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ANALYZING TWO KEY POINTS OF THE HUAIHAI CAMPAIGN
USING SUN TZU'S THEORY OF NET ASSESSMENT

A Thesis Presented

by

JIMMY J. CHIEN

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts Amherst
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

May 2015

Chinese Language and Literature

ANALYZING TWO KEY POINTS OF THE HUAIHAI CAMPAIGN
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DEDICATION

To my family, fiancée, and friends. I wouldn't have made it this far without you.

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First and foremost, I want to thank God for my blessed life and for His strength, courage, and guidance.

Thank you Professor Schneider, for your years of mentorship as well as pushing me further into my academic pursuits. Thank you to all the professors and faculty of the Chinese Department, your support ever since my undergraduate years have propelled me to this point. My gratitude also extends to members of my committee, Professor Platt of the History Department and Lt Col Hagan, Professor of Aerospace Studies of the Air Force ROTC. As experts in your fields, your counseling proved invaluable to my thesis.

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ABSTRACT

ANALYZING TWO KEY POINTS OF THE HUAIHAI CAMPAIGN

USING SUN TZU'S THEORY OF NET ASSESSMENT

MAY 2015

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Directed by: Professor David K. Schneider

This thesis focuses on the Huaihai Campaign (Nov. 6 1948 - Jan.10 1949) in the Chinese Civil War (1927-1936, 1949-1950). This war involved the Republic of China's (ROC) Kuomintang Party (KMT) and the emerging Communist Party of China (CPC). Over the course of a few months and around one million combatants, the Communists pulled off a resounding victory dealing the final blow to the KMT which led to the CPC's governance over mainland China. This case study of two key turning points in the Huaihai Campaign is analyzed using Sun Tzu's five net assessments from *The Art of War*. Although the KMT appeared the much superior force on paper, they were dealt a decisive blow during the Huaihai Campaign. This thesis uses Sun Tzu's five net assessments to explain the root cause of KMT decision failings. The KMT failures stemmed from ignorance of the most basic and vital military axioms of assessing advantages and disadvantages before going into battle.

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CHAPTER I

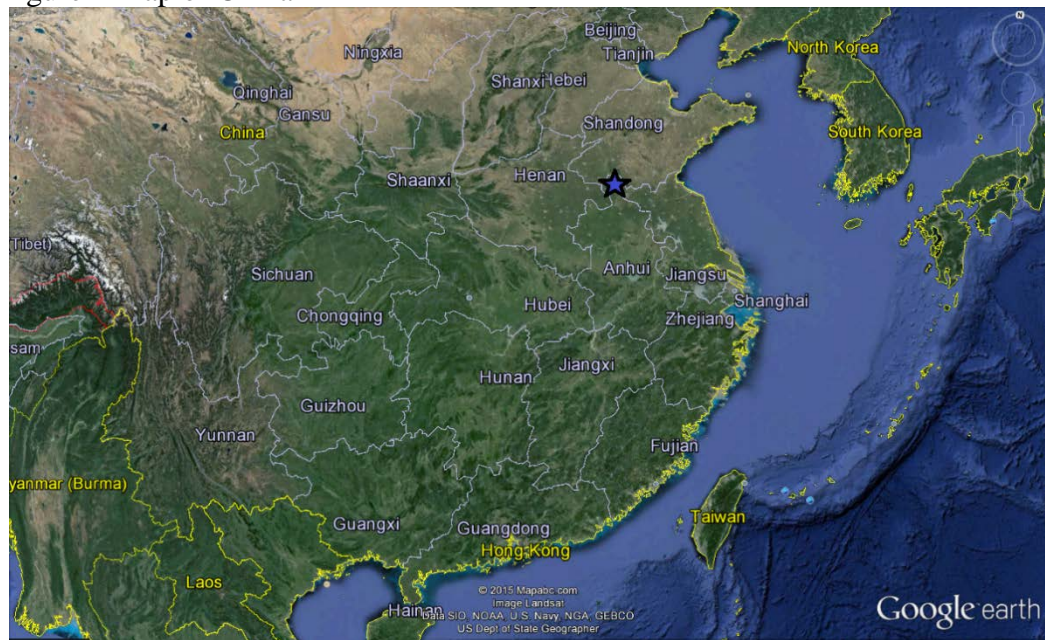
INTRODUCTION

The Chinese Civil War was an ideological conflict between the Nationalist Party (KMT), the ruling entity of the Republic of China (ROC), and those loyal to the newly emerged Communist Party of China (CPC) and their People's Liberation Army (PLA). The twenty year long war was the culmination of the ideological differences between KMT's nationalism and the CPC's communism. The civil war raged from August 1927 to December 1936. It was followed by a four year hiatus in which the KMT and CPC partnered together to form the Second United Front to counter the Japanese invasion. After a bloody end to the alliance the civil war continued again until May 1950 when the KMT along with their military and supporters retreated to the island of Taiwan.

Between November 1948 and January 1949 the tide of the war turned during the Huaihai Campaign. This pivotal battle became the deciding factor of the war and sealed the Nationalist's fate. During these months over a million soldiers met in and around the plains surrounding Xuzhou which resulted in the complete rout of Nationalist forces in the area.¹

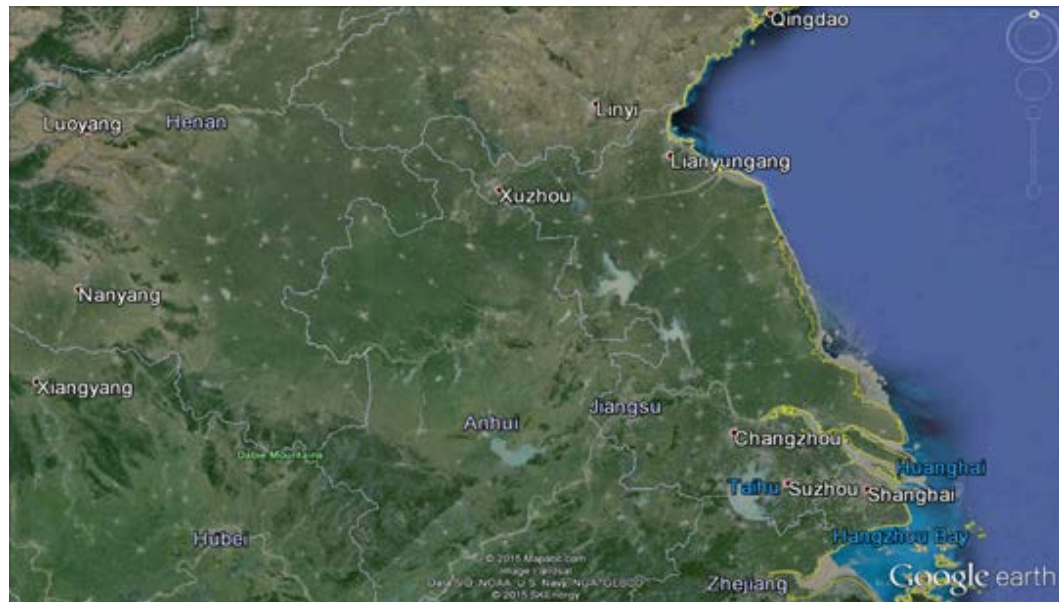
¹ Gary J. Bjorge, *Moving the Enemy: Operational Art in the Chinese PLA's Huai Hai Campaign*. Ft. Belvoir: Defense Technical Information Center, 2003, 1.

Figure 1 Map of China



Xuzhou is marked by the star (Source: Google Earth)

Figure 2 Xuzhou



Slightly zoomed in, Xuzhou and the surrounding area (Source: Google Earth)

This overwhelming defeat had huge implications. The CPC now controlled the majority of the country with the exception of the KMT capital of Nanjing and the southern provinces. The Nationalist military suffered a huge setback; originally had outnumbered and outgunned the PLA, this devastating loss swung the advantage to the

Communists. The once powerful Nationalist Army no longer had the resources to form a solid defensive front to repel the encroaching PLA, let alone launch a counter offensive in hopes to take back the country. The people, whose allegiance with the KMT were already waning, now saw the weakness of the Nationalists and became ever more willing to stand by the side of the CPC. The Nationalists also became powerless at the negotiating table; with total victory in sight, the Communists refused to accept anything less than that.

This decisive defeat was one that neither side foresaw. To make sense of the series of events that resulted in the destruction of the Nationalists' Xuzhou field armies, this thesis refers to Sun Tzu's *The Art of War* and its timeless principles. *The Art of War* focuses on assessing strengths and weaknesses. Sun Tzu begins the text with this topic and integrates it into the various chapters. To demonstrate this, this thesis includes passages from various chapters of *The Art of War* that point back to the importance of the assessments. Sun Tzu identifies five net assessment factors that are essential to achieving victory in battle. The application of these factors to a battle provides a framework for understanding why and how a battle is won or lost.

How did the professionally trained and U.S. supplied Nationalist Army succumb to the CPC's People's Liberation Army? To answer this question, this thesis analyzes two key turning points of the Huaihai Campaign with Sun Tzu's net assessments. When Sun Tzu's net assessments are applied to the two key turning points of the Huaihai Campaign, it is revealed that the root cause of Nationalist decision failings stemmed from ignorance of the most basic and vital military axiom of assessing advantages and disadvantages before going into battle.

This paper contains two thesis statements. The first is that the Nationalists might have been able to pull off a victory had they properly assessed the advantages and disadvantages of themselves and the Communists before going to battle. These key assessment factors are found in *The Art of War* and are applied to two major turning points of the Huaihai Campaign. By doing so, it pinpoints where exactly the Nationalist decision failings occurred.

The second thesis is that Sun Tzu's ideas and principles in *The Art of War* are far more than just a compilation of general truths and aphorisms. By looking closely at the original text, it reveals that *The Art of War* is a collection of dynamic principles able to be applied to any battle of anytime, on a strategic level and the operational level. To demonstrate its versatility and applicability, this thesis applies the principles of *The Art of War* to two key points in the Huaihai Campaign of the 1940s Chinese Civil War. One key point is analyzed on a strategic level, and the other on the operational level.

CHAPTER II

WHY USE SUN TZU AND THE ART OF WAR

This thesis, in some part, is influenced by “Sun Tzu at Gettysburg, Ancient Military Wisdom in the Modern World”, by Bevin Alexander. In the book, he states, “*The Art of War*, spells out universal principles that describe the nature of war, and these principles are still valid today...commanders who unwittingly used Sun Tzu’s axioms in important campaigns over the past two centuries were successful, while commanders who did not apply them suffered defeat...Sun Tzu’s principles can be applied to any military problem...Other leaders in other times discovered a number of these principles, but only Sun Tzu put together a comprehensive summary of the essential elements that make warfare succeed.” In his book, Alexander applies *The Art of War* to various battles to demonstrate how Sun Tzu’s principles are applicable. This thesis picks up where Alexander leaves off by providing a detailed analysis of a single battle, using *The Art of War* in its original text as a dynamic analytical tool to determine how the battle was won. Interestingly enough, no application of Sun Tzu to a Chinese battle has been done, and this thesis in a small part, strives to fill that void.

Sun Tzu did not formulate all the theories and strategies present in *The Art of War*. He accumulates what he and others observed and utilized, and codifies them into a readily available tool for leaders and decision makers to heed. The ideas present in *The Art of War* are not restricted to a concept of an ancient eastern method of warfare, but instead, are applicable to all warfare transcending time and space. To demonstrate the modern applicability of *The Art of War* this thesis gives a quick comparison of similarities in the U.S. military’s Campaign Planning Handbook with the ancient text.

The Handbook states that, the first step in campaign planning is to frame the operational area and environment in which future operations will occur, and to include an area for potential operations, and a surrounding area of influence where events may impact success of campaign objectives.² This is similar to Sun Tzu's *terrain*地形 chapter; in which it describes types of terrain and how it may impact the battle.

The Handbook continues by laying out key elements the commander and staff must understand to be fully prepared for a conflict. These elements are: political, military, economic, social, infrastructure, and informational systems. It is very similar to,

故經之以五事，校之以計，而索其情，一曰道，二曰天，三曰地，四曰將，五曰法

Therefore laying out the waging of war in five affairs, evaluate it by means of planning,

and seek out its real situation, the first is the way, second is heaven, third is earth, fourth

is the commander, fifth is method

The elements of: political, economic, and social all fall under the umbrella of Sun Tzu's *way*道. The military falls under *general*將, and the infrastructure and informational systems are components of *methods*法. Why are these factors so important to warfare? They are leverage points, key nodes, and linkages that may be acted upon to decisively influence the adversary's behaviors, capabilities, perceptions, and decision making.³ Assessment in these fields provide an overview of the opponent's advantages and disadvantages in the operational environment.⁴ As it states in the Handbook:

“Building an operationally focused net assessment is centered on developing a deep

² *Campaign Planning Handbook*. Philadelphia, PA: U.S. Army War College Department of Military Strategy, Planning, and Operations, 2008.17.

³ *Ibid.*, 29.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 17.

understanding of a potential or actual adversary⁵...Net assessment seeks to develop an understanding of the key relationships, dependencies, strengths and vulnerabilities within and between the adversary.”⁶

This assessment, combined with knowledge of friendly capabilities, allow the commander and staff to formulate a range of options from which decision makers can choose to achieve desired outcomes.⁷ Being able to assess the enemy’s overall strengths and weaknesses allow for proper estimation of the enemy’s abilities and limitations in accomplishing strategic and operational goals. This is almost an exact replica of one of Sun Tzu’s most iconic ideas,

知彼知己，百戰不殆

Know your enemy and know yourself, in one hundred battles there will be no danger

By analyzing and investigating the elements that contribute and affect warfighting capabilities, one can avoid or exploit strengths and flaws in the enemy. This assessment process is not an isolated idea attributed only to Sun Tzu. It is a universal thought that is capable of providing an intelligent hypothesis on the outcome of a battle.

The guidance Sun Tzu lays out in *The Art of War* is not a step by step instruction to be followed like footprints. Rather, it points toward the proper path and allows strategies and tactics to be fluid and mold to unique circumstances. Sun Tzu did not want the advice of *The Art of War* to make commanders rigid in their decision making, but instead, to understand that every conflict is different, thus requiring different solutions. Sun Tzu lays out the axioms of warfare but implores his readers to take heed

⁵ Ibid., 27.

⁶ Ibid., 29.

⁷ Ibid.

that every conflict is different and those unique aspects must be considered and examined to maximize chances of success.

Not only does the U.S. military still draw upon the wisdom of *The Art of War*, many scholars also believe in the modern relevance and application of the ancient book. In Samuel Griffith's *Sun Tzu: The Art of War*, the great British strategist and thinker, B.H. Liddell Hart, describes Sun Tzu as the most concentrated essence of wisdom on the conduct of war and believes that only Clausewitz is comparable, "The clarity of Sun Tzu's thought could have corrected the obscurity of Clausewitz...among all the military thinkers of the past...Sun Tzu has clearer vision, more profound insight, and external freshness."⁸ Those who look toward Sun Tzu for guidance are innumerable. Some military historians believe that Napoleon applied the philosophies from the ancient Chinese text into his planning. Robert Cantrell, author of, *Understanding Sun Tzu on the Art of War*, suggests that Napoleon carried a copy of Sun Tzu's work with him on campaigns.⁹

Mark McNeilly, a lecturer at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill and author of two books on Sun Tzu published by Oxford University Press states, "the lessons [*The Art of War*] has to teach strategists, are as deep and meaningful today as they were two thousand years ago."¹⁰ It is relevant today because Sun Tzu not only lays the foundation for warfare, but statecraft; not only military strategy but grand strategy. According to the United States Department of Defense, the strategic environment today and in the future cannot be addressed simply with military power

⁸ Samuel B. Griffith, *The Art of War*. New Illustrated. London: Watkins Pub., 2005. 106.

⁹ Robert L. Cantrell, and Lionel Giles. *Understanding Sun Tzu on the Art of War the Oldest Military Treatise in the World*. Arlington, VA: Center for Advantage, 2003. 4.

¹⁰ Mark McNeilly, *Sun Tzu and the Art of Modern Warfare*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001. 5.

alone. Military power coupled with the Nation's other instruments of statecraft will continue to be absolutely necessary.¹¹

Sun Tzu identifies and codifies many operational practices that are regarded as maxims for all types of conflicts today. He provides guidance on deception, when to advance and when to withdraw, when to attack and when to defend, the disposition of forces, discipline, and intelligence.¹² Stephens and Baker, authors of *Making Sense of War: Strategy for the 21st Century*, on what Sun Tzu provides to the modern era, says, “strategists contemplating the ends ways means construct at any intensity of conflict could not wish for more illuminating wisdom.”¹³

According to the late Dr. Michael Handel, an expert on strategic theory, nature, and operations of war, the longevity of *The Art of War* may be attributed to two main factors. Firstly, the underlying logic of human nature, which encompasses their political actions, has not changed throughout history. Thus, the axioms Sun Tzu presents, no matter how antiquated it may seem, will always be applicable. Secondly, modern warfare has become increasingly complex and modern technological developments adds a new dimension of uncertainty. Consequently, this obscures the fundamental principles of strategy that constructing the type of relatively simple framework which sufficed in the pre-industrial age is now impossible.¹⁴

This is why Handel staunchly believes that, “Strategists are therefore fortunate to have at least [one] enduring classical text: Sun Tzu's *The Art of War*...for it examines the

¹¹ DoD, *The National Military Strategy of the United States of America*, Washington DC: The Department of Defense, 2011, 2-5.

¹² Orlando Critzer, “21st Century Strategy Needs Sun Tzu.” *Strategy Research Project*, 2012, 10.

¹³ Alan Stephens, and Nicola Baker. *Making Sense of War: Strategy for the 21st Century*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006. 28.

¹⁴ Michael I. Handel, *Masters of War: Classical Strategic Thought*. 3rd Rev. and Expanded ed. London: F. Cass, 2001, 23.

immutable qualities of human nature as well as the constantly changing material and technological dimensions of military conflict.”¹⁵ He continues to argue for the validity and the need for *The Art of War* in the modern era, “Ultimately, the logic and rational direction of war are universal and there is no such things as an exclusively ‘Western’ or ‘Eastern’ approach to politics and strategy; there is only an effective or ineffective, rational, or non-rational manifestation of politics and strategy.”¹⁶

The Art of War identifies many operational practices recognized as maxims today. Sun Tzu does not invent the principles. He observes, utilizes, and records them for leaders and strategists of the past and present. It offers a refreshingly simple and unique perspective on overly complex issues such as war, strategy, strength, leadership, and the use of intelligence. As Mr. Li-Sheng Arthur Kuo, writing for the U.S. Army War College, points out, “In our modern era of conflict, it requires broader flexibility of thoughts, deeper exploitation of intelligence, and wiser indirect approach in our preferred but appropriate war theory. All these can be found in the writing of Sun Tzu.”¹⁷

It is important to not nail down the ideas in *The Art of War* to one finite definition. We lose out on the majority of the meanings Sun Tzu tries to imply when that is done. This ancient text is a collection of principles that are dynamic enough to fit and advise on any battle regardless of time or space.

Although there are many capable military strategists which this thesis could draw from, Sun Tzu and *The Art of War* offers the clearest and most concise option. *The Art of War* is far from a mere collection of definitions and aphorisms with little to no value in

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Handel, *Masters of War*, 24.

¹⁷ Li-Sheng Arthur Kuo, “Sun Tzu’s War Theory in the Twenty First Century.” *Strategy Research Project*, 2007, 15.

modern warfare. It codifies observations and strategies, and organizes it into a set of dynamic principles. *The Art of War* offers the best analytical tool for this thesis because of Sun Tzu's guidance for dynamic assessment analysis. *The Art of War* presents this in the form of the five net assessments, which this thesis translates and discusses in the next chapter.

CHAPTER III

THE FIVE NET ASSESSMENTS OF *THE ART OF WAR*

始計

The Beginning Plans

孫子曰：兵者，國之大事，死生之地，存亡之道，不可不察也。

Sun Tzu said: warfare, it is a major affair of the state, the realm of death and life, the way of existence and nonexistence, it cannot not be examined.

故經之以五事，校之以計，而索其情，

一曰道，二曰天，三曰地，四曰將，五法。

Therefore laying out the waging of war in five affairs, evaluate it by means of planning, seek out its real situation. First is the way, second is heaven, third is earth, fourth is the general, and fifth is method.

道者，令民與上同意，可與之死，可與之生，而不畏危也。天者，陰陽，寒暑，時制也。地者，遠近，險易，廣狹，死生也。將者，智，信，仁，勇，嚴也。法者，曲制，官道，主用也。凡此五者，將莫不聞，知之者勝，不知者不勝。

As for the way, it is the causing of people to do things, they can with it die, they can with it live, and not be afraid of danger.

As for heaven, it is the yin and the yang, the seasons, and the system of the times.

As for earth, it is about far and near, dangerous and easy, wide and narrow, the terrain will bring you death or life.

As for generals, it is about wisdom, credibility, humanness, courage, and disciple.

As for method, it is the military organization, the management of officers and officials, and the management of resources.

In all cases with these five factors, as for generals, there are none of them who have not heard of this, those who understand will be victorious, and those who don't understand will not be victorious.

故校之以計，而索其情。曰：主孰有道，將孰有能，天地孰得，法令執行，兵眾孰強，士卒孰練，賞罰孰明，吾以此知勝負矣。將聽吾計，用之必勝，留之；將不聽吾計，用之必敗，去之。

By means of planning warfare, and in those conditions identify its true nature. The saying: who is the master of the way, of the generals who is able, as for weather and terrain who has it, as for methods and commands which side practices it, whose army is stronger, whose soldiers are well trained, as for rewards and punishment, who can see it clearly. The general that listens to my counsel, if you use that general you will surely be victorious, keep that general; the general that does not listen to my counsel, if you use that general you will surely be defeated, dismiss that general.

計利以聽，乃為之勢，以佐其外；勢者，因利而制權也。

Calculate advantage by listening to these things, only then can you assess the dynamic configuration of power,¹⁸ and then assist the exterior; as for the dynamic configuration, it relies on it in order to control the balance.

兵者，詭道也。故能而示之不能，用而示之不用，近而示之遠，遠而示之近。利而誘之，亂而取之，實而備之，強而避之，怒而撓之，卑而驕之，佚而勞之，親而離之。攻其無備，出其不意，此兵家之勝，不可先傳也。

As for warfare, it is the way of deceiving your enemy. Therefore able and yet reveal you are unable, able to employ something but reveal you are unable, be close but show you

¹⁸ Translation of “dynamic configuration of power” from Professor Schneider.

are far, when far show you are close. When it is to your advantage, entice the enemy, when there is disorder take advantage of it, when they are ready, prepare for it, when they are strong, avoid them, when they are angry, agitate them, when they are humble, make them arrogant. When they are at leisure, make them toil, when they have close relations, scatter them. Attack their not preparedness, go after their not expecting-ness, this is the victory of the military specialist, it cannot in advance be passed on.

夫未戰而廟算勝者，得算多也；未戰而廟算不勝者，得算少也；多算勝，少算不勝，而況於無算乎？吾以此觀之，勝負見矣。

During the time before war the one who wins the temple calculations, is the one with more sticks; during the time before war the one who loses the temple calculations, is the one with less sticks; the one with many sticks win; the one with less sticks lose, how much more so when there are no sticks? I use this to observe the net assessment, if I use this to observe it, then victory or defeat can be foreseen.

The Beginning Plans 始計 is the first chapter of *The Art of War*. Sun Tzu purposefully places this at the start to further ingrain the importance of planning and preparation. He sets the reason and content of this book in the opening line: the implications of war are fatal for the men who fight and the political organ that dictates the fighting, thus it is not a matter to be taken lightly. To assist in war preparations, Sun Tzu identifies a five part assessment analysis: the way, heaven, earth, general, and method.

The way is a part of the political entity that engages in war. It is that organization's purposes and values. These are important for strategic alignment of action and achieving maximum compliance from its forces. The way is also the mission statement or ideology of a given body that can inspire fear or belief.

Heaven is the environmental factors that no one explicitly controls. Conditions such as climate, season, and weather all fall under the umbrella of heaven. One cannot command at will these elements, but one can manipulate it for an advantage. Despite these factors not directly aiding or harming a particular side, if heaven is not taken into consideration in war planning, disastrous results may ensue.

Earth refers to the situation on the ground, positioning of troops, and the geography of the battlefield. One can control and utilize these factors for an advantage. An army's position on the battlefield can be chosen by its commander; if it becomes disadvantageous, they have the ability to move to another location. Advantages such as the high ground can also be controlled by actively pursuing and holding such areas.

The general not only refers to the decision maker himself but also their ability to make the decisions. There are a number of factors to consider about the leader. In terms of wisdom, are they knowledgeable? Do they have good judgement and is able to make quick decisions? In terms of trust, do they inspire trust among the troops? Can they themselves be trusted? Do they trust their subordinates? In terms of compassion, do they take care of their people? Do they care about the price of victory? In terms of bravery, are they reckless? Do they take calculated risks? Do they inspire bravery and are their people willing to fight for them? Lastly, in terms of discipline, are they themselves well disciplined? Do they effectively enforce discipline among their troops?

The last of the net assessment elements is methods. This encompasses a military force's technology and warfighting doctrine. In terms of technology, one must look at what is available, how effective it is, and how well it is used. One must assess both quantity and quality of an army's tools and weapons. Furthermore, in the discussion of

methods, it is important to take heed of how an army fights and what strategic guidelines they tend to follow.

Sun Tzu believes that by calculating and understanding these advantages and disadvantages, one will be able to determine and utilize the *shi*勢. What is *shi*? There is no one true English definition of this word although many scholars try to do so by translating it as: power, force, influence, momentum, or circumstance. Although *shi* does have these individual meanings, at the same time, it also encompasses all these definitions as well as none of these definitions. The best and truest interpretation of *shi* may be, “the dynamic configuration of power”.¹⁹

Sun Tzu illustrates it as a combination of the five assessment factors in the broadest sense. He perceives it as the kinetic and potential energy within warfare and statecraft. *Shi* is an ever changing shape, or form, that the five net assessment factors molds. In other words, it is the advantages and disadvantages the dynamism of Sun Tzu’s assessment principles creates. By limiting *shi* to a single definition, we miss a large portion of what Sun Tzu tries to illustrate. The concept of *shi* is a reoccurring theme in *The Art of War*, it is the unifying factor for Sun Tzu’s principles and theories. Consequently, it reappears throughout this thesis as an anchor rooting Sun Tzu’s dynamic assessment.

Chapter one concludes with a description of the temple calculations. For every advantage one side holds, they are awarded a divination stick; holding more sticks means more advantages. Hypothetically speaking, more advantages means a greater chance of victory. By understanding what factors are in play, one can make an educated estimate

¹⁹ This definition is provided by Professor Schneider.

on who could win a conflict, how it could be won, and at the conclusion, determine why it is won.

The analysis present in this thesis may seem repetitive at times. However, if one examines *The Art of War*, it is evident that Sun Tzu repeats himself throughout the text. The dynamism of his theories assesses everything thoroughly and intertwines it with the other theories within *The Art of War*. Because this thesis utilizes Sun Tzu and *The Art of War*, the analysis process mirrors the repetitive nature present in the ancient text.

The strategies and ideas in *The Art of War* are not linear. Contrary to popular belief, everything in *The Art of War* intertwines with, and is reliant on, theories present before and later on in the text. It is also largely dependent on the particular situation at hand. A close reading and understanding of Sun Tzu in its original text devoid of modern commentary reveals a collection of complex and dynamic principles that applies to any battle of any time.

CHAPTER IV

THE FIVE NET ASSESSMENTS OF THE KMT AND CPC

In this chapter, this thesis applies Sun Tzu's net assessment to the Nationalist Army and the Communists' People's Liberation Army (PLA). This allows for the appraisal of each sides' strengths and weaknesses, and the determination of who the *shi* favored. According to Sun Tzu, a hypothetical victor can be determined without even fighting a battle. All five factors in the net assessment are explored: way (political), heaven (weather), earth (geography), general, and method (technology and doctrine). Although on the superficial level it seems evident which side holds the *shi*, it is not until a closer analysis that reveals a different story.

The Way 道

The KMT's political structure was stricken by internal factionalism and rampant corruption. Territories under their rule had very negative and unpopular views of the Nationalists.²⁰ This led to many people looking at the newly emerged Communist Party in a positive light.

KMT attempts to reduce the CPC's influence failed consistently. While the KMT took control of city after city, the CPC were able to garner mass support from the countryside. Inadvertently, the KMT placed more political and financial burden on themselves by holding the urban areas while the Communists grew in strength. There were many protests and activism against the KMT, and their unrelenting methods to suppress such demonstrations only pushed the populace towards the Communists and

²⁰ Bjorge, *Moving the Enemy*, 118.

their national revolutionary cause.²¹ While the Nationalist government was bogged down with these various domestic issues, the Communists bided their time and developed a strong power base in the rural and northern areas. Additionally, through the help of their Soviet comrades who provided them with advisers, weapons, and equipment, the CPC became a force to be reckoned with.²²

The Communists' organizational structure as a whole was also more effective than the Nationalists. The CPC ensured that the party, government, and army were unified and strived for a common goal. Meanwhile, the Nationalists had separate agendas for their party, government, and army. By the time of the Nationalist strategy conference in Nanjing in August 1948, where they deliberated on this issue and sought to fix it, it was already too late. The Nationalists finally decided to organize all their efforts for a total war, but the Communists had been doing that from the very start. Thus, this sudden shift in direction could not take the advantage away from the Communists.²³

The *shi* favored the Communists in the political realm of Sun Tzu's net assessment. The largest benefit the KMT had was the assistance of the United States through advisers, money, and a huge cache of weapons and equipment. However, they suffered greatly from domestic affairs, continued military losses and dwindled public support. The Communists on the other hand, were not burdened with internal unrest, which allowed them to focus their time and efforts on the civil war.

Heaven 天

²¹ David Priestland, *The Red Flag: Communism and the Making of the Modern World*. London: Penguin, 2010, 266.

²² Dieter Heintz, *The Soviet Union and Communist China 1945-1950: The Arduous Road to the Alliance*. Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 2004, 153.

²³ *Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun quaguo jiefang zhanjeng shi* [The History of the Chinese PLA's War to Liberate the Entire Country], Wang Miaosheng, Beijing: Junshi kexue chubanshe, 1997, vol. 4, 23-24.

The factor of *heaven* 天 that greatly impacted the battlefield was weather. The Huaihai Campaign took place from November 6th to January 10th. During these winter months the temperature dropped down to 30 degrees Fahrenheit and could be as warm as the upper 50's.²⁴ This may not seem like a severe climate, but the Nationalist Army mostly comprised of soldiers from southern China where 50's was as cold as it got.²⁵ Thus, they were not ready for such a temperature drop.

Precipitation also impacted the area of operations. The China central plain was a very rural environment with the majority of the roads being nothing but dirt paths. Whenever it rained, the roads became virtually non-traversable. Four days of clear weather might be required after a heavy rain before normal vehicular traffic could resume.²⁶ Additionally, due to poor drainage, the roads were often made weak and deteriorated by water seeping under them from neighboring fields.²⁷ This resulted in logistical nightmares for the KMT who relied on heavy trucks driving on these poor roads to transport troops and supplies to the front.

Contrary to the Nationalists, due to their lack of mechanized modes of transportation, the Communists relied on humans and draft animals for logistics. Prior to the start of the Huaihai Campaign, the Communists had around 150,000 civilian workers attached to the units.²⁸ In anticipation of the need for a consistent supply chain, they expanded their logistics network to implement over five million civilian laborers to

²⁴ "China Meteorological Administration." China Meteorological Administration. Accessed October 24, 2014. <http://www.cma.gov.cn/en2014/>.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Borge, *Moving the Enemy*, 98.

²⁷ General Headquarters, Far East Command, Military Intelligence Section, *Military Geography of China* (Tokyo: Far East Command, December 1947), 13.

²⁸ *Zhongguo junshi renwu cidian* [Dictionary of Chinese Military Figures]. Beijing: Kexue jishu wenxian chubanshe, 1988., 23-24.

transport supplies and equipment to the front.²⁹ Although this method was slow, it gave a great deal of flexibility and reliability over the Nationalists. While the KMT were dependent on trucks driving on less than decent roads, the Communists had a steady supply line that could move to wherever they were needed regardless of road conditions. As for *heaven*天, the *shi* leaned toward the Communists' advantage.

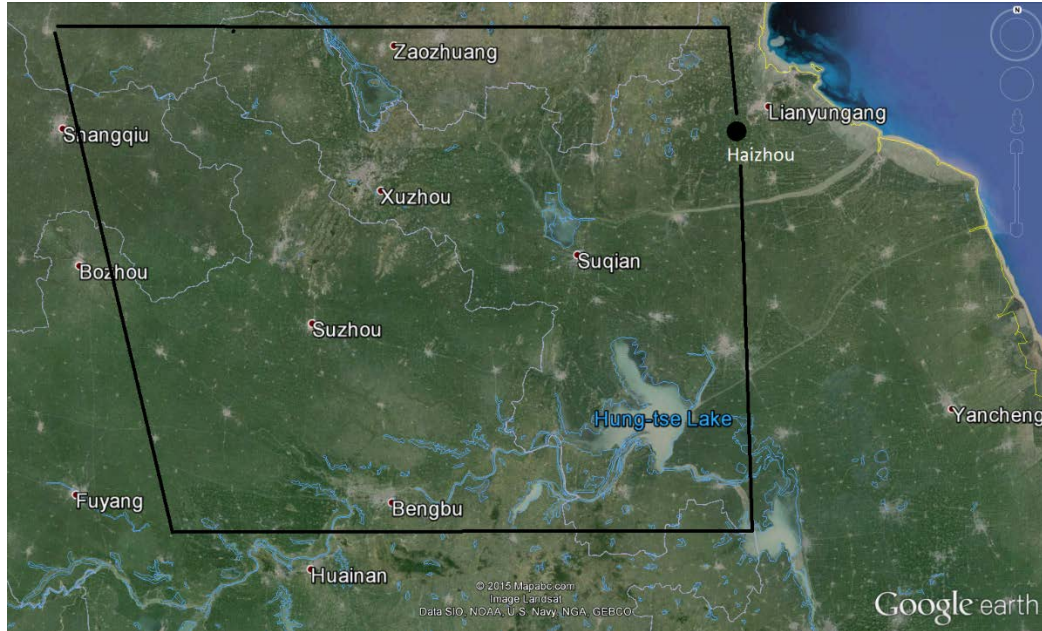
Earth 地

Although the geography of the battlefield cannot be entirely controlled, locations of battles can be chosen and the terrain can be manipulated in the forms embankments and trenches. As previously mentioned in the research, the Huaihai Campaign took place on the China central plains, more specifically the southeastern part of the great alluvial plain formed by the Yellow River. The area of operations stretched from Haizhou in the east to Shangqiu in the west, and from Zaozhuang in the north to Bengbu in the south.³⁰

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Borge, *Moving the Enemy*, 97.

Figure 3 Huaihai AOR



The Huaihai Campaign's area of operations (Map Source: Google Earth)

In the north central area there was an unconnected chain of hills that ran east to west. These hills generally had steep slopes and often rose dramatically from the surrounding plains to heights of several hundred feet.³¹ In the east, the vast plain was as flat as it could get. Hongze Lake, the large lake southeast of the campaign area was only 5 meters above sea level. At Guzhen and Bengbu, 174 miles from the coast, the elevation was only 20 meters.³² In 1947, U.S. Far East Command conducted a research on the geography of the area and concluded that the entire plains area south of Haizhou was poorly drained with ditches, canals, and small rivers [which] created serious barriers to movement.³³

The geography afforded different advantages and disadvantages to both sides. The terrain gave the Nationalists an edge on defense, firepower, and air

³¹ Bjorge, *Moving the Enemy*, 98.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ General Headquarters, 2.

support. While maintaining a defensive posture, the flat landscape gave defenders a good line of sight which made it easier to direct their firepower to the proper locations. Additionally, the attackers had to advance through miles of open ground with nothing to cover behind. The plains were also devoid of forestry which made it easy for the Nationalist Air Force to conduct aerial reconnaissance and air support.

At the same time, the flat terrain allowed the Communists to fight their favored method of warfare: mobile. They knew the Nationalists held a distinct technological advantage over them thus they avoided any head on battles. Instead, they were able to traverse the campaign area at unmatched speeds, and encircled and isolated Nationalist forces as they saw fit.³⁴

On the superficial level, the central plains offered the Nationalists an edge over the Communists. The landscape provided phenomenal field of vision, which in theory, allowed the Nationalists to utilize their firepower much easily. However, this was not the case. Their tanks were used sparingly and mostly as infantry support; their artillery was spread out, scattered among the divisions, and could not bring concentrated fire to the battlefield.³⁵

On the other hand, the Communist forces were able to take full advantage of the terrain. They effectively maneuvered through the plains to achieve positional advantages which allowed them to surround and cut off Nationalist forces from supplies and reinforcements.³⁶ Although the Nationalists were very capable at fighting defensive battles, without supplies and relief, their defenses eventually fell. The *shi* fluctuated between the two sides, but the Communists took advantage of it when it truly mattered.

³⁴ Bjorge, *Moving the Enemy*, 1.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 111.

³⁶ Bjorge.

The General 將

The Communist campaign headquarter was headed by Commander Chen Yi and his Political Commissar Deng Xiaoping. Chen Yi commanded the Central Plains Field Army (CPFA) and the East China Field Army (ECFA), led by Generals Liu Bocheng and Su Yu respectively.³⁷

The Nationalist Army was commanded by Chiang Kai-shek, the Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces as well as the president. Under him overseeing campaign operations was Gu Zhutong, the Chief of the Supreme General Staff. Under him was the Xuzhou Bandit Suppression Headquarters commanded by General Liu Zhi and his deputy, General Du Yuming. The headquarters had oversight of the 2nd, 7th, 13th, and 16th Army, led by generals: Qiu Qingquan, Huang Baitao, Li Mi, and Sun Yuanliang respectively. Not included in this command was the 12th Army marching from Queshan in the west to Xuzhou; it was led by General Huang Wei and under the jurisdiction of the Army Supreme Command in Nanjing.³⁸

The Communist and Nationalist commanding officers were equals in terms of professional military education. Almost all of these men were indoctrinated through Chinese military academies such as the famous Whampoa Military Academy. Others, in the years prior to the establishment of the Republic of China, received their military education in the Soviet Union, Germany, and Japan. But, military education through classroom mediums do not matter much in the live fires of battle. In terms of battle experience, both sides again were comparable. Since the Revolution of 1911, the army

³⁷ Zhonggong zhongyang dangshi ziliao zhengji weiyuanhui [Chinese Communist Party Central Committee's Committee for the Collection of Party Historical Material], *Huaihai zhanyi* [The Huaihai Campaign] (Beijing: Zhonggong dangshi ziliao chubanshe, 1988), vol. 1, 50.

³⁸ Bjorge, *Moving the Enemy*, 109.

had been in constant combat operations, either fighting the regional warlord armies or the Imperial Japanese Army.³⁹

However, there was an issue that plagued the Nationalist command structure. Factionalism within the Nationalist Army led to cliques being formed based on regional backgrounds, association within the Whampoa Military Academy, and shared experiences on the battlefield.⁴⁰ This led to resentment and poor cooperative among the officer corps. In an effort to combat this, Chiang Kai-shek constructed an over centralized command structure in which almost everything had to be reviewed and approved by him. But this created other problems, especially for the field commanders; they lost valuable advantages in time and maneuverability due to the wait period for Chiang's approval. This resulted in contradictory and harmful orders and it became a recurring issue throughout the campaign that led to disastrous results.⁴¹ Due to Chiang's micromanagement, the *shi* of *the General* 將, favored the Communists.

Method 法

The last component of the net assessment is technology and doctrine. The Nationalist Army held a distinct advantage in terms of technology. Aided by the United States, the Nationalists were able to field more modern equipment than the Communists, such as tanks, artillery, and heavy trucks. They also had a precursor to a navy, which allowed them to bring firepower and logistics over the water. They also had a small modern air force that wielded superiority in the skies.⁴² As for the Communists, they did

³⁹ Ibid., 118.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Du Yuming, "Huaihai zhanyi shimo" [The Huaihai Campaign from Start to Finish], The Historical Materials Research Committee of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, Beijing: Wenshi ziliao chubanshe, 1983, 12.

⁴² Bjorge, *Moving the Enemy*, 103.

not have many technological assets. Much, if not all, of their weapons and equipment were provided by the Soviets, left behind by the Japanese, or captured from the Nationalists. They were nowhere near comparable to the Nationalist Army in terms of technology.

The doctrines of both the Nationalists and Communists molded to fit each sides' advantages. Due to their technological advantages, the Nationalists created a doctrine that advocated for head on positional warfare. The Communists, less mechanized with much less firepower, refined their doctrine to preach mobility, quick decision making, and avoidance of frontal assaults. It is difficult to judge which doctrine was better because each was tailor made to fit their fighting style and advantages.

Listed below are the numbers each side brought to the battlefield. The ECFA's 15 infantry columns and Special Type Columns contained around 360,000 soldiers.⁴³ The CPFA's seven infantry columns contained about 150,000 soldiers.⁴⁴ A 'column' of the PLA was equivalent to a U.S. Army Corps in terms of size and function. They were the largest tactical units used to conduct maneuver at the operational level and usually contained two to three divisions ranging in size from 20,000 to 30,000.⁴⁵ There were also various regional forces attached to these field armies that brought the total strength of the Communist regular forces to around 600,000.⁴⁶

The Nationalist armies totaled about 800,000 troops.⁴⁷ It appeared that the Nationalist held the numbers advantage but a closer analysis revealed it was not the case. The Communists had a ready reserve of 500,000 from their regional militia in

⁴³ *Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun zhanshi*, 267.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ Liu Zhengxiang, *Di liushisi jun*, 127.

⁴⁶ *Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun zhanshi*, 267.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

addition to their 600,000 regular troops.⁴⁸ Thus, when the fighting started, they had a reservoir of soldiers to compensate for the loss of men while the Nationalists did not have this luxury. Additionally, more than five million civilians were recruited to form a logistics system that kept the PLA field armies well supplied.

As for technology, the Nationalists held a significant advantage over the Communists. The Nationalists' artillery outnumbered the PLA 2-to-1, and with more than 200 American M3A Stuart light tanks, they outnumbered the PLA 10-to-1. They also possessed a small modern air force with complete air superiority.⁴⁹ Hypothetically speaking, at the time of the Huaihai Campaign, the Nationalists could have put 80 fighters, 40 bombers, and 40 transports into the air around Xuzhou.⁵⁰ Although they were uncontested in the skies, the lack of airfields limited their ability to airlift troops and supplies. Xuzhou was the only city in the campaign's area of operations to have a functioning airfield, the next closest was 140 miles away in Nanjing.

The Communists were well aware of their technological disadvantages and compensated with their quick decision making and ingenuity in the implementation of their forces. As mentioned earlier, they were able to mobilize five million civilian laborers. Although transporting supplies by foot was slow, it was consistent and gave the Communists a great deal of flexibility over the Nationalists. While the Nationalists were bound to unreliable roads, the Communists had a steady supply line that could move to wherever they were needed.

⁴⁸ Bjorge, *Moving the Enemy*, 103.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Xubeng huizhan zhi bu* [The Xu-Beng Battle Section], The Armed Forces University War History Compilation Committee, Taipei: Sanjun daxue, 5-6.

Next, as part of *Method* 法, this thesis compares each sides' strategy and warfighting doctrine. Although Communist and Nationalist officers had similar roots in military education, their battle strategies were almost entirely opposite.

The PLA had a 10 part principles of war doctrine. CPC Chairman, Mao Zedong, described them as, "the main methods the People's Liberation Army has employed in defeating Chiang Kai-shek... [the doctrine is] the result of the tempering of the People's Liberation Army in long years of fighting against domestic and foreign enemies and completely suited to our present situation".⁵¹ The PLA 10 part principles of war doctrine were:

1. Attack dispersed, isolated enemy forces first; attack concentrated, strong enemy forces later.
2. Take small and medium cities and extensive rural areas first; take big cities later.
3. Make wiping out the enemy's effective strength our main objective; do not make holding or seizing a city our main objective. Holding or seizing a city is the outcome of wiping out the enemy's effective strength.
4. In every battle, concentrate an absolutely superior force (two, three, four and sometimes even five or six times the enemy's strength), encircle the enemy forces completely, strive to wipe them out thoroughly and do not let any escape the net. In special circumstances, use the method of dealing crushing blows to the enemy, that is, concentrate all our strength to make a frontal attack...Strive to avoid battles of attrition in which we lose more than we gain or only break even
5. Fight no battle unprepared, fight no battle you are not sure of winning; make every effort to be well prepared for each battle, make every effort to ensure victory in the given set of conditions as between the enemy and ourselves.
6. Give full play to our style of fighting - courage in battle, no fear of sacrifice, no fear of fatigue and continuous fighting.
7. Strive to wipe out the enemy through mobile warfare. At the same time, pay attention to the tactics of positional attack and capture enemy fortified points and cities.
8. With regard to attack cities, resolutely seize all enemy fortified points and cities which are weakly defended...As for strongly defended enemy fortified points and cities, wait till conditions are ripe and then take them.
9. Replenish our strength with all the arms and most of the personnel captured from the enemy. Our army's main sources of manpower and material are at the front.

⁵¹ Mao Zedong, "The Present Situation and Our Tasks," *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*, vol. 4. 162.

10. Make good use of the intervals between campaigns to rest, train and consolidate our troops.⁵²

The PLA never envisioned a monumental battle at Huaihai that could decide the outcome of the entire civil war. Adhering to their principles of war doctrine, the Communist planners prepared for low scale conflicts, specifically at assaulting smaller isolated Nationalist forces.⁵³ They also heavily emphasized maneuver and speed. As stated by Mao when he spoke at the Red Army College, the PLA were well aware of their inability to fight a head on positional battle with the Nationalist Army, “oppose fixed battle lines and positional warfare and favor fluid battle lines and mobile warfare.”⁵⁴ The PLA relied on their maneuverability advantage to either buy time on the defensive or awaiting an offensive opportunity.

On the other hand, the Nationalist Army operated almost in direct contrast to the PLA. As stated earlier, the Nationalist Army enjoyed a technological advantage over the Communists which made them favor positional warfare and frontal assaults. The advantages in firepower resulted in many Nationalist commanders committing hubris in their approach against the PLA. Some were unworried and even welcomed oncoming Communist offensives because it brought the PLA infantry within range of the Nationalist artillery.⁵⁵

In addition to fighting head on battles, the Nationalists attempted their ‘hammer and anvil’ strategy whenever possible. The idea was to trap an enemy force between a defending Nationalist force and an incoming relief force. In essence, they viewed the

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Bjorge, *Moving the Enemy*, 73.

⁵⁴ Mao Zedong, “Problems of Strategy in China’s Revolutionary War,” *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*, vol. 1. 213.

⁵⁵ Bjorge, *Moving the Enemy*, 116.

possibility of encirclement not as a total loss, but rather the enemy playing right into their plans. If the defending force held out long enough for a relief force to maneuver in place, theoretically, they could trap the enemy in between the two and destroy it.⁵⁶

The Nationalists were confident in this strategy due in part to their combat engineers' skill in building field defenses. Even the Communists knew of their prowess for quickly constructing formidable fortifications in short amounts of time. In theory, this strategy was a creative way to trick the enemy into a two front battle, but it solely depended on the relief force's ability to move into position. However, Nationalist shortcomings in maneuverability, night fighting, and maintaining effective mobile command and control resulted in them not moving fast across the campaign area which led to their easy encirclement.⁵⁷ Once units became surrounded and relief near impossible, no matter how good the field fortifications were, it did nothing but delay their sure destruction.

Another difference between Nationalist and Communist strategy was the holding of large cities. The Nationalists were inclined to do so even if the city had little to no strategic importance. This led to the loss of precious time, manpower, and resources, as well as putting a greater political and financial strain on the KMT government. The occupation of these cities was an attempt to boost their image as a strong, functional government that still had its reins over the country. If the cities were abandoned, it may have given the impression that the Nationalists were losing control. However, they risked losing the war and for certain the country in favor of short term political standings.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 86.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 116.

In a shallow analysis of *Method* 法, one may conclude that the *shi* greatly favored the Nationalist. In terms of technology, they certainly held the upper hand. The Nationalist Army outnumbered the PLA in terms of artillery, armor, and air power. They also used heavy transport trucks to move large quantities of soldiers, equipment, and supplies over great distances. On the other hand, the PLA had to work with the hand me downs from the Soviets and abandoned equipment from the Japanese. As for transportation, they relied on their large network of civilian laborers. It certainly appeared that the Nationalists held a tremendous advantage over the Communists.

Aligned with this thought, it seemed that the Nationalist battle strategy must certainly win against the PLA. The Nationalist strategy relied on their artillery and armor dominance which led to the implementation of the hammer and anvil. The PLA on the other hand knew of their technological inferiority and depended on maneuverability and avoidance of frontal positional assaults.

A closer look at the Nationalist technological advantages reveals a different conclusion. The Nationalists improperly utilized their artillery and armor by scattering these assets throughout the army divisions. Consequently, the Nationalists were unable to bring concentrated firepower to the battlefield, which could have been a difference maker. Additionally, the Nationalist Air Force, with units stationed in Xuzhou and Nanjing, were used sparingly. This may have been a result of the inefficient command structure. The air force was commanded by their headquarters stationed in Nanjing, 140 miles away from Xuzhou, which made it extremely difficult for coordination between the

army commanders in Xuzhou and the air force commanders.⁵⁸ Moreover, the Nationalist strategy of the hammer and anvil had a colossal hole they failed to account for.

The hammer and anvil was a great idea to force the enemy into a two front battle. However, the whole scheme relied on the swiftness of the relief force and whether or not enough combat power can be brought to defeat the enemy. The Nationalists severely overestimated their maneuverability potential and grossly underestimated the power and prowess of the Communists.

The Nationalists had a difficult time moving across the area of operations. This was in part due to the strong resistance of the Communist forces as well as poor planning and execution by the Nationalists. Once a force was surrounded, it became dependent on the relief to help them break out. But, because the Communists were able to fend off the rescue force, the Nationalists' strong defenses whittled away to continual Communist attacks. Thus, upon closer investigation, it is revealed that the *shi of Method* 法, favored the Communists.

Brief Summary of Assessments

The Communists held the advantage in *The Way* 道. They avoided the hassles of economic, political, and civil strife because they were not the official ruling entity of China. Instead, they were able to bide their time, accumulating money, equipment, and personnel. As for *Heaven* 天, no side could draw an advantage, but the Communists were the least affected by the elements. They were not dependent on mechanized methods of transportation, so when it rained and the roads became inoperable, the Communists still had a steady stream of supplies coming in via their extensive network of

⁵⁸ Ibid., 112.

human laborers. The Nationalists had the advantage in *Earth* 地. The flat central plains allowed for clear line of sight for Nationalist guns, artillery, and air support. But due to poor planning and execution, they lost it to the Communists. The Communists were able to exploit the terrain and maneuver at unmatched speeds across the battlefield which allowed them to cut off and surround Nationalist forces. The Communists held an edge in terms of *The General* 將. Although both the Communists and Nationalists had great commanders, the Nationalists were at a disadvantage because of the internal factionalism and centralized command structure. As for *Method* 法, the Communists held the advantage. Although the Nationalists held a technological advantage, they were not able to utilize it properly. The Communists made up for their lack of technological assets with maneuverability and ingenuity in their application of forces. As for doctrine, the Nationalists' hammer and anvil strategy played right into the hands of the Communists' strategy of surrounding and isolating enemy forces.

During the planning phase for the Huaihai Campaign, both sides thought they held the advantage, or the *shi*, going into battle. This thesis observes both the Communists' and Nationalists' assets and analyzes it with Sun Tzu's five net assessments. Thus, it concludes that the Communists held a significant advantage going into Huaihai and unless the Nationalists balanced the scales, it certainly would result in a Communist victory.

CHAPTER V

OVERVIEW OF THE HUAIHAI CAMPAIGN

Before summarizing the Huaihai Campaign it is important to note why the Nationalist Army and the PLA converged around the plains of Xuzhou. After series of Nationalist losses in the north and the west, the Communist presence encroached ever closer to the Nationalist stronghold and capital of Nanjing. The city of Xuzhou and the area around it was considered the gateway to Nanjing because it was the closest, largest city to Nanjing. It was also a logistical hub with several rail lines connecting the city. It was important for the Communists to gain a foothold in this area and use it as a staging point for future offensives to the south. They desired to: “establish conditions for the future capture of the large cities of Nanjing, Shanghai, and Hangzhou.”⁵⁹ The Nationalists did not want the Communists to have the ability to project its combat power so close to their capital, thus concluded it essential to hold the Communists at Xuzhou.

The paragraphs below offer a brief overview of the momentous Huaihai Campaign. Scholars divide the Huaihai Campaign into three main phases so the sequence of events can be easily followed.

Phase I: To address certain weaknesses in their armies’ positioning around Xuzhou, the Nationalists ordered a vast troop redeployment. Due to logistical errors and breakdown in communications, the Nationalist 7th Army was delayed in their crossing of the Grand Canal. This gave the Communists time to catch up and encircle them. Through series of quick maneuvers, the PLA surrounded the 70,000 strong 7th Army and cut it off from any aid and relief.

⁵⁹ *Zongguo renmin jiefangjun zhanshi* [A History of the Wars of the Chinese People’s Liberation Army], Historical Research Department of the Academy of Military Science, Beijing: Junshi kexue chubanshe, 1988, 435.

Rescuing the entrapped 7th Army then became the primary objective of the Nationalists. They delayed their execution and rushed through their planning which resulted in sending an inadequate relief force to attempt the breakout of the 7th Army. Due to the persistent resistance of Communist forces, the relief force never made it. Surrounded and without help the PLA eventually overpowered the Nationalist defenders. The 7th Army withstood the Communist onslaught for 16 days without supplies or reinforcements and exacted 49,000 PLA casualties before being destroyed.⁶⁰ The loss of the 7th Army marked the end of the first phase of the Huaihai Campaign.

Phase II: The destruction of the 7th Army left Xuzhou's eastern front extremely exposed. The Nationalists saw the potential dangers and abandoned Xuzhou and retreated further south. At the same time on the western front, the Nationalist 12th Army marching in from Henan as reinforcement, because surrounded by the PLA. The Nationalists tried to reach the 12th Army but were met with heavy resistance and blocked by the Communists. After a month of bloody battles, the Communists overcame the 12th Army's defenses and destroyed them.⁶¹ Phase two of the Huaihai Campaign came to an end on this note.

Phase III: After the destruction of the 12th Army on the western front, the only Nationalist field armies in the Huaihai area of operations were the 2nd, 13th, and 16th Army. As a result of poor decision making and execution, all three of these armies were surrounded without aid or relief. The 16th Army was the first to attempt a

⁶⁰ *Zhongyang junwei yuji* [Telegram from the CMC], Chinese Communist Party Central Committee's Committee for the Collection of Party Historical Material, Beijing: Zhonggong dangshi ziliao chubanshe, 1988, 193-95.

⁶¹ Bjorge. (Later citations of just Bjorge indicate the information was extradited from the entirety of the source, not just a specific page or paragraph)

breakout. Their success was marred by the majority of its soldiers being killed or captured in the process.⁶² This left only the 2nd and 13th Army in the campaign fields. Surrounded with their defensive pocket shrinking, the situation for these two armies became desperate. The Nationalist field commander formulated three options in hopes to save them from the impending destruction.

The first option required the Nationalists to draw from the armies at Xi'an and Wuhan as reinforcements to rescue the 2nd and the 13th Army. This meant abandoning these areas in an attempt to recover the situation in Xuzhou. The second option called for the entrapped Nationalist armies to keep defending in place until reinforcements from whatever reserves the leadership can scrounge up were made available to help. The third option left the surrounded armies to figure out whatever means possible to break out on their own.⁶³ Unfortunately for the 2nd and 13th Army, the Nationalist leadership ordered them to execute option three.⁶⁴ Isolated without supplies, the 2nd and 13th Army were easily overran when the PLA launched a general offensive against the Nationalist positions.⁶⁵ The final destruction of these two Nationalist armies concluded the Huaihai Campaign.

⁶² Du Yuming, *Huaihai zhanyi shimo*, 27.

⁶³ Bjorge, *Moving the Enemy*, 248

⁶⁴ Du Yuming, *Huaihai zhanyi shimo*, 42

⁶⁵ Bjorge, *Moving the Enemy*, 248

CHAPTER VI

BIGGEST TURNING POINTS

Just as every story has a climax, every battle has a decisive point. In the case of the Huaihai Campaign, there were two instances that drastically impacted how the battle played out. The first point occurred before the actual campaign even started. The Nationalists had a tough decision to make; should they defend Xuzhou and fight in the open plains, or retreat behind the Huai River to a better defensive position. The second point happened early on in the Huaihai Campaign and subsequently influenced the Nationalists' campaign objectives. One of the Nationalists' main forces, the 7th Army, became surrounded and the Nationalists elected to send an inadequate relief force. This resulted in the first of the eventual total destruction of all Nationalist forces in the Huaihai Campaign. The following sections of this thesis goes into detail of what happened during each of these two events as well as providing an analysis using Sun Tzu's net assessments.

This research integrates the historical narrative with Sun Tzu's dynamic assessments. Additionally, the following investigation includes passages from various chapters of *The Art of War*. This is a result of the dynamic qualities of Sun Tzu's ideas in which everything is intertwined and reliant on each other, especially with the five net assessment factors. Although all five net assessment factors impacted the two major turning points, some had greater impact than others. Thus, the analysis focuses more on the assessment elements that had the greatest impact.

CHAPTER VII

TURNING POINT I

The first major turning point is the Nationalists' decision to defend the exposed area of Xuzhou, rather than retreat behind the Huai River. Although the city was far from other Nationalist strongholds and only had a single supply line, Chiang Kai-shek, along with other Nationalist commanders, still thought the city could be well defended. A big factor that played into this decision was *the Way* 道. Due to possible political consequences of retreating, the Nationalists were really constrained to what actions they could take. Additionally, factors of *Heaven* 天, *Earth* 地, and *General* 將 had great impact on this decision.

During the months of September and October 1948, Nationalist General Du Yuming, deputy commander of the Xuzhou Bandit Suppression Headquarters, advocated for a large offensive against the Communists in the Shandong area. He flew between Nanjing, Beijing (pre-PRC Beijing), and Xuzhou in an attempt to acquire permission from Chiang Kai-shek to launch such an offensive.⁶⁶ However, Du Yuming's operation never took place.

On the morning of October 15, Chiang Kai-shek sent an urgent message shutting down Du Yuming's proposed offensive.⁶⁷ The Nationalists' situation in Manchuria took a turn for the worse, which resulted in Chiang not wanting to start another major campaign. The cancellation of this offensive left the Nationalist forces in the Xuzhou command with no operational plans and a great deal of uncertainty.⁶⁸ Shortly after this

⁶⁶ Ibid., 87.

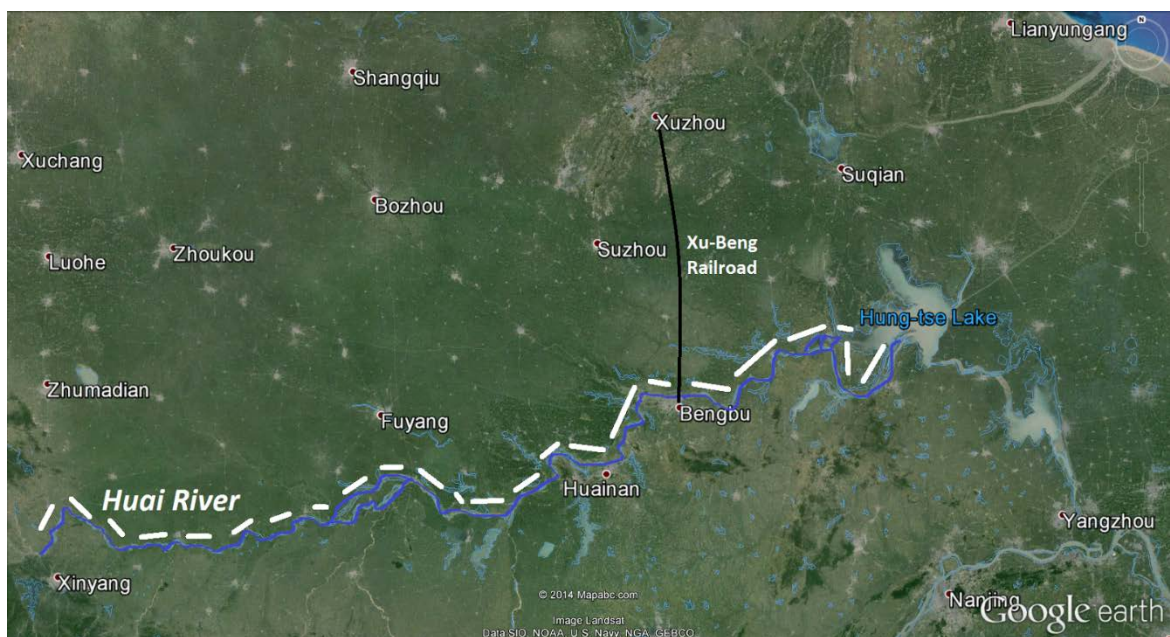
⁶⁷ Ibid., 88.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

lull, intelligence reports indicated the Communists' ECFA was preparing to move south and the CPFA was moving toward Zhengzhou. This greatly increased the chances of a large scale offensive on Xuzhou by the PLA. Consequently, the Nationalists shifted their focus to dealing with this developing threat.

After a week of planning, the Nationalist officers still had not agreed to a plan. Many felt that Xuzhou was too exposed and isolated. They also questioned their ability to effectively defend the city. Xuzhou only had one supply line, the Xu-Beng Railroad. If this line was cut, then all the Nationalist armies around Xuzhou would be stranded. Many officers proposed a new plan, in which they would abandon everything and retreat south of the Huai River. The river measured around 700 feet wide at points and was a major natural obstacle. If the Nationalists built fortifications along the southern bank of the river, it could have been too formidable of a defense for the Communists to cross.

Figure 4 Xu-Beng Railroad



Map of the Xu-Beng Railroad and the Huai River in relation to the area of operations (Map Source: Google Earth)

On October 29, the Nationalist Army commanders gathered again to address the situation they faced. They learned that their proposal of retreating behind the Huai River was rejected because of the High Command's reluctance to give up Xuzhou. They felt that such a maneuver would severely limit the Nationalists' ability to project combat power and retake the north. They also feared the potential political and psychological ramifications of such a maneuver. It seemed that abandoning Xuzhou and all the areas north of the Huai River, at a time when the Nationalist position in Manchuria was rapidly deteriorating, would create a devastating blow to morale and further reduce public confidence in the Nationalist government.⁶⁹

Here we see the impact *The Way* 道 had. In addition to planning for battle, the Nationalists also had to worry about public opinion and support. Although a retreat behind the Huai River may have been the best option, the scar it would have left on the KMT regime was considered too much to bear. A retreat behind the Huai River would have essentially split the country into two, with the north predominantly Communist and the south Nationalist. It also gave the impression that the Nationalists were losing control of the country and that the Communists were capable of challenging the KMT's rule of power. Additionally, willingly losing the north would have discredited the Northern Expedition and the sacrifices they made to reunite the country.

Thus, they knew there was only one real option. The new plan called for the consolidation of their forces to better defend Xuzhou. However, the new plan did not go into effect immediately because Chiang Kai-shek delayed the approval of the proposal. Prior to the Huaihai Campaign, Chiang stationed himself in Beiping to better

⁶⁹ Ibid.

command the Nationalist armies in Manchuria. But defeat after defeat led him to fly back to Nanjing to concentrate on the civil war as a whole. The Communist forces in Manchuria exhibited excellent maneuverability as they were able to surround and destroy Nationalist forces one after another. After witnessing his forces' destruction, Chiang became extremely concerned with how to preserve his troops in the Xuzhou region.⁷⁰

As Chiang continued to ponder, the situation on the ground appeared to shift toward the Nationalists' favor. It seemed that the CPFA's eastward push had slowed down, which increased the possibility of the Nationalists' 12th Army, marching in from the west, stopping the enemy's advance.⁷¹ Additionally, it did not appear that the ECFA was moving south to join the CPFA for a unified assault.

However, in actuality, the ECFA was indeed moving south with all possible speed, the Nationalists just had yet to discover their intentions. Due to these seemingly beneficial developments, Chiang Kai-shek concluded that Xuzhou may not be threatened and saw value in holding the city.

On November 5, the Nationalist commanders held another meeting to discuss the defense of Xuzhou. But, General Sun Yuanliang, commander of the 16th Army, and General Li Mi, commander of the 13th Army, still held out and argued for a withdrawal to south of the Huai River. They noted that Xuzhou was exceptionally exposed geographically and was also at the end of a long supply line. If they retreated, it would greatly shorten the supply line and added a major natural obstacle between them and the Communists.

⁷⁰ Bjorge, *Moving the Enemy*, 90.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 92.

However, General Qiu Qingquan, commander of the 2nd Army, and General Huang Baitao, commander of the 7th Army, strongly pushed for the defense of Xuzhou. Qiu asserted that Xuzhou did not have a logistics problem. He stated that a garrisoned force could receive supplies by rail, road, or air, and that large stockpiles of food and ammunition were already in the city. He furthered strengthened his argument by citing the extensive fortification network already in and around the city, which made it possible to mount an effective and formidable defense.⁷²

故知勝者有五：知可以戰與不可以戰者勝，識眾寡之用者勝，

上下同欲者勝，以虞待不虞者勝

Therefore as for understanding victory there are five factors: knowing when to fight and when not to fight, that is victory, knowing what is in full supply and low supply, that is victory, the superiors and subordinates having the same desires, that is victory, as for one who uses preparation to deal with the enemy's lack of preparation, that is victory

When the advantages and disadvantages of defending Xuzhou are weighed, it is clear that this is a fight the Nationalists should have avoided, because the *shi* greatly favored the Communists. This passage, from chapter 3 *Strategy for Attack* 謀攻, points back to Sun Tzu's net assessment factors of *Heaven* 天 and *Earth* 地. Generals Sun Yuanliang and Li Mi were correct in their notice of Xuzhou being greatly exposed and that logistics ('*knowing what is in full supply and low supply*') was an issue. Had the commanders assessed *Heaven* 天 and *Earth* 地, their decision might have been different.

⁷² Zhou Kaicheng. *Huaihai zhanyi zhong de di bajun* [The VIII Corps in the Huaihai Campaign], The Historical Materials Research Committee of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, Beijing: Wenshi ziliao chubanshe, 1983. 243.

As analyzed earlier in the thesis, in terms of *Heaven* 天, the Nationalists were greatly affected by the weather. Whenever it rained, the network of roads in the area of operations became non-traversable by the heavy trucks the Nationalists relied on for logistics. Additionally, the weather halted the Nationalist Air Force's airlift and air support capabilities as well as aerial reconnaissance. On the other hand, the Communists were not as negatively impacted as the Nationalists. All their transportation was done by foot via their human laborers. Their reconnaissance was conducted by people on the ground. Thus, it can be concluded that *Heaven* 天 stripped the Nationalists of their logistics system as well as intelligence gathering. Consequently, the *shi* leaned toward the Communists' favor.

As for *Earth* 地, it was previously mentioned that the Communists held a distinct advantage over the Nationalists. The PLA were able to maneuver across the plains at unmatched speeds, which allowed them to isolate and surround Nationalist forces. If the Nationalists wanted to take away the PLA advantage, they had to counterbalance the Communists' leverage over geography. The retreat behind the Huai River may have been the answer to offset their advantage. The Huai River, around 670 miles long and as wide as 700 feet, would have been a great natural barrier. It would have forced the Communists to either cross or go around, which might have bought the Nationalists valuable time to address other warfighting and political issues.

When this passage, along with the net assessment factors of *Heaven* 天 and *Earth* 地, are applied to the situation, it is evident that the Nationalists did not hold the *shi*. They thought Xuzhou was the ideal place to fight when it was not. They thought it could be properly supplied but it could not be. The commanders were divided on the

proper course of action. Therefore, according to this passage, victory was unachievable for the Nationalists.

兵法：一曰度，二曰量，三曰數，四曰稱，五曰勝；

地生度，度生量，量生數，數生稱，稱生勝。

As for the methods of warfare: First is measurement, second is capacity, third is quantity, fourth is relative balance, fifth is victory; terrain gives rise to measurements, measurements gives rise to estimation of capacities, estimation of capacities gives rise to calculations of quantity, calculations of quantity gives rise to balance, balance gives rise to victory.

This passage, from chapter 4 *Military Formations* 軍形, ties back to the importance of *Earth* 地. Xuzhou and the Nationalist armies were greatly exposed on the China central plains where the Communists had a great maneuverability advantage. To counteract this, the Nationalists needed something to balance the scales. If the Nationalists moved south of the Huai River, the Communists' power projection might have been limited.

Due to the Huai River's size, it left not much room for surprises. Any large troop crossing would be difficult and easily detected. The Communists' technological inferiority left them with two crossing options: either a temporary bridge or by small boats. The PLA combat engineers were trained to construct floating bridges, but a river of this size would have been difficult. The process was as described: "The first step in building these bridges was the painstaking process of gathering dried stalks and binding them into tight bundles. Then the bundles were tied into larger bundles to provide the buoyancy needed to support the necessary weight. Next, the engineers tied the large

bundles together so the current would not tear them apart. Finally, the bundles were stretched across the river and fastened to support posts on the side to make them more stable.”⁷³ As demonstrated in the PLA crossing of the Bulao River prior to the start of the Huaihai Campaign, their combat engineers made a floating bridge in a day and it took about half a day for a column (20,000-30,000 men) to cross.⁷⁴ It is important to note that this time frame occurred with the best possible conditions and they were not taking fire from defending Nationalist forces. Certainly, such an attempt on the Huai River would have taken much longer.

The other option available to the Communists to overcome a river defense was to cross using boats. However, the PLA had nothing remotely resembling a formidable water presence, which made a large amphibious assault an unlikely scenario. The most probable method would have been the use of small rubber boats the PLA already had at their disposal.⁷⁵ However, the amount of these boats were limited. Therefore, any attempt crossing the river on these miniscule vessels surely would be thwarted by the Nationalist defense.

This passage gives instruction on how to achieve victory through means of balancing the *shi*; such balance derived from understanding *Earth* 地. *Earth* 地 allows for proper assessment of battlefield advantages and disadvantages. In the present case, the Nationalists at Xuzhou had an unreliable and long supply line along with a very

⁷³ Tan, Jiping, *Di sishisi shi zai Bayiji de fumie* [The Destruction of the 44th Division at Bayiji], The Historical Materials Research Committee of the National committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, Beijing: Wenshi ziliao chubanshe, 1983, 235.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Cheng Jun, *Cong tupo yunhe dao gongshan Dawangzhuang, Jiangdudui* [From Breaking Through at the Grand Canal to Taking Dawangzhuang and Jiangdudui], A History of the Huaihai Campaign, vol. 2, 276.

mobile enemy. According to this passage, the Nationalists needed to tip the *shi* in their favor by shortening the supply line, and removing the mobility advantage from the enemy.

A retreat behind the Huai River could have addressed these two concerns. If the Nationalists moved behind the Huai River, it might have reduced transport time because of their proximity to the Nationalist capital of Nanjing. This area already had a solid network of supply depots connected by railroads. As for the Communists' mobility advantage, it would have meant nothing if a large river stood in their way.

However, Generals Qiu and Huang, who advocated for the defense of Xuzhou, commanded the two most powerful armies under the Xuzhou Bandit Suppression Headquarters. This led to their words and thoughts to have more weight than Sun and Li's.⁷⁶ While this exchange continued, they were notified that Chiang wanted to defend Xuzhou. This settled the matter once and for all, and the discussions afterwards focused on how to redeploy forces to achieve this objective.⁷⁷

故戰道必勝；主曰：無戰；必戰可也。戰道不勝，主曰必戰，無戰可也。

故進不求名，退不避罪，唯民是保，而利于主，國之寶也

Therefore, if the way to battle there is certain victory; but the ruler says: do not battle; you certainly have to battle. If the way to battle has no victory, and the ruler says you certainly have to battle, you must not battle.

Therefore, you advance without seeking fame, retreat without fearing disgrace, the people is who will be defended, and benefitting the ruler, as for he who does this, he is the treasure of the state

⁷⁶ Bjorge, *Moving the Enemy*, 93.

⁷⁷ Zhou, *Huaihai zhanyi*, 243.

This passage, from chapter 10 *Terrain* 地形, ties in the assessment factors of *the Way* 道 as well as *General* 將. It highlights an interesting issue, whether to obey or disobey an order if it is harmful to the state and the army. Sun Tzu believes that regardless of orders, it is the responsibility of the general to obtain victory. However, one must be ready to accept the consequences of insubordination.

It is important to highlight an interesting point in this particular event. In this specific case, Chiang was both *the Way* 道 and the *General* 將. He allowed the possible political ramifications to dictate the military decisions. As the generalissimo, Chiang personally oversaw the direction of the political party and government, as well as combat operations. Could this be a flaw in *The Art of War*? Unlikely. Instead, it may be Sun Tzu subtly hinting at how one in this position, as head of state as well as chief of staff, could be compromised when the need to make a strictly political or militaristic decision is needed.

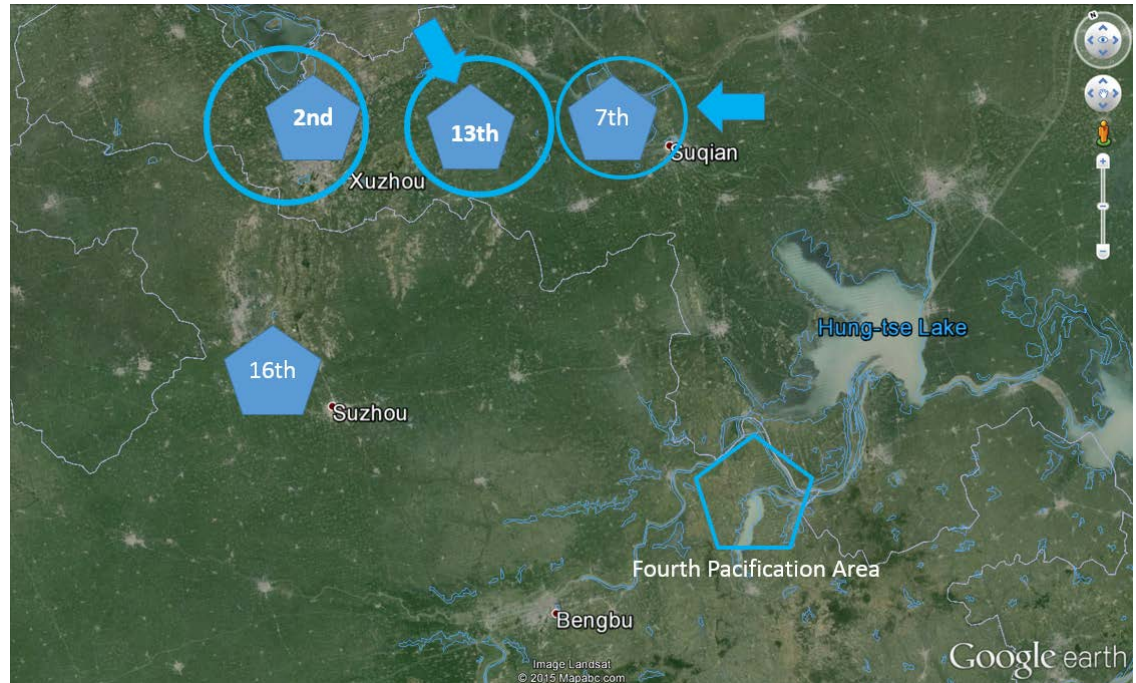
Thus, it was up to Chiang's subordinates in leadership and decision making positions to make up for the clouded judgement. As stated in the passage, the one who does this, puts victory above all else and does not fear the repercussions of straying away from a harmful order. However, this virtue was not exhibited by the field commanders under Chiang Kai-shek. Due to Chiang's micromanagement, the majority of orders were sent down directly from him. These personal orders were intimidating to his subordinates and were portrayed in an edict like manner in which they were scared to disagree with, or stray away from. Thus, the commanders feared Chiang more than defeat. By trying not to let down their generalissimo, they inadvertently let down their country.

The Nationalist commanders' new plan to defend Xuzhou was similar to the one of October 29. The defenders' center of mass would be moved farther north, and instead of holding the Xu-Beng Railroad, the armies would hold a line that blocked avenues of approach to Xuzhou from the north, west, and east.

The 7th Army was to defend the west bank of the Grand Canal as far south as Suqian. The 13th Army was to move south to the Lingbi-Sixian area to provide depth to the Grand Canal defensive line and secure lines of communication. West of Xuzhou, the 2nd Army was to abandon all cities west of Dangshan and control the area running north from Weishan Lake, through Dangshan, and south to Yongcheng. South of the 2nd Army, the 16th Army was to operate out of Mengcheng to control the area from Yongcheng to the Huai River.⁷⁸

⁷⁸ Guo Rugui. *Huaihai zhanyi qijian guomindangjun tongshuaibu de zhengchao he juece* [Wrangling and Decision Making Within the Nationalist High Command During the Time of the Huaihai Campaign], The Historical Materials Research Committee of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, Beijing: Wenshi ziliao chubanshe, 1983, 55.

Figure 5 November 6th redeployments



New troop redeployments beginning on November 6th. (Map Source: Google Earth)

The Nationalist redeployment started on November 6, but it did not go as well as they planned and hoped. When the Communists observed the changes in Nationalist positions, they determined that the Nationalists planned to defend Xuzhou. Thus, they advanced into positions and launched their offensive.⁷⁹ Soon after, Nationalist and Communist forces engaged in battle. This marked the first falling domino of many toward the Nationalists' defeat.

⁷⁹ Bjorge, *Moving the Enemy*, 93.

CHAPTER VIII

TURNING POINT II

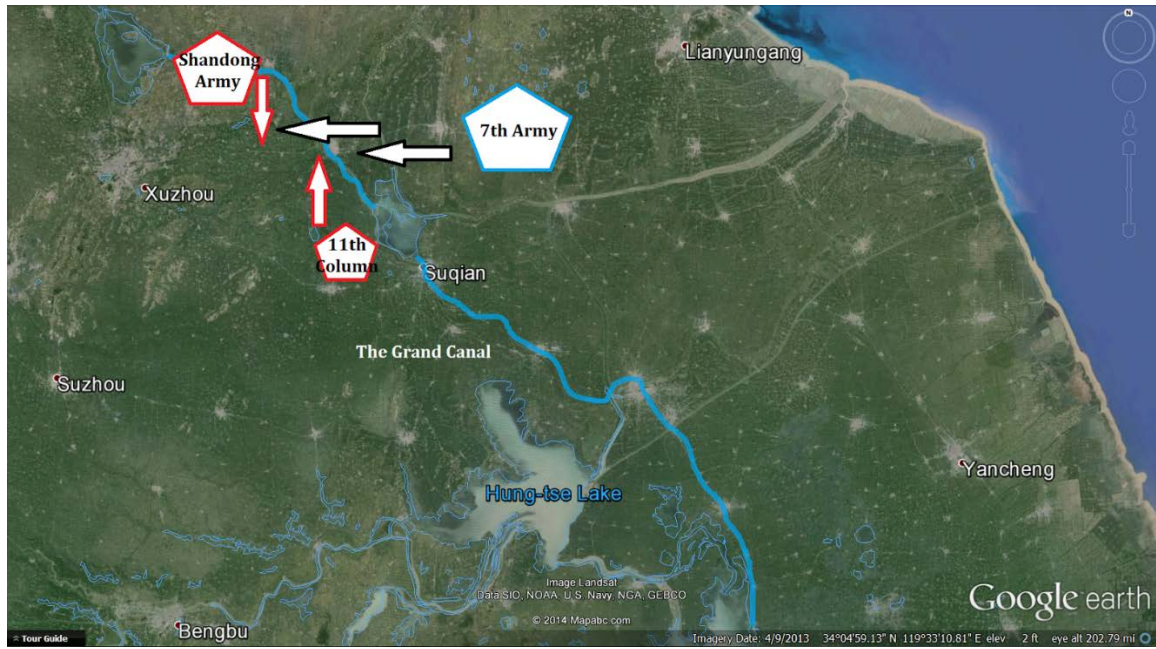
The other major event that greatly impacted the Huaihai Campaign was the encirclement of the Nationalist 7th Army and the decision to send an inadequate relief force to their rescue. The Nationalist commanders recognized the dangers the Communists posed on the central plains region and ordered a troop redeployment to counteract the aggressors. After days of deliberation, Chiang Kai-shek and the Nationalist High Command in Nanjing, ordered their armies to defend Xuzhou rather than retreat south behind the Huai River. However, Nationalist shortcomings, which will be mentioned later on in this chapter, resulted in slow troop redeployments that led to the 7th Army's encirclement. In an effort to save the 7th Army from certain destruction, other plans were put into action. But these plans failed to fully comprehend the *shi* of *Earth* 地, *General* 將, and *Method* 法, thus, brought the eventual defeat of all Nationalist forces in the Huaihai Campaign.

On the night of November 5th, 1948, as part of the new Nationalist troop redeployment order, the 7th Army started their crossing of the Grand Canal from the east bank to the west. Communist General Su Yu, commander of the ECFA, discovered this new movement on the morning of the 8th and immediately ordered a more aggressive advance.⁸⁰ He ordered the 11th Column to advance up the west side of the Grand Canal to keep the Nationalist 7th from crossing. He also directed the Communist Shandong

⁸⁰ He Xiaohuan, Fu Jijun, and Shi Zhengxian, *Huaihai zhanyi shi* [A History of the Huaihai Campaign], Shanghai: Renmin chubanshe, 1983, 57.

Army's 10th, 7th, and 13th Column to push south in order to block the Nationalist 7th Army's movement west.⁸¹

Figure 6 Movements to block the 7th Army



PLA's movements to block the Nationalist 7th Arm (Map Source: Google Earth)

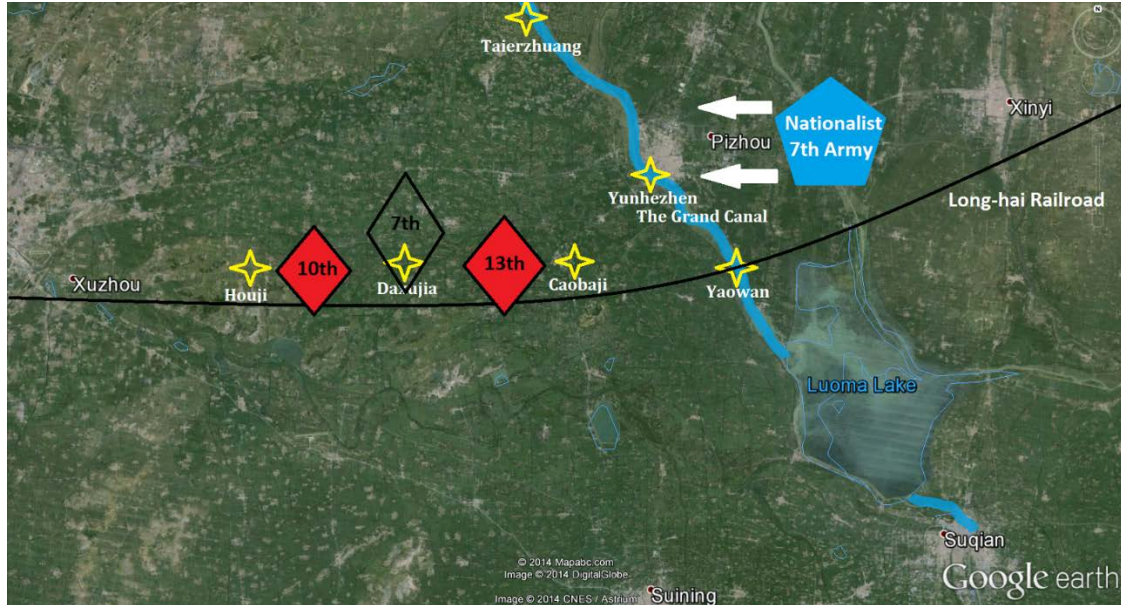
The Shandong Army's original mission was to fake an attack on Xuzhou and then defend the northern bank of the Bulao River. By doing so, they threatened the northern flank of any force sent from Xuzhou.⁸² However, the Shandong Army was the only Communist force at that time in position to attempt to cut off the Nationalist 7th Army. They marched quickly to the area, and created flexibility for maneuver by dispersing their troops across a 25 miles line along the Long-Hai Railroad. Their 13th Column held the left flank toward Caobaji, their 7th Column held the center toward Daxujia, and their 10th Column held the right toward the Damianshan-Houji area.⁸³

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

Figure 7 Cutting off 7th's route to Xuzhou



PLA cutting off Nationalist 7th's attempt to get closer to Xuzhou (Map Source: Google Earth)

In the afternoon of November 10th, the Communist 13th Column started their attack preparations on the Nationalist 44th Division C Corps.⁸⁴ Later that day, the 13th Column's 20th Division encircled the last rear guard battalion of Li Mi's 13th Army at Dagengzhuang, a village 2 miles west of Caobaji. That night, the 10th Column advanced to Houji, within 13 miles of Xuzhou. During the night, the 13th Column launched a general attack against Caobaji, and by the following afternoon, the Nationalist artillery position was overrun and captured by the Communists.⁸⁵ These actions, which occurred in the span of a single day, created a 19 mile gap between the Nationalist 7th Army and the Xuzhou defense perimeter and effectively cut the Nationalists' route to Xuzhou.⁸⁶

While those operations occurred, east of the Nationalist 7th Army's position, the ECFA's main body rushed to catch and encircle them. The Nationalist 7th Army had

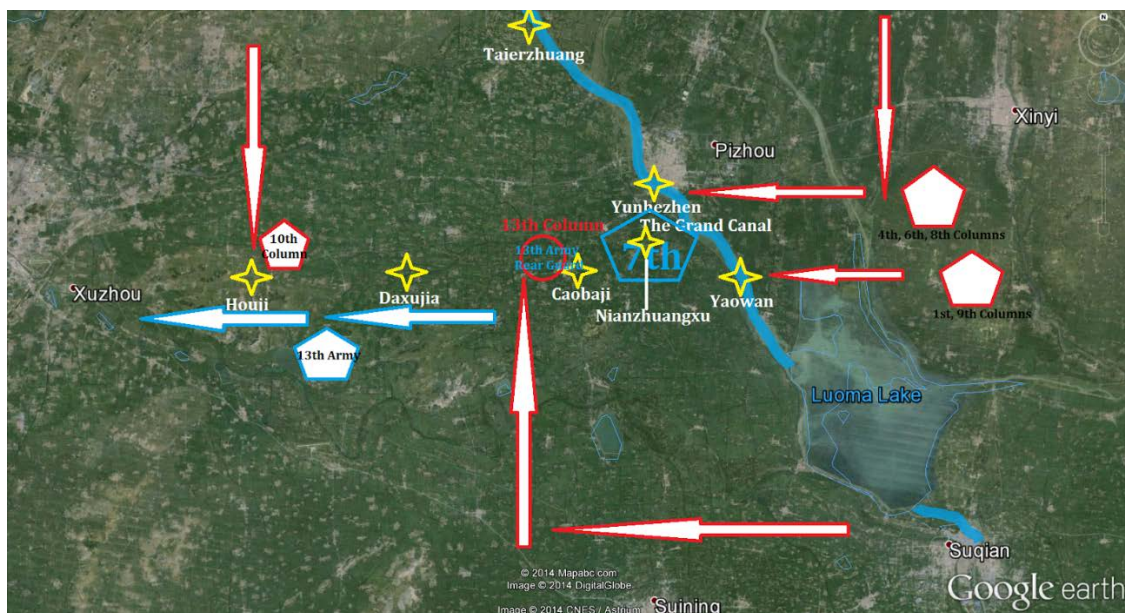
⁸⁴ Zhuo Zhijian, *Yongmeng qianjin fenzhan Huaihai* [Bravely March Forward, Bravely Fight at Huaihai], A History of the Huaihai Campaign, Shanghai: Renmin chubanshe, 1983, vol. 2., 354

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 356.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 354.

clear avenues of evasion toward the south, southwest, and west, and the ECFA hurriedly advanced to block those routes. Commander Su Yu ordered most of his columns east of the Grand Canal to move southwest on the south side of the Long-Hai Railroad, and directed the 4th, 6th, and 8th Columns to head to the key canal crossing point at Yunhezhen.⁸⁷ The 1st and 9th Columns were to head southwest toward Yaowan. These troop placements were designed to encircle the Nationalist 7th Army and place the ECFA in favorable positions for future developments.⁸⁸

Figure 8 Encircle the 7th Army



PLA troop movements to ensure the encirclement of the Nationalist 7th Army (Map Source: Google Earth)

By nightfall on November 11, the Nationalist 7th Army was completely surrounded. To its north and northeast was the 4th Column, to its east and southeast was the 8th Column, the 6th Column was to its south and southwest, and the 13th Column was to its west. In just four days, the ECFA was able to move through 62 miles to catch up and encircle the 7th Army. This was due to the great mobility advantage the PLA had

⁸⁷ Bjorge, *Moving the Enemy*, 134.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

in *Earth* 地. Other factors that contributed to the encirclement of the 7th Army were the PLA's good leadership, high morale, and a series of Nationalist failures.⁸⁹

The newest Nationalist troop redeployment, which ordered the 13th Army to reposition itself in the city of Xuzhou, gave the PLA the central position of the battlefield. Another Nationalist mistake was the 7th Army's failure to construct a second bridge at the Yunhezhen crossing point on the Grand Canal. This failure resulted in a slower crossing of the 7th Army, which allowed the PLA to catch up and encircle them. One of the most important decisions that led to the 7th Army's fate is one not very well documented and is summarized in the following paragraph.

That crucial decision was Nationalist 13th Army commander, General Li Mi's, refusal to help General Huang Baitao, commander of the 7th Army. The Nationalist redeployment order brought the 13th Army into the city of Xuzhou from its former positions in the east and northeast. Huang wanted Li's 13th Army to hold off a couple days before executing this order. Huang knew that with the current shape of his 7th Army, they would not be able to fill the void created when the 13th left, especially with portions of his army still crossing the Grand Canal. He asked Li Mi to wait until the 7th finished crossing and got situated before the 13th Army moved west toward Xuzhou.⁹⁰ However, Li Mi refused and ordered his 13th Army to prepare for immediate repositioning within the city of Xuzhou. This left Huang and the 7th Army to fend for themselves.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 135.

⁹⁰ Li Jinxuan, *Huaihai zhanyì pianduan huiyi* [Partial Memoirs of the Huaihai Campaign], The Historical Materials Research Committee of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, Beijing: Wenshi ziliao chubanshe, 1983, 293.

With the 7th Army left to their own devices, Huang wanted to establish a new rally point for his army after they crossed the Grand Canal. He wanted his troops to assemble in the Caobaji-Daxujia area instead of the old rally point of Nianzhuangxu, because it was 6 miles closer to Xuzhou. Additionally, Caobaji already had a solid system of fortifications built by the 13th Army when they used the city as their headquarters. Daxujia was another 6 miles further west and close enough to Xuzhou that the PLA would have difficulty maneuvering in between them. Had the 7th Army advanced that far, it may have been impossible for the ECFA to encircle them.⁹¹

At this time, the 7th Army's intelligence reports indicated that ECFA forces were moving west on its left flank, and on the right, they were already at the Bulao River. To the 7th's rear, the Communist 4th Column engaged Yunhezhen, and the 6th and 8th Columns were fast approaching. Huang assessed the situation and realized that the speed of the ECFA's advance would bring the full strength of their field army on the 7th in a relatively short time. He had two choices: risk moving west on the open plains toward Xuzhou, or defend against their eventual encirclement at Nianzhuangxu. Huang decided it was best to take their chances on the move toward better security than face certain danger if they stayed stationary.⁹² Orders were issued to the 7th Army to start moving westward in the morning, but those orders never took place.

The Nationalist High Command in Nanjing ordered Huang and his 7th Army to consolidate its positions in and around Nianzhuangxu and defend in place. Well aware of the PLA's ability to outmaneuver Nationalist forces in the open, the High Command thought it best to have the 7th remain where they were and wait for assistance. In this

⁹¹ Bjorge, *Moving the Enemy*, 138.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 139.

instance, the net assessment factor *Earth* 地 played a vital role. While on the move, the PLA held a tremendous advantage. But, while defending, the *shi* favored the Nationalists.

As previously mentioned in this research, the Nationalist Army combat engineers were very competent in constructing formidable field defenses. Coinciding with their hammer and anvil strategy, Nationalist fortifications had to be strong enough to withstand extended attacks. With the 7th Army heavily bunkered down and a clear line of sight available to the defenders due to the terrain, the Nationalists had the positional advantage over the Communists. The defenders would be able to inflict heavy casualties while the attackers had to move through miles of open ground to reach Nationalist positions.

This certainly played a role in the Nationalist High Command's decision to order the 7th Army to defend in place and allow themselves to be surrounded. At the present moment, the 7th Army had just crossed the Grand Canal. Tired and disorganized, they were in no shape to quickly move across the plains and get closer to Xuzhou. Rather than risk being picked off while on the move, the Nationalists opted to stay and defend their already fortified positions. However, this decision guaranteed the 7th Army would be isolated and encircled. By the end of November 10, they were completely cut off from other Nationalist forces.

In an attempt to recover the situation, the Nationalist commanders developed a new plan to relieve the 7th Army of their predicament. The 2nd Army would be used in concert with the 7th to push the ECFA units west of Nianzhuangxu, and adhering to their hammer and anvil strategy, squeeze the ECFA in between the two armies and destroy it. Meanwhile, the 16th Army would move north from Suxian to the Juliji-Jiagou area to

block the CPFA units west of Xuzhou. The 13th Army would stay and defend the city of Xuzhou.⁹³

Figure 9 Recovering the situation



Proposed plan to recover the situation (Map Source: Google Earth)

However, this relief plan was not executed immediately. The Xuzhou commander, General Liu Zhi, was certain the PLA's main objective was the capture of Xuzhou. Thus, he felt it unsafe to remove any troops from the city for a rescue mission. The delay exhibited by General Liu Zhi was detrimental to the relief effort. Instead of using the time to prepare, he elected to wait and hoped for a change in circumstances.

故兵以詐立，以利動，以分合為變者也，故其疾如風，其徐如林

⁹³ Ibid., 140.

Therefore in war, use deception to establish yourself, move only if you have an advantage, whether to divide or concentrate your forces, that changes depending on circumstances, therefore your speed is like the wind, your concentration like that of the forest

This passage, in chapter 7 *Maneuvering* 軍爭, depicts how an army needs to move. Through deception, one creates an advantage and holds the *shi*. Through this advantage, one moves without fearing enemy actions. However, the concentration of one's forces is dependent on the situation, thus there can be no pre-established method. Whichever is more applicable, their actions must be quick and ruthless. This ties back to *Earth* 地 and *Method* 法 of Sun Tzu's net assessment. *Earth* 地 must be accounted for because of its impact on mobility. *Method* 法 dictates the fighting style of the military; if they are more prone to fight frontal positional battles with the mass of their army (the Nationalists), or quick assaults on all fronts that lead to encirclement (the PLA).

In the present case, the Communists used deception to make the appearance of a threat on Xuzhou. By doing so, they had the advantage to move about freely knowing the Nationalists were preoccupied. As for the speed of maneuvering an army, it must be like the wind, which was the opposite of what the Xuzhou commander exhibited. Instead of putting plans to action, he waited idly while the situation continued to unravel.

Xuzhou headquarters' deputy commander, General Du Yuming, despite the apparent threats to the city, strongly believed that the intelligence reports were not correct. He did not believe that the PLA would conduct a broad attack on Xuzhou. He hypothesized that the main Communist effort must be in the east, taking shape of the familiar PLA pattern of isolating a Nationalist force, encircling it, and then destroying it or the relief force. *Method* 法 played a role in Du's hypothesis. He knew the PLA's

strategies laid out in their principles of war doctrine because it was put into action numerous times during their Manchurian conquests. He could not envision a scenario in which the Communists would benefit from attacking a strongly fortified city.

Du Yuming speculated that the attacks against the 2nd Army in the northwest/northeast regions of Xuzhou, were only diversionary attacks that posed no danger to the city. Thus, they needed to move east to aid the breakout of the 7th Army. He argued this to his superior in an effort to acquire a large relief force from Xuzhou to rescue the 7th Army.⁹⁴

General Liu Zhi, commander of the Xuzhou Headquarters, remained unconvinced that Xuzhou was not in danger. To settle the matter, Liu and Du ordered General Qiu Qingquan, commander of the 2nd Army, to come in and be debriefed. Qiu reported that large elements of the CPFA were moving south, possibly in an attempt to block the incoming Nationalist 12th Army. It appeared that the Communists did not mean to attack Xuzhou. To address the situation of the 7th Army, Du drafted two proposals for Liu Zhi to consider.

The first proposal called for the Nationalist forces to engage and destroy the incoming CPFA. It required the 13th Army to defend Xuzhou, and then the 2nd Army would head southwest, the 16th would head west, and the 12th would head northeast, in an attempt to catch the CPFA in the Guoyang-Mengcheng area and destroy them.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 18.

Figure 10 CPFA's trajectory



Nationalist intelligence reports hypothesized the CPFA's trajectory (Map Source: Google Earth)

After defeating the CPFA, the combined force of the four armies would turn east and breakout the 7th Army. Du believed that the positioning of Nationalist forces on three sides of the expected CPFA destination made this plan practical. Along with a huge numeric superiority the three Nationalist armies would bring, this plan had a high chance of success. The only shortcoming of this plan was the risk of the 7th Army not able to hold out long enough to be saved.⁹⁵

Du's second proposal was much more modest. Instead of engaging the CPFA, it followed the lines of the original plan of saving the surrounded 7th Army first. The only addition Du desired to make was increasing the size of the relief force. He wanted the entire 2nd and 13th Army to relieve the 7th, while the 16th Army defended Xuzhou. Then, while engaging in battle against the ECFA that surrounded the 7th Army, the Nationalist 12th Army would join the fight and finish off the Communists. But, if the

⁹⁵ Ibid.

CPFA could slow down the 12th's advance, the Nationalist relief force may not have enough combat power to defeat the ECFA.⁹⁶

Liu looked over the proposals and rejected both. In the first option, he did not believe that the 7th Army could hold out long enough for the Nationalist forces to defeat the CPFA and then go and rescue them. Liu also doubted the intelligence reports that cited the CPFA's trajectory to the Guoyang-Mengcheng area. If they carried out a full scale operation toward that area and it turned out to be a bust, it would spell doom for the Nationalists. Also, the main objective from Nationalist High Command was the relief of the 7th Army; if this goal was not met, Chiang would certainly hold them responsible.

Liu also thought that option two, the more conservative of the two, had its problems. Although it coincided with Chiang's orders to rescue the 7th Army, Liu did not want to move the 2nd Army. It was already engaged in firefights against the Communists and if they moved eastward, what would prevent the Communist forces from chasing them?⁹⁷ Here, it is shown how the factor of *General* 蔣 negatively impacted the Nationalists. Due to Chiang's micromanagement to combat his army's factionalism, Nationalist commanders were less likely to contend or offer alternatives to plans if they were sent down by Chiang personally. Moreover, because he personally oversaw all operations, any failings or unwanted deviations carried the possibility of explaining, face to face, to Chiang, the reasoning for their actions. This fear hindered the Nationalist field commanders because it did not allow them to adapt to situations, nor did it promote creative thought.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 19.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

After more intelligence reports poured in, Liu accepted the second proposal with a minor adjustment. Still fearful of possible attacks on Xuzhou, if the 2nd Army was to be used as part of the relief operations, he demanded that a corps be left behind to guard the northwestern area of the city as a precaution. Unknown to the Nationalists at this time, the CPFA's southern movement was not to engage the incoming 12th Army, but was to capture the city of Suxian (Suzhou).⁹⁸

Had the Nationalists properly assess the *General* 將 component of Sun Tzu's net assessment, it may have convinced Liu to send as large of a relief force as he could to rescue the 7th Army. The Communist commander in charge of the ECFA that surrounded the Nationalist 7th Army was General Su Yu. The 7th Army commander was General Huang Baitao. General Su Yu brought a huge numeric advantage over the Nationalists; with his ECFA of 15 infantry columns, his total forces numbered around 360,000 soldiers.⁹⁹ General Huang Baitao's 7th Army had 10 divisions roughly numbered around 100,000. Prior to the encirclement, the ECFA exacted 30,000 casualties when the rear of the 7th Army was caught at the Grand Canal crossing. This brought their strength down to 70,000 when the ECFA initiated their encirclement.¹⁰⁰

Su Yu used five columns, approximately 150,000 soldiers, to surround the 7th Army, and seven columns to blockade Nationalist relief forces coming to their aid. Other columns were sent to the north and south corridors east of Xuzhou to give the illusion of a major threat to the city.¹⁰¹ By doing so, it made the Xuzhou commander hesitant on

⁹⁸ Ibid., 142.

⁹⁹ *Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun zhanshi*, 8.

¹⁰⁰ *Zhongyang junwei yuji*, 129.

¹⁰¹ Zhang Zhen, *Huadong yezhanjun zai Huaihai zhanyi zhong de zuozhan xingdong* [The Combat Operations of the ECFA During the Huaihai Campaign], Chinese Communist Party

sending a large relief force to the 7th Army for fear of the city being attacked. This positioning also gave the ECFA the ability to outflank any troops sent from Xuzhou. General Su Yu truly understood the *shi* and managed to stay two steps ahead of the Nationalist planners at every turn in this campaign.

The 7th Army faced enormous odds as their 70,000 soldiers stood against 150,000 Communist troops. As the situation grew direr, the survival of the 7th Army depended on the relief force sent by the Xuzhou Command.

故我欲戰，敵雖高壘深溝，不得不與我戰者，攻其所必救也

Therefore when I desire battle, although the enemy has high fortifications and deep moats, they cannot not battle me, I attack their place that must be rescued

This passage from chapter 6 *True Situation* 虛實, tied into the net assessment factor of *Method* 法. The PLA's principles of war doctrine relied heavily on maneuverability and avoidance of head on positional battles. They focused on attacking smaller, isolated Nationalist forces. Such was the case with the 7th Army. The Communists were familiar with the Nationalists' hammer and anvil strategy thus were fully prepared for the incoming relief force. Instead of attacking a heavily fortified city such as Xuzhou, protected by various field armies, the Communists exploited the *shi* molded by *Method* 法, because they knew by surrounding the 7th Army, they would be able to draw out the Nationalist forces onto the open plains where they held the advantage.

When presented with courses of action, the Xuzhou commander elected the most conservative approach. Fearful of the city being sieged, only two field armies were sent to attempt the breakout of the 7th Army. This brought their total to around 150,000

Central Committee's Committee for the Collection of Party Historical Material, Beijing: Zhonggong dangshi ziliao chubanshe, 1988, vol. 2. 29.

soldiers. These 150,000 Nationalist soldiers would need to fight through 210,000 Communist troops who stood in their way, and then repel the 150,000 man force surrounding the 7th Army. Clearly, the *shi* did not favor the Nationalists.

將不能料敵，以少合眾，以弱擊強，兵無選鋒，曰北

The general unable to anticipate the enemy, uses a smaller force to engage a larger one, uses a weaker force to attack a stronger one, the army should not choose this battle, this is called a defeat

This passage from chapter 10 *Terrain* 地形, cautioned against acting to the unknown. The Nationalists did not know how many PLA soldiers were in the area, nor did they know where. This ties back to Sun Tzu's net assessments, specifically *General* 將. By assessing *General* 將, the numeric strength brought to the battlefield can be determined. A close analysis of this factor reveals that the Nationalists sent an inferior force to attempt the breakout of the encircled 7th Army. According to this passage, this decision would certainly lead to their defeat.

Figure 11 CPFA's countermoves



CPFA troop movements in relation to new Nationalist plans. By pulling the 16th Army out of Suxian (Suzhou), it allowed the CPFA to take and cut Xuzhou off from its only supply line from Bengbu. (Map Source: Google Earth)

On November 11, the orders were issued to the Nationalist armies. The 2nd Army, without their LXXIV Corps, was to move to the eastern edge of Xuzhou, south of the 13th Army's current position. These two armies would begin preparations and advance eastward toward the encircled 7th Army. The 16th Army was to move north from Suxian and defend the southern and western approaches to Xuzhou. Du Yuming wanted to make the relief force as strong as possible so that it may rescue the 7th Army more quickly and easily. Unbeknownst to the Nationalists, their troop repositioning created a positional weakness of great significance. Just as moving the 13th Army into Xuzhou earlier in the campaign allowed the Communists to cut off the 7th Army, moving the 16th Army from Suxian guaranteed the CPFA's success in capturing Suxian and

isolating Xuzhou. On November 13, the 2nd and 13th Army launched their offensive operations to break out the 7th Army.¹⁰²

是故勝兵先勝，而後求戰；敗兵先戰，而後求勝。

Therefore the victorious army is first victorious, and then seeks battle; the defeated army first battles, and then seeks victory

This passage from chapter 4 *Military Formations* 軍形, tied back to the importance of *shi* and the net assessments. In the current situation, the Nationalists failed to assess the advantages and disadvantages each side held before attempting the relief operations; this meant that the Nationalists did not take into consideration which side the *shi* favored. If they had, it would have been apparent that the Nationalists had a severe disadvantage as they marched toward the encircled 7th Army. By not understanding the situation, the Nationalists hoped to gain victory in the moment, rather than, like this passage stated, to make sure victory was obtained before going into battle.

¹⁰² Du, *Huaihai zhanyi*, 20.

CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSION

Over the course of a few months, the political, social, and military landscape of China drastically changed. The once backwards CPC had grown into an indomitable tide poised to sweep all of China into its red waters. The turning point of this long civil war occurred during the winter of 1948 to 1949 on the plains surrounding Xuzhou. This became known as the Huaihai Campaign.

The catastrophic aftermath of this operation crippled the KMT government to the brink of destruction. The majority of Chinese people now sided with the CPC and their call for a communist revolution. The Nationalist Army was reduced to a mere shadow of its former self, no longer able to confront the PLA. KMT controlled areas were also reduced to just a few southern provinces. Refusing to surrender, the Nationalist government, along with its military and supporters, retreated to the island of Taiwan, where the republic still stands to this day.

A series of Nationalist leadership decision failings led to the loss of the Huaihai Campaign. Although there were many planning and execution errors, this research advocates for two defining moments that truly turned the tide of the campaign: the verdict to defend Xuzhou, and the decision to send an inferior force to rescue the encircled 7th Army. The military assessment axioms present in Sun Tzu's *The Art of War* are used to analyze what went wrong for the Nationalists in the two major turning points.

Sun Tzu's dynamic assessment compose of five factors: political, weather, geography, commanders, doctrine and technology. These five factors are integral to planning a military operation because each component has direct and indirect influences

on the battlefield. Sun Tzu codifies these five assessment principles to provide a tool for leaders to calculate advantages and disadvantages, as well as determine which side the *shi* favors. Sun Tzu says:

知彼知己，百戰不殆；不知彼而知己，

一勝一負；不知彼，不知己，每戰必敗

If you know your enemy and know yourself, in a hundred battles there will be no danger; if you do not know the enemy but know yourself, for every victory a defeat; if you do not know the enemy, do not know yourself, every battle is a certain defeat

This research uses Sun Tzu's dynamic net assessments to analyze the two major turning points. By doing so, it becomes evident that the PLA held a distinct advantage over the Nationalist Army in both of the defining moments of the Huaihai Campaign. The KMT failures stemmed from ignorance of the most basic and vital military axioms of assessing advantages and disadvantages before going into battle. This resulted in the sure Nationalist defeat, just as Sun Tzu warned.

By using the principles in *The Art of War*, this thesis investigates how and why the seemingly superior Nationalist Army was defeated during the Huaihai Campaign. Understanding what specific areas the Nationalists failed in allows for the hypothesizing of how they might have been able to be victorious. Additionally, this thesis, to demonstrate the versatility and applicability of *The Art of War* in any battle and in any situation, analyzes two key points; one on the strategic level, the other on the operational level. Undoubtedly, in the form of *The Art of War*, Sun Tzu provides a collection of universal and dynamic principles that has been an invaluable resource for commanders and decision makers of the past and the present.

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