

Comparing and Contrasting Western and Eastern Ways of War: Building a Universal Strategic Theory

Authors : Adam Kok Wey Leong

Abstract : The comparison between the Western ways of war and Eastern ways of war has raised contemporary debates on the validity of these arguments. The Western way of war is popularly propounded by Victor Davis Hanson as originating from the Greek hoplite tactics, direct military maneuvers, democratic principles and social freedom and cohesion that has continued to yield military success for the Western powers for centuries. On the other hand, the Eastern way of war has been deemed as relying on indirect tactics, deception, and ruses. This often accepted notion of the divide between Western and Eastern style does not sustain in view of the available classical strategic texts from both sides from the same period that has proposed similar principles of warfare. This paper analyses the similarities between classical strategic texts on war from the Eastern perspective namely Sun Tzu's Art of War with a similar temporal strategic text from the West which is Sextus Iulius Frontinus's Stratagematon, and deduces answers to this core research question - Does the hypothesis of the existence of distinctive Western and Eastern ways of warfare stands? The main thesis advanced by this research is that ways of warfare share universal principles, and it transcends cultural and spatial boundaries. Warfare is a human endeavour, and the same moral actions guide humans from different geo-cultural spheres in warfare's objectives, which are winning over an enemy in the most economical way and serve as a mean to an end.

Keywords : ways of warfare, strategic culture, strategy, Sun Tzu, frontinus

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