

A Model to Study Modern War

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A Model to Study Modern War

Submitted by G. D. Walger, Captain, USMC

CG 4 FACAD's, B. L Saunders and P. M. Bragg, Majors, USMC

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Since the 1920's, leaders have used the Principles of War as a framework to study and understand war.¹ Following Operation Desert Storm, leaders were faced with "non-traditional missions" in Somalia, Liberia, and Bangladesh, among others. The Principles of Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW) were developed to understand the new strategic challenges presented by "non-traditional missions" and operations.² As warfare and conflict continue to evolve, the Principles of War and the Principles of MOOTW should be combined to better understand and study modern warfare.

The essay will proceed in three parts. First, it will offer background to understand the effects of modern challenges on the conduct of war. Second, it will present the Principles of Modern War Model. Finally, it will demonstrate the usefulness of the new model.

The Era of Modern Warfare

Thanks to my reading, I have never been caught flatfooted by any situation. It doesn't give me all the answers, but it lights what is often a dark path ahead.

*Lieutenant General James Mattis*³

¹ Evans, *War: A Matter of Principles*, pg. 10.

² Zinni, pgs. 261-2 and Strange, pgs. 23-24.

³ Lind, *Understanding Fourth Generation War*, pg. 16.

Marines understand war as a violent clash of opposing wills. Modern war is a violent clash of opposing wills in the post-Cold War era. MCDP-1, *Warfighting*, delineates between the nature of war and the conduct of war.⁴ Though the conduct of war constantly evolves, the nature of war is constant.

The conduct of war has evolved in the modern era. General Krulak developed the concept of the *Three-Block War*, during his service as Commandant of the Marine Corps, to explain the evolution of modern warfare. The *Three-Block War* describes war and conflict on three city blocks. The concept explained modern war of simultaneous operations of an operation other than war on one city block, an operation of low-mid intensity on a second city block, and an operation of high-intensity combat on a third city block.⁵ Recently, Lieutenant General James Mattis, USMC and Lieutenant Colonel Frank Hoffman, USMC, (retired) addressed the evolution of the war conducted in Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). The authors describe the emergence of the Fourth Block, the multi-dimensional block of information operations.⁶

⁴ U.S.M.C., MCDP-1, *Warfighting*, Chapter One.

⁵ Krulak, *Cultivating Intuitive Decisionmaking*, *Marine Corps Gazette*, May 1999.

⁶ Mattis and Hoffman, *Future Warfare: The Rise of Hybrid Wars*, pg. 18. "Our infatuation with technology was a reflection of our own mirror

In 1998, the Marine Corps published *MCDP-3, Expeditionary Operations*, which balanced theories from academic leaders with the Marine Corps doctrinal understanding of the nature of warfare.⁷ MCDP-3 considered the political, geographical, demographic, and cultural challenges present in the post-Cold War era. To meet the challenges of the modern era, junior Marine education and training is evolving. In a recent essay, Colonel T. X. Hammes, USMC (retired) offered considerations for the transformation. Specifically, Hammes recommended Marines from the rank of sergeant study culture and language for a region in the world.⁸

The Marine Corps responded and established the Marine Corps Center for Advanced Operational Culture and Language (MCCAOCL) to drive cultural training down to the small-unit level. While Marine leaders have always been encouraged to study the political, geographical, demographic, and cultural challenges of an operating area, modern challenges indicate the need for the same education and training across all ranks. To ensure the new formalized training is

imaging and an unrealistic desire to dictate the conduct of war on our own terms."

⁷ U.S.M.C., MCDP - 3, *Expeditionary Operations*. Specifically, *Expeditionary Operations* was influenced by articles from *The Atlantic Monthly*: Huntington *Clash of Civilizations*, Barber's *Jihad vs. McWorld*, and Kaplan's *The Coming Anarchy*. All of which were initially offered as articles in the journal and expanded upon in full-length books.

⁸ Hammes, *Dealing with Uncertainty: The Future Requires Flexibility*, pg. 39.

balanced with a warfighting focus, Marines should be assigned battle, campaign, and operations studies in assigned regions.

The Principles of Modern War Model is a simple standard framework. The model will help Marines in formal schools and informal professional military education to conduct battle, campaign, and operations studies. Major General Robert Barrow, USMC, (retired), validated the utility of the Principles of War as a framework to study war in his retrospective of Operation Dewey Canyon in the Vietnam War.⁹ The Principles of MOOTW are a valid framework to study MOOTW operations in the post-Cold War era.¹⁰ Applied together, the Principles of War and the Principles of MOOTW form a simple, disciplined, and flexible framework for Marines to study modern warfare.

The Principles of Modern War Model

Sun Tzu was the first to use essential elements to study war. British military leaders developed the Principles of War to plan, study, and understand war. The

⁹ Barrow, *Operation Dewey Canyon*, pg. 88. "In the planning and execution of an operation no one really ponders over the principles of war. In my opinion, the principles of war are a combination of common sense and military knowledge, instinctively applied during an operation. Their real value lies in the critique of an operation, as a measure of how it was conducted. Some battles have been won in spite of one or more principles having been transgressed, others have been lost in spite of all the principles having been observed."

¹⁰ Zinni and Strange, *Capital "W" War: A Case for Strategic Principles of War (Because Wars Are Conflicts of Societies, Not Tactical Exercises Writ Large)*.

Principles of War are simple and easily memorized through the acronym, MOOSEMUSS: Mass, Objective, Offensive, Security, Economy of Force, Maneuver, Unity of Command, Surprise, and Simplicity.¹¹ The nine principles are linked through the master principle, the objective.

The Principles of MOOTW are also linked through the objective. In 1998, General Zinni, USMC, (ret.) outlined the Principles of MOOTW in a collaborative effort with Marine Corps University professor Joseph Strange, Ph.d. Doctor Strange and General Zinni studied the increased frequency of "non-traditional missions" as conflict and warfare evolved in the post-Cold War era.¹² MCDP 1-0, *Marine Corps Operations*, was published shortly afterward and clearly defined MOOTW, considered the challenges of specific MOOTW operations, and clarified the six Principles

¹¹ All definitions for the nine Principles of War in this section from MCDP - 1-0, *Marine Corps Operations*, pgs. B-1 - B-4. The *objective* is to "direct every military operation toward a clearly defined, decisive and attainable objective." The *offensive* is to "seize, retain, and exploit the initiative." *Mass* is to "concentrate the effects of combat power at the decisive place and time to achieve decisive results." *Economy of force* is to "allocate minimum essential combat power to secondary efforts." *Maneuver* is to "place the enemy in a disadvantageous position through flexible application of combat power." *Unity of command* means that "for every objective, ensure unity of effort under one responsible commander." *Security* is to "never permit the enemy to acquire an unexpected advantage." *Surprise* "strikes the enemy at a time or place or in a manner for which he is unprepared." *Simplicity* means to "prepare clear, uncomplicated plans and clear, concise orders to ensure thorough understanding."

¹² Zinni and Strange, *Capital "W" War: A Case for Strategic Principles of War (Because Wars Are Conflicts of Societies, Not Tactical Exercises Writ Large)*, pgs. 261-2 and pgs. 23-24.

of MOOTW [Table (1)].¹³ The Principles of War and the Principles of Military Operations Other Than War form the Principles of Modern War Model, as indicated in Table (1).

PRINCIPLES OF WAR	PRINCIPLES OF MOOTW	JOINT PUBLICATION 3-0, JOINT OPERATIONS	PRINCIPLES OF MODERN WAR MODEL
OBJECTIVE	OBJECTIVE	OBJECTIVE	OBJECTIVE
OFFENSIVE		OFFENSIVE	LEGITIMACY
MASS		MASS	RESTRAINT
ECONOMY OF FORCE		ECONOMY OF FORCE	PERSEVERANCE
MANEUVER		MANEUVER	OFFENSIVE
UNITY OF COMMAND	UNITY OF EFFORT	UNITY OF COMMAND	MASS
SECURITY	SECURITY	SECURITY	ECONOMY OF FORCE
SURPRISE		SURPRISE	MANEUVER
SIMPLICITY		SIMPLICITY	UNITY OF COMMAND & EFFORT
	LEGITIMACY	LEGITIMACY	SECURITY
	RESTRAINT	RESTRAINT	SURPRISE
	PERSEVERANCE	PERSEVERANCE	SIMPLICITY

Table (1)

A Simple, Disciplined and Flexible Model

The Principles of Modern War Model disciplines Marines studying war by linking each of the principles to the objective. The flexibility is inherent to the model that encourages Marines to consider modern challenges and link principles at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels of war, as indicated in Table (2). The modern considerations are simple examples and not all-inclusive.

¹³ U.S.M.C., *MCDP 1-0, Marine Corps Operations*, pg. F-15. MOOTW is defined as "operations that encompass the use of military capabilities across the range of military operations short of war. These military actions can be applied to complement any combination of the other instruments of national power and occur before, during, and after war." U.S.M.C., *MCDP 1-0, Marine Corps Operations*, pgs. 10-3 – 10-6. *Restraint* means to "apply appropriate military capability prudently." *Perseverance* intends to "prepare for the measured, protracted application of military capability in support of strategic aims." *Legitimacy* is to "sustain the legitimacy of the operation and of the host government, where applicable."

PRINCIPLES OF WAR MODEL	EXAMPLES OF MODERN CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE MODEL
OBJECTIVE	-ANALYSIS OF PRINCIPLES OF MODERN WAR MODEL FROM ENEMY PERSPECTIVE -POLITICAL DOMINANCE, WILL & DIME AT ALL LEVELS OF WAR -FLATTENING/COMPRESSION EFFECT OF LEVELS OF WAR -SMALL-UNIT TRAINING, EDUCATION, MANNING & EQUIPPING -DIPLOMATIC-POLITICAL-CULTURAL-ECONOMIC & LANGUAGE TRAINING REQUIREMENTS FOR ALL MILITARY, CIVILIANS & CONTRACTORS -FLATTENING EFFECTS OF ADMINISTRATION & TASK-ORGANIZATION TO SUPPORT SMALL-UNIT DISTRIBUTED OPERAITONS -MANNING, TRAINING, EQUIPPING TIMELINE OF JUNIOR WARFIGHTERS FROM RECRUITING TO FIRST DEPLOYMENT-REDEPLOYMENT -SPEED, SIMULTANEOUS EFFECTS, TIMING, TEMPO, & SEQUENCING OF FIRES & INFORMATION OPERATIONS / TACTICS / OPERATIONS -ADAPTATION, INNOVATION, AND EVOLUTION -CIVIL-MILITARY OPERATIONS & COOPERATION -MOUT OPERATIONS IN THE THIRD WORLD -WARFIGHTING FUNCTION SUPPORT OF DISTRIBUTED AND EXPEDITIONARY OPERATIONS -ENVIRONMENTAL AND CULTURAL LIMITATIONS ...
LEGITIMACY	
RESTRAINT	
PERSEVERANCE	
OFFENSIVE	
MASS	
ECONOMY OF FORCE	
MANEUVER	
UNITY OF COMMAND & EFFORT	
SECURITY	
SURPRISE	
SIMPLICITY	

Table (2)

The principles all link to the objective.¹⁴ The national political objectives drive military objectives. Because the objective is the master principle in analysis of war, analysis must re-center upon each shift in the national political objective(s).

In OIF the shift in national political objectives prevented employment of the Combined Action Program (CAP). The failure to link the objective, unity of command and effort, and legitimacy prevented Marines from using CAP in Al-Anbar Province due to security and force protection challenges. Ultimately, this disconnect drove the Marines into high-intensity battles and operations in the Sunni

¹⁴ Evans, *War: A Matter of Principles*, pg. 12.

Triangle and Al-Anbar Province following the initial attack into Iraq. Clearly, overwhelming force and power is achievable with an economy of force while maintaining force protection and security, when all elements of power are unified in command and effort on the objective.

In contrast, during OEF the CAP has been used in Afghanistan from 2003-2005 with Provincial Reconstruction Teams.¹⁵ The initial success of the CAP in OEF continues to prove successful in defeating the enemy.¹⁶ The Marine Corps history of success with the CAP links to modern considerations of future expeditionary operations and distributed operations.

The Principles of MOOTW are relevant at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels of war. Modern considerations for restraint are the first, second and third order effects of tactical actions. For example, the Abu Gharib prison abuse scandal emboldened the insurgency in Al-Anbar Province, afforded the insurgency and Al-Qaida informational and psychological advantages, and aroused

¹⁵ Lamm, *The Right Strategy*, *Armed Forces Journal*, pgs. 25-27.

¹⁶ LtGen McCaffery, USA, (retired), *The War We're Winning*, pgs. 16-19; and Col. David Lamm, USA, *The Right Strategy*, pgs. 25-27. General Zinni, USMC, (retired) maintains a failure to embrace a common knowledge of terminology and issuance of "precise objectives - understood by all", led to the difficulty in military planning for *Operations Provide Comfort and Restore Hope*. Zinni's "Non-Traditional Military Missions," pgs. 247-283, in Strange's, *Perspectives on Warfighting*, Number 6: *Capital "W" War: A Case for Strategic Principles of War* cover his experience in low-intensity conflicts, now called Small Scale Operations.

global condemnation of the coalition strategy. A modern consideration for perseverance is the national morale and will to sustain war, as the present struggle to maintain national focus on the Global War on Terrorism, OIF, and OEF demonstrate. The importance of perseverance is magnified in considering the challenges of joint, multinational, ad-hoc coalition, and private military corporation warfare in the modern era. A modern consideration of legitimacy at the tactical level is the standardized political-cultural and language training Marines undergo prior to deployment in support of OIF or OEF. Using credible force balanced by cultural understanding and language training will legitimize Marines in contested areas and prepare Marines to adapt to challenges in modern warfare.

The conduct of war in the current operating environment continues to evolve. Mass, economy of force and maneuver are balanced to ensure combat power is concentrated at the decisive time and place.¹⁷ A modern consideration for mass is the precise ability of individuals, sensors, and platforms to work in concert to destroy, isolate, or track targets. The employment of night vision equipment, unmanned aerial vehicles and precision ordnance in OIF and OEF indicate training and

¹⁷ Scales, *Yellow Smoke*, pgs. 155-7.

equipping modifications down to the squad and fire team leader continues to evolve.

The Marine Corps remains capable of maintaining the offense in modern warfare, as exemplified in the administrative ability to meet the deployment requirements in support of OIF and OEF. Modern considerations for economy of force in the future are changes necessary to man, educate, train, and equip Marines to serve on small-unit teams in coalition, joint, and/or interagency operations.¹⁸

Expeditionary operations and distributed operations will continue to shape modern challenges to the offense, economy of force, and maneuver. Speed, timing, tempo, sequencing, and simultaneous effects are a few of the considerations witnessed in gaining a foothold during OEF. Modern security considerations must be balanced with the offensive to ensure force protection throughout the course of operations. While science and technology have always helped Marines win battles, students of war must carefully weigh the effects of modern challenges of security. Deception operations, information operations, psychological operations, public affairs, classification of intelligence, reporting, and offensive force protection are modern

¹⁸ Ibid., pgs. 117-121.

considerations for Marines to consider on all levels of war. To maintain the offensive spirit, Marines should prevent reliance on permanent basing, as witnessed in OIF.

Ultimately, unity of command enables the commander to focus the efforts of all participants and the warfighting functions. A modern challenge to unity of command and effort is cooperation of military personnel, interagency personnel, coalition partners, and contractors.¹⁹ In modern warfare, national strategic objectives will be met when all elements of national power are applied with unity of command and effort. Modern considerations for surprise and simplicity at the tactical level are to initiate and maintain aggressive and consistent plans in increasingly complex situations.²⁰

Studying modern war with the Principles of Modern War Model makes sense. The model clearly illustrates modern challenges with examples from OIF and OEF.

Conclusion

Marines need to expand their experiences through battle, campaign, and operations studies. Thus, Marines will develop their ability to recognize patterns and improve intuitive decision-making. This essay redefines how

¹⁹ Scales, *Yellow Smoke*, pgs. 164-6.

²⁰ Ibid. pgs 140-145.

Marines study and understand the challenges of modern war. Modern operations since Operation Desert Storm form a start point for Marines to start battle, campaign, and operations studies of modern warfare. The Principles of Modern War Model provides a simple, disciplined and flexible framework to understand the challenges of modern warfare. Lieutenant General Mattis indicated the professional benefits of reading and studying in preparation for battle leadership. The Principles of Modern War Model allows for more complete preparation.

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