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RE-EXAMINING THE MEANING OF *SUNZI*'S *BU ZHAN ER QU REN ZHI BING* 不戰而屈人之兵 AND ITS PRACTICALITY

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This article re-examines the meaning of bu zhan er qu ren zhi bing 不戰而屈人之兵*, one of the core notions of* Sunzi 孫子*, and discusses its practicality. The article questions the popularly pacific and defensive view on this expression and refutes the argument that it is an idealistic concept. By analyzing the context and historical background of* Sunzi*, this article argues that* bu zhan er qu ren zhi bing *is a realistic strategydeveloped to adapt to the increasingly fierce competition during the period of the Chunqiu* 春秋 (770–481 B.C.E)*. The term can be applied to both offensive and defensive strategies. Its meaning does not equate to but includes subjugating the enemy or frustrating his strategic goals through* famou 伐謀 *and* fajiao 伐交 *rather than engaging in decisive battles. Through studying four historical cases from the* Chunqiu*, this article analyses how to apply* famou *and* fajiao *to achieve* bu zhan er qu ren zhi bing *in practice.*

KEYWORDS: Sunzi, bu zhan er qu ren zhi bing*,* famou*,* fajiao*, warfare of Chunqiu*

ABBREVIATIONS

CZZZ	*Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhengyi* 春秋左傳正義. Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2000.
SJ	*Shiji* 史記. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1959.

INTRODUCTION

Sunzi 孫子, the most important classical Chinese military treatise, has a well-known saying: *Bai zhan bai sheng, fei shan zhi shanzhe ye; bu zhan er qu ren zhi bing, shan zhi shanzhe ye* 百戰百勝，非善之善者也；不戰而屈人之兵，善之善者也, which is usually translated as "To fight and win a hundred battles is not the most brilliant [method] among all brilliant [methods]; to subdue the enemy army without fighting is the most brilliant [method] among all brilliant [methods]."[1] The above

[1] *Sunzi*, 1.28. For the various translations, see Shu Xun 1980, p. 88; Shi Meiheng 1987, p. 10; Ames 1993, p. 79; Sawyer 1996, p. 50; and Lin Wusun 2007, p. 29. Most researchers translate the character *ren* 人 as "enemy." However, Harro von Senger proposes a distinctive view that *ren* should be translated into "men" after interviewing Qi Wen 戚文, a Chinese expert of *Sunzi* (Senger 2015, p. 97). I agree with Senger that *ren* in general is often translated as "people" or "men" rather than "enemy." In Chinese, the character corresponding to "enemy" is *di* 敵. However, in

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famous quote is generally regarded as one of the core notions in the strategic thought of *Sunzi*, "and by extension, in Chinese strategic culture thought as a whole" in both the Chinese and Western academia.[2] Most Chinese and Western scholars believe that this expression represents a pacifist and/or defensive point of view on war. For instance, some scholars say that it contains peace-loving thoughts and/or humanitarian concerns.[3] Zhang Heng argues that it stresses "the importance of winning people by virtue rather than by force."[4] Liu Tiewa opines that it means "rulers should arrive at their objectives without using force."[5] Victor H. Mair thinks that it describes a defensive strategy.[6] Nadine Godehardt indicates that it means that preventive and defensive measures should be undertaken before the enemy's first strike to avoid actual combat.[7] And some other scholars believe that it is an idea of deterrence strategy.[8] Their opinions sound reasonable and are in accordance with the "dominant view" about traditional Chinese strategic culture – China has "historically preferred to use force in defensive and limited roles."[9] However, does the pacific and defensive view on *bu zhan er qu ren zhi bing* really reflect the original meaning of *Sunzi*? If not, what does it exactly mean? These are the first set of questions to be discussed in this article.

Although some scholars highly praise the value of *bu zhan er qu ren zhi bing* and regard it as the "highest state" of the Chinese classical strategic philosophy,[10] many others question its practicality. For example, Guo Huaruo claims that it is an "unrealistic notion" (*buqie shiji de xiangfa* 不切實際的想法).[11] Alastair Iain Johnston argues that it is just an "idealistic concept" (*lixianghua de gainian* 理想化的概念)

Sunzi, *ren* often refers to "enemy-" For instance, *Sunzi* says: "Therefore, the one who is skilled in warfare subdues the army of *ren* without *zhan* 戰; takes the city of *ren* without attacking it; destroys the state of *ren* without prolonged [operations]" (故善用兵者，屈人之兵而非戰也，拔人之城而非攻也，毀人之國而非久也, *Sunzi*, 1. 32–33). All translations from *Sunzi* and other works are my own unless otherwise stated. It is obvious that *ren* refers to the "enemy." Moreover, *Sunzi* says: "Therefore if [we can] make *ren* to show his [disposition of forces] while concealing our own, then we can concentrate [our forces] while [making] the enemy to disperse his" (故形人而我無形，則我專而敵分, *Sunzi*, 2. 74). It can be seen that in *Sunzi*, the character *ren* and *di* are interchangeable. Hence, I think the character *ren* should be translated as "enemy" rather than "people" or "men" in *bu zhan er qu ren zhi bing*.

[2] Johnston 1998, p. 99.

[3] Sawyer 1996, p. 53, Wang Lianbin 1999, p. 154, Zhou Minyuan 2005, p. 128, and Wu Rusong 2016, p. 116.

[4] Zhang Heng 2013, pp. 10.

[5] Liu Tiewa 2014, pp. 559–560.

[6] Mair 2007, p. 142.

[7] Godehardt 2008, p. 22.

[8] Yu Rubo 1994, p. 18, Hu Xiaotie 1994, pp. 68–69, and Xie Guoliang 1995, p. 88.

[9] Mott – Kim 2006, pp. 2–3. The pacific and defensive view on traditional Chinese strategic culture is widely accepted by both Western and Chinese scholars. For example, John K. Fairbank asserts that the Chinese culture has a "pacifist bias" and regards violence as the "last resort" (Fairbank 1974, pp. 7–9). Jonathan R. Adelmann and Chih-yu Shih says that from a Chinese perspective, "war was seen as an aberration," and China "showed a general preference for defensive warfare" (Adelmann – Shih 1993, pp. 31–33). Michael D. Swaine and Ashley J. Tellis believe that the Chinese state "generally followed a pragmatic and limited approach" to the use of force (Swaine – Tellis 2000, p. 65). Zhang Tiejun thinks that "the Han Chinese regimes normally preferred diplomatic measures to military solutions" (Zhang Tiejun 2002, pp. 77).

[10] See Xu – Zhang 2007, p. 47.

[11] Guo Huaruo 1984, p. 20.

without actual effect.[12] Mair strongly criticizes it by saying that it is "an idealistic desideratum," which is "simplistic and impractical, as well as potentially fatal."[13] Some other scholars are not as straightforward as Guo, Johnston, and Mair, but they also seem to gently indicate that it may be too idealistic to be realized in practice.[14] Is *bu zhan er qu ren zhi bing* just an idealistic concept as argued and indicated by the above scholars? If not, how can it be applied in practice? These are the second set of questions to be studied in this article. I think that a key to answer the above two sets of questions is to understand the military term *zhan* 戰, which should mean "do open battles" rather than "fight." The character *qu* 屈 in the above famous quote from *Sunzi* is usually translated into "subdue."[15] The original meaning of *qu* is "bend" and extends its meaning to "make [one] bend/subdue." But it also can refer to "bend one's goals." As I will explain in detail later, a more appropriate translation of the quote should be "To fight and win a hundred open battles is not the most brilliant [method] among all brilliant [methods]; to subdue the enemy army or frustrate its strategic goals without doing open battles is the most brilliant [method] among all brilliant [methods]."

CHINESE UNDERSTANDING OF DEFENSE AND OFFENSE IN THE CHUNQIU

Huang Pumin argues that the thought of *Sunzi* is affected by the history of the Chunqiu 春秋 period (770–5th c. B.C.E.),[16] a well-known era of war. Huang's opinion is persuasive. The philosophic thinking, value, and culture of a country or nation cannot arise purely from the mind. They must be related to the history of that country or nation. In order to understand *Sunzi*, it is necessary to firstly understand the Chinese concepts of defense and offense during the Chunqiu period. First of all, I will briefly introduce the political situation of the Chunqiu. In the 11th year of King You of Zhou (Zhou You *wang* 周幽王, 771 B.C.E.),[17] the allied forces of the

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[12] Johnston 1991, p. 37.

[13] Mair 2007, p. 142.

[14] For instance, Wang Lianbin thought it represents the "perfectly ideal state" (*wanmei de lixiang jingjie* 完美的理想境界, Wang Lianbin 1999, p. 154). Li Jijun names it the "most perfect state" (*zui wanmei de jingjie* 最完美的境界, Li Jijun 1999, pp. 146). Li Ling opines that it is an "ideal state" (*lixiang tai* 理想態, Li Ling 2006, p. 120). Lü Xichen and Cao Jing call it the "highest ideal state" (*zuigao lixiang jingjie* 最高理想境界, Lü – Cao 2010, p. 97).

[15] See Shu Xun 1980, p. 88, Shi Meiheng 1987, p. 10, Ames 1993, p. 79 Sawyer 1996, p. 50, Lin Wusun 2007, p. 29, and Mair 2007, p. 50.

[16] Huang Pumin 1995, pp. 95–99.

[17] Under the Zhou feudal system, the noble/ruling class included four sub-classes: *wang* 王, *gong* 公, *dafu* 大夫, and *shi* 士. In principle, only *tianzi* 天子, the master of *tianxia* 天下 (the ancient Chinese circle of civilization) could title himself *wang*. Although in name, Zhou Tianzi owned the whole *tianxia* as said in *Shijing* 詩經 ("All [land] under the sky are the *wang*'s lands. [All people] from the land and shores are the *wang*'s subjects" 溥天之下，莫非王土，率土之濱，莫非王臣, *Mao shi zhengyi* 13.931), practically, Zhou *tianzi* only directly controlled a small part of it, which is called *wangji* 王畿. And there were hundreds of "feudal states" (*guo* 國) ruled by *zhuhou* 諸侯 ("monarchs of feudal states") who served Zhou *tianzi*. The *zhuhou* had five ranks (from high to low): *gong* 公, *hou* 侯, *bo* 伯, *zi* 子, and *nan* 男. *Gong* was also used as a general form of address of all five ranks of *zhuhou*. Inside a feudal state, there existed many fiefs called

state of Shen 申, the state of Zeng 繒, and Quanrong 犬戎[18] attacked King You of Zhou and killed him because he deposed Taizi Yijiu 太子宜臼.[19] Since then, Zhou gradually lost its authority and control over *tianxia*. The Zhou feudal states no longer obeyed Zhou and started to attack and annex each other. In the early Chunqiu, there were no particularly powerful states. In the middle Chunqiu, four great powers, Qi 齊 in the east, Chu 楚 in the south, Jin 晉 in the north, and Qin 秦 in the northwest, arose and in the late Chunqiu, two more great powers, Wu 吳 and Yue 越 arose in the southeast. Apart from them, there were a number of medium powers, like Song 宋, Lu 魯, Wei 衛, and Zheng 鄭, plus many small states. Figure 1 shows the major states of the Chunqiu:

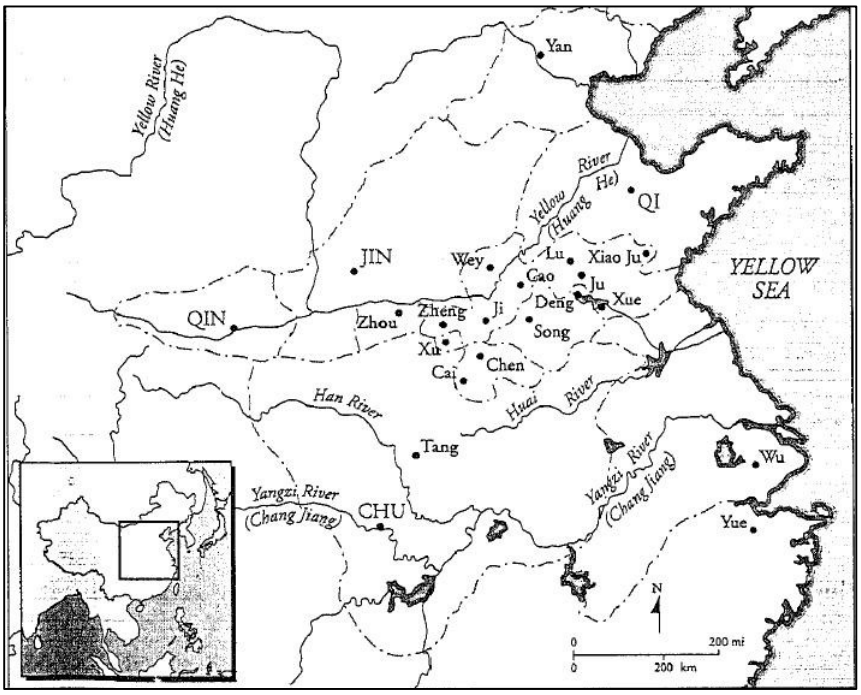

Figure 1. Major States of the Chunqiu period. Map drawn by the author.

In general, the attitude of the Chunqiu Chinese states towards defense and offense was realistic. They followed a principle summarized in *Sunzi*: "[One] defends when [one's strength] is insufficient. [One] attacks when [one's strength] is more than enough" (*shou ze buzu, gong ze youyu* 守則不足，攻則有餘).[20] In the Chunqiu, on one hand, great powers were aggressive when facing weaker states. They frequently attacked weaker states to expand their territories and influence. For example, during

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jia 家 ruled by *dafu*, who served *zhuhou*. *Dafu* was also a general form of address and it included two sub-ranks (from high to low): *qinq* 卿 and *dafu*.

[18] Quanrong refers to the barbarians living to the west of Zhou.

[19] *Shiji* (hereafter *SJ*), 4.149. Among all the sons of a monarch, the one officially acknowledged as the heir was called *Taizi*. Shen *hou* 申侯 was the maternal grandfather of *Taizi* Yijiu. He attacked King You of Zhou to help his grandson to seize back the power.

[20] *Sunzi* 1.45.

the Chunqiu, Qi annexed 10 states; Jin annexed over 20 states; Chu annexed 45 states.[21] Qin annexed 20 states in the reign of Lord Mu of Qin (Qin Mu *gong* 秦穆公, r. 659–621 B.C.E.).[22] But on the other hand, they were cautious about fighting with opponents about their equal. In most cases, they exercised restraint and were willing to compromise rather than risking doing battles with another great power. For example, in the 21st year of King Hui of Zhou (Zhou Hui *wang* 周惠王, 656 B.C.E.), Qi invaded Chu but finally, the two great powers reached a peace agreement without having massive battles. Jin and Chu contended for hegemony for nearly a century. However, during that period, they only engaged in four massive battles: the battle of Chengpu 城濮 in the 20th year of King Xiang of Zhou (Zhou Xiang *wang* 周襄王, 632 B.C.E.), the battle of Bi 邲 in the 10th year of King Ding of Zhou (Zhou Ding *wang* 周定王, 597 B.C.E.), the battle of Yanling 鄢陵 in the 11th year of King Jian of Zhou (Zhou Jian *wang* 周簡王, 575 B.C.E.), and the battle of Zhanban 湛阪 in the 15th year of King Ling of Zhou (Zhou Ling *wang* 周靈王, 557 B.C.E.).

Most of the time, Jin and Chu contended for hegemony through striking the allies of their competitors but avoided directly fighting with each other. When they estimated that their powers were more than enough, they adopted offensive strategies. When they estimated that their powers were not sufficient, usually they chose to back down. For instance, in the 25th year of King Xiang of Zhou (627 B.C.E.), the Jin army and the Chu army confronted each other across the river Zhi 泜. But neither side risked crossing the river to attack first. Finally, they withdrew respectively.[23] In the 28th year of King Xiang of Zhou (624 B.C.E.), Chu besieged the state of Jiang 江. The allied forces of Jin and Zhou attacked Chu to rescue Jiang. But they retreated without fighting after encountering the Chu army.[24] In the 13th year of King Jian of Zhou (573 B.C.E.), Chu attacked Song. The Jin army went to rescue Song and encountered the Chu army in the valley of Mijiao 靡角. The Chu army retreated without fighting.[25] In short, on one hand, the great powers were aggressive. They pursued hegemony and expansion through attacking and annexing weaker states. On the other hand, a great power usually would not rashly fight a massive battle with another one unless it was inevitable. But not all great powers act rationally. The state of Qin once frequently fought with its stronger neighbor, Jin. But the continuous wars with Jin did not bring benefits to Qin. It was suppressed by Jin in the Northwest corner and was isolated from the heartland of ancient China (the middle and lower reaches of the Huanghe 黃河 river). Another exception was the state of Wu, who overestimated its power and made too many enemies. Finally, it exhausted its strength during continuous wars and was annexed by the state of Yue, which makes it the only fallen great power in the Chunqiu. The medium powers also in general took a realistic attitude towards offense and defense. Medium pow-

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[21] Fan Wenlan 2002, vol. 7, p. 33.

[22] *SJ* 87.2542.

[23] *CZZZ* 17.550.

[24] Du Yu 杜預 said that Chu withdrew its army besieging Jiang to meet the allied forces of Jin and Zhou. Hence the allied forces retreated without fighting because they had already achieved the goal of lifting the siege of Jiang (*CZZZ* 18.576).

[25] *CZZZ* 28.930–931.

ers between great powers, like the states of Song and Zheng, were the objects contended by the great powers. They could not defend themselves independently and had to affiliate to a great power for protection. In return, they had to take orders from that great power. But this kind of relationship usually was not very stable. Medium powers changed sides along with the shift in the balance of forces between the great powers. For example, the state of Zheng frequently swung between Jin and Chu depending on which side had the upper hand. Medium powers did not always passively follow the great powers. When opportunities arose, they seized them to actively expand their territories. For instance, after defeating Chu at the battle of Chengpu, Jin became the hegemon of the heartland of China. Most states, including Lu, submitted to it. Their actions were restricted by Jin so that they could not wage a war at will without the permission of Jin. In the winter of the 24th year of King Xiang of Zhou (626 B.C.E.), Lord Wen of Jin (Jin Wen *gong* 晉文公, r. 636–628 B.C.E.) died and the Qin army crossed Jin's territory to attack Zheng without notifying Jin. Jin was enraged by Qin's insolence. In the summer of the next year, Jin ambushed the returning Qin army at the narrow passage of the mountain of Xiao 殽. When Jin was focusing on preparing the funeral of Lord Wen of Jin and the war with Qin, Lu seized the chance to attack the state of Zhu 邾.[26] In the autumn of the 31st year of King Xiang of Zhou (621 B.C.E.), Lord Xiang of Jin (Jin Xiang *gong* 晉襄公, r. 627–621 B.C.E.) died. The Jin noblemen divided because of a dispute on the succession problem. Again, Lu seized the opportunity to attack Zhu.[27] In summary, the medium powers between the great powers were victims of the contention wars. Their first consideration was to survive the environment of fierce competition. They usually depended more on political and diplomatic methods rather than military means to protect themselves from the threats of the great powers. But when the great powers' control over them had weakened, they would seize chances to attack each other and small states for expansion. Exceptions were Wu and Yue, which were far away from the heartland of China, the focal point of wars of hegemony. Hence, they were much less affected by the wars of contention between the great powers and had broader space for development. Finally, both of them had developed into great powers and played key roles in the late Chunqiu.

Re-Examining the Meaning of *Bu Zhan Er Qu Ren Zhi Bing*

I disagree with the interpretation of *bu zhan er qu ren zhi bing* as peaceful and defensive because this has two crucial problems. First of all, it is not in accordance with the historical background. *Sunzi* was written between the late Chunqiu and middle Zhanguo 戰國 (5th c. – 221 B.C.E).[28] Logically, the thought and theories of *Sunzi* should have been affected by the war practices during the Chunqiu. Moreover,

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[26] *CZZZ* 17.548.

[27] *CZZZ* 19.595.

[28] There are arguments on the authorship of *Sunzi*. The most popular view believes that Sun Wu 孫武 (around 6th-5th c. B.C.E.), a high-ranking commander of Wu, is the author. Another view argues that Sun Bin 孫臏 (around 4th c. B.C.E.), a high-ranking military advisor of Qi, is the author. And there are other opinions on the authorship.

Sunzi mentions former brilliant warriors a few times,[29] which also implies that it was written based on studying the experiences from past wars.

In the Chunqiu, hundreds of states frequently fought with each other.[30] As I have discussed in the last section, those great powers were especially aggressive. They annexed lots of small states. A Jin nobleman, Ru Qi 女齊 once said frankly:

> [The royal houses of] Yu 虞, Guo 虢, Jiao 焦, Hua 滑, Huo 霍, Yang 揚, Han 韓, and Wei 魏 share the same ancestral name Ji 姬 [with the royal house of Jin].[31] Jin became great because of [annexing them]. If [Jin] did not invade these small states, where would [Jin] get [land] from?[32]

There were 148 states recorded in the historical literature but only a tiny fraction of them survived after nearly 300 years of wars.[33] Hence, how could a military work advocating peace and defense originate in such a cruelly competitive era of wars? This is very unlikely.

Secondly, the peaceful and defensive view on *bu zhan er qu ren zhi bing* is not in accordance with the context of *Sunzi*. If we study *Sunzi* carefully, we will find that it focuses more on offensive rather than defensive strategy. The first chapter of *Sunzi*, "Ji" 計 (Assessment, also known as "Shiji" 始計, Pre-war assessment) talks about whether a war should be launched based on pre-war assessments. It argues that one should only start a war on the premise that the victory can be guaranteed. Obviously, *Sunzi* mainly considers the warfare issue from the perspective of the attacking side, who decides when and where to start a war. For the defending side, the war is forced on it, which leaves it no choice. Its second chapter, "Zuozhan" 作戰 (Making operational principles), points out the disadvantages of being involved in a long war. Mair opines that it "stands in sharp contrast to Mao Zedong's advocacy of long, drawn-out war."[34] However, I argue that *Sunzi* and Mao actually share the same point of view. They just look at the problem from different perspectives. Mao takes the perspective of the defenders, whose military power is usually weaker than the offensive side. For example, in the beginning of the Sino-Japanese War (1937–1945), China's military strength was weaker than Japan's but the country had the advantages of a vast territory and overwhelming population. Hence, China preferred a prolonged war to gradually exhaust the enemy's strength and wait for the change of the international situation, like the outbreak of the Pacific war. On the contrary, *Sunzi* mainly takes the perspective of the attackers who want a quick victory. When arguing why a protracted war is inimical, "Zuozhan" of *Sunzi* mentions "transporting grains to [troops] 1,000 *li* 裡[35] [away from the homeland]" (*qianli*

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[29] *Sunzi* 1.43, 47, and 3.148.

[30] Xie Guoliang estimates that over 600 wars happened during the Chunqiu (Xie Guoliang 1995, p. 84).

[31] Sharing the same ancestral name means they are the descendants of the same ancestor. It was immoral for them to annex each other.

[32] *CZZZ* 39.1257–1258: 虞、虢、焦、滑、霍、揚、韓、魏，皆姬姓也，晉是以大。若非侵小，將何所取？

[33] Fan Wenlan 2002, vol. 7, p. 35. Xie Guoliang claims that there were over 160 states (Xie Guoliang 1995, p. 84).

[34] Mair 2007, p. 80.

[35] *Li* is a traditional Chinese length unit. One *li* is equivalent to approximately 400 meters in the Chunqiu.

kuiliang 千里饋糧),[36] which clearly shows that it considers wars going on in the heartland of the enemy state. It also says that "[if] the army is stationed in the field for a long time, the wealth and resources of the state will be insufficient [to support it]" (*jiu pushi ze guoyong buzu* 久暴師則國用不足).[37] In the Chunqiu, the defenders usually stayed inside the walled cities. The army stationed in the field obviously refers to the attackers. The phrase *bu zhan er qu ren zhi bing* is in the third chapter of *Sunzi*, "Mougong" 謀攻 (Planning offensives), in which the disadvantages of directly storming fortified cities are discussed in detail.[38] This again is seen from the perspective of the attacking side. Therefore, how could a military work mainly focusing on offensive strategy advocate a peaceful and defensive view? This is illogical.

As I have mentioned before, a vital clue to the meaning of *bu zhan er qu ren zhi bing* is to understand the phrase *bu zhan* 不戰, which is usually interpreted as "without fighting,"[39] or "without a battle."[40] Johnston offers another explanation: "before fighting." Johnston says that if so, *bu zhan er qu ren zhi bing* then means "to weaken the enemy before fighting with it."[41] However, this interpretation sounds farfetched because weakening the enemy army first and then fighting with it is still directly engaging with the enemy. I think that most researchers misunderstand the military term *zhan* 戰, which does not simply mean "fight" in ancient China. *Sunzi* says: "Therefore the principle of using forces is: if ten or five times the enemy strength, then it can besiege or attack his [stronghold] … if equal, then it can *zhan* with them."[42] It can be seen that the term *zhan* is different from *wei* 圍 (besiege) and *gong* 攻 (attack). It particularly refers to a battle fought under "equal" conditions. *Sunzi* also says: "Hence if we want to *zhan*, although the enemies have built high ramparts and deep entrenchments [to protect them], they have to [come out] to *zhan* with us …,"[43] which indicates that *zhan* refers to fighting open battles in the field. Hence it is questionable to simply translate *zhan* into "fight." *Zuozhuan* 左傳 says: "Both [sides] completing their formations [and then starting to fight] is called *zhan*" (*jie zhen yue zhan* 皆陣曰戰).[44] The character *zhan* was only used to describe a "fair" open battle in ancient China. According to the traditions of Zhou, the belligerents should fight at an appointed place and time and they need to "[wait for the opponent] to complete his formation before beating the drums" (*cheng lie er gu* 成列而鼓).[45] *Zuozhuan* also says that "[attacking and defeating the enemy army] before it has completed its formation is called defeating such and such an army" (*di*

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[36] *Sunzi* 1.18.

[37] *Sunzi* 1.19.

[38] *Sunzi* 1.30–31.

[39] See Shu Xun 1980, p. 88, Shi Meiheng 1987, p. 10, Ames 1993, pp. 79, Sawyer 1996, p. 50, and Lin Wusun 2007, p. 29.

[40] Mair 2007, p. 50.

[41] Johnston 1992, p. 63.

[42] *Sunzi* 1.34–35: 故用兵之法，十則圍之，五則攻之…敵則能戰之.

[43] *Sunzi* 2.72: 故我欲戰，敵雖高壘深溝，不得不與我戰者...

[44] *CZZZ* 9.277.

[45] *Sima fa jinzhu jinyi*, 1.9. In ancient China, the army sent the signal of attacking by beating drums.

wei zhen yue bai moushi 敵未陳曰敗某師).[46] An ambush or a raid could not be called *zhan*. For example, in the 25th year of King Xiang of Zhou (627 B.C.E.), *Chunqiu* says: "A small Jin army and Jiangrong 姜戎 defeated a large Qin army at Xiao 殽."[47] Because Jin and Jiangrong ambushed the Qin army, *Chunqiu* does not use the wording *zhan*. In my view, it should rather say: "A small Jin army and Jiangrong engaged in an open battle with a large Qin army at Xiao. The Qin army collapsed" (*Jin ren ji Jiangrong yu Qin shi zhanyu Xiao, Qin shi baiji* 晉人及姜戎與秦師戰于殽，秦師敗績). Another example is the battle of Zuili 檇李. In the 23rd year of King Jing of Zhou (Zhou Jing *wang* 周敬王, 497 B.C.E.), *Chunqiu* says that "Yuyue defeated Wu at Zuili" (Yuyue bai Wu yu Zuili 於越敗吳于檇李).[48] In this battle, both sides had already completed formations in advance. However, Yue used a trick to disrupt the formation of the Wu army before attacking it. Therefore, when the two armies started to fight, the Wu soldiers were not drawn up. In such a case, *Chunqiu* still does not use the wording *zhan* because it was not a "fair" open battle. Hence, I argue that *bu zhan* does not mean "without fighting" but means "to avoid fighting 'fair' open battles with the enemy army." *Sunzi* makes this point very clear by saying that "do not intercept or attack [an army with] well organized flags and great formations."[49] Instead, it prefers to opt for "attacking when and where the enemy is not prepared and unaware [of the threat]."[50]

In the Chunqiu, Zhou *tianzi* lost authority and *tianxia* was in great disorder. Wars became more frequent and cruel at that time. Fighting nobly and fairly no longer suited the new situation. For example, at the battle of Hong 泓 between Chu and Song in the 14th year of King Xiang of Zhou (638 B.C.E.), Lord Xiang of Song (Song Xiang *gong* 宋襄公, r. 650–637 B.E.C.) refused to attack until the Chu army completed its formation.[51] Such a noble decision caused a crushing defeat of Song. The change of situation bred the thoughts of *Sunzi*, including *bu zhan er qu ren zhi bing*. Unlike Confucianism that advocates restoring the old order, *Sunzi* emphasizes on studying how to adapt to the new era. The battles of Xiao and Zuili can both be regarded as examples of *bu zhan er qu ren zhi bing*.

However, it is worthwhile to note that the concept of *bu zhan* is not completely identical with "not fighting" but does include this notion. *Sunzi* would rather opt for *famou* 伐謀 (to strike [the enemy] through stratagems) and *fajiao* 伐交 (to strike [the enemy] through diplomacy) than *fabing* 伐兵 (directly engaging with the enemy army in the field) and *gongcheng* 攻城 ("attacking [strongly fortified] walled cities").[52] The reason is that *famou* and *fajiao* can "preserve interests without wear-

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[46] *CZZZ* 9.277.

[47] *CZZZ* 17.542: 晉人及姜戎敗秦師於殽. Jiangrong refers to the barbarians having the ancestral name Jiang, living in the southern borderlands of Jin.

[48] *CZZZ*, 56.1842. Yuyue is another name of the state of Yue 越.

[49] *Sunzi* 2.97: 無邀正正之旗，無擊堂堂之陣。

[50] *Sunzi* 1.15: 攻其無備，出其不意。

[51] The official title of the Song monarchs was Song *gong* 宋公.

[52] *Sunzi* 1.28–30. *Famou* is usually interpreted as attacking the enemy's strategy (Ames 1993, p. 79, Johnston 1998, p. 94, and Lin Wusun 2007, p. 29) or plans (Sawyer 1996, p. 50 and Mair 2007, p. 83). *Fajiao* is often translated as attacking the enemy's alliances (Ames 1993, p. 79, Sawyer 1996, p. 50, Johnston 1998, p. 94, and Mair 2007, p. 83). However, such explanations have two problems. First of all, they confuse the line between *famou*, *fajiao* and *fabing*, *gong-*

ing down the forces."[53] In the Chunqiu, the inter-state relations were very complicated. An ally today might become an enemy tomorrow. If a state consumed too much strength in a war, no matter if it finally won or not, it would become vulnerable to other states, even including its allies. As warned by *Sunzi*, they might "take advantage of its exhaustion to launch actions [disadvantageous to it]" (*cheng qi bi er qi* 乘其弊而起).[54] For instance, the state of Wu, a great power arising in the southeast during the late Chunqiu once defeated almost all its neighbors including two great powers, Chu and Qi. But continuous wars gradually exhausted Wu's power. Eventually, Wu's vassal state Yue took advantage of this and successfully annexed Wu. Merely relying on force could not make a state beat its competitors and even could not guarantee its survival in the Chunqiu.

Guo Huaruo believes that the enemy will surrender without fighting only when the outcome of the war is a foregone conclusion. And even such a special case is still the result of fighting.[55] However, Guo's opinion is not very persuasive because he comes to the conclusion by simply studying the Chinese civil war (1927–1949), which is just a tiny fraction of the entire history of Chinese war. Johnston argues that practically the enemy cannot be defeated relying solely on nonviolent means, like *famou* and *fajiao*, which can only be used to weaken the enemy. He opines that the relationship of *famou*, *fajiao*, and fighting is not a sequence of preferences but a "temporal sequence." *Famou* and *fajiao* are not necessarily better options than *fabing*. They are just applied before fighting to weaken the enemy. Violent means are still the last step to eventually defeat the enemy.[56] Johnston's opinion is reasonable to a certain extent. Sometimes, *famou*, *fajiao*, and violent means need to be used together to achieve victory. For instance, at the battle of Zuili, Yue disrupted the formation of the Wu army through *famou* before attacking it. And I agree with Johnston that *famou* and *fajiao* are not always better options than *fabing*. Some researchers assert that *Sunzi* places more emphasis on stratagem than strength.[57] Such a point of view is groundless. *Sunzi* clearly points out that overwhelming strength is a decisive factor of victory by saying:

> A victorious army's [strength compared to its enemy's] is like one *yi* 鎰 compared to one *zhu* 銖.[58] A defeated army's [strength compared to its enemy's] is like one *zhu* compared to one *yi*.[59]

Moreover, *Sunzi* does not absolutely oppose *fabing* and *gongcheng*. It says: "Therefore, the general principle of using forces is: if ten or five times the enemy strength,

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cheng because attacking the enemy's plans and alliances could involve *fabing* and *gongcheng*, for instance, attacking the army of the enemy's ally. Secondly, they confuse the line between *famou* and *fajiao*. For example, thwarting the enemy's plan by attacking his ally should be categorized into which strategy, *famou* or *fajiao*? Since *Sunzi* distinguishes *famou* from *fajiao* and prioritizes the former over the latter, they should be different.

[53] *Sunzi* 1.33: 兵不頓，而利可全。

[54] *Sunzi* 1.19.

[55] Guo Huaruo 1984, p. 99–100.

[56] Johnston 1992, p. 63–64.

[57] See Zhang – Yao 1996, p. 217–218; and Lo Ping-Cheung 2012, p. 122.

[58] *Yi* and *zhu* are ancient Chinese units of weight. One *yi* is equal to 480 or 576 *zhu*.

[59] *Sunzi* 1.51: 勝兵若以鎰稱銖，敗兵若以銖稱鎰。

then [your army] can besiege or attack [the enemy's stronghold]."[60] If one does have overwhelming military advantages over the enemy, *famou* and *fajiao* might be unnecessary and *fabing* and *gongcheng* may be the simplest and most efficient way to subdue or completely destroy the enemy. However, Johnston's argument is based on that one's goal is to defeat the enemy army, in which case certainly violent means are essential. But the ultimate goal behind all state actions is to obtain *li* 利 ("interests and benefits") and/or remove *hai* 害 ("[potential] harms and threats"). Defeating the enemy army is just one of the means to achieve such goals but not the goals themselves. If defeating the enemy cannot help to achieve these goals, then such a military victory is meaningless.

Li Ling argues that *fabing* is used when *famou* and *fajiao* are impossible.[61] However, as I have discussed above, if one's military power is much stronger than his enemy, then *fabing* may be a better choice than *famou* and *fajiao*. On the other hand, *Sunzi* clearly says: "If [your strengths] are less and weaker [than the enemy's], then [you] should run away and avoid [fighting with] him."[62] It is unwise to wage open battles with a much stronger enemy. For example, in the battle of Suqi 速杞 between Chu and Sui 隨 in the 16th year of King Huan of Zhou (Zhou Huan *wang* 周桓王, 704 B.C.E.) and the battle of Hong between Chu and Song, Sui and Song fought against the overwhelming Chu forces in open battles, which caused their disastrous failures. It also may be unwise to engage in open battles with a well-matched or slightly weaker enemy. For instance, in the battle of Hequ 河曲 between Jin and Qin in the 4th year of King Qin of Zhou (Zhou Qin *wang* 周頃王, 615 B.C.E.) and the battle of Yanling 鄢陵, although Jin held the upper hand in both of the battles, it did not achieve any decisive results. Therefore, I argue *Sunzi* means that generally *famou* and *fajiao* are better means than *fabing* and *gongcheng* when one does not have absolute predominance over the enemy or is even weaker than the enemy. *Sunzi* does not explain how to actually apply these strategies. By applying *famou* and *fajiao*, can one completely avoid fighting with the enemy to achieve one's goals? It is also noteworthy that between *famou* and *fajiao*, *Sunzi* prioritizes the former over the latter. What are the reasons for it? Purely theoretical analysis is too abstract. I will further elaborate the practical application of *bu zhan er qu ren zhi bing* and explain why *Sunzi* prioritizes *famou* over *fajiao* through studying four historical cases from the Chunqiu.

CASE STUDIES: THE APPLICATION OF *BU ZHAN ER QU REN ZHI BING* DURING THE CHUNQIU

The first case is the "alliance of Shaoling" (*Shaoling zhi meng* 召陵之盟). After Zhou *tianzi* lost control over *tianxia*, Qi started to expand under the name of *zun wang rang yi* 尊王攘夷 ("revering [Zhou] *wang* and expelling the barbarians"). In the 10th year of King Hui of Zhou (667 B.C.E.), Zhou *tianzi* officially granted Lord Huan of Qi (Qi Huang *gong* 齊桓公, 685–643 B.C.E.)[63] the position of *bo* 伯.[64]

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[60] *Sunzi* 1.34: 故用兵之法，十則圍之，五則攻之。

[61] Li Ling 2006, p. 120.

[62] *Sunzi* 1.36: 少則能逃之，不若則能避之。

[63] The official title of the Qi monarchs was Qi *hou* 齊侯.

Hence, Qi became the first hegemon during the Chunqiu. The only state daring to challenge Qi was Chu, which was expanding northward and repeatedly attacking Qi's ally, Zheng. In response, Qi and its allies Song, Lu, Chen 陳, Wei, Zheng, Xu 許, and Cao 曹, crushed Chu's ally Cai 蔡 and then invaded Chu in the spring of the 21st year of King Hui of Zhou (656 B.C.E.).[65] Instead of immediately dispatching troops to meet the invaders, King Cheng of Chu (Chu Cheng *wang* 楚成王, r. 671–626 B.C.E.) sent an envoy to test their intention first.[66] The Chu envoy carried King Cheng's message to Lord Huan:

> Your highness lives by the North Sea and I, a person who lacks virtue, lives by the South Sea.[67] [The distance between our states is such far] so that even our cattle and horses in a period of heat can never cross the border to chase each other. [I did not expect Your highness to come to my land. What is the reason?[68]

It can be seen that King Cheng obviously preferred to solve the conflict by diplomatic means rather than fighting with the powerful allies. Qi *qing* Guan Zhong 管仲 replied to the Chu envoy on behalf of Lord Huan:

> You did not pay bundled waterweeds [used to filter the rice wine] as tribute, [which caused] the lack of [necessities] for the *wang*'s sacrifices, because the rice wine [used for sacrifices] cannot be filtered. Hence Ie come to investigate it. [Zhou] Zhao *wang* 昭王 did not return after his punitive expedition to the south.[69] Hence I come to investigate it.[70]

The response of Guan Zhong was meaningful. He said that Lord Huan came to investigate two faults of Chu. The first was a minor one but with conclusive evidence. The second was about murdering Zhou *tianzi*, the most serious crime at that time but with no strong evidence at all. Thus Qi kept its options open. The matter could be either minimized (only to levy the tribute from Chu) or maximized (to exterminate Chu) depending on the situation. Some scholars mention the concept of punitive expedition (*zheng* 征), which was regarded as a type of just war in traditional China. Its purpose is to "punish the abusive ruler and rescue the suffering

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[64] *SJ* 4.151. Here, *bo* does not refer to the third rank of *zhuhou* but means *houbo* 侯伯, the leader of *zhuhou*, who had the power to command *zhuhou* on behalf of *tianzi*.

[65] *CZZZ* 12.374.

[66] The monarchs of Chu refused to acknowledge the position and authority of Zhou Tianzi. Hence they titled themselves *wang*.

[67] *Jun* 君 (Your hignness) was a respectful form of address to call a monarch. *Guaren* 寡人 ("I, a person who lacks virtue") was a humble title used by a monarch to call himself. Qi was on the northeast of Chu. Ancient Chinese believed that the mainland is surrounded by four seas: the East Sea, the South Sea, the West Sea, and the North Sea. Here, the phrase is of course a hyperbole used to describe the great distance between Qi and Chu.

[68] *CZZZ* 12.376–377: 君處北海，寡人處南海，唯是風馬牛不相及也。不虞君之涉吾地也，何故？

[69] King Zhao of Zhou (Zhou Zhao *wang*, r. 995–977 B.C.E.) was drowned when crossing the river of Hanshui 漢水 because his ship sank. It is said that his ship was deliberately built unstable. Here Guan Zhong indicated that Chu had something to do with it.

[70] *CZZZ* 12.378–379: 爾貢包茅不入，王祭不共，無以縮酒，寡人是徵。昭王南征而不復，寡人是問。

people;"[71] and "to eliminate the disorder."[72] However, as *Mengzi* 孟子 says, "during the Chunqiu, no righteous war occurred" (Chunqiu *wu yizhan* 春秋無義戰).[73] Although wars were often started in the name of *yi* 義 ("righteousness"), the real goals of wars were always about *li* and/or *hai*. For Qi, *zun wang rang yi* was just a cover. Qi's purpose was to obtain *li* – consolidating and strengthening its hegemony – and to remove *hai* – suppressing its strongest challenger, Chu. Qi's next move was not dependent on whether Chu was related to the death of King Zhao of Zhou or not but based on its own best interests. Guan Zhong's reply was also a test of Chu's attitude, which would be a key factor affecting Qi's next move. The Chu envoy perceived the intention of Guan Zhong and replied:

> Not paying the tribute is the fault of our mornach who lacks virtue 寡君.[74] How dare [we] not to pay it [in the future]? As to Zhao *wang*'s not returning, *jun* can ask about it along the banks of the river [of Hanshui].[75]

The Chu envoy accepted the minor fault without excuses but flatly denied the major one. He indicated that Chu could make a concession but only a limited one. It seemed that Qi was not satisfied with Chu's offer for peace. This initial negotiation did not achieve any result. The allies kept marching towards the south to bring military pressure to bear upon Chu. However, the allies did not hastily launch offensives but halted at Xing 陘 (a place of Chu). In the summer, King Cheng of Chu sent a high ranking Chu royal house member, Qu Wan 屈完, to further negotiate with Qi. This time, the attitude of Qi had obviously changed. The allies retreated back to Shaoling (a place of Chu) as a gesture of goodwill. It is not recorded what the allies had done when they were stationed at Xing. But from the change of Qi's attitude, it is not hard to guess that they were collecting information and comparing different plans based on the collected intelligence. And finally, they denied the option of a total war with Chu, which was too risky and costly. At Shaoling, Lord Huan of Qi honored Qu Wan by inviting him to be on the same four-horse chariot with him to inspect the allied troops together. Lord Huan told Qu Wan that he was willing to establish a "friendly" relationship with Chu, as with its other allies. But he also made a show of force through the parade and threatened:

> Heading such [great] troops to fight in open battles, who can withstand? Heading such [great troops] to attack walled cities, which one cannot be taken?[76]

It seems that Qi favored to minimize the matter after weighing the advantages and disadvantages during the period between the two negotiations. However, Lord Huan still wanted to test Chu's bottom line before making his final decision. A meaningful question was what kind of "friendly" relationship Qi wanted? Qi was the *mengzhu* 盟主 ("leader of the alliance"). All its allies were in a subordinate position and

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[71] Yuan-kang Wang 2011, p. 27. See also Turner 1993, p. 296.

[72] Godehardt 2008, p. 25.

[73] *Mengzi zhushu* 14.448.

[74] *Guajun* ("our] monarch who lacks virtue") was a humble title used by a subject to call his/her monarch in front of foreigners.

[75] *CZZZ* 12.379–380: 貢之不入，寡君之罪也，敢不共給。昭王之不復，君其問諸水濱。

[76] *CZZZ* 12.380: 以此眾戰，誰能禦之？以此攻城，何城不克？

they had to take orders from Qi. As a great power, Chu definitely could not accept such a "friendly" relationship. Hence, Qu Wan replied:

> If Your highness stabilizes *zhuhou* by virtue, who dares not to obey you? If Your highness [chooses to conquer us] by force, Chu will use the Fangcheng 方城 as its wall,[77] and Hanshui as its moat [to defend itself]. Although [Your highness's] troops are so numerous, they will not be of any use.[78]

Wang Qing 王青 connects Qu Wan's reply with the moral view. Qu Wan believed that a state should make other states to follow it relying on virtue rather than on force.[79] But if Qi did not threaten Chu by force, how could Chu agree to make a concession? Actually, the first sentence of Qu Wan's reply represents just typical diplomatic language at that time. The two key points implied by Qu Wan are in the rest of the paragraph. On one hand, he clearly showed Chu's determination to resist aggression, which would infringe on its sovereignty and territorial integrity. But on the other hand, he indicated that Chu's strategy was defensive and Chu had no intention to challenge Qi's hegemony. Finally, Qi and Chu made a covenant. Chu namely recognized Zhou *tianzi* as the master of *tianxia* and Lord Huan of Qi as the leader of *zhuhou*, agreed to pay tribute and stopped to expand northward. In return, the allies retreated from Chu's territory.

The above case is a typical example of *fajiao*. The following points are worth of attention. First of all, *fajiao* was used when the adversary was too strong to be defeated. Cai's military strength was negligible compared to Qi and its allies. Therefore, Qi did not consider *famou* or *fajiao* at all but chose to adopt a direct military attack to crush Cai. However, Qi's attitude towards Chu was much more cautious because Chu was a very powerful state. Although Qi was probably more powerful and had more allies, it had no decided advantage over Chu. If Qi chose to go to war, Chu would enjoy the advantage of fighting on its vast homeland. Hence, the result of war was unpredictable. Even if Qi eventually could defeat Chu, it would probably be a protracted and costly war, which Qi would not benefit from. A third state might seize the hegemony after both Qi and Chu were weakened by the war. Qi's purpose was not to defeat Chu but to consolidate and strengthen its hegemony. If defeating Chu could not help Qi to achieve that goal, then it would be stupid to do so. Therefore, Qi wisely chose to subdue Chu by *fajiao*.

Secondly, *fajiao* does not completely exclude using force. Hu Xiaotie argues that subjugating the enemy without fighting does not mean completely giving up the use of force. Sometimes, it is necessary to use "a little bit of force" (*yidian bingli* 一點兵力).[80] Hu significantly understates the importance of using military power. Unlike common diplomacy, the purpose of *fajiao* is to subdue the enemies rather than develop friendly and co-operative relations with them. In order to subdue Chu, Qi mobilized massive forces. A certain level of violence may also be involved. For

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[77] Fangcheng was a long wall (changcheng 長城) built by Chu to defend northern invanders. It was from the north of today's Fangcheng 方城 to the northeast of today's Miyang 泌阳 of Henan 河南 province.

[78] *CZZZ* 12.380–381: 君若以德綏諸侯，誰敢不服？君若以力，楚國方城以為城，漢水以為池，雖眾，無所用之。

[79] Wang Qing 2016, p. 24.

[80] Hu Xiaotie 1994, p. 68.

instance, Qi crushed Chu's ally, Cai, and might encounter pockets of resistance from Chu's local troops after invading its territory. However, Qi had not engaged with the Chu main forces and did not rely on waging a decisive battle to achieve its goal. The level of violence must be moderate. If too light, Chu would not yield. If too excessive, a great war would be inevitable.

Thirdly, one may not achieve all that one expected through *fajiao* because after all, diplomacy is the art of compromise. From the "alliance of Shaoling," Qi only obtained its minimum goal. From the fact that until the last moment, Lord Huan was still threatening Chu, it can be seen that he probably wanted more from Chu. However, because Chu firmly held its bottom line, eventually he had to give up. Although Chu namely submitted to Zhou and Qi and agreed to symbolically pay tributes, it actually maintained its territorial integrity and independence, and reserved its strength. But certainly Qi was the winner of the game. After the "alliance of Shaoling," Chu dared not to openly challenge Qi, whose hegemony hen reached a peak.[81]

The second case to be dealt with here is about *famou*. After the death of Lord Huan of Qi, Qi declined and then two other great powers, Jin and Chu started nearly a century of wars to contend for hegemony (633–546 B.C.E.). In the 20th year of King Xiang of Zhou (632 B.C.E.), Lord Wen of Jin defeated Chu at the battle of Chengpu and then confirmed its hegemony.[82] However, afterwards Jin lost its advantage against Chu and suffered a great failure at the battle of Bi in the 10th year of King Ding of Zhou (597 B.C.E.). Although in the 11th year of King Jian of Zhou (575 B.C.E.), Jin again defeated Chu at the battle of Yanling, this victory did not have any decisive significance. In the reign of Lord Dao of Jin (Jin Dao *gong* 晉悼公, r. 573–558 B.C.E.), the seemingly endless struggle continued to revolve around Zheng, a medium power of paramount geostrategic importance located in the heartland of *tianxia* (today's central Henan province) between Jin and Chu. Being able to completely subdue Zheng would be of great importance in this fierce competition. Hence, both sides took turns to attack Zheng. Zheng was unable to resist either Jin or Chu so that it kept swinging between the two. When the Jin army arrived, it submitted to Jin and when the Chu army arrived, it submitted to Chu.

In the 10th month of the 8th year of King Ling of Zhou (564 B.C.E.), Jin and its allies Song, Lu, Wei, Cao, Ju 莒, Zhu, Teng 滕, Xue 薛, Xiaozhu 小邾, and Qi attacked Zheng, which had submitted to Chu in late winter, and besieged its capital. Once more, Zheng gave up resistance and sued for peace. Jin *shangjun jiang* 上軍將 (chief commander of the upper army)[83] Zhonghang Xianzi 中行獻子[84] was tired of Zheng's capriciousness. Hence he suggested:

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[81] Bai Shouyi 2004, p. 932.

[82] The official title of the Jin monarchs was Jin *hou* 晉侯.

[83] At that time, the Jin field army was divided into four armies, called *zhongjun* 中軍, *shangjun* 上軍, *xiajun* 下軍, and *xinjun* 新軍 respectively. Each army again was divided into two units led by a *jiang* 將 and a *zuo* 佐 separately. The *zhongjun jiang* was specially called *yuanshuai* 元帥 ("chief commander"). The ranks of the eight major commanders from high to low were *zhongjun yuanshuai*, *zhongjun zuo*, *shangjun jiang*, *shangjun zuo*, *xiajun jiang*, *xiajun zuo*, *xinjun jiang*, and *xinjun zuo*. In Jin, *zhongjun yuanshuai* was also *zhengqing* 正卿 (also known as *shangqing* 上卿), who ranked first among all *qing* (please refer to footnote 17) and was the chief minister and chief commander of a state (in the Chunqiu, a nobleman usually held a concurrent

> Continue to besiege its capital, wait for the Chu noblemen to come to rescue it, and then fight with them. Otherwise, [Zheng] will not make a [true] peace treaty [with us].[85]

Obviously, Zhonghang Xianzi thought that the only way to break the deadlock was to have a decisive battle with Chu. However, Jin *zhengqing* and *zhongjun yuanshuai* Zhi Wuzi 知武子 had a different plan. He said:

> [We should] allow Zheng to ally with us and withdraw our armies [so that we can attract the Chu noblemen to attack Zheng] so as to wear out them. I shall divide our four armies into three. [Each time they come], [we will wait until they have withdrawn and then use one–third of our troops] together with *zhuhou*'s crack troops (also divided into three) to attack. This will not tire our [troops] but Chu will not be able to endure. [This way] is better than engaging in battles.[86]

The allies adopted Zhi Wuzi's plan and made a covenant with Zheng. Chu's response was quick. In the 12th month, after the allies had retreated, Chu attacked and subdued Zheng. In autumn of the next year (the 9th year of King Ling of Zhou [563 B.C.E.]), the allies attacked Zheng and subdued it in the 10th month. However, in the 11th month, Zheng again submitted to Chu after the Chu army had come. At that time, the allies had not left Zheng yet. Jin *xiajun jiang* Luan Huanzi 欒桓子 wanted to attack the Zheng army to punish Zheng's treachery but Zhi Wuzi did not permit it and ordered the troops to retreat. In the 4th month of the 10th year of King Ling of Zhou (562 B.C.E.), the allies attacked Zheng, and allied with it in the 7th month. In the same month, Chu allied with Qin 秦 to attack Zheng and subdued it. Before attacking Zheng, Chu asked the assistance of troops from Qin, which never happened before. This clearly showed that Chu had already been worn out. In the 9th month, the allies once again attacked Zheng. This time, Chu finally gave up and did not take any action. Since then, Zheng was dead set on following Jin. Even the Chu noblemen themselves admitted that "currently Chu really was unable to contend with [Jin]" (*jin* Chu *shi bu jing* 今楚實不競).[87] Therefore, Jin successfully restored its hegemony, which is known as the "restoration of hegemony by Jin Dao [*gong*]" (Jin Dao *fuba* 晉悼複霸). *Zuozhuan* summarizes this as: "[Jin] called out its troops thrice and then Chu was unable to contend with [it]."[88]

Swaine and Tellis believe that the Chinese states preferred to use noncoercive measures because they "were generally shown to be more effective and deemed less costly and less controversial domestically."[89] Ni Lexiong argues that the purpose of

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post of government officer and military chief). *Zhongjun zuo* was *yaqing* 亞卿 (also known as *ciqing* 次卿 or *zhongqing* 中卿) who ranked second among all *qing*; the other *jiang* and *zuo* were *xiaqing* 下卿. Together they were known as the "eight *qing*" (*baqing* 八卿), who formed the core ruling team of Jin.

[84] Zhonghang is his clan name; Xianzi is his posthumous name.

[85] *CZZZ* 30.1001: 遂圍之，以待楚人之救也，而與之戰。不然，無成。

[86] *CZZZ* 30.1001: 許之盟而還師，以敝楚人。吾三分四軍，與諸侯之銳，以逆來者，於我未病，楚不能矣，猶愈於戰。

[87] *CZZZ* 32.1409.

[88] *CZZZ*, 30.1007: 三駕而楚不能與爭。

[89] Swaine – Tellis 2000, p. 66.

victory without fighting is to minimize the destruction of society.[90] They all omit the simplest reason – being unable to defeat the enemy by doing battles. Zhi Wuzi was a senior and experienced commander, who had attended two of the three greatest battles between Jin and Chu, the battles of Bi and Yanling. He was acutely aware of the fact that Jin and Chu were well-matched in strength. The reason that he rejected the suggestion of Zhonghang Xianzi and Luan Huanzi was very simple. He was uncertain about defeating the Chu army in the battlefield. Hence he said:

> If [we] fight with [Chu], but cannot defeat [it], [we] will be laughed at by *zhuhou*. Victory cannot be guaranteed. [We] had better withdraw.[91]

Even if Jin could defeat Chu, the victory might not be decisive, as at the battle of Yanling, at which although one of the eyes of King Gong of Chu (Chu Gong *wang* 楚共王, r. 590–560 B.C.E.) was hurt and the Chu army escaped at night, it was not crushed in the battlefield. Moreover, although Jin had many allies, they "all did not want to fight" (*jie bu yu zhan* 皆不欲戰).[92] Jin's allies followed Jin because they feared Jin's powerful strength. But they did not want to serve as cannon fodder for the Jin–Chu contention. And some of Jin's allies were not very reliable, especially Qi, the former hegemon which had declined but was still a great power. Once Jin's power was weakened, Qi would seize the opportunity to get rid of the control of Jin and challenge it.[93] Hence Zhi Wuzi avoided directly engaging with the Chu army but divided the Jin armies into three to wear out Chu. Therefore, Jin could beat Chu in the competition without losing its forces. If Jin chose to fight Chu in the battlefield, even if it won, most likely it would pay a high price. In that case, the other states, like Qi, would take the advantage of it. Instead of becoming stronger, such a military victory might cause Jin to lose its hegemony. Compared to Zhonghang Xianzi and Luan Huanzi, Zhi Wuzi looked at the problem more sensibly and comprehensively.

An interesting question is why Chu did not use the same strategy against Jin (dividing the Chu army into three and taking turns to attack). In order to carry out such a plan, close cooperation within the state and army is absolutely necessary. Half a century later, in the 8th year of King Jing of Zhou (512 B.C.E.), Wu Zixu 伍子胥, a Chu nobleman who escaped to Wu, suggested to King Helü of Wu (Wu *wang* Helü 吳王闔閭, r. 514–496 B.C.E.) the same strategy to wear out Chu. He believed that this strategy would work by giving the following reason:

> Chu had many [noblemen] in power but [they are] at odds [with each other]. [Hence] nobody will take the responsibility for any calamity. If [we] divide [our] army into three to harass [Chu in turn], when one of them invades [Chu], all the Chu forces will come [to meet our troops].[94]

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[90] Ni Lexiong 2001, p. 161.

[91] *CZZZ* 30.1022: 戰而不克，為諸侯笑。克不可命，不如還也。

[92] *CZZZ* 30.1002.

[93] Qi was reluctant to accept Jin as *mengzhu* and always tried to betray Jin whenever the opportunity arose. For instance, in the 18th year of King Ding of Zhou (589 B.C.E.), Qi associated with Jin's enemy Chu and then attacked Jin's ally Lu in the next year (*CZZZ* 25.788). In the 14th year of King Ling of Zhou (558 B.C.E.), Qi again betrayed Jin and attacked its ally Lu (*CZZZ* 32.1073).

[94] *CZZZ* 53.1747: 楚執政眾而乖，莫適任患。若為三師以肄焉，一師至，彼必皆出。

The internal contradictions of the Chu ruling class were very fierce. Many Chu noblemen, like Wu Zixu, were forced to flee their homeland. And they finally chose to serve Chu's enemies, such as Jin and Wu.[95] Therefore, Chu could not use the same strategy to strike back against Jin. On the contrary, the Jin noblemen were united at that time. *Zuozhuan* says that "the eight *qing* [of Jin] have a harmonious relationship" (*ba qing hemu* 八卿和睦).[96] Moreover, Zhi Wuzi had great authority to make his colleagues with different opinions to follow him. Hence his plan could be carried out. *Sunzi* says that "one who knows his adversary and himself will not be in danger in a hundred battles" (*zhi bi zhi ji zhe, baizhan budai* 知彼知己者，百戰不殆).[97] If one wants to win through *famou*, one must know the adversary and oneself too. Zhi Wuzi perceived the weakness of Chu and formulated a strategy to cope with it. He succeeded because he knew his adversary and himself. Many scholars agree that *famou* refers to the idea of psychological warfare.[98] I think that psychological warfare can be part of *famou* but the concept of *famou* is not just limited to psychological warfare. For example, in the above case, Jin took substantively military actions to wear out Chu. Hence, any stratagem utilizing the enemy's weakness can be regarded as *famou*.

From the above case, it can be seen that *famou* has much in common with *fajiao*. It may include using military force but does not rely on waging decisive battles to achieve its goals. However, unlike *fajiao*, *famou* does not rely on diplomatic means to solve the conflict and no official agreement is reached between the two sides. By comparing the two cases, it can be seen that Qi only obtained its minimum goal through *fajiao*, but Jin achieved its full goal, completely subduing Zheng through *famou*. It seems that *famou* is more effective than *fajiao*. Why is that? I will discuss the reason later.

In the above two cases, Qi and Jin were at least not weaker than their adversary, or even a bit stronger. *Bu zhan er qu ren zhi bing* was used as an offensive strategy in these cases. Then let us look at two other examples, in which *bu zhan er qu ren zhi bing* was applied as a defensive strategy against much stronger enemies. During the Chunqiu, Zheng was a popular target for great powers because of its important geographical location. In the 9th month of the 22nd year of King Xiang of Zhou (630 B.C.E.), Zheng was besieged by allied forces of two great powers, Jin and Qin. Zheng was unable to resist such powerful enemies through military means so that it chose to protect itself by *fajiao*. Zheng *dafu* 大夫 Zhu Zhiwu 燭之武 went to see Lord Mu of Qin[99] secretly at night and said to him:

> If exterminating Zheng benefits Your highness, [our broken state] dares to bother [Your highness'] ministers [to do so]. [But] Your highness know the difficulty of having a remote [place] as [Your highness'] border city when there are other

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[95] For example, the *Guo yu* 國語 (Discourse of the states) summarizes the most significant defection events of Chu from the reign of King Cheng of Chu to the reign of King Gong of Chu. See *Guo yu jijie*, 17. 489–492.

[96] *CZZZ* 30.983.

[97] *Sunzi* 1.42.

[98] Li Ling 2006, p. 120, Mott – Kim 2006, p. 12, Godehardt 2008, p. 10, and Kang Jingbiao 2015, p. 2.

[99] The official title of the Qin monarchs was Qin *bo* 秦伯.

> states between [the mainland of Your highness' state and it].[100] [Hence] why should [Your highness] exterminate Zheng to benefit [Your highness'] neighbor?[101] The greater [Your highness'] neighbor becomes, the weaker Your highness' [state] is. If [Your highness] absolves Zheng and lets [Zheng] to be [Your highness'] host on the way to the east to provide necessities to [Your highness'] messengers, this will be of no harm to Your highness. Moreover, Your highness' had benefited the [former] Jin monarch.[102] [He] promised [to give] Your highness' the cities of Jiao 焦 and Xia 瑕. [But he] crossed [the Huanghe river] in the morning and then built city walls [to defend Your highness'] in the evening.[103] This is what Your highness' know. Jin, how can it be ever satisfied? After having made Zheng its east boundary, [Jin] will expand its border on the west. Where will it get [land] if not by cutting down Qin's? [To exterminate Zheng will] diminish Qin but benefit Jin. Your highness', please consider it.[104]

Lord Mu of Qin was persuaded by Zhu Zhiwu. Hence he allied with Zheng, left three *dafu* of Qin to help Zheng guard its capital, and returned to Qin. In order to avoid a direct conflict with Qin, the Jin army also retreated. Zheng successfully survived this great crisis through *fajiao*.

Zhu Zhiwu persuaded Lord Mu by clearly stating the *li* of retaining Zheng and the *hai* of exterminating it. However, the eloquence of Zhu Zhiwu was not the only reason for his success. A more important reason was his acute perception. He perceived the hidden contradiction of the seemingly unbreakable Jin–Qin alliance.[105] After the battle of Chengpu, Lord Wen of Jin became the second hegemon of the Chunqiu after Lord Huan of Qi. However, Lord Mu of Qin was also an ambitious monarch who was seeking hegemony. He was not reconciled to let Jin dominate *tianxia* exclusively. Zhu Zhiwu brilliantly utilized Lord Mu's ambition to break up the Jin–Qin alliance and saved his state without fighting.

However, it is worthwhile to note that usually *fajiao* is not free from a price. The eloquence of Zhu Zhiwu was not sufficient to let Qin agree to ally with Zheng. The price was that Zheng had to allow the Qin troops to stay at its capital and to provide supplies to them,[106] which implied a hidden danger for the future. The mission of the three *dafu* of Qin left in Zheng was not just to help it defend Jin. They were also spies and contacts inside Zheng who were going to help Qin to annex Zheng, as the next case shows.

In the winter of the 24th year of King Xiang of Zhou (628 B.C.E.), Qi Zi 杞子, one of the three *dafu* of Qin left in Zheng informed Qin that it was the time to take

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[100] Qin and Zheng were not bounded but separated by Jin, Zhou, and Hua 滑.

[101] Here he indicated that because it was difficult for Qin to occupy Zheng, Qin's neighbor Jin would gain the territory of Zheng after Zheng's fall.

[102] Lord Mu of Qin had helped Lord Hui of Jin (Jin Hui *gong* 晉惠公, r. 659–621 B.C.E.) to go back to Jin to succeed to the position of Jin *hou*.

[103] Jin was on the right side of Huanghe and Qin was on the left.

[104] *CZZZ* 17.533–534: 若亡鄭而有益於君，敢以煩執事。越國以鄙遠，君知其難也，焉用亡鄭以陪鄰？鄰之厚，君之薄也。若舍鄭以為東道主，行李之往來，共其乏困，君亦無所害。且君嘗為晉君賜矣，許君焦、瑕，朝濟而夕設版焉，君之所知也。夫晉，何厭之有？既東封鄭，又欲肆其西封，不闕秦，將焉取之？闕秦以利晉，唯君圖之。

[105] Lord Wen of Jin was the brother-in-law and son-in-law of Lord Mu of Qin. Having the full support of Qin, Lord Wen seized power from his paternal nephew Lord Huai of Jin (Jin Huai *gong* 晉懷公, r. 637 B.C.E.).

[106] *CZZZ* 17.545–546.

Zheng because he was holding the key of the north gate of its capital. Hence the Qin army departed from its homeland to attack Zheng and then in the next spring, arrived at Hua, a small state close to Zheng. Xian Gao 弦高, a merchant of Zheng, happened to meet the Qin army on the way. He pretended to be the envoy of Zheng to refresh and reward the Qin army with four dressed hides, preceding twelve head of cattle and said to the Qin commanders:

> Dear gentlemen, our mornach who lacks virtue heard that you will march with your army to pass through our broken state.[107] [Our mornach] presumes to refresh and reward [your] attendants. [Although] our broken state is not rich, [we have prepared] for a long-time stay of them. [For every day they stay here, we] will prepare one day's provisions for [them]. [For every day they march within our territory, we] will prepare one night's guarding for [them].[108]

The Qin commanders thought that Zheng had already known of Qin's plan of attack and were well-prepared for it. Therefore, they gave up attacking it and retreated. Once more, Zheng made a stronger enemy pull back without fighting.

The same as in the first example of *famou*, *zhi bi zhi ji* was a key factor for Zheng's success. Qin's capital Yong 雍 (in today's Fengxiang 鳳翔 of Shaanxi 陝西 province) and Zheng's capital Xinzheng 新鄭 (in today's Xinzheng of Henan province) were about 581 kilometers apart (straight-line distance) and Qin had to cross the territories of Jin, Zhou, and Hua to attack Zheng. If Qin could not win the war quickly, its supplies would be a big issue. Behind the politely diplomatic language, Xian Gao actually passed a serious warning to the Qin commanders. The wording "[we are prepared] for a long-time stay of them" means that Zheng had prepared for a siege of a long time. The wording "[for everyday they stay here, we] will prepare one day's provisions for [them]" means that Zheng had sufficient reserves. Giving twelve head of cattle to the Qin army was a proof of it. The wording "[for every day they march within our territory, we] will prepare one night's guarding for [them]" means that Zheng had sufficient manpower. Xian Gao's warning was not just a bluff. After all, Zheng was not a weak state but a medium power. It was probably unable to defeat the Qin army in an open battle but most likely could defend its walled capital for a relatively long time. During the Chunqiu, it was not easy to take a walled city if the defenders were well prepared and had a strong will to resist. For instance, in the 9th month of the 12th year of King Ding of Zhou (595 B.C.E.), Chu besieged Song, a medium power like Zheng, but could not make it yield until the 5th month of the next year.[109] Therefore, *Sunzi* suggests that one should try to avoid *gongcheng*. Without the advantage of a surprise attack and the help of contacts inside, the Qin army was unsure about taking Zheng in a short time so that it had to give up its original plan. In this case, Zheng did not actually use its forces but its military strength did play an important role in deterring the enemy. Someone may argue that the above case should be considered as an example of *fajiao*. However, Xian Gao was actually not an envoy of Zheng. Moreover, Zheng

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[107] *Biyi* 敝邑 (our broken state) was a humble form of address for one to call one's state.

[108] *CZZZ* 17.545: 寡君聞吾子將步師出於敝邑，敢犒從者，不腆敝邑，為從者之淹，居則具一日之積，行則備一夕之衛。

[109] *CZZZ* 24.759, 763

and Qin did not come to any official agreement. Therefore, I argue that it is an example of *famou*.

From the above two cases, the following two points are to worthy of attention. First of all, when *famou* and *fajiao* were applied as a defensive strategy, fighting could be completely avoided. But strictly speaking, Zheng did not subjugate its enemies. As I have discussed before, in these cases, the character *qu* 屈 is more appropriate to be interpreted as "frustrating [the enemy's strategic goals]." It is naive to believe that one can defeat overwhelming enemy forces solely relying on stratagems and tricks unless the enemies make fatal mistakes and expose fatal weaknesses. Secondly, once again *famou* performed more effectively than *fajiao*. Xian Gao made the powerful Qin army retreat at the price of just four dressed hides and twelve head of cattle. It is because diplomacy is the art of compromise and involves the exchange of interests. For example, Qi had to give up part of its demands in order to avoid crossing the bottom line of Chu. Zheng had to satisfy Qin's requirements in order to ally with it. Therefore, usually the cost of *fajiao* is higher than *famou*. I think this is why *Sunzi* prefers *famou* to *fajiao*. However, in order to subdue the enemy or frustrate the enemy's plan through *famou*, a prerequisite is that the enemy must have made mistakes and exposed weaknesses first. Otherwise, *famou* will not work. This is why *Sunzi* says that "the enemy's vincibility depends on itself" (*ke sheng zai di* 可勝在敵).[110] The table below summarizes the key features and differences between *famou* and *fajiao*.

TABLE 1: COMPARISON BETWEEN *FAMOU* AND *FAJIAO*

	famou	*fajiao*
Practicability	Can be used as both offensive and defensive strategy, especially when one does not have overwhelming advantages over his adversary	Can be used as both offensive and defensive strategy, especially when one does not have overwhelming advantages over his adversary
Use of violence	May involve a certain level of violence but does not rely on doing decisive battles to achieve one's goals Violence may be completely avoided if it is used as a defensive strategy	May involve a certain level of violence but does not rely on doing decisive battles to achieve one's goals Violence may be completely avoided if it is used as a defensive strategy
Effectiveness	Relatively high	Relatively low More likely to require a compromise
Cost	Relatively low	Relatively high, especially when it is used as a defensive strategy
Conditions for success	More relying on the weaknesses exposed by the enemy and one's ability to find them	More relying on the willingness of both sides to compromise
Official agreement	An official agreement between the two parties is unnecessary.	An official agreement is made between the two parties.

[110] *Sunzi* 1.43.

CONCLUSION

In summary, the idea of *bu zhan er qu ren zhi bing* is neither purely peaceful nor defensive. It does not mean subjugating the enemy without fighting but means to avoid fighting "fair" open battles with the enemy. I argue that it is more appropriate to translate the famous quote of *Sunzi* as "To fight and win a hundred open battles is not the most brilliant [method] among all brilliant [methods]; to subdue the enemy army or frustrate its strategic goals without doing open battles is the most brilliant [method] among all brilliant [methods]." When the enemy is too strong to be easily defeated, *famou* (to strike [the enemy] through stratagems) and *fajiao* (to strike [the enemy] through diplomacy) are probably better options than *fabing* (directly engaging with the enemy army in the field) and *gongcheng* (attacking [strongly fortified] walled cities). *Famou* and *fajiao* do not rule out using forces and taking military actions, but they do not rely on defeating the enemies in decisive battles to achieve one's goals. By studying the history of the Chunqiu, it can be seen that *famou* and *fajiao* can be used as both offensive and defensive strategies. If it is used as an offensive strategy, a certain level of violence (not including engagement with the enemy main forces) is usually inevitable. But if it is used as a defensive strategy, violence means may be completely avoided. By applying *famou* and *fajiao*, great powers like Qi and Jin won in the contention for hegemony, and Zheng, a relatively weaker state survived the fierce competition. Therefore, I argue that *bu zhan er qu ren zhi bing* is not an idealistic concept but a realistic strategy developed from an era of wars to adapt to a much more competitive and complicated environment. At least during the period of the Chunqiu, it was practically applied by states to cope with their enemies. Generally, *famou* is more effective than *fajiao* because the latter usually requires compromise and/or paying a relatively higher price. But in order to apply *famou*, one must be able to find the weakness of one's enemy and know how to utilize it.

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CHINESE ABSTRACT

對「不戰而屈人之兵」之意義及其實用價值的重新審視

本文重新審視了《孫子》核心思想之一的「不戰而屈人之兵」的含義及其實用價值。對頗為流行的認為「不戰而屈人之兵」代表一種和平主義以及防禦主義的觀點，本文提出了質疑。同時本文反駁了認為「不戰而屈人之兵」只是一個理想化概念的觀點。通過對《孫子》一書的上下文和其成書的歷史背景分析，本文認為「不戰而屈人之兵」是一種為了適應春秋時期日趨激烈的競爭環境而發展出的現實主義哲學。它既可以被應用於進攻性，也可以被應

用於防禦性戰略。其含義並不等同於，但包含通過伐謀、伐交而非主力會戰的方式使敵人屈服或者挫敗敵人之戰略目的。通過對春秋時期四個實例的研究，本文具體分析了如何在實踐中運用伐謀與伐交以達到「不戰而屈人之兵」之目的。

關鍵詞：《孫子》、不戰而屈人之兵、伐謀、伐交、春秋時期的戰爭

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTOR

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