



The Great Military Philosophers on Afghanistan

Video 10: Sun Tzu – Chapters 12 & 13: Fires and Intelligence

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BOARD 1: AGENDA

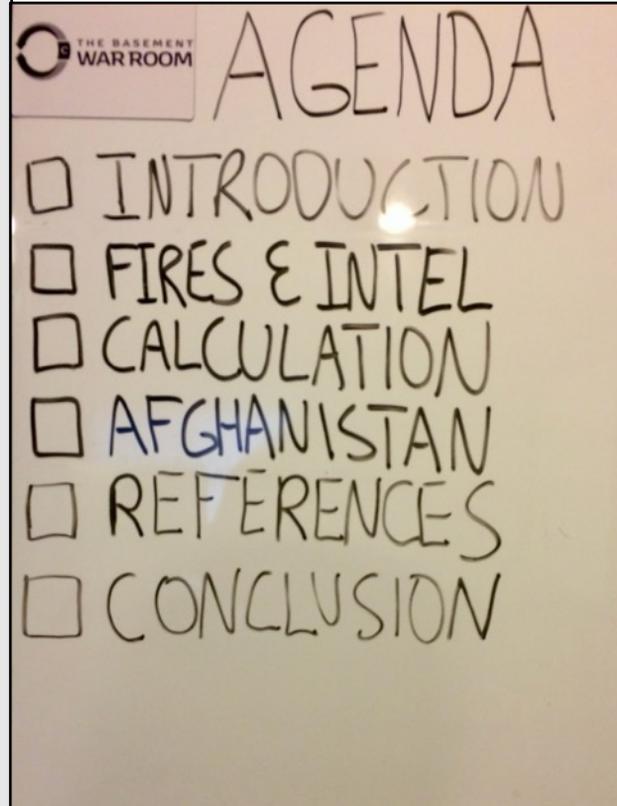
Introduction. Master Sun says "The farsighted ruler thinks the situation through carefully." (Ames) I suspect he would be pretty critical of our wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Introduce myself: Hi, I'm John Lemay and welcome to my basement war room.

Agenda:

- In this video in *The Great Military Philosophers on Afghanistan Series* I'm going to explore *The Art of War* Chapters 12 and 13 – Fires and Intelligence (The Use of Spies).
- I'll then discuss how *The Science of War* (calculations) is a major theme throughout *The Art of War* and contrast our War in Afghanistan with Master Sun's standards for calculations.
- This is the last talk on Sun Tzu. In Ames' book, Part II and III are interesting and I should have paired some of it with the 13 regular chapters, but I'm not going to dive into them on their own. The newly discovered material either repeats content from Chapters 1-13 or is fragmented.

Transition: So let's jump right in to Fires and Intelligence.



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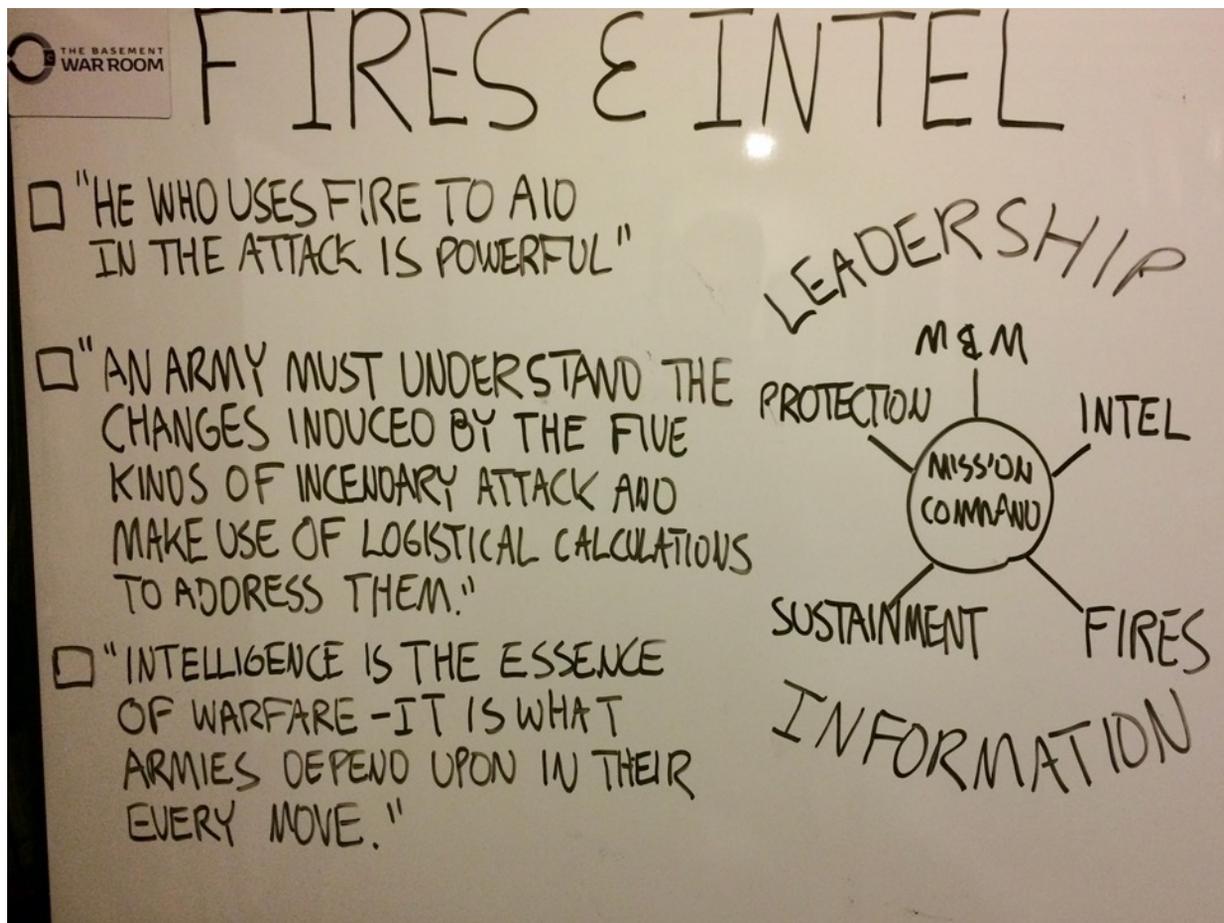
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BOARD 2: FIRES AND INTELLIGENCE

- Doctrine. U.S. Army doctrine describes combat power as the combination of Fires, Intelligence, Movement & Maneuver, Protection, Sustainment, Mission Command, Information and Leadership. Master Sun's prescriptions in *The Art of War* rhyme with current doctrine.
- The Art of War.
 - "He who uses fire to aid the attack is powerful." (Ames)
 - So instead of just fighting infantry on infantry, use combined arms! Or build combat power through the integration of the warfighting functions.
 - "In all cases an army must understand the changes induced by the five kinds of incendiary attack, and make use of logistical calculations to address them." (Ames)
 - This is the role of NCOs and officers. Win the battle before it is fought by building superior combat power by integrating the warfighting functions through proper planning, preparation, execution and assessment.
 - "Intelligence is of the essence in warfare - it is what the armies depend upon in their every move." (Ames)





CALCULATION

- CHAPTER 1 ESTIMATES: "THUS DO MANY CALCULATIONS LEAD TO VICTORY AND FEW TO DEFEAT."
- CHAPTER 13 USING SPIES: "THE FARSIGHTED RULER THINKS THE SITUATION THROUGH CAREFULLY."
- SUN TZU IS NOT A FAN OF HUBRIS

BOARD 3: CALCULATION

Calculations. *The Art of War* is a reaction to an era of unprofessional leadership by a aristocratic class in China. The emergence of powerful states wielding huge armies raised a cry for professionalism – generals who seriously studied war and systemically applied their study to winning. The “Science of War” and calculations is a theme throughout the book.

Chapter 1 Estimates: “The general who wins a battle makes many calculations in his temple ere the battle is fought. The general who loses a battle makes but few calculations beforehand. Thus do many calculations lead to victory and few calculations to defeat.” (Giles).

Chapter 13 Use of Spies: “Thus the reason the farsighted ruler and his superior commander conquer the enemy at every move, and achieve successes far beyond the reach of the common crowd, is foreknowledge. Such foreknowledge cannot be had from ghosts and spirits, educed by comparison with past events, or verified by astrological calculations. It must come from people—people who know the enemy’s situation.” (Ames)





BOARD 4: AFGHANISTAN

Master Sun's Standard: "Thus it is said: The farsighted ruler thinks the situation through carefully; The good commander exploits it fully. If there is no advantage, do not move into action; If there is no gain, do not deploy the troops; If it is not critical, do not send them into battle. A ruler cannot mobilize his armies in a rage; a commander cannot incite a battle in the heat of the moment. Move if it is to your advantage; bide your time if it is not. A person in a fit of rage can be restored to good humor and a person in the heat of passion can be restored to good cheer, **but a state that has perished cannot be revived, and the dead cannot be brought back to life.** Thus the farsighted ruler approaches battle with prudence, and the good commander moves with caution. This is the way (tao) to keep the state secure and to preserve the army intact." (Ames)

U.S. Approach. Supposedly an aide to President Bush said that "guys like [the reporter] were "in what we call the reality-based community," which he defined as people who "believe that solutions emerge from your judicious study of discernible reality." "That's not the way the world really works anymore," he continued. "We're an empire now, and when we act, we create our own reality. And while you're studying that reality — judiciously, as you will — we'll act again, creating other new realities, which you can study too, and that's how things will sort out. We're history's actors . . . and you, all of you, will be left to just study what we do."

Bad U.S. (or lack of) Calculations.

- A central government would work well in Afghanistan and we can build it top down. What gave us that idea? Did we study the reality of Afghan culture, history and geography?
- We could build a capable Afghanistan Military in our own image. Why did we think that would work? Again, did we explore Afghan culture?
- Pakistan would not be a sanctuary for the Taliban. It's all Pastunistan!



CONCLUSION

REFERENCES

THE ART OF WAR (GILES, GRIFFITH, AMES)

ARTICLE BY RON SUSKIND

THE ART OF WAR FOR D&D PLAYERS
BY M.T. BLACK

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COMMENT!

REFERENCES AND CONCLUSION

References:

Faith, Certainty and the Presidency of George W. Bush by Ron Suskind

<https://www.nytimes.com/2004/10/17/magazine/faith-certainty-and-the-presidency-of-george-w-bush.html>

The Art of War and Other Classics of Eastern Philosophy - Canterbury Classics (Giles Translation 1910).

Sun Tzu The Art of War - Oxford University Press (Griffith Translation 1963).

Sun Tzu The Art of Warfare - Ballantine Books (Ames Translation 1993).

The Art of War for D&D Players by M.T. Black. **Master Sun, you have arrived!!!**

Conclusion:

- The mission of The Basement War Room is to preserve the lessons of the Afghanistan and Iraq Wars. If you would like to aid me in this mission, **please join my facebook group “Lessons of the Afghanistan and Iraq Wars.”** <https://www.fb.com/groups/WarLessons/>
- **Please share on social media and comment!**
- Additionally, if you would like a look behind the scenes of The Basement War Room, **sign up for the newsletter on my website.** <https://mailchi.mp/83e750381519/thebasementwarroom>
- Thank you for watching!

