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## The Science of Military Strategy,

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## BOOK REVIEWS

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### AN ACCESSIBLE WINDOW INTO CHINESE MILITARY THOUGHT

Peng Guangqian and Yao Youzhi, eds. *The Science of Military Strategy*. Beijing: Military Science Publishing House, 2005. 504pp. \$40

This first English-language volume on strategy by China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) was translated by a team of experts at the Academy of Military Sciences from the original Chinese-language version (*Zhanlüexue*, 2001). Edited by two major generals with significant ability to shape PLA strategy as advisers to China's powerful Central Military Commission (CMC) and Politburo Standing Committee, this volume undoubtedly reflects elements of critical policy trends in Beijing and hence merits close examination by foreign researchers and policy makers. Since this book has deliberately been made accessible to an overseas audience, it is important to reflect on what message its English-language publication may be intended to convey.

The 2001 Chinese-language version is used to educate senior PLA decision makers, including those on the CMC, as well as officers who may become China's future strategic planners. Now in its fourth printing, it can be read along with a variety of other texts, such as the more operationally and tactically focused *Science of Campaigns* (*Zhanyixue*),

published by China's National Defense University in 2000, the better to understand actual PLA doctrine. The closest U.S. equivalent to these volumes collectively might be *Doctrine for Joint Operations* (Joint Publication 3-0).

Part One surveys China's historical experience and development of military theory. The authors describe the current age as an "era of sea," in which maritime states, like their predecessors, will employ Mahanian and other strategies to "actively develop comprehensive sea power" and "expand strategic depth at sea." Part Two offers Chinese perspectives on the laws and conduct of war. Chapter 9, on "Strategic Deterrence," deserves particular attention, as it clearly provides a rationale for many elements of the PLA's modernization program that have been overlooked by many foreign analysts. Part Three examines future warfare and the implications for China, including recent PLA experience and combat guidelines. Throughout the volume, the continuing relevance of the People's War is emphasized as a foundation of Chinese military strategy.

It is this third section that will be of greatest interest to Western scholars seeking insights into PLA thinking about China's strategic situation. The authors of this volume believe that China, both a land and a sea power, faces multifaceted strategic opportunities and challenges. Despite its eighteen-thousand-kilometer coastline, China is currently constrained by the world's longest island chain, centering on strategically, politically, and economically vital Taiwan. Taiwan is far from China's only disputed territory, however: "1,000,000 square kilometers" of maritime territory, "one ninth of China's national land territory," remains under contention. The authors also identify energy supply security as critical to China's national development. Their statement that the South China Sea possesses "rich oil reserves equivalent to that of [the] Middle East" conflicts with Western assessments, however, leaving the reader wondering about the true strategic underpinnings of Beijing's claims.

The authors foresee possible threats to China's "sovereignty, maritime rights, and great cause of reunification," threats that, should all other measures fail, may necessitate a defensive (and therefore inherently just) war on China's "borderlines, seacoasts, and air spaces." The resulting "high-tech local wars" may well require the PLA to confront a technologically superior adversary. Accordingly, the authors suggest emphasizing preemption; employment of a broad spectrum of military technologies, including asymmetric "trump card" weapons; and integration of civilian and military forces in missions (e.g., "guerrilla warfare on the sea") that incorporate political, economic, and legal

warfare. While this volume raises as many questions as it answers, it is nevertheless a welcome contribution to a vital field in which so little authoritative information is available.

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Howarth, Peter. *China's Rising Sea Power: The PLA Navy's Submarine Challenge*. New York: Frank Cass, 2006. 198pp. \$125

Peter Howarth, an Australian former diplomat and intelligence analyst, presents an excellent mix of strategic theory, political dynamics, and tactical detail in considering the Chinese submarine fleet. His treatment demonstrates a keen understanding of both parts of the phrase "politico-military strategy," and it is the type of thinking that Jeffrey Record of the Air War College recently opined is too often missing in the American community. Indeed, the book is a pleasure to read, if only because one gets to visit so many old friends in strategic theory, such as Alfred Thayer Mahan, Julian Corbett, Bernard Brodie, Hervé Coutau-Begarie, Raoul Castex, Andre Beaufre, René Daveluy, Colin Gray, Carl Döenitz, and Herbert Rosinski, as well as Mao Tse-tung, Deng Xiaoping, and Sun Tzu.

Like so many others who write about China's navy since the fall of the Berlin Wall, Howarth is inclined to make sensational claims on the subject, presumably thereby justifying the work and attracting attention. However, what distinguishes Howarth from so many others who have searched and found reasons to be alarmed at the conventional naval power of China is that he