

China's Civilian Army: The Making of Wolf Warrior Diplomacy

By Peter Martin

Oxford University Press, 2021

298 pp. \$27.95

ISBN: 9780197513705

Reviewed by Ian Forsyth

George Schultz, the U.S. Secretary of State from 1982 to 1989, equated diplomacy to gardening: long-term cultivation and maintenance of a healthy relationship that slowly but reliably bears fruit. Peter Martin's *China's Civilian Army: The Making of Wolf Warrior Diplomacy* depicts a Chinese diplomatic corps that has intermittently subscribed to this philosophy. This clear and engaging book is an enlightening blend of domestic People's Republic of China (PRC) politics, foreign policy practice, and diplomatic history with a fair amount of Zhou Enlai biography thrown in. Zhou was China's first foreign minister (FM) from its founding in 1949 to when he stepped down as FM in 1958.

Martin is a political reporter for Bloomberg News and spent several years as a correspondent in the PRC as well

as having studied at Peking University. *China's Civilian Army* devotes roughly half of its pages to the origin of the PRC diplomatic corps and Zhou. It tracks the evolution of its diplomats, who were disciplined, committed Communists, modeled in structure and spirit on the People's Liberation Army, hence the book title. They approached diplomatic assignments, conferences, and even basic meetings with little to no appropriate social science training or much host-country knowledge. Instead, they possessed a single-mindedness borne out of national insecurity and a lack of trust for one another in the field that was often self-defeating. The book also highlights the role of (often tumultuous) domestic Chinese politics, which could be crippling to its diplomatic efforts.

It concludes in the 21st century, where undeniable Chinese growth and power, with approval from Xi Jinping, spawned a generation of PRC diplomats who are combative, caustic, and sometimes petty (the exact opposite of Secretary Schultz's prescription). This aggression was nicknamed "wolf warrior diplomacy" (战狼外交) after a series of recent popular Chinese war movies.

Martin draws on the memoirs of over 100 retired American and Chinese diplomats, State Department and CIA archives, as well as his own career as a China correspondent for Bloomberg to tell this story. His research captures the nexus of political science, international relations, as well as history and biography, so it could claim residency in any of these disciplines.

Although *China's Civilian Army* starts off as history with some biography, it evolves into a study of what drove and incentivized China's diplomatic interactions. While the argument is not explicit, Martin presents a dynamic in which first and foremost China's diplomats are concerned with adhering to priorities of Chinese high politics. Through the PRC's first 20-odd years, these diplomats were more information officers than anything else. They declared China's official line in single direction "dialogues" with their hosts. While all diplomats are beholden to their countries' politics to varying degrees, Martin depicts a

community where political loyalty to Beijing and recitation of Beijing's truths were supremely valued. This made Chinese diplomacy exceedingly challenging during the Great Leap Forward and Cultural Revolution. Along those lines, Martin reveals that despite how influential or charismatic certain FMs might be (for instance, Zhou, Qian Qichen), it is the Party chairman who sets the tone, particularly if that chairman is especially paranoid (Mao Zedong, Xi). Martin also observes that the bulk of the wolf warrior vitriol has been directed at middle powers such as Australia and Sweden.

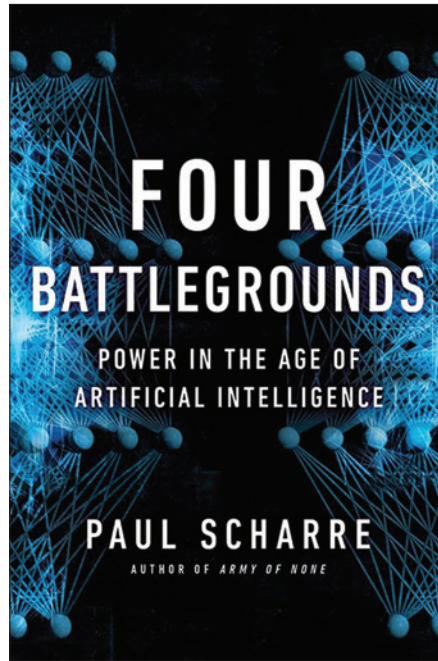
Another argument Martin implicitly advances is that the current wolf warrior diplomacy is not unprecedented; it has ebbed and flowed over the decades but never completely disappeared. Contemporary wolf warriors such as former FM spokesperson Zhao Lijian and former FM ambassador to Sweden Gui Congyou shock audiences with their barbed statements, but they are not the first of their kind. The difference between modern and prior wolf warriors is that the original warriors' combativeness was borne out of insecurity and the need to carve a niche for a newly created country. In contrast, contemporary warriors are brimming with the confidence of a country whose rise has been remarkable, whose power is undeniable, and whose respect has heretofore been unfairly denied. Martin describes how certain PRC elites are uncomfortable with this chest-thumping, but it still plays well with the PRC online populace, so such bravado is rewarded on a certain level.

While Martin does not make predictions or assert conclusions, the logical inference he draws is that because China is a major power, these diplomats will be ever-present though maybe not ubiquitous. Martin is professional enough not to wear his heart on his sleeve, but he clearly sees these diplomats as obnoxious and even dangerous at times. He highlights their impressive language skills and prestigious formal education but makes clear that such expertise and professionalism is often discarded if not outright rejected by their FM superiors for the sake of political expediency.

China's Civilian Army is valuable because it could assist the joint force in its efforts to understand China's foreign policy and the role of domestic politics in its foreign policy behavior by highlighting the trends and dynamics of China's diplomats. It is effective at illuminating the connection between Chinese senior leadership, China's global position in terms of power, and how these drivers impact Chinese formal and informal diplomacy. It is also accessible for non-Sinologists and does not require a strong China background to understand it, though a China background does help. It is also very well written with clear, informative prose.

Recent headlines seemingly point to an ebb in wolf warrior diplomacy. Notorious wolf warrior Zhao Lijian has been shifted from Foreign Policy Spokesperson to the Deputy Director for Boundary Affairs; he may or may not be demoted but he certainly is muzzled. Xi and President Joe Biden had a seemingly positive summit in Bali last November at the G-20. New FM/outgoing ambassador to the United States Qin Gang departed with warm statements for his hosts. Is this a tactical retreat by China's civilian army, or is it a broader philosophical change? It is more likely that China's domestic pressures, such as containing COVID-19 and reigniting its economy, compel Xi to prioritize stability and not unnecessarily alienate other powers, particularly the United States. Research by Dan Mattingly and James Sundquist of Yale shows how unhelpful China's wolf warrior tactics are. It is advantageous for China to attend to its diplomatic garden after years of neglect. Yet based on Martin's research, China's wolf warriors will inevitably return in one form or another, particularly given China's size, stature, and power. **JFQ**

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Four Battlegrounds: Power in the Age of Artificial Intelligence

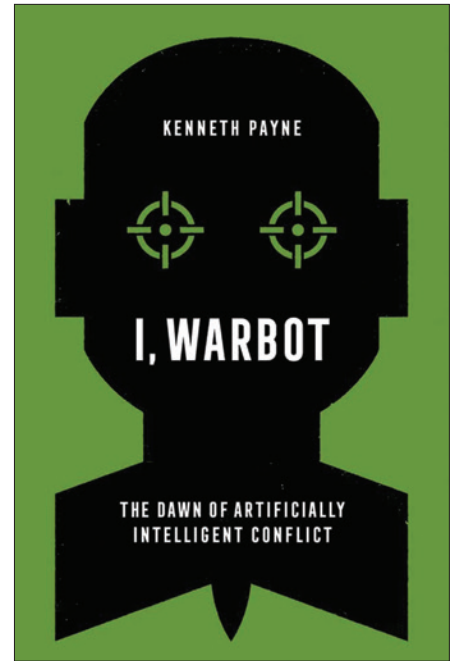
By Paul Scharre
W.W. Norton & Company, 2023
496 pp. \$32.50
ISBN: 9780393866865

I, Warbot: The Dawn of Artificially Intelligent Conflict

By Kenneth Payne
Oxford University Press, 2021
280 pp. \$29.95
ISBN: 9780197611692

Reviewed by Frank G. Hoffman

The rollout of Chat GPT-3 by OpenAI in late 2022 caused a storm of controversy. The new software created seemingly authentic and detailed answers to queries, generated passable drafts of student essays, and even managed to pass a college exam at the Wharton Business School. But some of the chatbot's responses were also inaccurate, inappropriate, and deeply flawed. The updated version GPT-4, released in March 2023, did little to alleviate concerns about how far and how fast this technology could take us.



Here again the rapidly developing field of artificial intelligence (AI) brought out a spate of spurious claims and serious concerns. Given the purported progress being made in computational intelligence, it is imperative that the Armed Forces be attentive to understanding what AI can and cannot do within our professional sphere. There is little doubt that AI will bring about profound changes in the conduct of warfare, and equally little agreement on just what those changes will be.

Two recent books, *Four Battlegrounds* and *I, Warbot*, will help readers sort out the hype from the hysteria. Both address the state of the art of today's AI and machine-learning technology with interesting anecdotes and insights drawn from intensive interaction with leading laboratories, critics, and scientists around the globe. Most importantly, they underscore what we should be wary of when incorporating AI into military institutions and operational practice.

Four Battlegrounds, penned by Paul Scharre from the Center for a New American Security, blends a pragmatic approach borne from his days as an Army infantryman with the perspective of a veteran Pentagon policy wonk. This is Scharre's second major work on the topic. His initial book *Army of None*: