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1. REPORT DATE **2007**	2. REPORT TYPE	3. DATES COVERED **00-00-2007 to 00-00-2007**

4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE **Clausewitz: On Poker, How Today's Leaders Can Use Poker to Better Prepare Tomorrow's Warriors**	5a. CONTRACT NUMBER
	5b. GRANT NUMBER
	5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER

6. AUTHOR(S)	5d. PROJECT NUMBER
	5e. TASK NUMBER
	5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER

7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) **United States Marine Corps,Command and Staff College, Marine Corps Combat Dev,Marine Corps University, 2076 South Street,Quantico,VA,22134-5068**	8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER

9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)	10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)
	11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)

12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT **Approved for public release; distribution unlimited**

13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES

14. ABSTRACT

15. SUBJECT TERMS

16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT **unclassified**	b. ABSTRACT **unclassified**	c. THIS PAGE **unclassified**	**Same as Report (SAR)**	**20**	

NOTE 1:

This paper makes multiple references to Civil War generals and battles. Very few topics evoke as much controversy and emotion as the American Civil War. I use Civil War generals to illustrate my points because these generals are familiar to even the most casual reader of history.

For instance, saying Napoleon's use of the bluff at the battle of Jena was masterful may be correct, but it would make sense only to those who were familiar with Napoleonic history. When I say "Pickett should not have charged up Cemetery Ridge" I do not mean to imply he should have disobeyed orders nor am I making any impingements to his courage, wisdom, or character. I am simply stating that history proved the charge on Cemetery Ridge was unwise.

Also, an entire book could be devoted to classifying Civil War generals into different categories, but that is not the point of this paper. I will not be insulted if you differ with my examples as long as you understand the point I am making by using them.

NOTE 2:

Many times in this paper I use the pronoun "he" when either he or she would be appropriate. I do not intend to suggest that women will not make good poker players or commanders. It is simply for readability sake.

If anyone actually believes that women do not make good poker players, I suggest they try sitting down at a table with Annie Duke or Jennifer Harman and watch their money evaporate in front of them.

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FUTURE WAR PAPER

Clausewitz: On Poker
(Clausewitz was a TA)*

How today's leaders can use poker to better prepare tomorrow's warriors.

Lieutenant Colonel Phil A. Stewart, USAF
AY 2006-07

Mentor: Dr. Gordon Rudd
Approved:
Date:

* TA is defined later in the paper

Introduction

In the whole range of human activities, war most resembles a game of cards.[1]
- *Carl Von Clausewitz*

For years, many philosophers, strategists, poets, politicians, and warriors have pointed to the similarities between playing poker and combat. Perhaps the late Colonel David Hackworth, one of America's most decorated soldiers, said it best when he stated, "Great warriors were usually great poker players…it made sense, too, because in many ways the skills required in poker are the same ones you need on a battlefield: boldness, a cool head, and the ability to bluff."[2] It isn't just military leaders who see the power that training in poker provides. Bill Gates was an avid poker player before he went on to become the world's most successful businessman. Richard Nixon financed his first political campaign with his poker winnings.[3] President Truman, General Eisenhower, and Secretary of War Henry Stimson played avidly during WW-II.[4] The list goes on, and all these men credit playing poker with aiding their life successes. What these men keyed in on is supported by almost overwhelming anecdotal evidence, but little scientific study. What exactly are the similarities between poker and combat, and more importantly, how can a modern commander use this information to better prepare for future wars?

The similarities between poker and combat are striking. Taking the analogy one step further, both activities stress a type of crisis action thinking and decision making in an environment filled with uncertainty and high risk. In addition, the options a player faces on a poker table closely parallel the options a commander faces on a battlefield. Poker is a unique training aid that a commander can employ to help his troops develop essential leadership traits[5] that they can call upon in both combat

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[1] Carl Von Clausewitz, <u>On War</u>, trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976) 86.
[2] David H. Hackworth, <u>About Face</u>, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1989) 127.
[3] James McManus, "The Poker of War: How Military Strategy Was Born At The Gaming Tables," <u>The Boston Globe</u>, 30 March 2003.
[4] Aaron Brown, <u>The Poker Face of Wallstreet</u>, (New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2006) 178.
[5] Marine Corps War Publication 6-11, <u>Leading Marines</u>, lists what the Marine Corps determines to be essential leadership traits. These are: Integrity, <u>Knowledge, Courage, Decisiveness</u>, Dependability, <u>Initiative, Tact</u>,

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and other crisis management situations. As such, competitive poker playing should be adopted into the military training regimen in the same manner as the military Physical Training (PT) program.

In support of the above thesis, this paper makes three propositions: First, poker develops crisis action thinking skills, and the environments and options a player faces at the poker table are similar to those faced in combat. In addition the fog, uncertainty and deception which exist on a poker table are closely mimicked in combat. Second, poker is both introspective and reflective. As such, it helps one determine how risk-averse one is as a leader and how risk-averse others perceive one to be. Third, poker -- like warfare -- is an iterative process. As the game progresses, past adversary actions, combined with current conditions, can be analyzed rapidly to determine future enemy intent.

Fog and Crisis Action Thinking

War is the realm of uncertainty; three quarters of the factors on which action in war is based are wrapped in a fog of greater or lesser uncertainty.[6]
>   - *Carl Von Clausewitz*

No other game trains a person in crisis action thinking better than poker. Crises exist in all organizations, not just the military. A crisis is best defined as "A sudden – sometimes extreme – change in the condition of an organization."[7] Crisis action thinking is a subset of Critical Thinking, traditionally taught by the military. As an analogy, crisis action thinking is to Critical Thinking what Crisis Action Planning was to Deliberate Planning under the old joint planning model. What separates decision making in a crisis situation from decision making in a "normal" situation is time (lack thereof), uncertainty, risk, and extreme pressure. All of these are duplicated magnificently on a poker table.

Judgment, Loyalty, Unselfishness, Endurance, Bearing, Enthusiasm, and Justice. Those underlined are sharpened by playing poker.
[6] Clausewitz, 101.
[7] Allan L. Schoenberg, "What it Means to Lead During a Crisis: An Exploratory Examination of Crisis Leadership," diss., Syracuse U, 2004, 10.

Training in crisis action thinking has long been neglected by the military. This is surprising considering the environment in which the military operates. There is no greater crisis situation than combat, and yet a study of six syllabi from the Defense University System revealed that less than 1% of studies focused on crisis action thinking or crisis leadership in general.[8] Those lessons that are studied typically focus on issues of morality and integrity, not the actual decision process a leader must go through to arrive at a logical conclusion in a time-constrained environment. This is an important distinction because "There are far more people who can lead in a non-crisis situation than those who can lead during a crisis…you can see it in the decisiveness -- or lack thereof -- of purported 'leaders' during a crisis."[9] Retired Major General Perry Smith, a noted scholar on leadership issues, highlights the difference in his article "Leading in Combat":

> "In peacetime training, there is often time to weigh carefully alternative courses of action; to discuss issues in detail with your subordinate peers and bosses; to sleep on the issues overnight. Combat requires a change of approach. Your troops expect you to be decisive – even when things are horribly confused. Management in peacetime to a large degree, is avoiding risk. Combat is a high-risk environment that gets even more risky if you are slow to make key decisions."[10]

Hurricane Katrina illustrated this point perfectly. Although there was plenty of information available which adequately framed the emerging disaster, the Louisiana civil and military leaders were unable to operate in the crisis environment and provide relief in a timely manner. Hurricane Katrina was a natural disaster, but the response illustrated a supreme failure of crisis action leadership at many levels which made it a national catastrophe. During a crisis, it is the leader's decision making process that determines success or failure. The ability to manage large amounts of information — sometimes very limited information — in a high stress, fog filled, time constrained

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[8] Syllabi researched were Air Force: Squadron Officer School (residence), Air Command & Staff College (correspondence), Air War College (correspondence), and School of Advanced Aerospace Studies. Marine Corps: Command & Staff College (residence) and School of Advance Warfare.
[9] Schoenberg, 10.
[10] Perry Smith, Maj Gen, USAF, Ret., "Leading in Combat," Air Force Times, 21 January 1991: 5.

environment where risks are high is a <u>learned behavior</u> critical to crisis action thinking. Since it is

learned behavior, it can be practiced, and no game or activity practices it better than playing poker.

<center>**Decisiveness & Boldness…piercing the fog and the keys to Crisis Action Thinking**</center>

In what field of human activity is boldness more at home than war? It is the very metal that gives edge and luster to the sword.[11]

<div align="right">- ***Carl Von Clausewitz***</div>

Decisiveness and boldness; time and again these two traits are a lighthouse during the storm of

uncertainty. They act as a beacon, enabling leaders to pierce the fog of war and operate in a time-

constrained, high-risk environment. They are the keys to successful crisis action thinking, yet not

everyone is born with them. And even when they are, these traits can be improved and honed by

playing poker.

Poker simulates fog better than any other game. Clausewitz defines "fog" as the general

unreliability of information in warfare, which causes all action to take place in a kind of twilight in

which unknown or unseen elements must be guessed, or left to chance.[12]   Why poker, and not other

games that teach strategy? Chess and backgammon are two games commonly used to teach strategy,

but both are complete information games where there is no fog.[13] Chess also lacks randomness and

chance. Bridge is another card game which teaches strategy. Again, there is little fog in bridge

because all the cards are eventually revealed during the course of a hand, although there is doubt who

holds those cards initially, thus it is better than chess. In addition, and perhaps more importantly,

boldness, decisiveness and bluffing are not rewarded in chess, backgammon, or bridge. Instead,

steady, consistent, risk-averse strategies are employed to achieve long term success. Only in poker

can bluffing be used as a tactic. Only in poker does one operate in the fog described by Clausewitz

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[11] Clausewitz, 190.
[12] Clausewitz, 140.
[13] Brown, 176.

and others. "Poker rewards attention, while chess and backgammon reward concentration."[14] This is why poker is the preferred game to teach people crisis action thinking skills.

The Three Options of Poker: Folding, Raising, and Calling

Poker is such a powerful training aid because the options on a poker table simulate the options available to a commander during combat. This is best illustrated with the three classic moves in poker: Folding, raising, and calling. The parallels between these three moves and options on a battlefield are highlighted below.

The first option is known as "folding". In poker, to "fold" means to refuse to play the hand. It is a simple act yet one of the most powerful plays for a young player to learn. In combat, it would be akin to refusing battle. In poker, like warfare, one should only fight when conditions are favorable. Only a fool or desperate adversary fights under unfavorable conditions. Learning to recognize when conditions are not favorable is a simple, yet vital, lesson for any leader or poker player. For historical example, consider the Robert E. Lee versus Ulysses S. Grant "Overland Campaign" of 1864 as an example of a commander "folding", and choosing to fight another day. Lee repeatedly fell back on Petersburg in the face of overwhelming Union forces and refused to engage in decisive battle, preferring instead to use maneuver to force change. [15]

Folding is the simplest, yet most important play in poker. By refusing to fight when conditions are not favorable and only engaging an opponent when the odds are favorable maximizes advantage and increases the probability of long-term success. In addition, only engaging an opponent under favorable conditions leverages the value of the most important asset on a poker table — one's chips.

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[14] Brown, 176.

[15] It should be noted that Lee eventually lost the campaign. By never fighting he eventually ran out of ground and was forced to fight when he could no longer retreat. Tactically, it made sense to retreat in the face of a superior enemy, but strategically, this led to ultimate defeat—a truly frustrating dilemma, with possibly no solution. In poker, this is referred to as "blinding out" when you repeatedly fold until all your money is gone. The lesson is the same…sometimes you must stand and fight despite the odds not being in your favor. Again, although interesting, it is beyond the scope of this paper.

Arguably, the same applies to warfare.[16] The good player recognizes when conditions are not favorable. More importantly he realizes when conditions are favorable, and when they are, he commits his forces *en masse*. This is known as a raise.

In poker, "raising" means a player increases the stakes of the game. The player is concentrating his forces (his chips) at the decisive time when he holds a strong hand. It is a bold and decisive move -- traits which have already been highlighted as critical to success. When a player raises at poker, he normally seizes the initiative in the hand, and serves notice to other players that he is a force to be reckoned with.

Seizing the initiative and raising the stakes in combat is also of paramount importance. Raising the stakes in combat could be concentrating your forces at the decisive point of the battle, a concept made famous by Napoleon and repeatedly hammered home by Clausewitz. It is such a fundamental concept of war that it has been captured under "Mass" as one of the nine Principles of War.

 The third option is known as "calling".   In poker, "calling" refers to matching someone else's bet; you neither fold nor raise. It is widely considered to be a weak move and is known by the derogatory phrase as "limping in" to the pot. The reasons for this are fairly straight forward. If a player has a bad hand, he should fold. If he has a strong hand, he should be decisive and bold and raise as discussed earlier. Poker is about maximizing winnings and minimizing losses. Calling does neither, and worse, it is a sign of weakness to ones opponents. In battle, it would be comparable to an operational pause.

In combat, calling would also be accepting combat under the enemy's terms. While a commander may be forced to do this, he would not normally choose this option while better alternatives remained. For instance, General Lee should not have ordered General Pickett to charge up Cemetery

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[16] Aaron Brown claims there is a leadership counter-theory which states poker can teach a negative leadership lesson because "being willing to fold too soon rather than too late is one reason poker players sometimes make bad leaders. There are situations in which the leader should strive until all hope is gone, even dying on the battlefield or going down with the ship. That can be good for the cause, but it's bad poker." Brown, 5.

Ridge. The essence of this argument is best summed up by the probably apocryphal, yet portent,

argument between Generals Lee and Longstreet prior to Pickett's charge. When told by Lee to attack

General Meade in the morning "if Meade is still there", Longstreet replied: "General Lee, if Meade is

still there in the morning, it is because he wants us to attack; a good reason, in my book, for not

doing so!" This comment may, or may not, have actually taken place but the lesson is still valid. In

battle, a commander is a fool to do what his opponent wishes him to do. Poker teaches us this lesson

as well.

Deception

If the enemy is to be coerced you must put him in a situation that is even more unpleasant than the sacrifice you call on him to make.[17]

- *Carl Von Clausewitz*

The most important reason to teach young warriors poker is that deception is fundamental in both

poker and warfare. In no other game does deception play as vital a role. "Bluffing" (when a player

pretends to have a strong hand <u>when he doesn't</u>), or "slow playing" (when a player pretends he

doesn't have a strong hand <u>when he does</u>), and being unpredictable in your actions are all necessary

for the player who wishes to be successful in poker. Indeed, it is impossible to be successful in the

long term in poker if the player does not employ deception of some type.[18] The same conclusion can

also be made in warfare. From the Trojan horse of ancient times to General Norman Schwarzkopf's

famous left hook in Operation DESERT STORM, deception exists throughout the full spectrum of

warfare. Code words, elaborate schemes of deception, spies, plots and counter-plots have been

employed by successful field generals throughout history. Indeed, like poker, it is difficult to be

successful in warfare without the use of deception.

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[17] Clausewitz, 77.
[18] This can be mathematically proven using Game Theory.

Equally important is laying the groundwork for deception in both poker and warfare. The best way to set up deception is by reinforcing a concept which the enemy is already inclined to believe.[19] Conversely, it is harder to deceive someone into believing that which they originally do not believe.[20] Planting the seeds for deception is critical. This is why poker players usually raise prior to attempting a bluff; they are representing a strong hand, and their opponents are inclined to believe it because of the earlier raise. This is also true in warfare.

At the battle of Chancellorsville, General Robert E. Lee outflanked General Joseph Hooker (who, by the way, was an avid poker player and should have known better). General Lee ordered General Jackson to march southwest around Hooker's flank and envelope the Union army. General Hooker actually witnessed the first phase of this flanking march, so why was he surprised later that day by the attack? Hooker had already convinced himself that Lee would retreat, and when he witnessed the Confederates marching in a southwest direction (the direction of Richmond, and also as fate would reveal, his exposed flank) he was convinced Lee was retreating rather than turning his flank. "When you have a theory and see it confirmed, it's easy (but expensive) to ignore all subsequent evidence."[21] Thus we can see how the power of deception coupled with what an adversary is already inclined to believe can be decisive when employed properly.

Game Theory 101: Risk vs. Gamble

Know your enemy and know yourself, and in 1,000 battles, you will never be in peril.[22]
-     **Sun Tzu**

Poker should not be considered to be gambling in the traditional sense of the word. Gambling is risking your money on odds alone (usually less than 50-50) when there is no positive expectation of payoff. Gambling with respect to positive expectation of payoff is widely explored in Game Theory

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[19] From a seminar taught by Dr. Gordon Rudd at the USMC School of Advanced Warfare, 20 September 2006.
[20] Rudd.
[21] Brown, 283.
[22] Sun Tzu, The Art of War, trans. Ralph D. Sawyer (Colorado: Westview Press, 1996) 52.

which was developed by scientists, economists and sociologists throughout the 20th Century and is the bedrock all sound poker theory. This is not so with other casino games. In other casino games the odds are in favor of the house. The player may win occasionally, but statistically, in the long term the house always wins. Of course the games are designed this way on purpose and it is how the casinos make a profit. In poker, however, a player can decide for himself how risk-averse he is, and use this information when determining whether to add his money in the pot.[23] This is an extremely powerful tool, and that is why poker is about risk-taking, not gambling. If a player only takes risks with positive expectation of payoff, he will be a successful and profitable player in the long run. This does not mean he will always win -- fog, friction, and chance play a large part of poker -- but it will lead to long term success.

Poker and any form of calculated risk taking, including combat operations, are all about "maximizing success, not minimizing risk."[24] Thus, knowing how risk-averse one is, and how risk-averse other people perceive one to be, is another reason playing poker is a valuable aid. Most people have a natural aversion to risks. One would expect millions of years of evolution weeded out all the excessive risk-takers from the gene pool generations ago. But success in combat requires boldness and risk taking. Some people are more predisposed to take risks than others. Others take too many risks. A happy medium exists and this medium is where the successful poker player and successful combat leader thrives.

Financial institutions have long been aware of the importance of establishing a person's aversion to risk (or lack thereof) before placing them in charge of money. This was one of the main arguments in Aaron Brown's book "The Poker Face of Wall Street." In it, Brown successfully

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[23] For an over-simplified example, consider a Texas Hold'em example where each player starts the game with two face down cards exclusive to him. There are 169 possible two-card combinations one could start with, yet mathematically speaking, only 17% of these hands have a better than average chance of wining the pot at the end of the hand. By limiting the hands a player starts with to one of these 17% hands, and folding the other 83% of the time, a player can mathematically ensure winning in the long run!

[24] Brown, 4.

argues it is essential for managers of mutual funds, and all successful stock traders for that matter, to have a propensity for taking smart, but not wild risks. If a manager is too risk-averse, the fund makes only marginal gains. If the manager is prone to too much risk, the fund will eventually go broke. Brown concludes that poker is a wonderful way to highlight which people will eventually make good fund managers. Brown concludes:

> "Some people reflexively avoid every risk or (conversely) grab every loose dollar without caution. I don't mean to belittle these strategies; I'm sure they make sense to the people that pursue them. <u>I do know, however, that none of these people will be successful (stock) traders.</u>"[25] (emphasis added)

The exact same thing applies to combat leaders, and that is why the military could benefit by teaching poker.

Rocks, Maniacs, Calling Stations and TA's

Clausewitz was a TA.
-   *The Author*

The majority of poker literature divides all poker players into four broad categories: Rocks, calling stations, maniacs, and tight-aggressives (TA's). Combat leaders can be divided into the same categories as well. The process for the allocation is simple. Consider a graph with two axis' (see graph on next page). One axis represents a person's aggression. The further to the right on the graph, the more aggressive they tend to be. Conversely, the closer to the left, the more passive they are. "Aggressive" poker players frequently raise. "Passive" poker players frequently call. As highlighted in an earlier section "calling" in poker is not generally considered to be a decisive play. The other axis represents how tight or loose a player is. "Tightness" refers to how many hands a player participates in. "Tight" players fold often and play in relatively few hands but take risks when there is positive expectation of profit. "Loose" players prefer to gamble more often, thus play in

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[25] Brown, 67.

many hands, even when positive expectation of profit is low. This results in four combinations of players:

	Passive	**Aggressive**
Tight	Tight-Passive **"Rocks"**	Tight-Aggressive **"TA's"**
Loose	Loose-Passive **"Calling Stations"**	Loose-Aggessive **"Maniacs"**

The first type of category is the Tight-Passive. These players are known as "Rocks". They play only the strongest of hands (which is wise), but when they play them, they do so weakly (which is unwise). They rarely raise, and are easy to bluff. They are extremely risk-averse, and would rather fold a winning hand than risk losing a large amount of money.   A combat example of the "rock" would be General George McClellan. McClellan was a great organizer and motivator, and he understood the theory of warfare as well as anyone of his day, yet he was excessively cautious in combat. McClellan was always convinced that he was outnumbered and he was petrified of taking risks. As a result, history remembers him as an ineffective combat general (but wonderful training general and organizer). In the military, rocks make great staff officers, due to their organizational skills, but poor combat leaders in traditional kinetic fights because they are too risk-averse. However, rocks may be effective counter-insurgency leaders due to their extreme patience and general reluctance to use overwhelming force. They also tend to thrive in the training environment as instructors.

The next category of player is the Loose-Passive, known as a "Calling Station". They play many hands, but also play them weakly (a deadly combination). They seldom raise and call every bluff and bet. They can not be bluffed -- as they won't fold -- but rest assured they will call all raises. In a perfect world, a poker player would like all of his adversary's to be Calling Stations. General "Fighting Joe" Hooker is a good example of a combat "Calling Station." He rarely shied from combat (hence his moniker) and was exceptionally brave, but when he did fight, he was often indecisive. He was thoroughly out-maneuvered by General Lee at Chancellorsville and it was his Grand Division which futilely charged up Marye's Heights multiple times to no avail at the battle of Fredericksburg.

The third category is the Loose-Aggressive, known as a "Maniac." The term "maniac" is descriptive, and not necessarily derogatory. Some of the world's top poker players are maniacs. The "maniac" plays many hands, often with trash cards, and raises frequently. They often win by sheer aggression -- pushing others out of the pot. But when they lose, their losses are enormous. They are known to take any gamble, regardless of the risks involved. For that reason, maniacs are tough to play against. One never knows what they hold, and calling them until the end of the hand can be expensive. As a result, maniacs often win huge sums in spite of themselves (they also lose huge sums as well). The maniac is distinguishable from the calling station because of his aggressiveness. Clausewitz recognized both the danger and value of a maniac in warfare when he stated:

> "In a commander, a bold act may prove to be a blunder. Nevertheless, it is a laudable error, not to be regarded on the same footing as others. Happy the army where ill-timed boldness occurs frequently; it is a luxuriant weed, but indicates the richness of the soil."[26]

A good combat example of the "maniac" is General Nathan Bedford Forrest. Widely feared by Union Commanders, General Forrest often attacked with abandon even when outnumbered, often achieving great success. At the Battle of Shiloh, he single-handedly charged an entire Union battalion and lived to tell the tale. He was known for his incredible boldness, and it is a minor miracle that he

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[26] Clausewitz, 190.

survived the war. Maniacs can be good wartime commanders, but historically make poor peacetime

leaders. Also, wartime maniacs are dangerous because while wantonly gambling poker chips on a

table may be acceptable to some, wantonly gambling soldier's lives in combat is not.[27] Another

opportunity to be aware of if your opponent (in combat or poker) is a "maniac" is that they are highly

susceptible to deception and can be easily trapped due to their over-aggressive nature.

The last category is the Tight-Aggressive, known as a "T.A." This is the ideal poker player. The

TA only plays hands which have a positive expectation of wining. And when he plays he is

aggressive, raising often and seizing the initiative. As such, the TA is the most respected and feared

opponent at the table. Similarly, this is the ideal type of warrior. The TA only fights when

conditions are favorable, and he fights with aggression. When conditions aren't in his favor, he uses

maneuver to change the environment until they are favorable. General Lee is the most famous of all

TA's. He was rarely outmaneuvered and cautious when choosing to fight. Yet when he did fight, he

fought boldly, and committed all his resources at the decisive point.

The iterative nature of combat and poker

Poker is not a game of independent hands, like spins of the roulette wheel, but a session in which it makes sense to invest money early to acquire a favorable position. A poker session is not a series of independent battles against individual opponents; success requires finding and defending a profitable niche at the table that is in no one player's interest to dispute.[28]

- *Aaron Brown*

Fool me once, shame on you
Fool me twice, shame on me.

- *Irish Proverb*

Poker, like warfare is a continuous, iterative process. Past adversary actions, combined with

current conditions, can be studied and analyzed rapidly to determine probable future adversary intent.

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[27] This is captured under a subset of Game Theory known as the Gamblers' Fallacy. It reasons that a gambler can sustain catastrophic success indefinitely, but only sustain catastrophic loss once. It is why a gambler who goes "all in" on every hand will always ultimately lose all his money. The same applies to combat.
[28] Brown, 21.

This knowledge will lead to a determination of what actions one should take. The iterative nature of poker is important to teach because it places an emphasis on gathering information about ones adversaries, which is critical in warfare.

Much of poker includes learning about the adversary. "It is a game of information — incomplete information to be sure, but it is a game of information nevertheless."[29] Good poker players will sometimes lose a hand on purpose early in a game, merely to determine and gather information about how their adversary played against them so they can use this information at a later time when the stakes are higher. If the exact same poker hand was played twice, the second time it was played, the good player would play it better the second time because he has more information about the adversary.[30]

Using information to gain advantage is standard military operating procedure. The sole purpose of several government and military organizations is to gain information. But in crisis action thinking, one may not be able to access the needed information in the allotted time. In this case, one has to rely on what is known to the military as "situational awareness" to use partial information in a high-stress environment to arrive at a best-case course of action. It is natural to be uncomfortable operating in this environment. It takes practice and skill, and poker simulates this perfectly.

Conclusion

The military could do a better job capitalizing on poker to more adequately prepare our leaders for combat. Other sectors of American society are already doing just that. Bill Gates and Warren Buffett recently developed a Bridge Club fund for young kids to play in school. They would have used poker, for the same reasons highlighted in this paper, but school administrators found this

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[29] Richard D. Harroch and Lou Krieger, <u>Poker for Dummies,</u> (New Jersey: Wiley Publishing, 2000) 64.
[30] In addition, This iterative process is also useful when studying Chaos Theory and Complex Adaptive Systems. This also is beyond the scope of this paper.

unpalatable.[31] Brown made the case that financial traders need to be well schooled in both Game Theory and poker playing to become more successful on Wall Street.

There are several hurdles which need to be overcome when advocating playing poker competitively. Currently United States law prohibits gambling in any non-regulated and licensed facility. In addition, the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) prohibits gambling between officers, enlisted men, and noncommissioned officers. The easiest solution to these challenges is to play poker in competitive tournaments which offer prizes, not money, for winning. Many military officers clubs already have discovered the popularity of this.[32] Players pay a minimal amount of cash ($20 buy-in is common) to compete for prizes ($200 BX gift certificate, for instance). This does not meet the legal definition of gambling and is already common practice around the country. Officers, NCOs, and enlisted personnel are also allowed to compete with each other in these competitions. Another solution available to the commander serious about training his troops in crisis action thinking via poker would be to segregate games in which only officers competed against fellow officers, and NCOs played against other NCOs.

Another objection to gambling is morality. Some believe gambling and poker is degenerate behavior or a vice.[33] The easiest way to overcome a moral objection to gambling is to make it a form of competition, again, in a tournament format, much like churches around the world have done with bingo. Instead of playing for money, perhaps contestants could compete for a 3-day pass, or free meal at the Club.

There are many solutions for overcoming both the legal and moral objections of teaching soldiers to play poker. The important thing to keep in mind is that some risk must be involved for the poker

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[31] Martha T. Moore, "Billionaires bank on bridge to trump poker," USA Today, 19 December 2005.
[32] The Quantico Officers' Club currently has a monthly poker Texas Hold'Em tournament which is open to all officers, noncoms, and enlisted, as well as base civilians.
[33] There are actually no Bible texts that directly prohibit gambling. In fact, the Bible has multiple references to "casting and drawing lots" (from whence we get the term "lottery") as a means of dealing with uncertainty and ensuring fairness. The religious frowning on gambling has evolved over time and is derived form the 10th commandment found in Exodus 20:17 which refers to coveting.

lessons to be effective. If you remove the risk, you invalidate the lessons. This is one of the key aspects of poker playing.

The American military establishment would be wise to adopt playing poker into the regular training regimen, much the same way as daily physical training has been adopted into it. Unlike any other game, poker teaches and develops crisis action thinking skills and sharpens intellectual and analytical abilities. Poker mimics the high stress and highly uncertain environment of the battlefield unlike any other competitive game. It offers keen insight into how risk-averse one is as an individual, and how risk-averse ones adversaries are. The iterative nature of poker closely simulates the iterative nature of warfare, rewarding those who pay attention to detail and punishing those who ignore deception. The legal and moral hurdles associated with poker can easily be overcome with proper oversight and by either playing in a tournament format, or simply playing non-cash games if desired. Regardless of how it is implemented, the American military establishment will better prepare today's leaders for tomorrows conflicts if it adopts competitive poker playing into its routine training regimen.

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