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“OTHER” PRINCIPLES OF WAR

by

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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

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Abstract

“Other” Principles of War

The recent addition of restraint, legitimacy, and perseverance to the joint operations principles highlights the need for a better understanding of war principles and their use. The joint principles consist of a list of nine war principles and a list of three “other” principles. The only distinction between the two lists is their title. Both lists together make up the twelve war principles. There is no actual definition for principle or for “other” principles in any Joint Publication. This paper tries to explain the differences between the original principles and the other principles. It explores the history of both lists in an effort to highlight the vast differences that put the principles at odds. Finally, the paper draws conclusions concerning the lack of understanding regarding the use of the other principles and the effect of the new principles on both force transformation and training. This paper is not an attempt to show that restraint, legitimacy, and perseverance are not important. They are vital to current stability operations. The focus is on the misplacement of these principles with offensive and defensive principles of war.

INTRODUCTION

The U.S. military has a time tested, battle proven way of executing and winning wars. This “way of war” is outlined in a simple list of principles that guide the commander from the planning and execution to lessons learned in the conduct of war. The principles of war are rooted in experience, proven by their pivotal station in forming joint doctrine, professional military education, and are vital to effective war planning and command.ⁱ Any change in these principles should be of major concern and study for the operational commander.

Although there have always been arguments about the list of principles themselves, a basic understanding of the actual definition of a principle is paramount to this discussion. The Oxford English Dictionary defines a “principle” as “a fundamental source from which something proceeds; a primary element, force, or law which produces or determines particular results; the ultimate basis upon which the existence of something depends: cause, in the widest sense.”ⁱⁱ Applied to principles of war, this highlights the importance of the understanding and application of the laws, or principles. Both political leaders and military professionals should possess a solid knowledge of the use of principles of war at the strategic, operational, and tactical level in order to effectively plan, execute, and win wars.

In 2006, with very little fanfare, there was an addition to the U.S. military’s principles of war. In Joint Publication (JP) 3-0, *Joint Operations* three new principles of war – restraint, legitimacy, and perseverance were added. They were listed as “other principles” and added to the list of the nine original principles of war. By combining the nine war principles and the three “others”, the twelve new joint principles of operations were formed.

The joint operation principles of restraint, perseverance, and legitimacy do not share common qualities with the existing nine principles. They reflect the current focus on stability operations and take away from the offensive and defensive operational skills that will be needed in future operations. They also lack foresight by assuming that all future wars will mirror current conflicts.

This paper will explore the history of the principles of war in an effort to better understand how the U.S. came to adopt the original nine principles. It will also look into the origins of the newly added principles in order to understand why they were added. It is important to compare the newly added principles with the original nine to see how they differ and what the difference might mean to the operational commander. A clear connection between the principles and their effect on the direction of training and equipment will be made to express the strategic, operational, and tactical application of these principles.

BACKGROUND

In almost every lasting endeavor there develops a set way to go about achieving the objective. This set way usually comes from a combination of both success and failure. Over time, regardless of the objective, what helps in the achievement of success is adopted and what does not is discarded. Through this process principles are established.

In war, what are now considered principles can be traced back more than 2000 years to the Chinese general Sun Tzu.ⁱⁱⁱ He wrote thirteen chapters on the art of war. Since that time numerous generals, admirals, military scholars, and historians have written books, essays, and theses on war principles.^{iv} Although Sun Tzu was generally credited with the first writing that describes the principles of war, they were not listed as principles.^v They were described as a number of crucial elements believed to be vital in the planning and

execution of war.^{vi} The thirteen essential considerations specified by Sun Tzu in *The Art of War* were victory, morale, the offensive, security, surprise and deception, cooperation, intelligence, concentration, speed, mobility and flexibility, administration, public opinion, and command.^{vii} These time-tested principles are reflected in modern military principles. One can easily replace concentration for what is today called mass, or replace cooperation with unity of command. The title has changed slightly but the definition has remained the same for thousands of years.

The earliest European expression of war principles can be traced back to 390 A.D. in *De Re Militari*, (On Military Institutions) written by Flavius Vegetius Renatus.^{viii} Much like Sun Tzu's writings the principles were not defined or expressed as constraints for victory. They were more of an implied way of warfare.

Clausewitz in, *On War*, also did not construct an actual list of principles but did discuss several fundamentals of strategy. Although principles were more implied in his writings, they were very important. Clausewitz could not have constructed his theory of war without a body of principles.^{ix} Principles, defined as deductions reflecting the "spirit and sense" of law by Clausewitz, formed the foundation for his over all theory of war.^x

By looking at different writings of Clausewitz a list of common principles can be formed. Implied principles can be seen from Clausewitz's *The Most Important Principles on the Conduct of War*. They include the use of all force with the utmost energy, the concentration of power to obtain a decisive blow, the need to act quickly, and exploitation of success with the utmost energy.^{xi} From *On War*, Book III, "On Strategy in General", a break down of the chapters reveals many common shared traits with current U.S. war principles. Chapters titled "Boldness", "Superiority of Numbers", "Concentration of Forces in Time",

and “Unification of Forces in Time” all relate to the current principle of mass. Chapter 14 titled “Economy of Force” and Chapter 9 “Surprise” need not be compared; they share the same title with today’s principles.^{xii} Although it is clear Clausewitz realized the importance of principles, they were still not compiled into a useful list complete with definitions, Jomini would change that.

General Antoine Henri de Jomini, who served both Napoleon Bonaparte and Czar Nicholas I of Russia as “general-in-chief”, was credited as the first author to list principles of war and express them in a clear and intelligible language.^{xiii} He first formulated his principles in, *Characteristics of Major Military Operations*.^{xiv} He also argued in *The Art of War*, in 1838 for principles that were prescriptive, timeless, and comprehensive.^{xv} Based on the campaigns of Fredrick the Great, he created a list of principles that included the offensive, the objective, mass, surprise, economy of force, security, and maneuver.^{xvi} Compared to the nine U.S. principles, Jomini’s list was only lacking simplicity and unity of command.

In 1915 Capt. J.F.C. Fuller in, *The Principles of War with Reference to the Campaigns of 1914-15* listed eight principles of war.^{xvii} They included the objective, the offensive, mass, economy of force, movement, surprise, security, and cooperation. This list led to the official adoption of war principles by British Forces in *British Field Service Regulations 1920*.^{xviii} It is unclear if the British influenced the U.S., but a year later a list of principles was codified and placed into official documents of the U.S. Army.^{xix} The list of the current nine war principles first appeared in an American publication in 1921, United States War Department, TR 10-5: *Doctrines, Principles, and Methods*.^{xx} The principles were merely a list with no

explanations or qualifications. In 1949 in *Field Manual 100-5* the principles, for the first time, were both named and listed in an official document.^{xxi}

The long history and shared traits of the war principles helps validate their lasting usefulness. It is also important to examine the history of the three new “other principles” and why they were added to Joint Publication 3-0 to form the principles of joint operations.

The three new joint principles in JP 3-0, restraint, legitimacy, and perseverance were originally introduced in the early 1990s to military doctrine as “Military Operations Other than War” (MOOTW).^{xxii} MOOTW consisted of six principles - objective, unity of effort, security, restraint, perseverance, and legitimacy. These principles established the idea that there was a difference in war operations and stability operations. As MOOTW became more common and took on a major portion of combat operations for U.S. fighting forces, a shift in joint doctrine took place. The U.S. military recognized the error of that distinction and removed MOOTW from its doctrine, combining the “traditional” principles of war and principles of MOOTW into principles of joint operations.^{xxiii} By doing this, stability operations gained importance. Instead of post-hostility operations overlapping with war, what is called mission creep, they fell under the category of war.

THE “OTHER” PRINCIPLES

There are two major issues concerning the addition of restraint, legitimacy, and perseverance to the joint operation principle list. They have numerous inherent differences with the nine war principles for which the simple title of “other” does not account. Also, they are not actually principles, they are of vital importance in current conflicts but that does not make them principles.

There is a commonality in the existing nine principles of war that has allowed them to endure over time and guide commanders through changing conflicts. An enduring quality of the nine original principles is the ease in which they are applied to all levels of leadership. These principles are as important to the strategic leader as they are to the platoon leader.

The new principles are not so clearly applied to all levels of leadership. Restraint has become a much more important aspect of stability operations as tactical actions have an increasingly larger strategic effect. “The purpose of restraint is to limit collateral damage and prevent the unnecessary use of force.”^{xxiv} By definition it deals mainly with the application of force in tactical situations. The only discussion of its application at varying levels of leadership is the need to ensure up and down the chain, commanders at all levels understand the current rules of engagement (ROE).^{xxv}

Perseverance is concerned with preparing U.S. forces, the population, and other government agencies for protracted war. Its purpose is to ensure the commitment necessary to attain the national strategic end state.^{xxvi} Gen. William S. Wallace stated in the forward to the training document information pamphlet for the Army Field Manual (FM) 3-0 “the next several decades, according to many security experts, will be an era of persistent conflict that will generate continuing deployments for our Army.”^{xxvii} The ability for a nation and its actors to persevere is obviously very important, but does not apply to all levels of leadership. Soldiers and sailors are well aware of the level of commitment current stability operations require. The members of the armed forces deploy when ordered to do so. Where restraint focused more on the tactical level of operations, perseverance focuses more on the strategic level of leadership.

Legitimacy also falls short of reaching all levels of military leadership. At the strategic level it is a very real concern. The purpose is to develop and maintain the will necessary to attain the national strategic end state. The audiences may include foreign nations, civil populations in the operational area, and participating forces.^{xxviii} Much like restraint and perseverance the national strategic end state is the focus. The original war principles purpose statements are much clearer and deal directly with the enemy and friendly forces. It is clear that there is a difference in the application of the new principles and the original nine at the different levels of leadership. A difference can also be seen when comparing what type of operations with which the original and other principles deal.

The original principles deal with offensive and defensive operations of warfare. They concentrate on how the U.S. military goes about defeating the enemy rather than holistically embracing political, social, and economic factors.^{xxix} The three other principles deal with the characteristics of stability operations addressing the need for an all of government approach to obtain victory.

The examination of the differences of the original and other principles is merely to show they exist. It is not to prove that restraint, legitimacy, and perseverance are not important in current conflicts. It does, however, highlight the fact that the other principles do not belong on the same list with principles of war. The principles of joint operations should be clear, share common characteristics, and most importantly, be actual principles.

Restraint, perseverance, and legitimacy were taken from one principle list and added to another, but are they even principles? Restraint, described as the judicious use of force, and perseverance, the commitment and preparedness for protracted military operations, are elements of common-sense advice.^{xxx} Restraint is a function of a combatant's perception of

how much force is necessary to accomplish a particular mission, the discipline needed to refrain from exceeding that level of force, and the ability to control the application of force itself.^{xxx1} Perseverance is not applied the same way that mass is applied. Mass is taken to the enemy, the agents involved in a conflict endeavor to persevere.^{xxxii} Success depends on the physical and psychological capacities relative to an opponent's. Restraint and Perseverance thus fall into the category of cautions rather than principles.^{xxxiii}

Legitimacy, the perceived legality, morality and rightness of war aims and operations conducted in pursuit of them, has become more important in the globalized environment of the Twenty-First Century where political statements and physical actions can be captured and retransmitted almost instantly.^{xxxiv} The fact that tactical actions are playing strategic roles does not make legitimacy a principle, but a subjective condition that must be addressed at the strategic level.^{xxxv} In any conflict, both sides will always strive to claim legitimacy for their actions. While possessing legitimacy is clearly not necessarily a prerequisite to waging war successfully, combatants whose aims and actions are perceived as legitimate have a better chance of garnering the support of the international community.^{xxxvi} However, it is neither a principle of war nor battle.

Restraint, perseverance, and legitimacy are required for success in today's conflicts. They are vital to successful stability operations, but they differ greatly from the original principles of war and act more as characteristics than they do principles. They are misplaced in JP 3-0 as "other principles" in the joint operations lists.

FORCE TRANSFORMATION AND FUTURE WAR

The current War On Terror, or Long War, has caused the rethinking of conflict and the guiding principles. Although counter-insurgency (COIN) and other stability operations

are not new types of warfare, they are now the leading factors in force transformation. That fact is making the three other principles anything but “others”. They are becoming the most important items on the principles list as they begin to shape doctrine. “We must emphasize doctrine as the driver for change,” said Army Chief of Staff Gen. George W. Casey Jr. “You can’t cement change in the organization until you adapt the institutions. That change begins with doctrine.”^{xxxvii} He was speaking of stability operations and their increasing importance in warfare.

The Army saw the need to include the new principles that cover stability operations in the FM 3-0. How important have these operations become? In the latest version of FM 3-0, stability operations are viewed as important, or even more important, than offensive and defensive operations.^{xxxviii} Stability operations are also outlined as a core mission for all organizational entities within the Department of Defense (DoD) in DoDI 3000.05, September 16, 2009.^{xxxix}

As force transformation focused on stability operations becomes the main driver for change, the types of future conflicts and the military’s ability to face them becomes an important issue. The addition of the new principles assumes that future wars will have a prolonged stability aspect lead by the military. This thinking can be seen at the highest levels of military and political leadership. There are forecasts of dramatic cuts in traditional state-on-state warfare. The rules, or principles, of military engagement itself have emerged in appointment hearings on Capitol Hill. There are suggestions that “a new law of war” is needed.^{xl} This demonstrates the importance of the principles and how they affect all levels of warfare.

Does this thinking prepare the military for conventional state-on-state warfare? The type of force on force warfare that, if not prepared for properly, will prove the most costly. Conventional war could break out on the Korean peninsula, between India and Pakistan, or with Taiwan and China.^{xli} All out war in the Middle East can never be ruled out. Iran could pose a nuclear threat very soon. The point is not to list every new conflict or the possible enemies and locations. It is to express the fact that although the current conflict has unconventional aspects, the future is always uncertain and the military must be prepared to meet that uncertainty. The Army has addressed this issue with what is called “full-spectrum operations”. The implications of full spectrum operations still includes the requirement of forces to be fully trained and equipped for major combat operations.^{xlii}

How prepared would U.S. forces be for a major combat operation? The focus on stability operation has already taken a toll on current force training. There are tankers who have not fired their main guns for years and artillerymen in the same status. These are perishable skills. Waiting for major combat operations is not the time to start training for conventional warfare tactics. How much further will the U.S. forces conventional training deteriorate as stability operations continue to gain in importance? With the current status of U.S. forces and doctrine, it will continue to become less effective in dealing with major combat operations.

Allowing stability operations to become the main driver for force make up and training will have dire consequences when the U.S. engages in its next conventional war with an equal enemy. The offensive and defensive principles of war should never become secondary to principles dealing with stability operations.

COUNTER ARGUMENT

One could make the argument that the addition of the three other principles is justified because stability operations are the current and future face of warfare and the addition supports a force that is trained and equipped to carry out those type of operations. If they are not applicable in the future they can be left out of operations because the principles are a guide and not a checklist.

The conventional state-on-state conflict is a thing of the past in today's globalized world. Stability operations encompass all phases of warfare, are a core U.S. military mission, and are now by definition, war operations. These facts support the addition of the three other principles to joint operations. Although they are listed as "others" they will equip commanders with a solid foundation to conduct stability operations in all phases of war, now and in the future.

The ending of the Cold War resulted in the U.S. emerging as the only world superpower. As the preliminary stages of Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom unfolded it became clear that the U.S. could not be matched with conventional forces. The majority of struggles the U.S. military encountered were during the stability operational phases. The insurgency in OIF and OEF proved an effective way to combat the U.S. military.

From these lessons, potential enemies realized conventional war with the U.S. was out of question. This fact led to a change in warfare and ultimately led to the three new principles being added to joint operations. With no foreseeable conventional rival the U.S. has rightfully changed its focus to train and equip forces to conduct stability operations. The principles of joint operations, with the addition of restraint, perseverance, and legitimacy now form the bedrock that will ensure those operations are successful. It makes the

principles list more effective by covering more types of warfare and giving the commander more options to choose from.

The three new principles will not prove harmful in the future if a conventional war is encountered. The principles are used as a guide, not a checklist. If the new additions do not apply to a conflict they can simply be discarded. It is the ability to prioritize the risk involved in applying one principle and choosing to discard another that is the true art of waging war.^{xliii} Throughout all phases of war the principles should be revisited to ensure the ones relevant to the conflict are being used and the ones that might hinder operations are set aside. A more complete list allows for a more complete look at operations. The three new principles allow for this and do not put the nation in harm of losing future wars, no matter what type of conflict is encountered.

The three new principles are a part of the changing framework that prepares U.S. forces for prolonged unconventional warfare fought in and around a host nation's population center. The addition of restraint, legitimacy, and perseverance to the principles of joint operations makes the U.S. fighting force better prepared to deal with the changing characteristics of warfare.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Throughout history there have been many differing views on the exact way principles should be applied. The main thought is that they can't be relevant in every conflict so they should be reviewed and chosen to match the operation. If that were the case then the addition of the new principles would seem to be a minor event. If they are not needed during the next conflict simply throw them out as irrelevant. By using this philosophy the very concept of a principle is violated.

Jomini replied to skepticism about the value of laying down fixed rules for warfare by replying the rules merely guided or regulated the conduct of war and did not dictate how a commander should go about defeating an enemy.^{xliv} The Army FM 3-0 highlights the confusion of the subject of application. It states very clearly that the principles are not a checklist. While they are considered in all operations, they are not applied in the same way to every situation.^{xlv} Maybe there is some confusion with the term checklist? Just because a principle is not applied the same way in every situation does not mean it is not used. It is still considered. The scope of the application of principles changes in warfare, the principles do not.

Application is the key to the discussion about the future of the principles of war. The principles do not change or become invalid, instead the application is constantly in flux.^{xlvi} Some principles may have “rescoped” in their overall influence, for example, trainees destined to become street fighters in Iraq, or Afghanistan, are made to understand that “unity of command” does not imply a lack of opportunity for initiative.^{xlvii} The true art of warfare is the ability to apply all the principles to conflict with the correct scope in order to set condition in the commander’s favor. The inclusion of all principles will result in better-planned and executed operations. To include all principles there needs to be a clear understanding of the differences of offensive, defensive, and stability operations. The current joint principles list that divides war and other principles is insufficient in this area.

There needs to be a list of principles solely for stability operations. Although stability operations are now a core mission and equal to offensive and defensive operations they do not share the same principles for success. The original nine principles are meant for the offensive and defensive aspect of warfare.

A principles list for stability operations would elevate its importance. This would be an effective way to better integrate stability operations into the planning and execution phases of war. The principles would also provide the framework for how stability operations are conducted and therefore drive what type of training and tools are needed to support them while at the same time highlighting the importance of conventional principles.

The list would increase the commander's effectiveness in conducting operations. Much like the offensive and defensive principles, a stability list would provide the bedrock for conducting stability operations. Once an established norm for conducting these operations was adopted it could be refined and would prove more effective.

Set principles would allow for the shift in mind-set that is required as a conflict progresses through phases. The list would have great value for the operational commander by providing a framework that could be implemented at the correct time allowing for a shift in focus. This would provide a smooth transition from conventional hostilities to possible stability operations.

A list of stability operation would also give other government agencies an input to the principles. DoDI 3000.5 directs DoD to be prepared to support stability operations led by other U.S. Government departments or agencies.^{xlviii} By creating a new list it would allow input from these agencies while not interfering with the core offensive and defensive principles that the military clearly should control. This agency input would allow for a more comprehensive, and therefore effective, list. It would be the foundation for force transformation in the government agencies much like it is with the military. The list would provide justification for funding for agencies, and become the driving force for a more robust military and government agency team able to conduct effective stability operations.

The application of principles is the key to effective offensive, defensive, and stability operations. By breaking out the key elements of successful stability operations, U.S. forces can become more effective in their execution. The separate list allows other government agencies to have an input in the principles. It also sets the foundation for a more robust force by increasing funding and increasing government agency capabilities. The end state is a more effective military government team that is truly able to support DoDI 3000.5.

CONCLUSIONS

The change in the principles of war in Joint Publication 3-0, *Joint Operations* has almost gone unnoticed by both military and political leaders. In the research for this paper only one article addressed the addition of the three other principles. The fact is, not many military or political leaders see the principles of war being of great importance. That could lead to an ill prepared force more focused on prolonged conflict and stability operations.

Principles of joint operations consist of nine war principles and three other principles. Since all operation will have some sort of joint aspect and the lists are combined it is clear that the two lists together now make up the full war principles list. Much like the term “others” the combining of the two lists leads to confusion.

How much thought was put into the addition of these three new principles? It appears their addition was brought about by a joint publication that was being revised and a concept (MOOTW) that was being removed. There was an attempt to incorporate principles that are relevant to today’s conflicts. That is a very careless way to establish something as important as principles, the bedrock of joint operations.

Nothing states this carelessness more clearly than simply looking at the list in JP 3-0. The principles are actually listed as “other principles”. They do not warrant a name that the

commander can apply. What conditions are “other” principles supposed to be applied to? JP 3-0 has no answer. At least under MOOTW they were identified separate from principles of war and under a category that was useful. If they were meant to be as important as war principles they should be added to the list of the original nine and the title of other principles removed all together.

Offensive and defensive warfare has not changed and therefore the principles of war should not change. In the future new threats will always evolve, but whether they bring about a fundamental change in warfare is extremely doubtful.^{xlix} The evolution from stone to slingshot, to musket or rifle or cannon or rocket, to A-bomb or thermonuclear warhead, all of them operate under the basis of the very same principles of war.ⁱ To suppose that the principles have changed because the current operations call for house-to-house street clearing instead of Desert Storm-style battles is folly in the extreme.ⁱⁱ The military must stay true to its time tested principles; not change its principles or proceed under the assumption that the principles have changed.ⁱⁱⁱ

Although stability operations are the major element of the conflicts of today the future will surely hold new enemies and wars. The US military must keep the offensive and defensive principles of war at the forefront of training and doctrine.

NOTES

ⁱ Brian Hanley, “The Principles of War: Uses & Abuses,” *Proceedings*, (October 2005), 46, <http://www.proquest.com/> (accessed 27 March 2010).

ⁱⁱ *Ibid*, 46.

ⁱⁱⁱ David Evans, *War: A Matter of Principles* (New York, NY: St. Martin’s Press INC., 1997), 1.

^{iv} *Ibid*, 1.

^v *Ibid*, 5.

^{vi} *Ibid*, 5.

^{vii} *Ibid*, 6.

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- viii Brian Hanley, "The Principles of War: Uses & Abuses," *Proceedings*, (October 2005), 47, <http://www.proquest.com/> (accessed 27 March 2010).
- ix Antulio J. Echevarria II, "Principles of War or Principles of Battle," in *Rethinking the Principles of War*, ed. Anthony D. Mc Ivor et al. (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2005), 61.
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- xi Ibid, 62.
- xii Ibid, 62.
- xiii Raymond E. Bell Jr., "The Validity of the Principles of War," *Army*: February 2007, 20.
- xiv Ibid, 20.
- xv Brian Hanley, "The Principles of War: Uses & Abuses," *Proceedings*, (October 2005), 47, <http://www.proquest.com/> (accessed 27 March 2010).
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- xviii Ibid, 8.
- xix Ibid, 9.
- xx Brian Hanley, "The Principles of War: Uses & Abuses," *Proceedings*, (October 2005), 47, <http://www.proquest.com/> (accessed 27 March 2010).
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- xxiii Ibid, 59.
- xxiv Chairman, U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Operations*, Joint Publication (JP) 3-0 (Washington, DC: CJCS, 13 February 2008), A-3.
- xxv Ibid, A-3.
- xxvi Ibid, A-4.
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- xxviii Chairman, U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Operations*, Joint Publication (JP) 3-0 (Washington, DC: CJCS, 13 February 2008), A-4.
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- xxxi Ibid, 69.
- xxxii Ibid, 59.
- xxxiii Ibid, 69.
- xxxiv Ibid, 69.
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