulling back the epistemological and ontological layers of a cultural approach to developing a military strategy is no easy task. However, it is essential to understanding how knowledge and reality communicate intent to those responsible for developing a military strategy. A military strategy "conveys a message to audiences hostile, friendly, and indifferent."[212] The encapsulation of the message is in how the strategist assembles the ideas of power, war, warfare, and morality. Communicating strategic intent to the adversary occurs from closing the gaps between how each actor understands each of those ideas.

Developing increased self-awareness aids expanding the epistemic cognition in the western strategist. It arms them with increased understanding not just of other perspectives, but how they can use the logic of another perspective to complement, counter, and when needed, to

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[211] Heath, "Why PLA Watchers Keep Missing Changes to China's Military Strategy," 70.

[212] Toshi Yoshihara and James R. Holmes, *Red Star over the Pacific: China's Rise and the Challenge to U.S. Maritime Strategy*, Rev. 2nd ed. (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2018), 29.

defeat it. The better a strategist understands the creation of knowledge in various contexts, the better able they can make informed decisions about who and what to believe given the multitude of challenges in the modern world. The better they can respond to an emerging adaption and evolution as two logics converge in the competitive space.

Serious climbers desire to check off a first ascent, a route no other climber has successfully climbed. First ascents are excursions into the unknown. Getting to the top is nothing, how a climber gets to the top matters above everything. A route up a granite face might appear to follow a system of easily climbable cracks when viewed from the ground. Needless to say, when the climber is leading up the route, the cracks could require a myriad of different techniques with different organizing principles. Climbing in these types of situations characterizes climbing at the sharp end. Most often, the lead climber will not know what transition to make until they get to the problem on the wall. Discovering the route to the top while leading the climb is what Mintzberg means when he talks of an emergence of a realized pattern that signals a departure from the deliberately planned effort that most often characterizes strategy making.

The western strategist struggles to look out at the world and their reflection because they assume the primacy of their assumptions about reality and knowledge. However, the goals remain the same, to summit the mountain peak. Understanding the assumptions behind how knowledge and reality define a world view becomes especially critical when learners need to assess the validity, certainty, reliability, source, and limits of their knowledge. It becomes especially critical when applied to the complex, ill-structured problems bounding the modern battlefield.

Today's complex problems require thinking equating to what Arendt referred to as "thinking without a banister." Based on her own experiences in thinking, through reflection, about the world, thinking without a banister is like an experience of walking up and down a

staircase without the support of a banister on either side.[213] According to Arendt, this type of thinking is a "world-withdrawn activity that depends on agreement with no one other than oneself."[214] Thinking without a banister is making strategy at the sharp end. Spending time in the learning space between Minztberg's deliberate and realized spheres of strategy, enables the military planner to learn what is emerging from the convergence of two opposing strategists' logic.

Looking back across history and the significant movements of strategic thought, and properly framing them from within their cultural context enables the strategist to interpret the emerging action. Assembling a military strategy that incorporates the meta-assumptions informed by how culture produces and contextualizes knowledge becomes increasingly challenging when the process encounters another cultural perspective. Which dominates? When it lacks clarity or is of such dominance that the only reflection the military practitioner sees reflected is their cultural frame, it is difficult to ascertain and draw conclusions about observed action. Only seeing yourself opens up gaps and reduces the effectiveness of a process of developing an opposing military strategy.

Complex systems are emergent. They are susceptible to change in any direction. Change emerges from within complex environments. Within the context of a military strategy, this creates requirements for the strategist first to recognize, and then to respond to the adaptation and evolution. Change in a Taoist system emerges from the shifting context between actors. Newly acquired socioeconomic awareness drives change within a Marxist system that emerges with unprecedented violence and chaos. Lastly, the problems of science drive adaptive and evolutionary change from a modernist system.

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[213] Hannah Arendt, *Thinking without Banisters: Essays in Understanding, 1954-1975*, ed. Jerome Kohn (New York: Shocken, 2015), 473.

[214] Ibid., xiv.

An individual's world view has an aim. It is to secure and protect a sense of who someone is, to pad the world with a sense of predictability.[215] These security images provide a sense of an internal cognitive defense system.[216] World view, predictability, and security images blunt the sharpening effects of emergent change. Strategy implies a well-thought-out, a rational, preplanned position that facilities control.[217] The downside for the military practitioner is to slip into false consciousness, to become an un-stabilized gimbal in the development of a military strategy.

Possessing the capacity to respond with spontaneity works to re-stabilize the gimbal. Spontaneity is an output practice wisdom, which consists of the three broadening ideas of theory, philosophy, and subjective experience. These three ideas represent and express knowledge about the human experience for the strategic thinker. They represent three potential stabilizers for the strategic thinker whose gimbal can no longer aid their course. As war remains a fundamentally human endeavor, expanding practice wisdom aids the awareness of the strategist's intuition in relation to other instances of epistemic cognition opening the door for the strategist to give expression to on-the-spot moves.[218] The strategic military practitioner possesses the capacity to refine and improve their strategy-making processes. He does this by recognizing emergent knowledge and gaining additional insight into the human experience as it relates to socially sanctioned violence.

Future investigations might do well to look into the interaction of post-modern thought and strategic logic. With the continued interest in autonomy and autonomous systems, how developing systems capable of learning absent human agency might enable Marxism's achievement of its final utopian plateau of communism also holds interest. Additionally, a close

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[215] Krill, *Practice Wisdom*, 21.

[216] Krill, *Existential Social Work*, 86.

[217] Ibid., 121.

[218] Krill, *Existential Social Work,*121.

examination of the CCP as an interaction of Taoist, Confucius, and Marxist philosophies make it possible for the party to retain control of its citizenry allowing them to focus energy outward might also be worthy of investigation. Lastly, an examination of the impact of culture on future artificial intelligence or autonomous systems and how culture could contribute to achieving political or military aims becomes increasingly crucial in the modernist context.

This paper pulled back the subcutaneous layers of three cultural perspectives, Taoism, Marxism, and Modernism. It examined the meta-assumptions that lend themselves to organizing the formulation of reality and knowledge, their epistemic layers. The strategist that can see between the epistemological gaps, the learning space of each approach, immediately gains an advantage in constructing knowledge and defining reality. Gained in the immediacy of 'knowing' is the capacity to work in the learning space between a deliberate and realized strategy. Awareness of the intricacies of the organizing principles of a strategic approach through increased practice wisdom provides a stabilizing force for a synthesis between opposing perspectives.

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