



Can principles of war apply equally to different environments?

(land, air, sea, space, cyber)

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Engagement opérationnel

Trained as a paratrooper, Major General Reinhard Wolski joined the Army Light Aviation and was posted to Celle as an aircraft pilot in 1984. In 1989, he was posted as a G2/G4 officer at the Army Tactical Centre and then as a G3 officer at Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe. He was appointed Commanding General of ALAT in 2009 and was appointed to head the NATO Joint Warfare Center in 2014, then to head the Army Concept and Capability Development Center (Amtes für Heeresentwicklung) in 2016. He has deployed to Bosnia, Kosovo and Afghanistan during his career.

The principles of war are lighthouses to guide the uncertain navigator through the storm. In this respect, the Clausewitzian approach lays the foundation for a philosophy of warfare with an important strategic dimension; the Jominian approach focuses more on the operational level. However, national and NATO military doctrines do not make a clear distinction between the principles of the two approaches.

In Germany, the Clausewitzian approach has had a significant impact on thinking about the principles of warfare. The German Army is thus the only major armed force that has never formally adopted a list of principles. Only a 1999 document contains principles similar to those discussed today, with principles for political decision-makers and others for strategic and operational commanders. Reflection on the principles of warfare is moreover confronted with an evolution in the concept of the war zone. Indeed, the traditional environments of warfare (land, air and water) are now being supplemented by new areas such as space and cyberspace.

These areas are not bounded by national borders and must be considered in a comprehensive manner, including in the context of regional conflicts. In this context, for land, air and naval operations, the main challenge in the future should be to define and defend principles that preserve the freedom of action of the armed forces. The principles

of economy of forces (especially where mass is limited) and concentration of effort (or effects) should also remain fundamental. The principle of velocity also appears critical.

Ultimately, as the conflict environment becomes increasingly transparent, as capabilities in terms of SRI operations develop and as intelligence becomes more and more 360°, uncertainty may no longer appear to be an essential principle of warfare. Nevertheless, to this day, we must continue to consider this element.

On land, in the air and at sea, in order to preserve our freedom of action and our ability to concentrate our efforts where we wish, we must therefore consider the conditions and potential consequences of the actions undertaken (s'). On land, in the air and on the sea, in order to preserve our freedom of action and our ability to concentrate our efforts where we wish, we must therefore consider the conditions and potential consequences of the actions undertaken (for example when flying over certain airspace), guarantee effective means of communication (if necessary by developing hybrid systems and/or common platforms), make progress in the field of digitalisation and continue to develop SRI (around the concept of "sensor-to-shooter").

In space, freedom of action is likely to remain limited unless a large set of dedicated satellites is available. In this field, the economy of forces also seems essential, with a real but limited capacity to concentrate efforts. Velocity also appears to be fundamental, in particular with regard to the use of holding orbits or self-protection systems - the first attacker who manages to blind a system in space is likely to gain a considerable advantage. The principle of uncertainty, on the other hand, is less relevant here, given the limited number of players capable of operating in space to date.

In cyberspace, some of the principles of war may be intangible. Nevertheless, freedom of action could be called into question, especially in a cyber maze dominated by the adversary. In such a case, in order to create uncertainty for the adversary, the legal conditions and preparations, which might allow cyber-offensive operations, would need to be examined. The principle of economy of forces could, on the other hand, take on a different meaning in the cyber environment, for all stakeholders.

While cyber warfare may be the cheapest means of achieving supremacy over certain adversaries, depending on the context, it may require armies of "trolls" or, on the contrary, a handful of specialists. If so, the tactical, operational and strategic control of such operations would need to be strengthened.

Within NATO, the Framework for Future Alliance Operations (FFAO) thus deals with what will be at stake in military combat in the future and the implications for the armed forces. This document does not define principles of warfare per se, but proposes a framework for the philosophy of combat and the conduct of military operations.

In conclusion, the principles of war can be applied to all dimensions and scales. In the future, in view of the developments referred to above, these principles will probably have to be defended more strongly. Moreover, cyberwarfare could offer new possibilities for establishing in principle what Sun Tzu defined as the supreme art of

warfare, namely subduing the enemy without fighting.

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