

PRINCIPLES OF WAR

The fundamental principles upon which rest all good combination of war have always existed and to them all others should be referred for the purpose of arriving at their respective merits. These principles are unchangeable; They are independent of the arms employed, of times, and of places.

- Jomini

The aim of military study should be to maintain a close watch upon the latest technical, scientific and political developments, fortified by a sure grasp of the eternal principles upon which the great Captains have based their contemporary methods, and inspired by a desire to be ahead of any rival army in securing options for the future.

- Sir Basil Liddel Hart

Although Clausewitz himself speaks loosely of certain “principles” to be observed and followed, he specifically rejected the notion that there could be any well defined body of particular rules or principles that universally dictated one form of behaviors rather than another It was not until the twentieth century that various army field manuals would attempt to encapsulate centuries of experience and volumes of reflection into a few tersely worded and usually numbered “principles of war”. Clausewitz would have been appalled at such attempts, and not surprised at some of the terrible blunders that have been made in the name of these principles.

- Bernard Brodie

INTRODUCTION

For centuries many military organizations have subscribed to the idea that there exists a set of guiding principles or ideas that guide the conduct and study of war. These guiding principles are known as Principles of War. There has never been universal agreement on one common list of principles. Most nations have their own list of principles based on their military culture, experience and heritage.

Principles of War is a guide to actions concerning the application of combat power, rather than an unquestioned truth with universal application to every single operation. They help provide a better understanding of warfare but these are guidelines only and not prescription, formula, recipe or checklist for success.

The Principles of War were developed over time and reflect the manner in which we fought and planned to fight during 20th century industrial age. With the present global security environment of the 21st Century, exponential growth of Information Technology in the information age, introduction of nuclear weapons in the Indian subcontinent and China, increased influence of irregular warfare, proxy war and non state actors and other changes caused some to question the values of existing Principles of War. The foremost military thinker of our age John Keegan wrote during the second decade of the Cold War, “ One of the purposes behind the principles has been to make new and strange circumstances comprehensible, to draw a thread from

one war to another, to force events into a mold and to make conflicts obey the dramatic A point is reached in the development of weapon systems beyond which one cannot compare the present and the past". He said that the principles implied "maximization of means" and therefore they were not applicable to limited nuclear war or Low Intensity Conflicts. These demanded, "subtle response, patience, self control, firmness but not ruthlessness and an ability to settle for something less than total victory".¹ These qualities were not supported by the existing Principles of War. There are arguments at the other end of the spectra. It says that the principles have universal application and they were a collection of concise rules for warfare intended to aid battle leaders from the low ranking officer to the General. Whether these rules are called principles, maxims or axioms, they are independent of time, place and situation.² There is a need of flexibility in applying the principles of war. Discussing Operation Just Cause in Panama (1989-90) in a LICO scenario William C Bennett wrote in Military Review (1991), "Certain events indicate that when principles of war are applied to short duration contingency operations in a low intensity conflict environment, the interpretations of principles must be viewed within a broader context than normal. The forms that some of the principles may take are likely to be less traditional or 'military' than 'police' or 'political' in nature."³

There has not been any attempt to establish a priority among the principles except Selection and Maintenance of Aim. They should not be viewed individually but as a collective whole, each inextricably linked with the others. Without an understanding of the connections that bind the principles together, as well as the tensions and contradictions that stress them, much of the utility inherent in the principles would be lost. Failures could result from an undue focus on one or few of the principles, when full appreciation of the whole would yield success.

Predicting the Future.

Developing Principles of War for future conflict scenario is a risky and challenging task. We cannot predict the future with any degree of certainty. That does not mean we will not look towards the future. We cannot rely entirely on our lessons based from past wars. During the First Gulf War we saw the effectiveness and impact of airpower. During the Kosovo conflict the Serb Army effectively dislocated and neutralized the potential effects of NATO airpower by hiding their vehicles in built up areas. We should not rely entirely on past, we must look at present day scenario more intently as we cannot predict the future accurately.

The security environment, both global as well as national, and exponential growth of information technology has introduced new threats and has provided the armed forces with new means and methods of waging war. We should be conscious of the dangers of attempting to predict the future. We should avoid the trap of preparing to fight the last war. Our principles of war should be re-examined in light of what we know and expect during the 21st century like Proxy War and conventional warfare in a nuclear backdrop. In LICO scenario there is no front or an enemy. Own operations are to be conducted over prolonged periods, over unspecified areas and against many factors having varying modus operandi sans ethics and rules. Strategically military operations signify application of restrained force to control an environment allowing other organs of the State to function and enabling the government to initiate measures for a permanent solution. The situation demands operational and attitudinal

reorientation for an Army which is structured, equipped and trained to ward off external threats in a conventional warfare.

HISTORICAL EVOLUTION

Sun Tzu presented Principles of War in around 500 BC. Napoleon believed that principles of war directed all great commanders and during his last years of life in captivity in St Helena he dictated his own 78 military maxims. Antonine – Henri Jomini was probably the first individual whose writings led to the concept that a small set of principles could serve as a guide for the commanders to succeed on the battlefield. Jomini wrote, “ The fundamental principles upon which rest all good combinations of war have always existed, and to them all others should be referred for the purpose of arriving at their respective merits. These principles are unchangeable. They are independent of arms employed, of times and of places”. Prior to World War one, Marshal Foch of the French Army wrote of only four principles of war.

Major General JFC Fuller, in his 1923 magnum opus book “The Reformation of War” defined eight principles of war viz objective, offensive, security, concentration, economy of force, movement, surprise and co operation. The same eight principles were later incorporated into British Military doctrine in 1932 British Field Service Regulations.

All the Commonwealth countries have very similar principles of War including US Army. Over the years there has not been much of a change except certain explanations. US Army has acronym Mouse Moss as its Principles of War as :-

<u>M</u> ass	<u>M</u> aneuver	
<u>O</u> ffensive	<u>O</u> bjective	
<u>U</u> nity of Command	<u>S</u> ecurity	= “ Mouse Moss”
<u>S</u> urprise	<u>S</u> implicity	
<u>E</u> conomy of Force		

Indian Army uses acronym “A case of CSM” as its Principles of War as per ARTRAC Red Book. These are :-

- A - Selection and Maintenance of Aim
- C - Concentration
- A - Administration and Morale.
- S - Surprise
- E - Economy of Effort

- O - Offensive Action
- F - Flexibility

- C - Co operation
- S - Security
- M - Maintenance of Morale

A comparison of Principles of War followed by various armies in the world is given at Appendix. It is interesting to note that the German Army has not laid down any principles of war. This has been done deliberately by them since they want to avoid

the dangers of over simplification and encapsulation of military concepts and principles.

ANALYSIS OF THE PRESENT PRINCIPLES OF WAR.

In view of LICO/proxy war, conventional war in WMD backdrop, Kargil type of operations and information age operations with digitization of battlefield taking place in the 21st century an analysis of the present principles of war is carried out in the above backdrop.

Selection and Maintenance of Aim

The ultimate military purpose of war is the destruction of the enemy's armed forces and will to fight. Strategic, operational and tactical objectives can be clearly identified and developed only when the political purpose has been determined and defined by national government. Selection of the aim starts at the political and strategic level. Every military operation must have a single, attainable and clearly defined aim which remains the focus of the operation and towards which all efforts are directed. We have to make enemy's aim inappropriate or irrelevant to break his cohesion to defeat him in detail.

In the information age RMA with its promise of the capability to render the enemy strategically paralyzed in a relatively short period of time focus is less on the enemy's armed forces and more on his leadership, Command and Control (C2) structures and communication infrastructure.

In proxy war aim may be more difficult to define. The military objective should have the willing acceptance of a lawfully constituted agency, group or government elected by the population. In conventional operations commanders take action for a swift victory whereas in proxy war achieving strategic aim would take a very long time. In a situation like proxy war number of agencies like Army, BSF, CRPF, Police are operating. Each separate operation by different agencies must be integrated with each other to contribute to the ultimate strategic aim. Leaders of different unit, army or others, must understand the strategic aims, set appropriate objectives and ensure that they contribute to unity of effort with other agencies.

Maintenance of Morale

Like leadership, morale is important. Morale is nurtured through good leadership, sound discipline, realistic training, confidence in equipment and sense of purpose. It is a condition, attitude or sense of spirit that is maintained. Morale is nurtured in a force during peace time and is maintained and protected in conflict by good leadership, effective security and information dominance. However, morale is not a principle of war that is applied to campaign planning or conflict resolution. Importance of morale in battle cannot be underestimated but maintenance of morale is not a principle of war itself. Morale can be said to be included in Principle of Administration.

Offensive Action

I was too weak to defend, so I attacked.

- General Robert E Lee.

The purpose of an offensive action is to seize, retain and exploit the initiative. Traditionally, most have agreed with Clausewitz "We must say that the defensive form of warfare is intrinsically stronger than the offensive". However although it may sometimes be necessary to adopt a defensive posture, this position is only temporary until the necessary means are available to resume offensive operations. An offensive spirit must be inherent in the conduct of all defensive operations - the defence must be active, not passive.

There is a school of thought that offensive action is only a means to seizing, exploiting and retaining the initiative. The focus of this principle in its current form is wrong. Seizing, exploiting and retaining the initiative is the key to this principle, not offensive action. Seizing, exploiting and retaining the initiative will allow us to impose our will on the enemy, to make him react to our actions. Initiative applies to all three levels of conflict and apart from traditional concepts of offensive action, it could also include such actions as diplomatic measures at the strategic level, information operations, psychological operations or computer network attacks at the operational and tactical level. Retention and exploitation of the initiative will allow us to get inside the enemy's decision cycle and disrupt his plans and his ability to fight as a cohesive force. It has been suggested that principle of offensive action is out of date and should be changed to seize, exploit and retain the initiative.

WMD. Introduction of WMD in the subcontinent necessitates a relook to the principle of offensive. Offensive operations under attack by enemy WMD or the threat of such an attack will be difficult to execute. How do we handle a religious zealot democratically elected with a hand in the nuclear button, not afraid to use it even knowing the acknowledged superiority of Indian Strategic Command?

Initial offensive should render enemy's ability to strike back with WMD inoperative. If it is not achieved the end state of a conflict will be extremely risky. Will the enemy escalate at the end or will he be deterred from launching NBC fusillades as his regime goes down? Will he use some WMD and threaten more use still in an attempt to achieve a better end war settlement? Or should we keep our forces out of range until enemy WMD can be destroyed or until the enemy leadership is killed or replaced?

There will be a temptation at the inception of any such conflict to target the enemy leaders to create disorganization and a regime change. However, if it does not succeed there is a great possibility that enemy regime will counter with desperate measures that might include launching a nuclear, biological or chemical weapons attack even if they face a clearly superior Indian nuclear force. How do we achieve victory with such an enemy?

Surprise

All warfare is based on deception.

- Sun Tzu.

Surprise by itself is neither good nor bad. Surprise can only be useful if the actor gains tangible benefit from its application. Factors contributing to surprise include speed, effective intelligence, deception, application of unexpected combat power, operating at night/during limited visibility, security, use of terrain that appears unfavorable, operational security, variation in tactics and methods of operations, information superiority and asymmetry.

Surprise can be in tempo, size of force, direction or location of main effort, originality and timing. In the information age stealth and speed will be the two key elements.

Surprise retains its importance in modern conflict. There is another school of thought which says that since it is an effect achieved by the application of other principles, it is no longer a principle unto itself. Surprise is achieved by the application of the principles of seizing, exploiting and retaining the initiative (offensive action), synchronization of effort (cooperation), flexibility and security.

Concentration of Force

The principles of war could, for brevity, be condensed into a single word concentration.

- BH Liddel Hart

Concentration does not imply that there should never be dispersion. A carefully organized distribution of troops and firepower, accompanied by feints and a convincing deception plan, helps to balance our own forces and confuse the enemy. Knowing when to concentrate and when to disperse is a matter of timing and judgment depending on a careful appreciation of the situation.

Today with the advent of high tech weapon systems, soldiers no longer talk of massing forces, but of massing effects. It is no longer required to bring forces into the same geographical area to bring their effects to bear on the same target. In today's battlefield it may be dangerous as well.

Concentration implies the massing of the effects of all pertinent capabilities, military and others. Army assets (armour, artillery), joint support (intelligence, aviation, naval gunfire where applicable, missiles), special forces, psychological operation, electronic warfare and other means that could contribute to mission success. However, concentration of force is not always the best means to effectively employ them. Economy of force is just as important.

WMD. In combat with an adversary armed with WMD, dispensing one's own forces can make enemy WMD less cost effective. Now massed bomber attacks are less productive than a few stealth bombers firing or dropping precision munitions at targets from stand off mode.

Network Centric Warfare. Using the information, sensor and engagement grids of the networks, dispersed forces will mass effects by co-ordinating location, identification and targeting information from sensors to rapidly employ long range,

precision fires using shared information from a common operational picture. However, many technological problems have to be overcome before network centric warfare can exist as an operational capability.

To achieve results of such magnitude, fire must be distributed, coming from diverse locations, killing the enemy not with one massive blow but by a “thousand vital cuts” that collectively induce a paralyzing effect. Effect Based Operation (EBO) is a fundamental part of network centric concept.

Economy of Effort

Is it reciprocation of concentration of force or mass? Needs deliberation. Economy of force involves risks, requires astute strategic planning and judgment by political and military leaders and places a premium on the need for the flexibility of thought and action.

The information based RMA may require us to think differently about the concept of resources. The following comments of General Dennis Reimer, former Joint Chief of Staff of the US Armed Forces help to illustrate this point, “ We talk now about situational awareness..... if we can achieve that we can change the way we operate. If you go to Ft Leavenworth they teach in terms of operations when there is uncertainty and risk and you keep a large reserve. Generally most of the army students will tell you its two up and one back. That’s the way it has been for a long time. But if you can take that risk out of there, you can get more of your combat systems in the fight.” The primary reason to keep forces in reserve is to preserve combat power to be able to counter the unpredictable nature of the enemy. If information dominance renders the enemy significantly more predictable, the logic for a reserve force becomes less valid. The result is that information based RMA will allow commanders to employ forces in a more simultaneous than sequential manner, as well as employing more of the force from the onset of hostilities.

Security

Security results from the measures taken by a command to protect itself from surprise, interference, sabotage, annoyance and threat ISR. Deception greatly enhances security. The threat of asymmetric action requires emphasis on security. In the 21st century security will play an important part in the protection and guarding of military information system.

The internal dimensions of security includes the protection of plans and intention – what is usually known as operational security but also entails counterintelligence, counter deception, C³I redundancy and defensive information warfare. The external dimension includes intelligence gathering and analysis, deception and offensive information warfare. One of the biggest challenges in the 21st century will be cyber security—protecting computers and the links between them, Technology has the potential to facilitate security, but no security system is full-proof.

Flexibility

Flexibility is modification of the principles of mobility or maneuver as practiced by other countries. Today it calls for the ability to react quickly to changing situations, in order to rapidly shift points of efforts to react to unforeseen opportunities or contingencies. Consistent with the manoevristic approach to modern war fighting, the principle of flexibility calls for flexibility of mind, rapid decision making and a clear understanding of commander's intent. It still demands the ability to rapidly and efficiently deploy forces to the correct time and place. It is felt that flexibility would be preferable principle of war than maneuver.

Co-operation

Nothing in war is so important as an undivided command

- Napoleon

Co-operation may produce coordination, but giving a single commander the required authority unifies action. Unity of command means that a single commander directs and coordinates the actions of all forces towards a common objective. In joint, peacekeeping operations or in LICO environment there are situation where military commander does not directly control all the elements of combat. In the absence of command authority commanders cooperate, negotiate and build consensus to achieve unity of effort.

In LICO environment other government agencies may have the lead. Commanders may answer to a civilian Chief like say Governor of a State, or may themselves employ the resources of an agency which is not part of army. During OP RAKSHAK in Punjab the army was deliberately kept in low key and State Police was given an upper hand and more media exposure. Command arrangements may be loosely defined causing commanders to seek an atmosphere of co-operation rather than command authority to achieve unity of effort.

Co-operation also applies to the co-operation between military and civilian authorities and inter departmental co-operation at the strategic level. Co-operation between arms and services, services and nations is a key sub element of the concept of synchronization and synergy.

The information based RMA will force our chain of command to function more like a network resulting in a more flattened and responsive command structure. In this sense the information based RMA may challenge our current hierarchical concept of unity of command.

Synchronization, synergy of effect, integration, unity of command, unity of effort – all these terms are being used as principles of war by different countries. There are subtle difference in these terminologies. But only one of them can be the principle of war. In our context where joint commands have not come into being except as a tentative experimental measure in Andaman & Nicobar Command and Strategic Command, co-operation will be the right choice.

Simplicity

This principle perhaps more than any other is all important. Simplicity can never be over emphasized. A good simple plan with concise clear words minimizes the chance of confusion.

Administration

Successful conduct of military operations requires effective and efficient logistics and administrative support. Heading should not be logistics as part of administration, which is an extremely important part, is not covered. There is another school of thought that it should be changed to sustainment. In addition to administration and logistics it includes such factors as the ability to endure and replace casualties and the ability to replace and maintain stocks of expensive precision munitions. It is recommended that the heading should be logistics and administration.

LOW INTENSITY CONFLICTS.

For low Intensity Conflicts Operations (LICO) or Operations Other Than War (OOTW) the army faces complex and sensitive situations in a variety of operations. These operations like Counter Insurgency Operations or proxy war, Peace Keeping Operations, Aid to Civil Authorities etc are of long duration and undergo a number of shifts in direction during the course. For these operations US Army had given out separate Principles of war in their Field Manual FM 100-5, Operations of June 1993. These are :-

- (a) **Objective**. Direct every military operation towards a clearly defined, decisive and attainable objective.
- (b) **Unity of Effort**. Seek unity of effort toward every objective.
- (c) **Legitimacy**. Sustain the willing acceptance by the people of the right of the government to govern or of a group or agency to make and carry out decisions.
- (d) **Perseverance**. Prepare for the measured, protracted application of military capability in support of strategic aims.
- (e) **Restraint**. Apply appropriate military capability prudently.
- (f) **Security**. Never permit hostile factions to acquire an unexpected advantage.

Even for Peace Operations US Army has kept the above principles as principles of war in FM 100-23 Peace Operations. However, in the filed manual FM 3-0 Operations US Army has gone back on one set of principles given out earlier in FM 100-5 Operations.

There is a school of thought that present principles of war were sufficiently robust to serve as guides to actions in counterinsurgencies. These were excellent device for

the commander to use in analyzing all aspects of his counterinsurgencies plans. If his plans confirm to the principles of war, he is on firm ground. Similarly some experts believe that the principles of war were applicable to air, space and aerospace doctrine and operations.

Tenets of Army Operations

The tenets of army operations build on the principles of war. They further describe the characteristics of successful operations. These tenets are essential to victory. While they do not guarantee success, their absence risk failure. US Army in their latest Field Manual FM 3- 0, Operations list out the following tenets of army operations :-

- (a) **Initiative**. Setting or dictating the terms of action throughout the battle or operation.
- (b) **Agility**. Ability to move and adjust quickly and easily. Prerequisite to initiative and is the ability of the force to act faster than the enemy.
- (c) **Depth**. Extension of operations in time, space and resources.
- (d) **Synchronization**. Arranging activities in time, space and purpose to mass maximum relative combat power at a decisive place and time.
- (e) **Versatility**. Ability of armed forces to meet the global, diverse mission requirement of full spectrum operations. Commanders to shift focus, tailor forces and move from one form or type of operations to another rapidly and efficiently.

Is there a case of considering these tenets as additional principles of war? It merits discussion.

Information Technology Digitisation of the battlefield will deliver operational benefits. Commanders will be better informed, but so will be their subordinates and their enemy. The commander's greater comprehension of events is an opportunity. The possibility of information transparency is a threat. The task of leading an information rich formation is a challenge. Some brave thinking will be required in order to seize the opportunity, meet the challenge and counter the threat. Technology will never substitute for good generalship, human qualities and moral issues. Creativity will be rewarded and predictability heavily punished. Being ready to learn fast is more important than having the answers in advance. The Information based RMA, characterized by its ability to collect, digest and distribute vast amounts of information, all at incredible speeds, promises to lift the "fog of war" and increase our military capability. In order to realise the potential of the information based RMA we must challenge the paradigms we have formed concerning the enduring bedrock of our military doctrine, the ten principles of war.

OTHER PRINCIPLES WHICH MAY QUALIFY AS PRINCIPLES OF WAR

Some of the principles which may qualify as principles of war and should be considered are as under :-

Information dominance Conflict resolution in the 21st century will require increasing dependence on information. In addition to space, cyber space a new dimension to the overall battle space, accelerated pace of operations and the introduction of highly technological communications, situational awareness, sensor and weapon systems will only increase our dependence on computers and effective information management.

However, information per se cannot be a principle of war. It should be information dominance. Information dominance will enable forces to efficiently move and process the vast amounts of data, to synthesize it into information and, in turn, use that information to gain knowledge and understanding of ourselves, the enemy and the battlefield. Information dominance also refers to our information systems and to deny enemy to gain information dominance. Information dominance will reduce the fog of war and give commanders and soldiers a more accurate understanding of their operating environment. Information dominance will prove to be one of the most important principles of war for the 21st century.

Public Opinion. In today's warfare the factor of public/world opinion has acquired such significance that this is perhaps the most important consideration influencing the commencement, conduct and terminations of any war. Only China lists political mobilization as one of his principles of war.

Intelligence Even small forces can achieve significant victory by using intelligence based on painstaking reconnaissance and good information. Examination of current doctrines suggests that intelligence is a de-facto principle of war. Most of other principles of war depend upon intelligence. Concentration of force and surprise rely upon the quality of intelligence that is available.

Manoeuvre

Manoeuvre can be considered to be part of flexibility principle. Not recommended to be included.

Unity of Command

Not recommended to be included as separate principle of war. This has been covered under the head of co-operation.

Time

Time is not included as a separate principle of war in any doctrines of established armies of the world. Its inclusion as a principle of war is not recommended

CONCLUSION

Principles of War are those which have directed the great commanders, whose great deeds have been handed down to us by history.

- Napoleon

Every army has its own lists of principles of war. An analysis of the principles of war of various nations reveals only a narrow range of divergence. Where change is necessary we have to be cautious in effecting the change. Radical change in military policy is extremely difficult to implement. Robert R Leonhard in his book the Principles of War for the Information Age departed significantly from conventional military thought and argues that three laws control human conflict : the Laws of Humanity, Economy and Duality of Conflict. These laws are supported by seven principles which have no resemblance to our traditional principles of war and are unlikely to be accepted by any military organization.⁸

Our current principles of war are reflective of the way we fought in the past than the manner in which we plan to fight today and in the future. The principles of war must be updated to meet the challenges of the 21st century. No other Army in the world has fought so many wars and carried out counterinsurgency/proxy war in such varied terrain and environment including nuclear backdrop in last 50 years. With so much rich first hand knowledge and experience we must implement all the lessons learnt and move towards the future with our own eyes and not through Filed Manuals of other countries.

Revision of Principles of War should not be done in a hurry. Discussions/brainstorming should be organized and officers be encouraged to challenge each principles about their applicability to the current and future methods of warfighting in Indian context. Only after due deliberations at all levels should the Principles of War be formulated.

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