

# **Sublime Words with Profound Meaning**

## **Pre-Qin Scholars' Comments on Military Affairs and Their Convergences with International Humanitarian Law**

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From the Western Zhou Dynasty to the late Qing Dynasty, China has witnessed in a history spanning more than 3000 years a dramatic cycle of long-lasting unification and disintegration. In the fighting that has ensued in the course of these transitions and changes of dynasties, brilliant military talents and ideas have emerged.

During the hundreds of years of the Pre-Qin period (the Spring and Autumn Period, eighth to fifth centuries BCE, and the Warring States Period, fifth to third centuries BCE), society was in fear and turmoil. None of the great thinkers of the time could ignore the political situation. Instead, they actively participated in politics and lobbied governments, hoping that their political ideas could be adopted to protect the State and the people, and to bring peace to the world. Regardless of their backgrounds, all expressed their views on the “use of military force” in the face of social realities. In the Pre-Qin period, these included not only military strategists, but also scholars from other fields.

Amid rapid changes in the Pre-Qin period, the Hundred Schools of Thought contended academically and nations disputed militarily, culminating in a pinnacle of Chinese military science. It saw the emergence of Sun Tzu, Wu Qi, Tian Rangju and other ancient military talents who set examples for generations to come. Today, we read and reflect on their works and feel that, although they cover military strategies and tactics, there is no endorsement of blood-soaked brutality. We not only marvel therefore at their ingenuity, but also admire their benevolent fraternity. Indeed, a traditional humanitarian spirit appears to be deeply rooted in Chinese military thinking.

Due, undeniably, to the assistance of Jiang Ziya and the Duke of Zhou, the Western Zhou Dynasty (c. 1045-771 BCE) managed to defeat the great Shang emperor even though it was a small vassal State, and contributed to the establishment of China. Future generations praised both these figures as pioneers of military strategy and Confucianism. Later, they were enfeoffed with the Qi and Lu States, and their ideas became popular in these regions. The Qi State had outstanding military strategists like

Sun Tzu, Rangju and Sun Bin, while the Lu State had marvellous talents like Confucius and his disciples. Confucius (c. 551-479 BCE) established an ideological system with “Ren” (benevolence) as the core requirement for “rightly governing the State and making the world peaceful”.

The so-called Confucian teachings of “cultivating the moral self, regulating the family, rightly governing the State and making the world peaceful” all started on the basis of “benevolence” and had far-reaching impact on the doctrines of military strategists and other schools of thought. Governing the army with “benevolence” became the dominant idea of military science and has profoundly influenced Chinese thinkers up to the present day.

Confucianism gradually evolved from the individual’s “cultivation of the moral self and regulation of the family” to the universal way of “ruling the State rightly and making the world peaceful” and thus had to engage closely with military affairs. Confucianism was not merely “talking about benevolence and propriety” without a deep understanding of the military; on the contrary, military science is an integral component of Confucianism. This is illustrated by the Six Arts of “rites, music, archery, horsemanship, literary arts and mathematics” that are advocated by Confucian teachings, finding a balance between the use of military force and the act of benevolence. Thus, Pre-Qin military science became profoundly influenced by Confucianism with its rich humanistic concepts and rules. Although the words “humane” or “humanitarian” were not directly used, both found thorough expression through the core concept of “benevolence”.

The striking feature of Pre-Qin military science is its holistic outlook on conducting warfare within the framework of national strategy, where war is the continuation of politics and everything serves politics. It therefore enables the mobilization of all available resources to realize complete victory and good governance of the people, rather than just focusing on temporary military wins. Practicing “the way of benevolence” is not only the key for military strategists to defeat the enemy and the foundation for the use of military force, it also constitutes the basic framework for the Pre-Qin art of warfare. Looking at today’s International Humanitarian Law (IHL), we cannot help but notice how similar it is to the humanitarian concepts and rules advocated by Pre-Qin military science, especially in restricting the excessive use of force, alleviating the scourge of war, and protecting the victims of armed conflict.

Most notably, the humanitarian behaviour that found manifestation in Pre-Qin

military strategists' "benevolence" is an inherent requirement in their art of warfare. While traditional Western military science also engaged to some degree in humanitarian discourse regarding the conduct of war, Chinese military strategists' guiding ideology for the use of armed force has anticipated core elements of IHL since ancient times. This stems not only from the application of Confucian "benevolence" in the arts of warfare, but also from the deep benevolent roots among Chinese people and their rejection of unnecessary killing. Moreover, "benevolence" is not only essential to Pre-Qin military science; it also dominated the development of Chinese military science in later generations. Arguably, it has become the pride and soul of the Chinese military even today.

### **Confucians Commenting on the Military**

Confucian scholars emphasized that the use of military force must be in accordance with the requirements of national politics, and the concept of "benevolence" was promoted as a principle for guiding warfare. In the writings of military strategists, however, more attention was paid to studying specific strategies and tactics under the guidance of national strategy, pragmatically combining "benevolence" with "fighting by deception" to ensure victory in war.

#### **Benevolence of Confucius**

"Do not impose on others what you yourself do not desire."

—*The Analects of Confucius - Duke Ling of Wei*

The original meaning of "benevolence", that is, "to love others", requires that one loves others as one loves oneself. How can one achieve this? Confucius put forward the principles of loyalty and consideration for others. He advocated that the use of military force should be restrained by "benevolence", and not be used excessively, since this could lead to catastrophic violence.

Confucius' teachings pay much attention to military education and even more on overall military affairs. Among his disciples were many outstanding military talents who successfully commanded combat operations, such as Fan Chi, Ran You and Zilu.

For example, when Ran You led the Lu army to defeat the Qi forces and was asked by Ji Shi how he was so good at fighting, he admitted that he learned from his teacher Confucius. When, however, another powerful minister came to ask Confucius for military advice, the master decisively refused as he perceived him to be “not benevolent”.

Confucius used the concept of “propriety” to limit excessive force and restrain any inclination to take life. He highly praised Gongyin Shangyang’s conduct when defeating the Wu army, saying, “even when taking life there needs to be propriety”. Confucius also used the concept of “righteousness” as a counterbalance to the soldiers’ “valour”. He once expressed to his disciple Zi Lu that, “If gentlemen are valorous but not righteous, then chaos will ensue; if vile characters are valorous but not righteous, then banditry will ensue.” By nurturing the internal qualities of military commanders and soldiers, the excessive use of force can be contained and unnecessary harm in war be prevented.

### **Mencius’ Righteousness**

“He who finds the proper course has many to assist him. He who loses the proper course has few to assist him. When this - the being assisted by few - reaches its extreme point, his own relations revolt from the prince. When the being assisted by many reaches its highest point, the whole kingdom becomes obedient to the prince. When one to whom the whole kingdom is prepared to be obedient, attacks those from whom their own relations revolt, what must be the result? Therefore, the true ruler will prefer not to fight; but if he does fight, he must overcome.”

—*Mencius - Gongsun Chou II*

“If a king advocates benevolence, he will be without any enemy in this world”. This is Mencius’ (372–289 BCE) principal summary of countries fortunate to be under “benevolent governance”. Although Mencius (who is often referred to as the second Confucian sage) inherited the ideological core of Confucianism’s “benevolence”, he elevated “benevolence” from “loving others” at the level of the individual to the national level of “benevolent governance”, which requires the State to be people-oriented and to aim at protecting the people, including in its use of military force and conduct in war. He strongly opposed excessive killing and revenge in war, stating,

“When a man kills another’s father, that other will go on to kill his father. When a man kills another’s elder brother, that other will go on to kill his elder brother”.

### **Xunzi’s Comments on the Military**

“Military forces are a tool for prohibiting violence and eliminating evil, not a tool for fighting for power and profit. Wherever military forces governed by benevolence pass by, that place is transformed and enjoys a spirit-like state, like the falling of a timely rain, and no one can fail to praise them.”

—*Xunzi - A Debate on Military Affairs*

Xunzi (often ranked as the third Confucian sage; c. 310-238 BCE), though differing from Mencius in some aspects of his academic thought, strongly advocated for restraint in military affairs. Elucidating that the root of war lies in the suppression of violence and harm, he proposed that combat operations need to meet the requirements of “benevolence and righteousness”. One should only resort to using military force in order to stop violence and chaos, and not to kill and seize land like self-interested robbers. Xunzi considered it a fundamental mistake to regard the use of military force as a struggle for power and profit. Instead, the foundation for using force lies in “benevolence and righteousness”, and practicing these concepts makes the world safer place.

Puzzled by this notion, one of his disciples asked him, “[You] often take benevolence and righteousness as the foundation for the use of military force. Benevolent people love others, while righteous people follow principles, so what use does one have for the military? Military force is applied in a struggle for power and profit.” Xunzi then explained, “Things are not as you understand them. Benevolent people indeed love others, but it is because they love others that they hate the wicked to cause them harm; righteous people indeed follow principles, but it is because they are principled that they hate principles being breached and chaos ensuing.”

As war is based on “benevolence and righteousness”, and aimed at upholding justice, conduct during war must conform to “benevolence and righteousness” as well. Therefore, Xunzi put forward the basic wartime principles that all sides should abide by during the conduct of hostilities, such as “not to kill the old and the weak, not to trample crops, allow those who avoid war to flee for their safety, and to let bygones be

bygones for those who lay down their arms and surrender”, among a broad range of other humanitarian propositions.

## **Military Strategists’ Comments on the Military**

### **Sun Tzu’s Philosophy**

“The art of war is of vital importance to the State. It is a matter of life and death, a road either to safety or to ruin. Hence it is a subject of inquiry which can on no account be neglected.”

—*The Art of War*

Undoubtedly, *The Art of War* by the famous general and philosopher Sun Tzu (544-496 BCE) should be the first to be mentioned among the works of Pre-Qin military strategists. As a matter of life and death, a road either to safety or to ruin, war is an affair of national concern that has to be carefully considered. Therefore, Sun Tzu started with “Laying Plans” and emphasised preparatory work such as pre-war planning and evaluation. To judge the possibility of winning or losing a war, and to decide whether to go to war, he compared the advantages and disadvantages of both sides based on the Five Constant Factors (Moral Law; Heaven; Earth; The Commander; Method; and Discipline) and the Seven Considerations (“Which of the two sovereigns is imbued with the Moral Law?”; “Which of the two generals has most ability?”; “With whom lie the advantages derived from Heaven and Earth?”; “On which side is discipline most rigorously enforced?”; “Which army is stronger?”; “On which side are officers and soldiers more highly trained?”; and “In which army is there the greater constancy both in reward and punishment?”).

The “Moral Law” (Dao, “The Way”) expresses the manner in which the people and the monarch should work together in righteous wars, sharing life and death, closely assisting each other and thus becoming undefeatable. In “The Commander”, Sun Tzu defines five fundamental virtues that military commanders should exhibit: “Wisdom; Trust; Benevolence; Courage; and Strictness”. Since “benevolence” is regarded as an essential quality of commanders, in Sun Tzu’s “Moral Law” one finds a reflection of the “humanitarian spirit” of benevolent people loving others. However, when it comes

to benevolence in military affairs, a balance between the brutality of war and humanitarian concerns needs to be found, and inevitably a distinction from the Confucian concept of “benevolence” arises.

*The Art of War* holds that the evaluation of the “Five Factors and Seven Counsels” only is capable of showing up possibilities. To turn possibility into reality, it is necessary to resort to deceptive military strategies. It emphasizes that: “All warfare is based on deception”. That is, “When able to attack, we must seem unable; when using our forces, we must seem inactive; when we are near, we must make the enemy believe we are far away; when far away, we must make him believe we are near. Hold out baits to entice the enemy. Feign disorder, and crush him. If he is secure at all points, be prepared for him. If he is in superior strength, evade him. If your opponent is of choleric temper, seek to irritate him. Pretend to be weak, that he may grow arrogant. If he is taking his ease, give him no rest. If his forces are united, separate them. Attack him where he is unprepared, appear where you are not expected.”

This “deception” is the “secret” of winning wars and cannot be divulged beforehand. In this way, Sun Tzu not only makes a strict distinction between the implementation of “deception” and humanitarian considerations in war, he also brings them into close proximity. He contributed greatly to introducing humanitarian concerns into the brutality of war, both in theory and practice, including pragmatic concerns such as how to treat prisoners of war humanely. “*The Art of War - II. Waging War*” demands that forces change the flag of captured enemy chariots, take good care of captured soldiers, and offer them the opportunity to join with their own units. The difference between *The Art of War* and other Pre-Qin military works lies in its succinct character, and humanitarian notions are often expressed inherently rather than explicitly. His economy of words when referring to key national interests and broad strategies should not diminish his benevolence – a point that merits more attention by scholars.

### **Wu Qi’s Virtue**

“‘Moral law’ [Dao] is the means by which one restores the people’s good nature. ‘Righteousness’ is the means by which to put affairs into action and realise accomplishments. ‘Planning’ is the means by which to keep harm distant and realise benefit. The ‘Essence’ is the means by which to secure one’s position and protect one’s achievements. If behaviour does not conform to the ‘moral law’, if actions do not

conform with ‘righteousness’, but instead one dwells in magnificence and enjoys nobility, one is bound to suffer disaster.”

—*Wu Zi*

Wu Qi (440–381 BCE) was a master military strategist in the Pre-Qin period who was accorded similar respect to Sun Tzu. His work, *Wu Zi*, has attracted worldwide attention, much like *The Art of War*, and both are often mentioned together when discussing military affairs. Illustrating Wu Qi’s prestige, the Wei Liaozi states, “Who is the one who commanded 70,000 troops and no one under Heaven opposed him? It is Wu Qi. Who is the one who commanded 30,000 troops and no one under Heaven opposed him? It’s Sun Tzu.” Wu Qi was taught by Zeng Shen, the grandson of Confucius’ disciple Zengzi, and was deeply influenced by Confucianism. In order to show his profound Confucian cultivation, he once dressed in Confucian clothes to meet Marquess Wen of Wei to share his thoughts on military affairs.

The ideological foundation for using armed force in *Wu Zi* is to “cultivate morality within the country, and be prepared militarily for external enemies”. Wu Qi emphasises moral law, righteousness, propriety and benevolence. “Moral law” is aimed at restoring the people’s good nature. If behaviour does not conform to moral law, then great calamities will ensue. This is an embodiment of the Confucian spirit of “benevolence”.

The need for military preparedness is based on the cultivation of morality. In warfare one must not act recklessly like robbers, murdering people and stealing goods. In the context of sieges, *Wu Zi* emphasizes that after capturing a city, armies are not allowed to cut down trees, destroy houses, forcibly take food, slaughter livestock, and burn warehouses. Anyone wishing to surrender should be allowed to do so and be treated kindly. *Wu Zi* deserves praise for incorporating these requirements – which resemble modern IHL – as foundational guiding principles for warfare.

### **The Essentials of “*Six Secret Teachings*”**

“The world does not belong to a single individual, but is shared by all people in the world. Those who act in accordance with benefiting all people in the world will gain the world. Those who monopolise the benefits of the world will lose the world.”

—*Six Secret Teachings - King Wen’s Teacher*

The *Six Secret Teachings*, traditionally held to have been composed by Qi Taigong Jiang Shang (c. 12<sup>th</sup> century – 11<sup>th</sup> century BCE), is the most comprehensive Pre-Qin military work. The book is divided into six parts: “Wentao” (Civil Strategy—statecraft and diplomacy); “Wutao” (Military Strategy—political measures); “Longtao” (Dragon Strategy—military organisation); “Hutao” (Tiger Strategy—military equipment and tactical principles); “Baotao” (Leopard Strategy—tactical solutions to various challenges); “Quantao” (Dog Strategy—specific tactical principles for component forces, i.e. chariots, infantry and cavalry). From national strategy to tactical battle formations, it covers a wide range of military knowledge of the time.

The *Six Secret Teachings* opens with the principle of benevolent governance and regards loving one’s citizens as fundamental for governing the country: “Those who act in accordance with benefiting all people in the world will gain the world. Those who monopolise the benefits of the world will lose the world.” It demands those in power “to give people benefits without harming them, to promote success unfailingly, to protect lives without taking them, to give benefits without resorting to plunder, to make people content without hurting them, and to make people happy without causing anger”.

The *Six Secret Teachings*’ emphasis on benevolent government provides the theoretical basis for the implementation of humanity in war. For example, it stipulates that after conquering a city, it is forbidden to burn food; destroy houses; cut down trees in graveyards and sacred sites; kill surrendering soldiers and commanders; and mistreat prisoners of war. Instead, it demands that the enemy be treated with benevolence, righteousness and kindness. It concludes that if military force is applied in this way, then “righteousness will spread to the benefit of all and everybody will submit to one’s military forces”.

### **The Strategy of “Weiliaozi”**

“Military forces are a lethal weapon. War stands in opposition to morality. Fighting is not worthwhile. Therefore, the king fights violent uprisings for the purpose of upholding benevolence and righteousness”.

—*Weiliaozi - Army Orders 1*

Next to *The Art of War*, the *Weiliaozi* (c. 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE) also deserves much attention. As far as the implementation of humanitarian rules of war is concerned, its value might far exceed even *The Art of War*. From the severe destructive nature of war itself, the *Weiliaozi* demonstrates that the use of force must be based on benevolence as well righteousness, and must prevent violence and injustice. Causing starvation, killing other people's fathers and brothers, plundering people's wealth and enslaving their children are all considered rogue behaviour.

The text emphasizes that even in war restraint should be exercised in the taking of life: "Proper armies do not attack blameless cities, they do not kill innocent people." It also raises the requirement that, in times of war, "Peasants should maintain their land, businessmen should maintain their shops, and officials should maintain their offices". This need to protect non-combatants provides further evidence for the existence of humanitarian concerns and might surprise present-day readers.

### **The Foundation of "*Simafa*"**

"The ancients took benevolence as their foundation."

—*Simafa*

The earliest extant Pre-Qin military book, *Simafa* (The Methods of the Sima; c. 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE), provides a reflection of the military norms prevalent already prior to the Spring and Autumn Period. As large parts of this book were reportedly lost, the version of the *Simafa* that has reached us today was reconstituted by senior officials of the Qi State under the order of King Wei (r. 356–320 BCE) during the Warring States Period. Later generations referred to the text as "*The Art of War of Sima Rangju*", due to its content being largely attributed to military strategist Sima Rangju (dates unknown), "whose literary abilities united his people and whose military abilities intimidated enemies". The present *Simafa* is constituted by three parts, namely, the ancient Sima Art of War, Rangju's Art of War, and the opinions of the editors.

The *Simafa* begins by explaining that benevolence lies at the very foundation of military affairs. The use of military force, the specific behaviour during combat and the rules of combat are all based on the concept of benevolence. These rules can be roughly divided into three categories:

First: Time and opportunity of combat

For example, do not launch attacks during the farming season or during epidemics; do not take advantage to attack enemy countries when they are in national mourning or experiencing famine; and do not start wars in either winter or summer. The purpose of these stipulations is undoubtedly aimed at protecting people's livelihoods, being considerate to both sides in a conflict and reducing the suffering caused by the calamities of war.

Second: Belligerent behaviour and rules for treating injured enemies

For example, fleeing enemies should not be pursued for more than 100 steps, and enemies who have retreated voluntarily should not be tracked for more than 90 li (somewhere between 30 and 40 km during that period). Enemies who have lost their fighting capacity should not be killed; one should show compassion and treat the wounded and sick among enemy forces; unprepared enemies should not be attacked; and enemies who have laid down their arms should be pardoned.

Third: Rules for occupied areas

For example, when an army enters enemy territory, they are not allowed to desecrate sacred places, hunt in the fields, destroy waterworks, burn houses and buildings, cut down trees, or rob livestock, food and utensils without authorisation. They are not allowed to injure old people and children, or treat young adults and middle-aged people as enemies unless they resist by force. They must treat injured enemies and allow them to return home. Many of these rules, if their source is not stated, could be mistaken for provisions of modern IHL.

### **Chinese Traditions and International Humanitarian Law (IHL)**

From an academic perspective traditional Chinese culture was often summarised through the "Three Teachings": Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism. After the ideological reform of the feudal state by Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty (r. 141 BCE - 87 BCE), "dismissing the Hundred Schools of Thought and revering only Confucianism", later dynasties tended to disagree, emphasizing instead that "Confucianism comes first among the three schools" because most representative of traditional Chinese culture. From a practical perspective, traditional Chinese culture

was often divided into four categories: “Military, Medical, Agricultural and Artistic”, of which military science ranked first.

This article attempts to grasp the humanitarian concepts and rules of military science in the Pre-Qin period from only the perspective of Confucianists and military strategists, leaving Taoist, Mohist and Legalist perspectives to future explorations. From the passages explored above, it is clear that Pre-Qin military science is deeply rooted in the Confucian concept of “benevolence”. In short, “benevolence lies at the foundation of using military force, and military force needs to be applied in accordance with benevolence”.

Examining these humanitarian concepts of Pre-Qin military science shows that there are both similarities and differences compared with present-day IHL. Pre-Qin military science unifies the concepts of “applying military force based on benevolence” and “fighting by deception” in the process of war. This echoes IHL’s careful balance between humanitarian concerns and military requirements, allowing for ruses of war, while opposing perfidy. Many Pre-Qin operational rules are strikingly similar to provisions found in IHL. For example, allowing enemies to surrender; being kind to captives; treating injuries and illnesses; and not attacking civilians, destroying houses, sacred places and water conservancy projects after entering enemy territory.

The most important difference between modern IHL and traditional Chinese humanitarian rules of war lies in their roots. Chinese traditional military strategists’ humanitarian concepts and rules are derived from the moral concept of “benevolence means to love universally” and the political concept of “governing the country with benevolence”, which are the inherent requirements of their art of warfare.

Until the humanitarian revolution that led to the establishment of IHL, military ethics in other parts of the world have not always integrated benevolence and humanitarian considerations to the same degree. Historically, Western military strategists, for example, have made comparatively fewer positive statements on the humanitarian requirements in war. Carl von Clausewitz in his *On War* repeatedly emphasizes that “war is an act of violence, which in its application knows no bounds”. Indeed, he considered that “in such dangerous things as war, the errors which proceed from a spirit of benevolence are the worst”.

Contrastingly, the humanitarian concepts of Pre-Qin military strategists were based on “benevolence” in war, which resulted in a variety of humanitarian rules that must be observed and implemented. These rules are regarded as an important

embodiment of the art of war, and even considered essential to defeating the enemy. This is of high reference value for IHL and its dissemination, acceptance, and implementation by parties to conflict.

The humanitarian concepts and rules proposed by Chinese traditional military strategists are not the product of theoretical deliberations and closed discussions among leaders, but directly result from the collective experience of wars over millennia. They embody the essence of Chinese military strategists of the Pre-Qin period, guided actual combat at that time, and have dominated the development of Chinese military science among later generations. In a sense, the policy of Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty to “reject other schools and respect only Confucianism” further strengthened the concept of “benevolence” in military science.

A reflection of the deep roots of “benevolence in using force” can be found, for example, in the poems of famous Tang Dynasty poet Du Fu: “There need to be limits on taking lives, just as when guarding a state its boundaries need to be observed; if one is able to contain transgressions, what is the need to cause unnecessary death and injury?”

During the Yuanfeng period of the Song Dynasty (1078-1085 CE), the government canonized seven military books from prior dynasties as required reading for the military examination, the “*Seven Military Classics*”. Among those selected were five great works of Pre-Qin military science, *The Art of War*, *Wu Zi*, *Simafa*, *Six Secret Teachings* and *Weiliaozi*. After their integration into the official corpus, “interpreting military affairs through Confucianism” reinforced the humanitarian concept of “benevolence lying at the foundation for resorting to the use of force” in Chinese military science.

During the Song, Ming and Qing Dynasties, not only did “talking about military affairs and one’s family” emerge as a popular trend among Confucians, there were also Confucian scholars such as Wang Yangming and Zeng Guofan who commanded their troops in battle and made their mark in the annals of history. Of course, with changes in the nature of war, it became inevitable to eliminate outdated rules. “Don’t attack unprepared opponents”, for example, was a rule formed for chariot wars during the Western Zhou Dynasty. When chariot wars transformed into confrontations between cavalries and infantries, sticking to these rules would have been perceived as lacking an understanding of military affairs.

During the Jinggang Mountains period (1927-1929), Mao Zedong formulated

“Three Rules of Discipline and Six Points for Attention” for the Chinese Workers’ and Peasants’ Red Army, which soon after developed into the “Three Rules of Discipline and Eight Points for Attention” that are still fundamental to present-day China’s armed forces. Humanitarian rules in this military doctrine include not mistreating prisoners; not beating or cursing people; not damaging crops; not harassing women; paying compensation for everything damaged; and not confiscating people’s property.

Some of the rules that were developed in the Chinese traditions throughout the ages go even further than those stipulated in the Geneva Conventions. This demonstrates that the humanitarian concept of “benevolence needing to be the basis for resorting to the use of force” is deeply rooted in the Chinese military tradition and continues to play an active and positive role in the present day.