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Sun Tzu's "The Art of War" and Implications for Leadership: Theoretical Discussion

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We present a study of the Art of War from a leadership perspective, one in which we make a closer connection to the context of general organization and management. The Art of War written by Sun Tzu is one of those books that could be classified in the genre of pop-culture. Although its content used to be considered as a carefully protected state secret in the past, it is now available to everyone. Its use has in the past century of moved from warfare also to other areas of human activity. Strategic advices that it contains can be used in many more areas than just the conduct in the times of war. In fact, the success in wars, as well as in business, of course, depends on leadership, which is why we identify the positive and negative attributes of a leader in relation to strategic leadership. People are those who fight in battles and are also those who win them; and the most important person in every battle is the general. Historically, a number of successful military commanders ascribe the credit for their victories to Sun Tzu's principles. In addition, this wisdom is now being examined and used by senior executives from all around the world, especially in Asia, because it can be utilized in many business and political situations. The Chinese classic "The Art of War" is still considered as one of the most influential and important works on strategy, why a discussion on theoretical and practical implications of Sun Tzu's strategic leadership theory in a global environment is also included.

Keywords: Sun Tzu, leadership, organization

1 Introduction

In 500 B.C. probably the most renowned and revered ancient general in the world today (Low and Tan, 1995) – Sun Tzu – wrote the highly influential book The Art of War, which offered a framework for waging war and valuable observations on the nature of battle. The Art of War has been very influential in Chinese political and military history and there is evidence that it has influenced the thinking and practice of political and military leaders in modern China (e.g. Mao's guerrilla war), Japan, and the West (Cleary, 2000; Griffith, 1971; Lord, 2000). So important was this text that over the millennia it's been translated into many languages, updated and adapted to describe everything from the internal workings of sales processes to investment strategies to modern politics. Carl von Clausewitz (von Clausewitz, 1968), the famous Prusian military theorist and author of the classic "On War" noted that business was a form of human competition that greatly resembled war. Within the field of business studies, The Art of War has been applied to the areas such as strategic management (Tung, 1994; Boar, 1995; Rarick, 1996; Lee, Roberts, Lau, & Bhattacharyya, 1998; Marber, Kooros, Wright, and Wellen, 2002; Wu, Chou, and Wu, 2004), project management (Pheng and Chuvessiriporn, 1997; Hawkins and Rajagopal, 2005), security management (Watson, 2007), innovation management (Martin, 2009; Foo, 2011), patent management (Lo, Ho and Sculli, 1998; Wanetick, 2010), quality management (Pheng and Hong, 2005), change management (Fernandez, 2004), human resource management (Wee, 2000; Lamond and Zheng, 2010), organizational behavior (Ko, 2003; Ahlstrom, Lamond and Ding, 2009), marketing (Low and Tan, 1995; Ho and Choi, 1997; Michealson and Michealson, 2003; Gagliardi, 2004), e-commerce (McCarthy, 2001), management education (McCallum, 1998; Li and van Baalen, 2007), leadership (Chen and Lee, 2008; Hee and Gurd, 2010; Reichard and Johnson,

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2011), negotiation (Fang, 2006), international business (Wong, Maher and Lee, 1998), and the newly emerging discipline of systems engineering (Foo, 2008; Foo, 2009). Maxims of competitive strategies and tactics directly and indirectly attributed to the Art of war permeate speeches by Chinese and Western business executives. In Singapore, there is even the Sun Tzu Art of War Institute. This ancient classic has also been applied to such unexpected areas as construction industry (Pheng and Fang, 2005; Pheng and Hong, 2005), writing (Bell, 2009), patient care (Tremayne, 2008), rhetoric (Combs, 2005), personal success (Michealson and Michealson, 2003), and even dating (Rogell, 2011).

Sun Tzu is also known as Sun Wu with Sun being the family name, as we read in Chen and Lee (2008, pp. 143-144). Tzu was a honorary title meaning "master." Sun Tzu and his ancestors obtained their family name by a historical coincidence as their original name was Chen and then Tian. Sun Tzu's grandfather, under the family name of Tian, was awarded a large piece of land under the official title of Sun by the king of the Qi state for his military achievement in a war against the state of Lü. Over time, the family came to be known as Sun instead of Tian. Being born into a family of experts on military and political affairs and living in the state of Qi, which boasted many great military and political philosophers of the Warring States Period, Sun Tzu was blessed with an invaluable rich inheritance of political and military philosophies and practices. He later came to the state of Wu and presented to the king of Wu his thirteen chapters of the Art of war. He became a principal strategist of the Wu state and is believed to have contributed greatly to its ascendance.

Beyond the major religions such as Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism, Chinese leadership culture also has its underpinnings in the writings of well-known thinkers not affiliated with any of these schools of thought. One such writer was Sun Tzu (Gallo, 2011). In writing the Art of War, Sun Tzu, however, drew upon the wisdom of the previous philosophical schools. Confucianist thoughts on benevolence, righteousness, ritual propriety, and wisdom can be recognized in the Art of War, where these concepts are used to define, evaluate, and guide leadership, strategy, and tactics. Among the Daoist ideas that have the greatest impact on Sun Tzu's strategic leadership theory are the dialectic relationship between the contradictory forces of yin and yang, and the significance of the five basic natural elements of water, fire, wood, metal, and earth in warfare. The Legalist ideas of law, authority, and tactics were also key concepts used by Sun Tzu in discussing leadership strategies and tactics.

In this paper we study the Art of War from a leadership perspective, one in which we make a closer connection to the context of general organization and management. Following Chen and Lee (2008, p. 143), we study how, in the view of Sun Tzu, military commanders exercise strategic situationalism, namely, situation-making (zhao shi) to lead an army to victory. We identify the positive and negative attributes of a leader in relation to strategic leadership. Furthermore, we elaborate Sun Tzu's strategic situationalism into (a) creating positional advantage in the environment, (b) creating organizational advantage within the organization, (c) building morale within the troops, and (d) leveraging and adapting to situations. Finally we discuss theoretical and practical implications of Sun Tzu's strategic leadership theory in a global environment.

2 Sun Tzu's Strategic Leadership

Based on the Sun Tzu's views on warfare and his prescriptions to the focal commander on how to achieve organizational outcomes through strategic maneuver on the key elements of an organized action, we frame Sun Tzu's philosophy in terms of strategic leadership, following Chen and Lee (2008, p. 153). While paying attention to ways of organizing, developing, and motivating a highly effective organization we also highlight the importance of factors external to the leader–member relationship including the higher authority, the larger community, and alliances and enemies, and the immanent situational and contextual factors. The term strategic leadership also suggests a system or institutional perspective as opposed to the supervisor–subordinate perspectives taken by theories of leadership such as the situational theory (Hersey and Blanchard, 1981, 1993), the path–goal theory (House, 1971), and the LMX theory (Liden and Graen, 1980).

Sun Tzu's adherence to the holistic approach to warfare makes his leadership theory fundamentally situational. Of the five determinants of a victory in war, three are external factors (the socio-political environment, the weather, and the terrain) and two are internal to the organization (the quality of the leader and the condition of the army). Sun Tzu devotes two full chapters to physical terrain (Chapter 10, Wu, 2001) and regions (Chapter 11, Wu, 2001) and one full chapter explicitly to varying tactics according to situational contingencies (Chapter 8, Wu, 2001). In other chapters about strategies, there are clear themes of using unorthodoxy and surprise, and of varying tactics according to circumstances. As we read in Chen and Lee (2008, p. 157), Sun Tzu's situational approach to leadership is also reflected in the importance he places on situational psychological factors relative to individual ones. He argues that "one who is skilled in directing war always tries to turn the situation to his advantage rather than make excessive demands on his subordinates" (Chapter 5, Wu, 2001), which suggests that success depends more on how the troops are strategically and situationally deployed by the leader than on the quality or psychological state of the individual soldiers per se. Furthermore, Sun Tzu sees followers' cohesion and morale as largely a function of situation rather than a purely chronic condition of the army. He predicts that troops will have greater morale when they are at the beginning of a campaign, when they find themselves deep in the enemy's territory, when they are rested, and when they have no way to back out (Chapter 11, Wu, 2001). He concludes that "an army under such conditions will be vigilant without admonishment, will carry out their duties without compulsion, will be devoted without constraint, will observe discipline even though they are not under close surveillance" (Chapter 11: 103, Wu, 2001). However, Sun Tzu's strategic situationalism of leadership is closer to the notion of strategic choice (Child, 1995) than the notion of situational determinism in the organizational behavior literature (Davis-Blake and Pfeffer, 1989). Despite, or indeed because of, his situational views of individual psychology and organi-



Figure 1: Sun Tzu's model of strategic situationalism (Chen & Lee, 2008, p. 158)

zational effectiveness, Sun Tzu believes strongly that success lies in the ability of the leader on the one hand to comprehend and appreciate the power of a situation and, on the other, to rise above the situation by creating, leveraging, and adapting to the existing and emergent environment. This is what Chen and Lee (2008, p. 158) call strategic situationalism.

We depict the strategic situationalism model in Figure 1, in which the first component describes attributes of the leader, which enable strategic leadership activities to affect the situation and the followers, which in turn lead to success. Solid lines in the Figure 1 refer to causal relationships on which Sun Tzu focused; dotted lines are possible but obscure causal relationships.

3 Individual Attributes of the Strategic Leader

The Art of war contains many descriptions of the attributes of an ideal leader. In describing an ideal sovereign the most common terms Sun Tzu uses are humaneness (benevolence and righteousness) and enlightenedness. In describing an ideal general, Sun Tzu lists five attributes: wisdom, trustworthiness, benevolence, courage, and firmness (Chapter 1: 5, Wu, 2001). While benevolence is the most important virtue of the Confucian Dao of government, wisdom appears to be the most important attribute of the strategic leader for Sun Tzu's Dao of war. It is a much broader concept than intelligence as it refers to the acquisition of knowledge and skills through accumulation and the ability to fulfill one's responsibility. In fact, wisdom may arguably be the overarching attribute for Sun Tzu, as it is capable of incorporating courage, firmness or even benevolence and trustworthiness. In describing the wisdom of the general, Sun Tzu refers to understanding the broader political mission of war, seeing the Dao of yin and yang (seeing danger inherent in advantages, but advantage in dangers), having foreknowledge of the enemy and the battleground situation, recognizing emergent changes of the situation, and having the skill to use unorthodox strategies, to leverage situations (e.g. different kinds of region), to deploy troops according to the situation, and to win the troops' loyalty and compliance through soft and hard means. In superior–subordinate relations, trustworthiness, for Sun Tzu, seems to refer primarily to loyalty to the superior whereas, in contrast, benevolence is directed downward toward the subordinates. Courage may be the ideal attribute that is most special to military organization and combat situations, but to a large extent so is firmness. However, firmness may be more universal to all organizations as it counterbalances benevolence, for Sun Tzu believes that benevolence without firmness creates loyalty but not deployability. McNeilly (1996, p. 128), who in his book interprets Sun Tzu from the business perspective, also lists five desirable traits of an ideal leader: a) build your character, not just your image, b) lead with actions, not just words, c) share employee's trials, not just their triumphs, d) motivate emotionally, not just materially, e) assign clearly defined missions to all, avoiding mission overlap and confusion, f) make your strategy drive your organization, not the reverse.

Sun Tzu also lists five fatal flaws of a strategic leader that can bring calamity to the leader and the troops (Chapter 8, Wu, 2001). "Those who are ready to die can be killed; those who are intent on living can be captured; those who are quick to anger can be shamed; those who are puritanical can be disgraced; those who love people can be troubled" (Cleary, 2000, p. 135). These are vulnerabilities of the leader that can be strategically exploited by the enemy in combat situations. Although these have been typically viewed as character or trait flaws (e.g. Griffith, 1971), they can also be viewed as cognitive and emotional errors committed in response to extremely turbulent and volatile situations. Regardless of whether they are chronic traits or situationally induced characteristics, they are flaws. Notice that except for fear of death and quick tem-

per, three qualities could be viewed as positive attributes of courage, honor, and benevolence if they exist in moderation or are counter-balanced by other attributes. When a leader is wedded to an otherwise good value or a course of action to the exclusion of other values and options, the otherwise good attribute becomes a flaw. Courage without wisdom and benevolence without firm discipline are examples. So it is single-mindedness that is fatal because the leader is unable to adapt to the complex and changing situation or more vulnerable to strategic maneuvering by more skillful opponents. In pointing out these flaws, Sun Tzu in effect is holding a holistic and situational view of positive leadership characteristics. Furthermore, because the single-minded overzealous leader is typically guided by emotion rather than by knowledge of the objective situations and the sound reasoning of strategic thinking, Sun Tzu points to the importance of emotional stability and balance for strategic thinking and strategic operation. He repeatedly warns against launching wars and battles as a result of the emotion of the sovereign and the general. Emotions, he warns, can be reversed but perished states and lost lives cannot be brought back.

4 Strategic Situationalism

Key to Sun Tzu's leadership theory is the Chinese concept of situation (shi), situation-making (zhao shi), and situational adaptation (yin shi). The Chinese term shi has been translated into English as force, position, power, or momentum. In the Art of war, Sun Tzu devoted one chapter (Chapter 5, Wu, 2001) to the topic of shi. The purpose of strategies and tactics regarding shi is to create a positive position (you shi) relative to an opponent, i.e. relative advantage, and the more overwhelming the advantage, the greater the likelihood of swift and complete victory. In the Art of war strategic situational advantage is further divided into subtypes of advantage: positional (terrain), organizational, and morale/spirit (qi shi).

4.1 Positional Advantage

The most potent advantage according to Sun Tzu lies in placing the organization in an advantageous position vis-a'-vis other organizations in a given field of operation. This involves creating a strategically favorable environment for the organization. In the most basic sense of the term, Sun Tzu refers to the positional advantage of terrain (di shi). "When torrential water moves boulders, it is because of its momentum [shi] … Logs and rocks remain immobile when they are on level ground but fall forward when on a steep slope. The strategic advantage of troops skillfully commanded in battle may be compared to the momentum of round boulders rolling down from mountain heights." Sun Tzu emphasizes that it is far more effective for commanders to create situations (zhao shi) in which troops are advantageously positioned and ready than to demand bravery and heroism when faced with adversity. Strategic leadership should therefore pay more attention to creating favorable situations than accepting and working within given situations. The former requires strategic thinking, foreknowledge, and proactivity. Sun Tzu prescribes many proactive behaviors for creating a preponderance of positional advantage relative to opponents, ranging through full preparation, arriving early, employing more troops, and providing better logistics, etc. However, positional advantage seems to start with or boil down to advantage in knowing, especially in having information, as can be seen in the great importance of "knowing yourself and knowing your enemy." It is no wonder the book starts with war parameter assessment, which requires information on warring parties and ends with the importance of using secret agents for information advantage. Lord (2000, p. 304) observed that because Sun Tzu believed in "the manipulability of the strategic environment," he is remarkably different from Western military strategists such as von Clausewitz. While von Clausewitz emphasizes the chance and uncertainty of warfare and highlights the importance of intuition and the will of the leader, Sun Tzu places high priority on intelligence about the actual conditions of the battle, and affords it a strategically decisive role.

4.2 Organizational Advantage

One of the five parameters of winning is the organization of the army, by which Sun Tzu refers to the unity of command, the consistent enforcement of rules and regulations, clear rewards and punishments, and the coordination of different parts of the army. Sun Tzu starts the chapter on momentum by stating that whether commanding many or few troops, a large or a small army, it is a matter of organization, of instituting layers of control, and of communication. As an aside, it is amazing to discover how so many of Sun Tzu's ideas on the science of war are reflected in the Western science of management, especially in the essential managerial functions of planning, organizing, commanding, and controlling as proposed by Henri Fayol (1916), who wrote his book about two thousand years after the Art of war. According to Griffith, the Art of War was translated into French in Paris in 1772. One wonders if Fayol had read and reflected on Sun Tzu. Sun Tzu proposes constant variations of orthodox and unorthodox formations in deploying troops. The conventional formations are generally used to engage the opponent while the surprise tactics are employed to win victories. Yet, unconventional and deceptive tactics such as feigning confusion, weakness, and retreat rely heavily on the order, strength, and unity that lie in the organizational advantages.

There seems to be a paradox in Sun Tzu's insistence on a rather rigid structure of unity of command and organizational discipline on one hand but flexibility, innovation, and variation of actions on the other. Sun Tzu's answer to the paradox lies in the leader's strategic discretion (Hambrick and Finkelstein, 1987) as well as the leader's ability to create and leverage situational and psychological advantages. Sun Tzu insists on non-interference from the sovereign on matters of military operation and on the autonomy and discretion of the commander. While acknowledging that the commander receives his mandate from the sovereign, after the commander sets out, "there are commands of the sovereign he should not obey" just as there are situations in which "there are roads he should not take, armies he should not attack, walled cities he should not assault, territories he should not contest for" (Chapter 8:

69, Wu, 2001). He warns of three ways that a sovereign could bring disaster to the army: arbitrarily ordering the army to advance or retreat when in fact it should not, interfering with the administration of the army, and interfering with the commander's strategies and tactics (Chapter 3, Wu, 2001).

Clearly, Sun Tzu believes that although the mandate is set from the top (which itself is subject to the criteria of righteousness and benevolence) subordinates should be fully empowered to execute the mandate without interference from above especially when the higher authority has no full knowledge of the situation in the field. Sun Tzu also believes in following the Way of war (zhan dao), namely, following the rationality of acting according to the objective contingent requirement of the war rather than the subjective wishes of the sovereign or the general. "Thus, if the Way of war guarantees you victory, it is right for you to insist on fighting even if the sovereign has said not to. Where the Way of war does not allow victory, it is right for you to refuse to fight even if the sovereign says you must. Therefore, a commander who decides to advance without any thought of winning personal fame and to withdraw without fear of punishment and whose only concern is to protect his people and serve his sovereign is an invaluable asset to the state" (Chapter 10: 93, Wu, 2001).

4.3 Moral Advantage

Morale advantage refers to a psychological advantage, the degree of superiority of a troop over its enemy in terms of a conviction of morality and efficacy and a determination to win victory. With such momentum of spirit and energy the army will be like the cascading of pent-up water thundering through a steep gorge. How then is such morale momentum created? First, the legitimacy of command, for example, that of the sovereign over the general, the army, and the populace in general, originates from the Way, namely, righteousness and benevolence of those invested with authority. Sun Tzu sees the psychological identification and attachment of the rank and file with the leader and the organization as essential. "If troops are punished before their loyalty is secured they will be disobedient. If not obedient, it is difficulty to employ them" (Chapter 9: 85, Wu, 2001). Second, benevolence must be coupled with discipline through training and deployment. Officers should be benevolent but strict with the soldiers, gain their loyalty, and have a harmonious relationship with them (Chapter 9, Wu, 2001). Such hard–soft tactics, of course, reflect the Daoist way of thinking and are consistent with the paternalistic model. It should be noted, as we did earlier, that in Sun Tzu's strategic situationalism, morale is not merely a function of internal subjective qualities of the organizational members. Organizational and positional advantages outside the person are other ways of inducing psychological advantage.

4.4 Leveraging and Adaptation

While situation-making stresses creating favorable positional, organizational, and psychological situations, taking advantage and adapting to existing situations is also part of strategic situationalism, and this is closest to the contingency approach of leadership in the West (Fiedler, 1977; Hersey and Blanchard, 1981). In Chinese, leveraging and adaptation are called yin shi, literally meaning "following the situation." Change of operations and tactics in response to emergent situations is a major component of strategic leadership. The emergent situations may present opportunities to be leveraged and constraints to be adapted to. Like Laozi, the master of Daoism, Sun Tzu likens the leader's ability to change to a property of water. Sun Tzu asserts that as water changes its course in accordance with the contours of the terrain so do commanders change their tactics in accordance to the situation. "There is no fixed pattern in the use of tactics in war just as there is not constant course in the flow of water" (Chapter 6: 57, Wu, 2001). The variation and change of tactics are based on understanding all aspects of the situation: the location, the time, the state and condition of one's own army versus those of the opponent's. The key is to understand fully the emergent and the potential favorable and unfavorable factors. It is in the context of adaptation and change that Sun Tzu identifies those five fatal flaws of the commander (Chapter 9, Wu, 2001). These flaws orient the commander to staying on a wrong course because of adherence to some predetermined doctrine, high authority, or emotion.

5 Discussion and Conclusions

We present here the theoretical and practical implications of the Art of war in a global context, following the thoughts of Chen and Lee (2008, p. 165) on this issue. What needs to be emphasized first and foremost is Sun Tzu's non-relational approach to leadership. Admittedly one can see a reflection of the Confucian dyadic model of interpersonal role relationships such as that between the sovereign and the minister and between the parent and the child. Yet, Sun Tzu is mostly concerned with the whole organization: its legitimacy, its systems of operation and administration, the collective followership, or the unity and morale of the organizational members. His unit of analysis and his target of leadership actions are more often than not at the collective rather than the individual or the dyadic levels. His collectivity also tends to be at the highest collectivity level, that is, the overall organization rather than its individual divisions and subdivisions. Such an approach speaks to the Western literature on strategic leadership (Boal and Hooijberg, 2001; Finkelstein and Hambrick, 1996) and contributes to it by emphasizing the creation of external and internal winning environments. The system and situational approach to leadership complements dyadic models of leader–member relationships (Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1995). Leadership in the global context calls not only for cross-cultural relationship-building but also for attention to issues of external and internal environments, system-level adaptation, and collective identification.

Second, Sun Tzu's theory of situationalism provides interesting critiques on the person-situation debate in the organizational behavior literature and on cross-cultural research on cognition. The person-situation debate centers on whether it is individuals' stable internal characteristics or the external situation that determine people's behavior (Davis-Blake and Pfeffer, 1989; Ross and Nisbett, 1991; Salancik and Pfeffer,

1978). Dispositionalists believe that the impact of individual characteristics is more significant whereas situationalists believe in the power of the situation. Cross-cultural comparative research on cognition and behavior shows that the Chinese are more holistic in that they see more situational causal factors, whereas Westerners are more analytic and agential as they are more likely to see individual actors as causal agents of events (Nisbett et al., 2001). Both these bodies of literature might suggest that Chinese leaders, relative to their Western counterparts, believe more in the power of situation than in that of individuals, so that Chinese leadership is expected to be less agential, less assertive, or less proactive with regards to situation or environment. This, however, is not what we observe in Sun Tzu's leadership philosophy as manifested in the Art of war. What we observe is that while Sun Tzu does believe in the causal power of the situation he nevertheless also believes in great leaders being masters of situation-making, situation manipulation, and situation leveraging. Sun Tzu's theory of strategic situationalism fits well with the Daoist way of contradictory thinking but in our view has great significance for leadership research and practice as organizations become more complex, dynamic, and global.

The third point of both theoretical and practical importance is Sun Tzu's concept of wisdom and the importance of information. We pointed out that the Chinese concept of wisdom or enlightenment bears some resemblance to the concept of intelligence in Western psychology and leadership (Kirkpatrick and Locke, 1991). But there may be important differences. First, the Western concept of intelligence is a personality trait that is largely hereditary and non-malleable whereas the Chinese concept of wisdom is acquired through continuous study and practice. Second, the Chinese concept of wisdom is also broader than managerial wisdom as conceived by Boal and Hooijberg (2001) or job-related knowledge (Kirkpatrick and Locke, 1991). Most likely the Chinese concept of wisdom is multidimensional and, in Sun Tzu's conceptions, it could be a meta-characteristic of what leadership is about. More conceptual work is needed to refine and specify wisdom and establish its validity in leadership research. Wisdom could very well be the key leader characteristic that accounts for or moderates strategic situationalism.

Another point relating to wisdom is about strategic information-seeking. Lord (2000, p. 304) credited Sun Tzu for "anticipating the information-oriented strategic approach of the contemporary revolution in military affairs" and, we want to add, in the affairs of business and management as well. It can be further argued that if information-seeking becomes the norm, information quality in terms of completeness, relevance, and accuracy and information management may be important factors that affect the effectiveness of strategic situationalism.

Lastly, issues of ethics are becoming more salient as companies are facing greater global as well as domestic competition. Sun Tzu's infamous quote that "war is a game of deception" (Chapter 1: 9, Wu, 2001) needs to be considered in its historical context as well as in the context of war being ridden with conflict and violence. Sun Tzu's aversion to aggression and destruction for the sake of vengeance and his appeal to justice and benevolence reflected the Confucian philosophy of benevolence and humaneness. However, his deception tactics were severely condemned by Xunzi, a Confucianist contemporary of Sun Tzu, on the grounds of morality and ethicality. It is obvious that Sun Tzu's deceptive tactics are almost always directed toward the enemy but in Chapter 11 (Wu, 2001) he also entertained situations in which the officer needs to be inscrutable and to keep the soldiers ignorant of the military plan and the battle situation, all in the name of maintaining the unity and morale of the army. The question arises of whether, and, if so, to what extent and on what bases, organizations and leaders may use deception or information asymmetry in their transactions with their opponents or their employees. Where should the benchmark of moral and ethical standards in military, political, and business conflicts be set, and should there be different ethical standards for domestic and international conflicts? In summary, future researchers must seriously consider the incorporation of ethics into their model of strategic leadership and must address the ethical challenges raised in Sun Tzu's Art of war.

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