

**EXCERPTS FROM EMPEROR TAIZONG ON EFFECTIVE
GOVERNMENT: "MAINTAINING MILITARY FORCES"**

Introduction

Li Shimin reigned as Taizong, second emperor of the Tang dynasty (618-907), from 626 until his death in 649. An energetic ruler, Tang Taizong had played a major part in the military campaigns that brought his father (Li Yuan, Tang Gaozu, r. 618-626) to the throne as the first emperor of the Tang dynasty. Having eliminated his two competitors for the throne (his brothers Li Jiancheng and Li Yuanji) in an ambush at the capital city's Xuanwu Gate in 624, Li Shimin forced his father into retirement in 626 to take the throne for himself. As the second emperor of the Tang dynasty, Li Shimin gave shape to the administrative structure of the empire. The text recommended below was written in 648, near the end of his reign, and was meant to serve as advice to his heirs.

Selected Document Excerpts with Questions

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*Excerpts from Emperor Taizong on Effective Government:
"Maintaining Military Forces"*

Weapons and armor are a country's tools of violence. A warlike country, however huge and safe it may be, will end up declining and endangering its populace. Military force cannot be entirely eliminated nor used all the time. Teach people military arts when they are free from farming in order to equip them with a sense of military decorum and morale. ... Confucius said, "Not teaching people how to fight is the same as discarding them." Hence military might serves to benefit the realm. This is the gist of the art of war.

Questions:

1. What philosophical assumptions underlie Taizong's thinking on war?
2. The *Analects* (13:30) record that Confucius said: "To lead the people to war without having taught them is to throw them away." Is Tang Taizong using Confucius appropriately?
3. At what seasons of the year would Tang Taizong want his officials to lead the people in military training?