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Sun Tzu's Art of War: The Modern Chinese Interpretation

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For the first time, we are offered insight into Rosinski's personality, his ambitions, and his lonely and bitter failures in his personal and intellectual life. Stebbins's book is the work of a friend seeking to make a modest monument to Rosinski. Despite the limitations inherent in such a venture, Stebbins has nonetheless succeeded in making a useful contribution by providing a firsthand contemporary appreciation of the man, linking him to the history of military and naval theory in the middle years of the twentieth century. These two publications are the basic tools with which future historians will eventually place Rosinski within the broader perspective of military and naval thought.

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Tao Hanzhang, *Sun Tzu's Art of War: The Modern Chinese Interpretation*. Translated by Yuan Shibing. New York: Sterling, 1990. 128pp. \$10.95

This book provides an interesting look at the way that Sun Tzu's philosophy is taught in the communist Chinese military school system. The author is a retired People's Liberation Army (PLA) general and "Long March" veteran who is currently an advisor to the Beijing Institute for Strategic Studies. This work is apparently a compendium of his earlier lectures on this subject. It is disappointing for a number of reasons, not least of which

is the predictable Marxist-Maoist interpretation of Sun Tzu's strategic concepts. It is emphatically *not* a substitute for the more scholarly and useful translation of Sun Tzu by the late Samuel B. Griffith, who has done an excellent job of placing both the man and his work in a proper historical and military context. His book has become the standard work on Sun Tzu for the U.S. military (*Sun Tzu: The Art of War*, Oxford University Press, 1971).

General Tao's work provides a commentary, illustrated with examples from Chinese history, on key concepts of Sun Tzu's *Art of War*. Unfortunately for the Western audience, the examples are not clearly explained and the accompanying maps, showing arrows that one presumes represent troop movements, do nothing to clarify them. Most likely the maps were taken from the teaching notes from which the book appears to have been produced, and it is possible that the circumstances of these ancient battles were understood well enough by General Tao's Chinese military students that a detailed explanation was unnecessary for them. This is not the case for Western readers, however, who must struggle with unfamiliar names and places to comprehend the points that General Tao is trying to make.

Praising Sun Tzu for his early "scientific" and "materialistic" attitudes, General Tao demonstrates how Sun Tzu's "primitive dialectics" were really in accord with modern "universal" (Marxist) concepts such as the "law of the unity of opposites."

He criticizes Sun Tzu for failing adequately to describe the "nature" of war (just or unjust), overemphasizing the importance of the military over the political leadership, and for being too rigid and mechanical in applying his principles. General Tao concludes that these faults ("backward or even reactionary views") were due to Sun Tzu's class status and the fact that his book was written in the interest of the emerging feudalistic class.

An appendix to General Tao's book provides a short and straightforward translation of Sun Tzu's *Art of War* essays; this is in vernacular English and is therefore easy to read. That in itself makes this book an excellent adjunct to, but not a replacement for, the Griffith text. As previously mentioned, the value of General Tao's book is not so much in his explanation of Sun Tzu's thought, but as an indication of how these thoughts are presented to modern Chinese military professionals.

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Dellios, Rosita. *Modern Chinese Defence Policy: Present Developments, Future Directions*. New York: St. Martin's, 1990. 256pp. \$55

Rosita Dellios, professor of international relations at Bond University in Australia, contends that the ongoing Chinese defense modernization does not spell an end to the Maoist concept of "people's war." Dellios argues that the people's war strategy will continue

to find new effectiveness, that the changing face of Chinese defense strategy is only cosmetically Western; its strategic features remain distinctly Chinese. The author posits that people's war under modern conditions is no mere human-wave response to armed aggression, but rather the strategy for psychological preemption of such aggression. A concept called "guerilla nuclear warfare" underpins the Chinese strategic approach.

Dellios has written in a clear and direct style. Despite its worthwhile portions, however, the book suffers from a major flaw which is so serious as to negate its positive aspects.

The author has failed to take into account the continuous changes that have been taking place in the Chinese domestic environment and in the international arena. The strategic shift in defense planning initiated in 1985 by Deng Xiaoping has not been factored into this study.

The key elements of the shift include reliance on a smaller professionally structured military force with a focus southward instead of to the north, and involvement in limited local wars instead of large scale conflicts.

The subsequent events in the Soviet Union intensified these trends, and all but did away with the massive offensive threat that the Soviet forces had posed to the Chinese heartland. These events hastened the shift and ultimately led to a deemphasis on a Soviet-initiated large scale war involving nuclear weapons. This scenario was one in which China