

# Similarities and differences in the principles of warfare – from the classics to the Homeland War

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## Abstract

*In the article, I tried to connect the principles of warfare as they were understood, explained and finally defined by the classics of military thought Jomini, Foch and Liddell Hart with contemporary specific principles of war that were applied in the Homeland War through the implementation of operations, primarily offensive ones. This article provides an expert review of the Diploma thesis “Similarities and differences in the principles of warfare – from the classics to the Homeland War” which I wrote and defended at the CDA Integral Command and Staff School.*

## Keywords

*war, theories of war, principles of war, Homeland War, operation.*

## Introduction

War as a social phenomenon has appeared since the very beginnings of human civilization. People as social beings, after family forms of life, begin to unite in tribes as growing forms of human civilization, which nowadays grow into states and state alliances for various reasons, economic, political and finally military alliances of two or more states. War or a primitive form of armed combat also appears among the tribes themselves, where a tribe attacks a weaker tribe, usually for economic reasons, by seizing part of the arable land or by seizing part of the tribe using them as slaves. In the very nature of such conflicts is the economic reason, which we can only confirm today, since after all, the First Gulf War was undertaken because of the most important natural resource today – oil. Therefore, economic reasons are the real causes of war; all other reasons, such as political, ethical, and religious, are less important and are a side effect or cover for economic reasons.

I will support the above thesis with several facts that can be found in the history of wars. Namely, there is no army in the original community, wars are fought for survival (people were defeated or killed, set free or they became tribesmen). In class societies, wars are fought for economic reasons, to increase wealth, expand territory and secure a privileged position. This is why Socrates said to Alexander of Macedon: *“Let us transfer the war to Asia, and the happiness of Asia to ourselves.”* (Ambury, 2023)

### *Theories about the origin of war*

The first theory is objective-idealistic. It discusses the causes of war and considers them to be in supernatural forces: theological understanding (*“God wills it”* – Pope Urban II. 1095.) (Marschhauser, 2015), fatalistic understanding (Galović, 1998), and the source is the militaristic national spirit<sup>1</sup>.

The following theory about the origin of war talks about the cause of war which is in earthly factors: demographic theory (Malthus, 2023), biological theory (Hobbes, 2023; Škember, 2011), racial theory (Rosenberg: *“There are higher and lower races and all history is the history of the struggle of races.”*)

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1 E.g.: The Germans

(Rosenberg, 2023), geopolitical theory (Ratzel: “*The cause of war is the lack of living space, whereby each nation needs to use its own space, and then has the right to conquer new living space – this is a war justified by God and nature.*”) (Ratzel, 2023).

The third theory about the origin of war relies on subjective-idealistic concepts: the causes of war are in an important individual<sup>2</sup>.

### *The concept of war*

The most famous definition of war was given by Carl von Clausewitz in his work *On War*, where he says that “war is nothing but the extension of political relations with the use of other means” (page 502). However, there is an objection to his definition of war as it does not include wars in the original community, because there is no state policy there, the extension of state policy by other means does not always have to be war (e.g. termination of diplomatic relations, etc.). Based on the above, I believe that a more acceptable definition of war would be the extension of foreign state policy by means of organized armed violence in order to force the enemy, who responds to armed violence with violence, to make certain concessions – territorial or economic.

### *Types of wars*

According to Clausewitz, there are the following types of wars: wars for complete subjugation and wars for conquering only parts of another state (page 502). According to Jomini, there are also several types of wars: offensive wars to claim rights, wars that are politically defensive and militarily offensive, wars of opportunity, wars with or without allies, wars of intervention, wars of conquest due to the spirit of conquest or for other reasons, wars from belief, national wars, civil or religious war, double wars (page 15-16).

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<sup>2</sup> The wishes and aspirations of statesmen, military leaders or in the aspirations of certain circles and organizations

The modern definition of the types of wars is reflected in the following divisions of wars: offensive (attacking) wars, defensive (protective) wars, imperialist wars, national liberation wars, foreign (inter-state, inter-national) wars, internal (civil) wars, just wars (depending on the specific historical circumstances), unjust wars (depending on specific historical circumstances), naval, aerial, atomic, chemical, bacteriological, conventional (with regard to the means, space and organization of the armed forces), manoeuvre, positional, partisan (with regard to strategic-tactical aspect).

### *Theories about the justification of wars*

Throughout the history of warfare, those who started wars have always found some theories about the justification of war. Social Darwinists, racists, justify war because, according to their theory, wars regenerate, i.e. rejuvenate and ennoble humanity in a biological, psychological and moral sense. Ethical theorists justify war because war maintains and purifies the morals of the people. The justification of war by the needs of production. And finally the justification of war in the name of socialism – China, Albania, Cuba and others.

In the end, we come to the realization that wars are inevitable because the entire history is full of wars. In the last 5000 years, mankind lived in peace for only 292 years (Swiss scientists).

### **Modern Determinations of the Principles of War**

When determining the modern principles of wars, we must first explain how in today's modern world, that is, the modern understanding of the concept of war, is approached from various points of view. In today's, modern times, the actions of the army can be divided into the classic implementation of wars and warfare, actions other than war (Not-War) and actions other than military. Of course, the understanding of the principles of warfare was influenced in many ways by past wars and the principles that pervaded them. Inherited military analysis, as old as the wars themselves, and many more recent scientific endeavours are included in the creation of this understanding. On the basis of these analyses, the principles created in

the distant past and/or in recent times are adopted. With minor changes, they become fixed and change-resistant components of theories, teachings and rules of warfare. Thus, for example, the United States Army adopted Fuller's principles developed for World War I and its warfare. Later, they were "somewhat modified", but it is claimed that even today they can withstand analytical verification, verification by experiment and verification in practice"<sup>3</sup>.

The French appreciate Foch and have long recognized his principles of war described in his work *The Principles of War*<sup>4</sup>. Great Britain in the 1970s needed ten<sup>5</sup>, and the Soviet Union nine<sup>6</sup> principles of warfare. In the span of several decades, the USA, Great Britain, France and the USSR used a total of less than thirty names for less than ten mostly the same contents. In eight cases, they are shared by two or more<sup>7</sup>, and five times it is a question of the principle of only one of these states<sup>8</sup>.

The principles of war are the efforts of military theorists to recognize all aspects of warfare as universal and relevant. They have a very wide application and directly refer to the unique features of warfare, while avoiding literary and dogmatic constructions.

In essence, these are the long-term basis and general guidelines for the implementation of activities at all levels of war and are the permanent basis of the army's doctrine.

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3 There are nine of these principles: objective, unity of command, offensive, security, concentration of forces, surprise, economy of force, simplicity, execution of maneuvers (Operations, FM 3-0).

4 Concentration of forces, freedom of action, surprise; more precisely: the struggle for freedom of action and the economy of force are the only guiding principles, since the economy already requires and includes a certain concentration of forces.

5 Aim, offensive operations, cooperation, concentration of forces, economy of effort, mobility - flexibility, surprise, security, maintenance of morale, management - command.

6 Advance and Consolidation, Offensive/Attack, Assembling Forces, Concentration, Economy of Force, Maneuver and Initiative, Surprise and Deception, Necessary Reserves, Destruction.

7 Aim, offensive/offensiveness, command, concentration (strength, effort), economy, maneuver (mobility, freedom of action, initiative), surprise (deception), security (insurance, reliability).

8 Reserves, simplicity, maintenance of morality, management, destruction.

## *Principles of war*

According to the latest FM 3-0 Operations (FM 3-0 Operations, 2022), nine principles of war are stated: objective, offensive, concentration, economy of force, manoeuvre, unity of command, security, surprise, simplicity. Those nine principles of war provide general instructions for conducting war and non-war operations at the strategic, operational and tactical levels. According to FM, these principles are the permanent foundations of US military doctrine. The US Army published its original principles of war after World War I. In subsequent years, the US Army adapted the original principles, but overall, they have withstood the tests of analysis, experimentation, and practice.

Furthermore, according to FM 3-0 Operations, principles of war are not a checklist. They do not apply in the same way in every situation. Rather, they summarize the features of successful operations carried out during the wars. Their greatest value lies in the education of military professionals. Along with the study of past campaigns, major operations, battles and engagements, the principles of war are a powerful tool for analysis.

Conceptually and formally, the principles of war are determined within the framework of ideas, doctrinal settings and global views on war, within the framework of scientifically based and general historical experiences and knowledge in practice, appropriate to specific historical and political circumstances and technological achievements of the time, within the framework of scientifically based predictions about possible features of the future war.

The basic principles of war are:

- Objective. Direct every military operation towards a clearly defined, decisive and attainable objective.
- Offensive. Gain, retain and use the initiative.
- Concentration. Concentrate the effects of combat power at a decisive place and time.
- Economy of force. Allocate minimum essential combat power to secondary efforts.
- Manoeuvre. Place the enemy in a position of disadvantage through the flexible application of combat power.

- Unity of command. For each objective, ensure unity of command under one responsible commander.
- Security. Never allow the enemy to gain an unexpected advantage.
- Surprise. Strike the enemy at a time or place or in a manner for which he is not prepared.
- Simplicity. Prepare clear, simple plans and clear, concise orders to ensure complete understanding.

In contrast to the trust in experience, the scientific foundation and the importance of the principles of war, which corresponds to standardized operational procedures at certain levels of warfare, some other knowledge and critical judgment about the questionable credibility of war experiences are gaining momentum. Surprising questions and answers come to this thought from many sides. For example, are concentration of forces, surprise and economy of force principles really inherent in war, or are they relational concepts that do not belong to these principles? This doubt is of course a challenge to the established military strategic thinking. It disrupts the order and sequence of the inherited and, as it is understood in practice, of confirmed truths. By emphasizing a change as innovation, contemporary theorists of manoeuvre warfare challenge even more radically the order and arrangement of contents uncritically held by consciousness. The theory of manoeuvre warfare requires such changes in all forms of doctrine, training, education, and ultimately in the entire culture of the army. It looks for large-scale innovations according to the following criterion: while some strategy with its principles remains unchanged and after all the changes in the warfare space coexists with them, these changes are not innovations. The request is summed up on a symbolic level in the saying: "Don't work hard - work fast, speed is important in everything called tempo." The principles of war as principles resistant to change, but not to the demands of all-round innovation. Along the lines of the impetus of the theory of manoeuvre warfare and beyond its intentions and limits, what opens here is the perspective of thinking about the penetration of time into the constructions of principles and its influence on the intensity and manner of their obsolescence.

### *The universality of the principle of war*

Based on the above, it is evident that the implementation characteristics, significance and role and content of each principle are changing, which may ultimately result in the disappearance of some of them and the appearance of new ones. This raises the question of their universality, that is, their lasting value, as well as the question of their significance, content, methods and means of implementation. During the historical period in which military theorists reflected on the principles of war, the problem of the development of military thought, and especially the principles of war, was approached from two different angles.

The first approach is based on the assumption that in military theory there are certain unchanging principles of war, and the main advocate was Jomini. Another approach was developed by Clausewitz, emphasizing that the principles of war in military theory are an expression of the concrete, but also changing conditions of war, which causes the principles of war to be changeable as well.

In the further elaboration of the article, I will try to justify the need to adapt and upgrade the principles of war in accordance with changes in the operational environment, historical and military-political circumstances, and technological achievements. Questioning the universality of the principles of war as their permanent characteristic highlights the lack of a scientific approach to the influence of modern weapons, techniques and other factors on waging war.

Today's doctrines, especially during and after World War II, prefer offensive actions not for the purpose of an aggressive policy, but for the implementation of armed combat.

The most recent example of such use of the principle of offensiveness is the war in Iraq, where the armies of the USA and Great Britain applied the principles of offensiveness and unity of purpose, as well as unity of command. Of course, with the use of all the other principles of war that I mentioned in the previous section.



Such periods are only a matter of timing created by the rivalry between the means of attack and defence because each new means of attack conditions a more modern means of defence and vice versa.

All in all, it is necessary to accept universality as a feature of the principles of war, but with constant additions and reshaping of the content and, above all, of the way they are implemented, in accordance with current and future circumstances and the achieved level of technological development, i.e. the requirements of contemporary doctrine in particular general circumstances.

The basis of the theory as well as the subject of research on war is the accepted principles of war, which are accepted using empirical scientific syntheses based on experience, but also scientific research on war and military operations themselves. The content of the stated principles and the manner of their application change from time to time, but their value and importance of the principles as a theoretical orientation remain in force over a longer period of time. Their basic value is in the method of application, in a different combination of individual parts for each situation. Knowing and recognizing these principles of war is a scientific theory, and their application in practice is the art of warfare.

Furthermore, the principles of war are of a universal character and apply to strategy, operational skill (the skill of planning and conducting operations) and tactics.

### **Determinations Of The Principles Of War In The Classics Of Military Theory (Jomini, Foch, Liddell Hart)**

At the base of all war operations is the principle that should be followed in all war combinations, and it contains several maxims: defeat the main body of the army with a strategic movement, at decisive points of the battlefield and communications; using a manoeuvre to tie up parts of the enemy's forces. The great principle and maxims of warfare are complemented by Jomini and in doing so he distinguishes three levels: principles of war, principles of strategy and grand tactics. Clausewitz sets three principles: concentration of forces, action of the strong against the strong, resolution by battle on the

main battlefield. Liddell Hart inaugurates six rules: stretching the enemy by indirect approach, surprise by unpredictable action, strong to weak, solution on the auxiliary battlefield. Ferdinand Foch is the first to introduce two abstract rules: economy of force and freedom of action, and General Beaufre emphasizes the importance of hitting a decisive point thanks to the freedom of action achieved by a good economy of force. Mao Zedong lays down six principles: before the enemy's advance, withdrawal by central retreat, advance when the enemy retreats, one-on-five strategy, five-on-one tactics, supply by kidnapping, and a solid connection between the army and the people.

Before World War II, the Soviets believed that the future war would be highly manoeuvrable and would not be reduced to a single strike, but to a series of large-scale operations. They emphasize the importance of the offensive operation, the offensive, and the coordinated action of the branches, they ignore the defensive operation, which should be carried out only in exceptional cases.

At the same time, in the French war doctrine, the importance of establishing and using fire is overemphasized, as well as the subordinate method of conducting the operation, which significantly conditions the possibility of manoeuvre and self-initiative of subordinates.

For the Germans, especially after the Nazis came to power, the offensive operation became a dogma. They believe that deep penetrations in the form of wedges carried by armoured units, along with coordinated action with infantry and aviation should prevent the enemy from deploying forces for battle and marginalize his fortifications.

In this section, I will discuss in more detail the considerations of three military theorists who appeared in different historical periods. Starting with Jomini as a representative of the Napoleonic Wars, Foch as a representative of the period before and during World War I, and Liddell Hart as a contemporary military theorist who is still cited by many today.

I will try to put each one individually in the historical framework to which the way of thinking in the army belongs at that historical moment.

### *Determinations of the principles of war by Jomini*

In his most comprehensive work, which considers military theory, *Summary of the Art of War* (The Project Gutenberg, 2004.), in the chapter entitled "On the basic principle of war", Jomini says that the aim of that work is to prove the existence of one basic principle for all military operations, a principle that stands above all good combinations.

This principle consists of the following: gradually bring the main forces of the army to decisive points on the battlefield and, if possible, to the enemy's communications, without exposing one's own communications through strategic combinations; by a suitable manoeuvre bring the main forces where only smaller parts of the enemy forces are located; when the battle begins, conduct a tactical manoeuvre in the same way, in order to bring the main forces to a decisive point in the area of the battle, that is, to a part of the enemy's positions that is important to weaken; the main forces should not be concentrated only on the decisive point, but should enter into action energetically and harmoniously and show the simultaneous effort of all forces.

It is evident from the above that Jomini himself in his explanation of the basic principle of war actually gave almost all the principles of war that we know today and have experienced during the long history of warfare of the human race. One of the fundamental principles of war that runs through all four points is manoeuvre. In addition to manoeuvres, in the explanation of the basic principle of war, we can also recognize the goal, that is, the unity of the goal, as the concentration of all one's strength - mass, concentration on a decisive point on the battlefield or theatre of war. Furthermore, Jomini also talks about how the main forces should not be concentrated only on the decisive point, but must enter into action energetically, so it is the principle of offensiveness/attack. Also through this hypothesis we can in some way read the principle of economy of force.

Emphasizing the principles is extremely important for Jomini, which can be read through all his works, and is most evident in his capital work *The Art of War*. He himself believes that the practice of war can be reduced to a series of general, and therefore universal, principles that can be learned and

applied in all situations. In his work *Traite des grandes operations militaires* (Jomini B. H., 1851) (Treatise on Grand Military Operations) he formulated a number of such principles. These formulations emphasize the importance of "strategic initiative", the advantage of concentrating forces at one point over that of several weak points in the opponent's formation, the importance of pursuing a beaten enemy, and the value of surprise.

Jomini felt the importance of surprise as a principle of war and says that we can never emphasize it enough. "You must, if possible, surprise the enemy," says Jomini. Furthermore, due to his direct participation in the Napoleonic Wars, Jomini gives great preference to the offensive as a principle of warfare. Jomini always pointed out the weaknesses of the defence even though the commander was forced to carry out defensive operations for political reasons. Jomini calls this term "defensive offensive" and believes that one should always undertake some form of attack such as an attack or a preventive attack in order to break the deadlock of the defence which destroys the defensive position and creates a sense of false security in the fortified positions among the soldiers, which is also called "the psychology of the Maginot line".

Jomini did not deal with the philosophical problems arising from the conception of war. He limited himself to what he believed to be the practical results of warfare. So the application and universality of the principles of war which can be learned and which should be applied in order to win the war and conquer territory and ultimately defeat the enemy, not necessarily destroy it.

### ***Determinations of the principles of war by Foch***

The following principles of war were stated by Foch already at the beginning of his book *The Principles of War* (Foch, 1911), namely: the principle of economy of force, the principle of freedom of action, the principle of free disposal of forces, the principle of security, etc.

It was rightly noted that the "etc." means that this is not all, and it is not clarified further in the book either.

If we analyse Foch's principles in detail, we do not find a clear difference between the principle of freedom of action and the principle of free disposal of forces. Foch seems to have used them interchangeably so that his students

would understand the enormous importance of initiative and freedom of action, independent of the will of the enemy. Other principles are more important – the principle of economy of force, which represents the crown of the freedom of action he preached, and the principle of security, which was a condition for its application.

According to Foch, the principle of economy of force allows the “art of war” to continue to exist, despite the danger of chaos and confusion arising from the conditions of modern war. Foch never clearly defined this principle.

It is clear that such a principle, although general, does not enable application in a multitude of diverse possible circumstances, for example, it could not be said that all forces should always be concentrated for a decisive strike. But it is equally clear what lesson this principle points to: the impossibility of being sure everywhere that the enemy will not be stronger, and thus the need to accept risks.

Is there then, as a consequence of this concentration, the danger that the enemy will surprise in the least expected place? The security principle was supposed to support this danger. Almost half of the work *The Principles of War* is devoted to the study of security principles. Its significance, in short, is best expressed in Foch’s words: “This concept of security, which we express in a single word, is divided into: material security, which enables the enemy to avoid blows when it is not desired or cannot be struck back. It is a means that makes a person feel safe in the midst of danger, when standing and moving under protection; tactical security, which enables the achievement of a goal or the execution of an order received, despite the unfavourable circumstances caused by the war, despite unknown facts and measures taken by the enemy of his own free will, and which also enables to act safely and with certainty, ensuring his own freedom of action, regardless of what the enemy might do.

### ***Determinations of the principles of war by Liddell Hart***

Based on his analysis of the history of warfare, Liddell Hart laid out several truths, which seem so fundamental and general that we could call them axioms (Liddell Hart, 2012). These truths are definitely practical instructions,

not abstract principles. Liddell Hart believes that military theorists tried to find the principles of warfare, which could be expressed in a single word, and later they needed several thousand words for its actual clarification. At the same time, all these principles are so abstract that they have different meanings for different scholars and, whatever their value, they depend on the way in which the respective scholar understands and comprehends the war. The longer a person searches for all possible abstractions, the more they look to him like a mirage that you can neither reach nor use, except as a mental exercise.

The principles of war, and not just one of them, can be summed up in one single word, which is, for example, "concentration". But, for the sake of its truth, this word should be supplemented so that it reads "concentration of strength against weakness" of real value, it must be clarified that the concentration of strength against weakness depends on the spreading of your enemy's forces, which again is achieved by the dispersion of your own strength, which is similar to, and partly is, dispersion. Your dispersion, your enemy's dispersion, and your concentration represent such an order in each of these actions follows on from the previous one. True concentration is the result of a deliberate dispersion of forces. Here is a fundamental principle, the understanding of which can prevent the fundamental (and most common) fallacy, and it is to allow your enemy freedom and time to concentrate in order to meet your concentration. However, the mere presentation of this principle is not very practical for its implementation.

The already mentioned axioms (hereinafter expressed in sayings) cannot be summed up in a single word, but we can still express them with the smallest number of necessary words, so that they would have practical value. For now, there are only eight of them, of which six are positive and two are negative. They apply to both strategy and tactics, unless otherwise indicated.

### *Positive axioms*

Adjust your goal to available means. – A clear insight into the real situation and a cold calculation should prevail when setting the goal. Madness is "biting off more than you can chew", and the beginning of military wisdom is the sense of what is possible. Therefore, you learn to face the facts, while

still maintaining confidence in yourself, because you need a lot of confidence that allows you to achieve what at first glance seems incredible to you at the beginning of the action. This confidence is like the current in a battery. Avoid wasting it in futile efforts and always remember that all your personal continuous confidence will do you no good if the cells in your batteries, which are the soldiers at your disposal and on whom you depend, will be exhausted.

Adapt your plan to the occasion, never losing sight of your goal. – Know that there are always more ways to achieve one goal, but also take into account that each object should always be closely related to the basic goal. When considering possible objects, evaluate the possibility of their realization according to whether all of them, and to what extent, would serve that fundamental goal, in case they were achieved, because it is bad to go astray, and it is even worse to reach a dead end.

Use the path of least expectation. – Try to imagine yourself in the state in which your enemy is, and think about what would be the direction that he would predict as the least likely or would be rejected altogether.

Use the direction (or course) of least resistance as long as it can lead you to any object that would contribute to the achievement of the main goal. – In tactics, this saying applies to the use of reserves, and in strategy to the exploitation of every tactical success.

Choose the operational direction that offers you a choice of alternative facilities. – In this way, you will confuse your enemy, and this will significantly increase your chances of capturing at least one object, most likely one of those that he defends the weakest, and which can train you to capture the other objects one after the other. An alternative choice of objects allows you to take the opportunity to occupy one of them. Having only one single object, unless the enemy is much weaker, means as well as the certainty that you will not be able to capture it, since in that case the enemy is no longer in suspense, which is what you are aiming for. The most common mistake is to combine a single line of operation, which is usually wisely chosen, with a single object, which is usually futile. Although this saying applies mainly in strategy, it should be applied in tactics as well, if possible, because it really forms the basis of tactical infiltrations.



Make sure that both your plan and versions are flexible so that you can adapt them to the occasion. – Your plan should predict and take measures for the next step in case of success or failure or only partial success, which is the most common in war. Your schedule should be such that it allows you to exploit or adapt this in as little time as possible.

### *Negative axioms*

Do not put all your strength into a single blow, as long as your enemy is on guard as long as he is in a good position to parry or avoid your blow. Historical experience shows us that, except against a much weaker enemy, no useful strike is possible unless the enemy's resistance or evasive power is paralyzed. Therefore, no commander should really attack the enemy in position, until he is sure that he has already developed paralysis, which is created by disorganization and its moral equivalent, which is the demoralization of the enemy.

Never repeat an attack in the same direction (or in the same form), in which you have already suffered failure. An increase in strength alone is not enough of a change, since it is likely that the enemy himself will be strengthened in the meantime. And it is even more likely that the success of rejecting you will strengthen him morally.

The essential truth, which represents the basis of these principles, is that in order to achieve success, two major problems must first be solved: disruption of the enemy and exploitation. One of them precedes and the other follows the actual shot, which in itself represents a relatively simple action. You cannot successfully attack your enemy if you have not previously created a favourable situation. You cannot make your action successful unless you take advantage of that second opportunity which arises before he can recover.

The study of history, the study of the great theoreticians of war leads him to the conclusion that the key to victory in war is to break the enemy's will to fight, at the same time all instruments of the power of a nation should be used, and the goal is not only the armed forces of the enemy but also the opposing nation. Manoeuvre warfare is used to crush the armed forces primarily by manoeuvring in a wide area (operational level), propaganda,



economic blockade, diplomacy, attack on the centre of power, attack on the population, strategic bombing – means to break the will (strategic level).

### *Application of the principles of war during the three periods of the Homeland War 1990-1995*

Here I will state the application of the principles of war that were applied during Croatian military operations as well as their peculiarities in the Homeland War according to time periods as starting points from which to start when researching the application of the principles of war during military operations during the Homeland War and which should draw attention to the peculiarities of these operations in relation to the operations of other armies. Furthermore, this list, let's call it that, is not in the role of history, but precisely in the role of finding out the peculiarities of the application of the principles of war through the implementation of military operations during the Homeland War.

#### *Application of the principles of war in the first phase of the war*

The first phase of the Homeland War can be dated from May 1990 to January 3, 1992. (Barić, Barišić, & Mareković, 2003.; Rakić & Dubravica, 2009.) The above dates limit this phase to the time of democratic elections and the change of government in the Republic of Croatia until the signing of the armistice in Sarajevo between the Republic of Croatia and the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA).

In the first phase of the war, the aggressor had complete supremacy in all elements of combat power, and it is questionable to talk about the application of the principles of war by the Croatian Armed Forces as a special category within the art of war. The aggressor used the doctrine of indirect approach, about which Sir Basil Liddell Hart wrote the most. In all areas of conflict, the forces consisted of units of the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Croatia, CAF brigades in the making, volunteer units (Croatian Defence Forces, HOS) and the National Guard, which primarily carried out defensive operations. Forces and resources did not show concentration on any part of the conflict in terms of the principle of war as a form of combat action.

The battlefield as an area of operations is not defined militarily; there was no economy of force and security was at a low level due to the permanent garrison of the former JNA and enemy-oriented enclaves.

During this phase of the war, it is quite difficult to find a clear demarcation between military and civilian activities. The Croatian army carried out military operations, but not at a strategic level. This is primarily a civil-military operation rather than a classic military operation. Despite this, the goal was unique and reflected in stopping the aggressor and stabilizing the battlefield.

In this phase of the war, we can highlight one specific feature that was not implemented in modern warfare until the beginning of the war in Croatia, and we can reduce it to the name "War for Barracks". The barracks and facilities of the JNA in Croatia have been under blockade since July, which is carried out by motley groups, among which the most numerous units are the National Protection units, and they are joined by citizens living nearby. Barracks crews are under constant multiple pressure because the blockading forces also use deliberate psychological measures and call for surrender, staying in Croatia, etc. With all blocked units, the local crisis headquarters conduct continuous and mostly fruitless negotiations. Non-Serb soldiers and officers fled from the besieged barracks, and those who remain are in contact with the Croats. On September 14, 1991, the Croatian authorities, which until then had prohibited attacks on barracks, issued an order to tighten the blockade, and barracks were cut off from electricity, water, supplies, telephone connections, garbage collection, etc., and combat operations against the barracks were intensified. The decimated crews of the barracks, exhausted by the long blockade and demoralized, stopped the defence relatively quickly. The spoils of war were extremely rich: over 230 tanks, about 400 larger cannons, tens of thousands of rifles, several million pounds of ammunition and a lot of other equipment and vehicles fell into Croatian hands. The captured weapons were immediately used, so the war for the barracks was the first turning point of the war. The fall of the barracks was also contributed by the incompetence of the JNA command, which did not take the units out of the buildings in time, as they were often located in

cities, in a narrow space, and were surrounded by tall buildings. The poor communication system left many barracks without contact with superior commands and other units after the termination of civilian telephone lines. Superior commands did not provide assistance to the besieged units, so breakthroughs, if they occurred, were organized by their own forces. The air force of the JNA (Yugoslav Air Force, JRZ) completely failed and limited itself to machine gunning and bombing already conquered barracks, so attacks on its own forces were not rare either.

Croatian forces, on the contrary, achieved their goal with a skilful combination of armed and non-armed means of pressure. In addition to being exhausted in the blockade, the morale of the crews was broken by calls to surrender that were transmitted by radio broadcasts and loudspeakers, and the commands were exhausted by daily negotiations, by offering money for the surrender of barracks and equipment, and by intimidation, which proved to be very successful, and a significant number of barracks and other facilities surrendered without a fight. The static blockade of the barracks was carried out by weakly armed but numerically strong units, while the attacks themselves were undertaken by better trained and armed smaller strike groups of the Croatian National Guard (ZNG) and special police, so that a significant economy of force was achieved.

One of the peculiarities of the first phase of the Homeland War is the improvisation that reached its unimaginable proportions. The use of agricultural planes that targeted enemy positions with boilers that were repurposed for bombing the enemy, the use of anti-hail rockets that also targeted enemy positions, but they were dangerous on both sides. You never knew which way the rocket would fly. In the battle for Vukovar on Trpinjska cesta, improvisation also flourished and I think that this technique of anti-armour combat should be studied more thoroughly at all military schools. Namely, the Croatian fighters on Trpinjska cesta destroyed the Serbian tanks in such a way that they opened the entrance door (*kapija*) from the courtyard, hid in the courtyards, and when the tanks came, they fired *Ose* and *Zolje* at the tanks and quickly retreated across the fences (*plotovi*) into the second courtyard (*avlija*), and again shot and of course hit the Serbian tanks. Enemy

infantry moved from the tanks on the tracks of the tracks so that the Croatian defenders fired at the tanks unhindered. The aggressor infantry did not fulfil their task of protecting armour from tank destroyers at all.

Based on the above, it is clear that during the first phase of the Homeland War, the Croatian Armed Forces did not apply the principle of offensive war, only in some minor actions, such as the operation Swath 10 and the operation Hurricane 91. Defensive operations generally took place on other parts of the Croatian battlefield. From this period of the Homeland War, we can conclude that the principles of war were the goal principle, which was achieved, the unity of command, all offensive or defensive operations were approved by the commander-in-chief, and the organization on the battlefield itself shows that the entire battlefield was divided into operational groups that had operational supervision over units that were within the area of responsibility of the operational groups. Furthermore, concentration as a principle of war was also used during the first phase of the Homeland War in such a way that the guard brigades were concentrated in places that were of exceptional importance for the Republic of Croatia during the implementation of defence operations. The economy of force is reflected in the following example: the 117th ZNG brigade from Koprivnica was never fully engaged in its area of responsibility. The brigade was sent to the area of responsibility by battalions so that the battalions could be replaced during the implementation of combat operations. This ensured the rest of the forces and easier mobilization of the forces if there was a need. Manoeuvre as a principle of war was used first of all by the use of defensive actions, and most often by defending from combat positions, which put the enemy in a disadvantageous position in the event of his offensive actions. Just by using defence from combat positions, which has the characteristics of elastic defence, we never allowed the enemy to gain an unexpected advantage, and thus we used the principle of security war. The plans were simple, due to the inexperience of the command staff, which was presented in a very acceptable and comprehensible way for the soldier: "Conquer that peak."

### *Application of the principles of war in the second phase of the war*

The second phase of the Homeland War began after the Sarajevo Armistice on January 3, 1992 and lasted until Operation Flash on May 1, 1995. (Barić, Barišić, & Mareković, 2003.; Rakić & Dubravica, 2009.)

In this phase of the war, the application of the principles of war and military operations are significantly different compared to the first phase of the war, and can be briefly summarized through these determinants: the presence of UN forces, a free part of the territory of the Republic of Croatia without the army of the former JNA in garrisons, the beginning of the armed conflict in the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the battlefield has been stabilized on a large part of the territory of the Republic of Croatia, a command system has been organized at all levels in the Croatian Armed Forces, the beginning of the restructuring of the Croatian Armed Forces, the Croatian Armed Forces have acquired the ability to conduct military operations at the highest levels in terms of quality and quantity.

In these circumstances, the aggressor decides to use his military force in the manner and doctrine of retaliation, that is, the use of fire strikes against vital objects on the entire free territory of the Republic of Croatia. Accordingly, the aggressor shapes his military force according to the system of classical corps organization. The characteristic of this organization is the static nature of the battle units and the small depth of defence.

The Croatian military goal in this phase of the war was to liberate the roads and create the assumptions of a single operational base that must enable the final operations to liberate the occupied territory, and to move the front line as far as possible from the big cities in order to make it impossible for the aggressor to operate artillery on them on a tactical level.

The general characteristics of these operations are: the manoeuvre of the forces that will be the bearer of the attack in the area of gravity of the operation, the bearers of these operations are the guard brigades, the dedicated formation of forces for the task, before the implementation of the operation, the commands are purposefully organized, the time of the implementation of the operation is shorter compared to the time required for preparation of the

operation, offensive operations are carried out by guard brigades, defensive operations are carried out by reserve brigades and home defence regiments, unified logistical support of all operations (ammunition and weapons) is the responsibility of the Croatian Armed Forces, other logistical support is the responsibility of civilian capabilities in the area of the operation.

A general feature of that period is the large operational breaks necessary for the implementation of training and education, as well as equipping and organizing the Croatian Armed Forces for the final liberation operations. These pauses were necessary due to the use of almost the same units for conducting offensive operations, not so much in terms of manpower as in terms of the lack of weapon systems and ammunition.

Operation Maslenica and Medak Pocket are the operations that best depict that period of the Homeland War and best describe the application of the principles of war and military operations of that period. Their determinants are: security which is manifested through timely and secret planning and preparations, application of the war principle of surprise, unity of command which is manifested through centralized command for each individual operation, concentration is expressed through the participation of only ready forces at the very beginning of the implementation of the operation with the participation of parts of the Croatian Navy and Croatian Air Force and Air Defence forces, the economy of force shows that only the minimum forces and resources necessary to deter the enemy from a possible attack on these routes are assigned to the auxiliary routes.

### *Application of the principles of war during final military operations*

The final operations for the liberation of the Republic of Croatia, or the third phase of the Homeland War, began with Operation Flash on May 1, 1995 and ended with the peaceful reintegration of the Republic of Croatia. (Barić, Barišić, & Mareković, 2003.; Rakić & Dubravica, 2009.)

Based on past experiences, the CAF used the principles of air-land battle doctrine during the preparation for the final operation to liberate the homeland. Its determinants are: short duration considering the relatively deep penetrations of the Croatian Armed Forces, avoiding the use of NBC

assets, avoiding major destruction, general mobilization was carried out, which excluded the possibility of strategic surprise, allowing self-initiative and creativity among subordinate commanders, organizing the command of the battlefield, we can say in some way, a joint command was set up that commanded the entire operation, in which all three branches of the Croatian Armed Forces were involved, as well as special units of the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Croatia, the centre of gravity, Knin, was determined, corridors were planned for the retreat of the aggressor forces in order for them to make it possible to leave the territory of the Republic of Croatia more easily due to reduced losses.

Operations Flash and Storm are the operations that best illustrate that period of the Homeland War and best describe the application of the principles of war of that period. Their determinants are: the goal of the operations in the last phase of the Homeland War was clearly defined and aimed towards a decisive and achievable goal – the liberation of part of the Croatian territory temporarily occupied by the aggressors, the offensiveness was very clearly expressed through the exceptional speed of the operations and the very short duration operation, as the name itself says, Flash and Storm, the manoeuvre is manifested through the use of guard brigades as the bearers of the attack with the support of other forces of the Croatian Armed Forces in support of attacks on the main lines of operations, security which is manifested through timely and secret planning and preparations which were carried out at the highest levels of command in the Croatian Armed Forces, the application of the war principle of surprise. (The enemy realized very late what had actually happened to him, and panic was caused among his forces, which retreated very quickly to the neighbouring Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina.), unity of command, which is manifested through centralized command for each individual operation, concentration is shown through the participation of only ready forces at the very beginning of the implementation of the operation with the participation of parts of Croatian Navy and Croatian Air Force and Air Defence forces, the economy of force shows that only the minimum forces and resources necessary to deter the enemy from a possible attack on the team are allocated on the auxiliary routes directions, simple and clear plans and concise orders were prepared that ensured a complete understanding of the tasks that were set before the Croatian Armed Forces.



The complete liberation of the country came about through the peaceful reintegration of Eastern Slavonia. The enemy saw that it was no longer advisable to confront the Croatian Armed Forces with force and simply left the temporarily occupied part of the Republic of Croatia.

Based on the last statement, we have already come to one feature of the art of war, which is that it is not necessary to physically destroy the enemy, but to render him incapable of fighting and to impose peace on him on our terms, thus avoiding large human casualties.

## **Conclusion**

Common sense and balanced judgment are necessary qualities for a successful military commander, but they alone will rarely guarantee success in the ruthless conditions of war. The principles of war are derived from hundreds of years of military history. They are, in fact, abstractions usually expressed as axioms. They are universally accepted as self-evident truths. The principles of war must undergo critical and constructive reflection and become the main part of the instructions before they are practically applied. They can be violated sometimes, but they should always be kept in mind. The principles of war are usually directly or implicitly part of the doctrine, but never the whole doctrine.

Time is often a critical factor; information may be sparse and unreliable or difficult to find; danger and fatigue usually have a negative impact on judgement, and unforeseen circumstances often disrupt even the best-laid plans. In order to meet these strict requirements, the commander's common sense and judgment must be grounded in a sound knowledge of certain fundamental principles of war which have marked the success of commanders in past wars.

The mere application of these principles of war does not guarantee victory. Circumstances dictate the relative importance of each principle, so in some cases a commander cannot fully adhere to one principle to the detriment of another. Rapid change in technology and capabilities also has the purpose of changing the emphasis and application of these principles. That is why it is a challenge for the commander to know what to emphasize at any given



moment. Therefore, these principles are not immutable laws, but rather guidelines for action.

The role and function of the principle today can be defended by a comprehensive analysis of historical experiences, but it is shown that a number of innovations in the ways and intensity of the implementation of the principle's content should be respected. That is why there is a need to adapt the way of implementing the content of the principles as a basic assumption of their effectiveness in practice, especially those principles that have been significantly confirmed in practice so far.

Some principles were imposed in relation to others, but all these principles are applied and recognized even today after so many years.

The analysis of modern cases of warfare imposes manoeuvre, surprise, security and objective as mutually conditioned and dependent principles of warfare. The effectiveness of warfare at all levels directly depended on the degree of their timeliness, quality and mutual coordination. It has also been shown that the main features of most principles are activity, speed and initiative.

Manoeuvre has become the main way of imposing a decisive battle, which is what the attacker strives for, but also the fundamental way of delaying the battle until the conditions for victory are created, which is what the defender strives for. Manoeuvre, a complex concept, has become an irreplaceable principle of warfare, and with new contents it becomes the essence of warfare as its permanent and important feature. Its effectiveness is conditioned by the optimal choice of methods and ways of implementing its contents appropriate to specific circumstances.

The objective, defined as a principle of warfare, states that all military action should be directed towards a clearly defined and determined goal that will achieve the ultimate purpose of war: defence.

There is a unique process at work that significantly limits the freedom of military action, so an optimally chosen and achieved military goal today does not necessarily mean a war victory, that is, the achievement of political goals. Let's mention how the newly established relationship between war and politics was one of the important factors in determining the goal of Operation Storm, especially in relation to the occupied Croatian Danube

Region. Therefore, the relationship between warfare and politics in the context of the goal as a principle must be respected in the time to come because it is not a one-time phenomenon, but a historical tendency.

The appearance of new means, especially means for early detection, imposes a logical conclusion that the possibilities of applying surprise as a principle of war have been significantly reduced. Modern means have undeniably made surprise more difficult, but they have not made it impossible. The experiences of modern warfare have shown that it is still possible to achieve surprise by place, time, method of action, and by choosing a target and using new means of war technology. Precisely the wars of the recent era, whose characteristics are vaguely defined limitations and an unclear degree of expansion of the conflict (local wars), are suitable grounds for the implementation of the principle of surprise. It still remains an important principle of warfare, as it has been in all recent wars. When it comes to surprise, we can freely add security as one of the principles of war that is complemented by surprise. The security of plans and the secrecy of planning provides a significant basis for the application of successful surprise. Those two principles complement each other perfectly if their essence is respected.

Concentration as a principle will not be achieved by the ratio of the number of units and people, but by the quality of the elements of combat power. The goal of the war will be the sources of strength of the aggressor military power in general (mainly motivational-willing) and the elements of the communication and information structure of the armed forces, not the classic elements of the aggressor forces of the operation. The fundamental means of security as a principle will be the timeliness of notification in the function of the security of the military forces and the population. The battlefield will not be primarily determined by the classical front line, nor will the classical understanding of offensive and defensive action be valid. But offensiveness will be the principle, but in the form of implementation through the supremacy of speed, activity, initiative and equipment and training in the modern sense.

When Jomini, Foch and Liddell Hart spoke about the "principles of war" or axioms, they were also guided by the breakdown of historical experiences that were available and primarily known to them. Analysing their "principles

of war”, we cannot get away from the impression that all the principles of war that we know today within the framework of nine terms actually came from the thinking of those three great men of military thought throughout history. Reading the aforementioned definitions of the principles of war and comparing them with the principles of war today, we can state with great certainty that the three of them, and some of their predecessors and contemporaries, established these principles of war long before us and that they are very much still relevant today. Of course, all principles are subject to time adjustments and the influence of technology, which sometimes develops too quickly, as I stated at the very beginning of the article.

Furthermore, it is evident that during the Homeland War, we applied the principles of war in a gradational manner. What do I want to say? Namely, it is evident that at the very beginning of the Homeland War, the application of the principles of warfare in the preparation and implementation of the operations themselves were applied selectively and, we can say so, accidentally. But as we developed as an armed force through the training at CDA, the principles of war were applied more and more comprehensively during the planning and implementation of the operations themselves. This can be seen on the example of the final operations in the Homeland War, Storm and Flash, which are a textbook example of the application and observance of all the principles of war during their planning and implementation, and thus obtained such results that the whole world admired our magnificent operations. In the above examples, I did not refer in detail to the other principles of war that were applied during the planning and implementation of given operations, but I focused on those principles that particularly stood out as positive and that in some way proved that there is continuity in the application of the principles of war from the classics of military theory to the Homeland War, up to the present day. I believe that it is very easy to read from the Homeland War that the principles of war are nevertheless universal and applicable for many years, which only confirms the thesis about the universality and longevity of the principles of war. Of course, the principles of war have developed throughout history and are subject to some changes over time and the use of new technology, but still, at their core, they remain unchanging and somewhat permanent.

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## About the author

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## **Sličnosti i razlike u načelima ratovanja – od klasika do Domovinskog rata**

### **Sažetak**

*Načela ratovanja kako su ih shvaćali i objašnjavali te na kraju definirali klasici vojne misli Jomini, Foch i Liddell Hart, u članku sam nastojao povezati sa suvremenim određenjima načela rata koja su se primjenjivala u Domovinskom ratu kroz provedbu operacija, prvenstveno ofenzivnih. Ovaj članak daje stručni pregled Diplomskog rada „Sličnosti i razlike u načelima ratovanja – od klasika do Domovinskog rata“, koji sam pisao i obranio na Intergranskoj zapovjedno-stožernoj školi Hrvatskoga vojnog učilišta.*

### **Ključne riječi**

*rat, teorije rata, načela rata, Domovinski rat, operacija.*