

# A most welcome encyclopaedia

by *Hugues Eudeline*

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**TITEL:**

**From Sun Tzu to hyperwar: a strategic encyclopaedia**

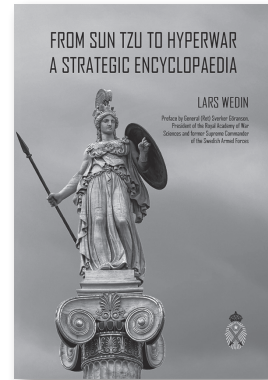
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SUNNI TERRORIST ORGANIZATIONS are waging worldwide protracted low intensity wars. High-tech military forces of democratic countries that are fighting them cannot bear their costs in the long run and most taxpayers want to end the longest war in American history without lasting results. The terrorist's way of war, the Modern War as per Colonel Trinquier's works written sixty years ago, reflects in many ways Sun Tzu's thought: "When the army engages in protracted campaigns the resources of the state will not suffice." US forces are currently decreasing their involvement in many fighting theaters. For Sun Tzu and terrorist organizations with limited combat capabilities, "to subdue the enemy without fighting is the acme of skill."

At the same time, shortly after waging a very successful hybrid war in Ukraine, Russia has developed a new nuclear doctrine arguing that a limited nuclear first use with low-yield weapons could provide a strategic advantage. The U.S.A. has been following suit, and the US Navy has deployed in January 2020 the new low-yield Trident W76-2 warhead on a nuclear ballistic submarine (SSBN). This is a major shift in the nuclear strategy of

both countries and a return to early cold war days when tactical nuclear strikes were currently planned. However, more than just a response, the U.S.A. takes advantage of the opportunity provided by Russia to develop thus a weapon with a potential use against other adversaries, not least North Korea and Iran that unfold their nuclear programs in underground facilities that cannot be reached by conventional bombs while diplomacy is at a stalemate.

Concomitantly, China and the U.S.A. are facing the Thucydides's Trap as the "rising state" catches up with the "ruling one." Since 2015, the ongoing tech war between China and the U.S.A. and the sensitive dual-use technologies that are being developed could be the necessary preamble for a future hyperwar.

The concepts evoked in these three examples of strategies or doctrines are currently implemented. They can seem quite difficult to understand by ordinary people who are not highly specialized strategist, yet are interested in international affairs. Although mainstream media refer daily to those concepts, most of the time it is, oftentimes, without sufficient

explanations, at the cost of potentially damaging misunderstandings.

War, and thus, strategy, are sources of endless theories and concepts that pile up since more than twenty-five centuries and constitute a very rich corpus. Many documents are often difficult to read, having been written at different ages by persons from different cultures. However, all remain highly modern and keep a striking topicality. For instance, *Irregular Warfare* reflects in many ways Sun Tzu's thought. Chapter XIII of "The Art of War" on secret operations is as pertinent today as it was when it has been written 2,500 years ago. It is not surprising that this essay, which horrified many orthodox Confucians, strongly influenced Mao Zedong.

For these reasons, Captain (Navy) Lars Wedin's book is an invaluable work. He had a great idea when he decided to write this very handy manual that fills the gap between a dictionary whose definitions are too short to get the full idea of a term and an encyclopaedia that consumes too much time to study concepts in depth. His book, easy to consult, is therefore useful to all, non-specialists, students, decision makers, military personnel and even strategists because of the very wide domains it covers. Most of the time, it provides the short but precise enough idea to catch up with the letter.

The author has made the choice to separate this book in three parts: a brief history of western military thinking, the encyclopaedia per se and a compilation of some notable strategic thinkers.

A concept must be placed in the context of the life of its author and of the time when it has been developed to grasp its right meaning. This is precisely what affords the triptych used by Captain Wedin to present within two to four pages each one of the strategic thinkers he selected: "life," "work," "legacy." The latter part, remains open that will evolve in time and according circumstances, strategy being by nature a living science and art.

The concepts developed throughout history are the fruit of the intelligent thought of strategists fed by events and thoughts from the past. However, they are timeless and remain valid. Although these concepts cannot predict the outcome of future conflicts, they do, however, enlighten them, provided they have been well understood. The work of Captain Lars Wedin greatly contributes to this need.

The digitalization of that book could further enhance its practicality and provide a chance to enlarge its content to more strategists and concepts without over clogging it. With the author, we hope that this will happen soon. The work deserves it, first to enrich the data to a wider corpus of strategic matters and second, to fulfill the need to further facilitate common people understanding of events that have a real influence on their life.

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