



# The Great Military Philosophers on Afghanistan

## Video 8: Sun Tzu – Chapters 7 & 8: Armed Contest & The Nine Contingencies

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### BOARD 1: AGENDA

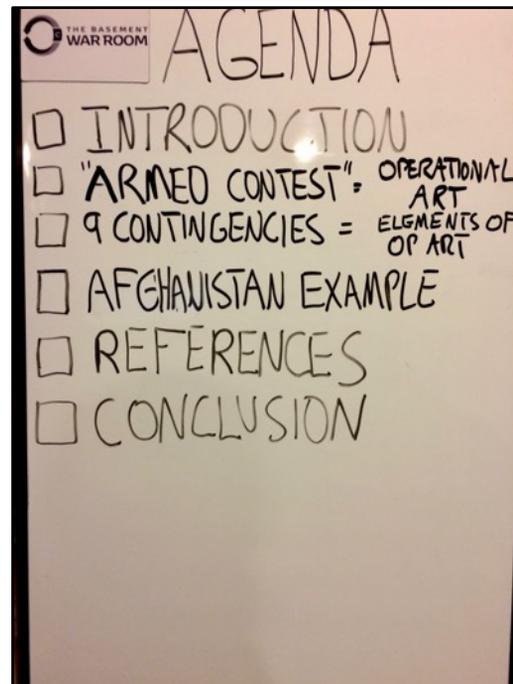
Introduction. The Art of War is replete with tactical wisdom, but does it address operational art?

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 7 and 8: Armed Contest & The Nine Contingencies.
- I'll explore how they relate to the current doctrine of operational art and then give an example from Afghanistan.
- This is not an academic argument that Sun Tzu thought in terms of modern doctrine. Rather it is an attempt to illuminate the meaning of modern doctrine using The Art of War.

Transition: So let's jump right in to Armed Contest.



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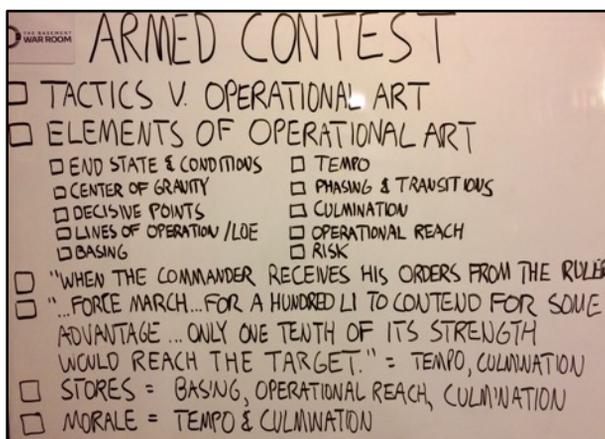
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## BOARD 2: ARMED CONTEST

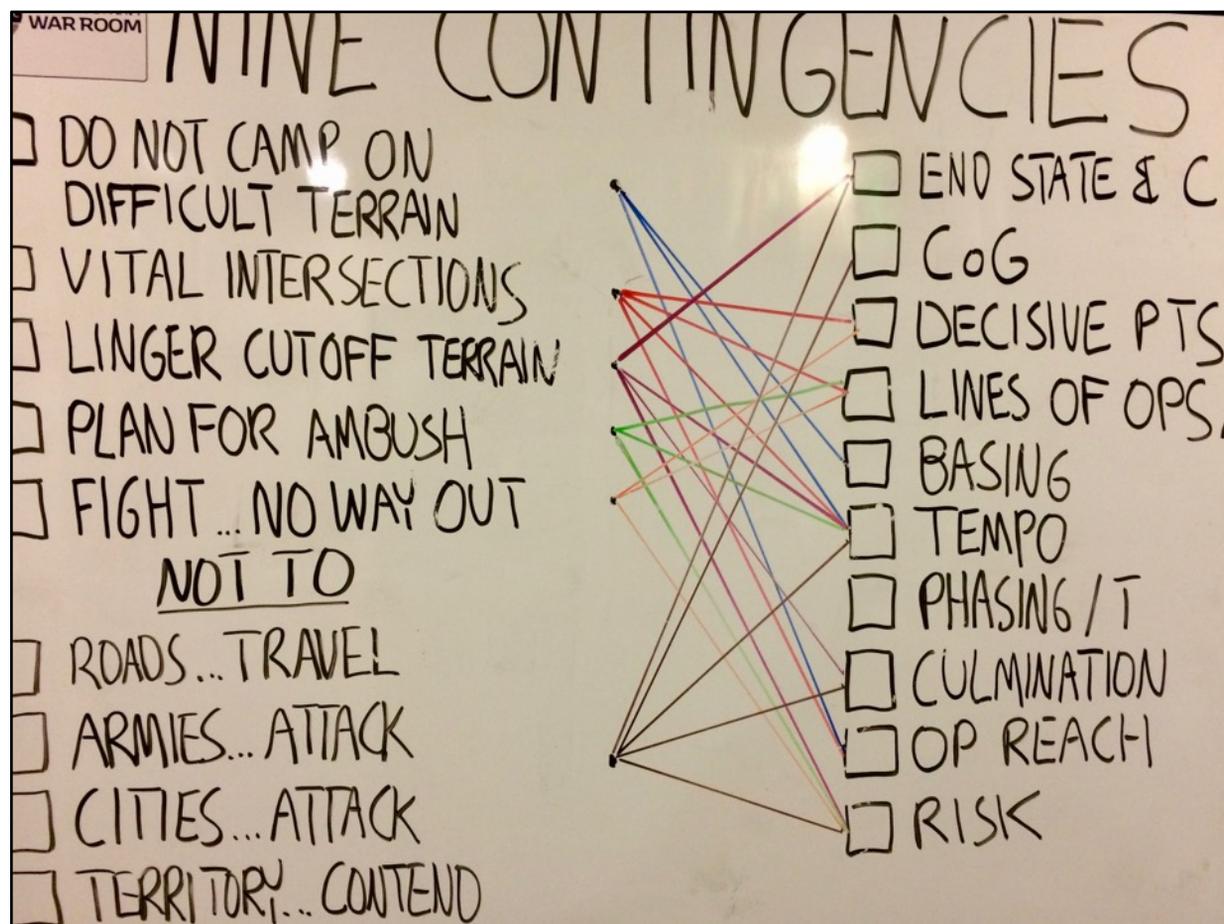
### Operational Art v. Tactics

- Definition of Tactics. Tactics is the application of combat power in time, space, and purpose to accomplish a task (or tactical action). (Lemay).
- Definition of Operational Art. For Army forces, operational art is the pursuit of strategic objectives, in whole or in part, through the arrangement of tactical actions in time, space, and purpose. (ADP 3-0 p2-1).
- Elements of operational art (ADP 3-0 p2-6...2-11).
  - End state and conditions: "The end state is a set of desired future conditions the commander wants to exist when an operation ends."
  - Center of gravity: "A center of gravity is the source of power that provides moral or physical strength, freedom of action, or will to act."
  - Decisive points: "A decisive point is a geographic place, specific key event, critical factor, or function that, when acted upon, allows commanders to gain a marked advantage over an enemy or contribute materially to achieving success."
  - Lines of operations and lines of effort: "A line of operations is a line that defines the directional orientation of a force in time and space in relation to the enemy and links the force with its base of operations and objectives.... A line of effort is a line that links multiple tasks using the logic of purpose rather than geographical reference to focus efforts toward establishing a desired end state."
  - Tempo: "Tempo is the relative speed and rhythm of military operations over time with respect to the enemy."
  - Phasing and transitions: "A phase is a planning and execution tool used to divide an operation in duration or activity."
  - Culmination: "The culminating point is a point at which a force no longer has the capability to continue its form of operations."
  - Operational reach: "The limit of a unit's operational reach is its culminating point."
  - Basing: "A base is a locality from which operations are projected or supported."
  - Risk: "Risk is the probability and severity of loss linked to hazards."

Sun Tzu was talking tactics in previous chapters but now is discussing operational art because:

- Both Chapters 7 & 8 start with "when the commander receives his orders from the ruler." (Ames). So the commander is focused on achieving a strategic objective.
- "...force-march at double time for a hundred li to contend for some advantage, its commanders would all be taken, its strongest men would be out in front, the exhausted ones would lag behind, and as a rule only one tenth of its strength would reach the target." (Ames). = Operational reach, tempo, culmination.
- "For this reason, if an army is without its equipment and stores, it will perish; if it is without provisions, it will perish; if it is without its material support, it will perish." = Basing, operational reach, culmination.
- Even the discussion of morale is tempo and culmination.

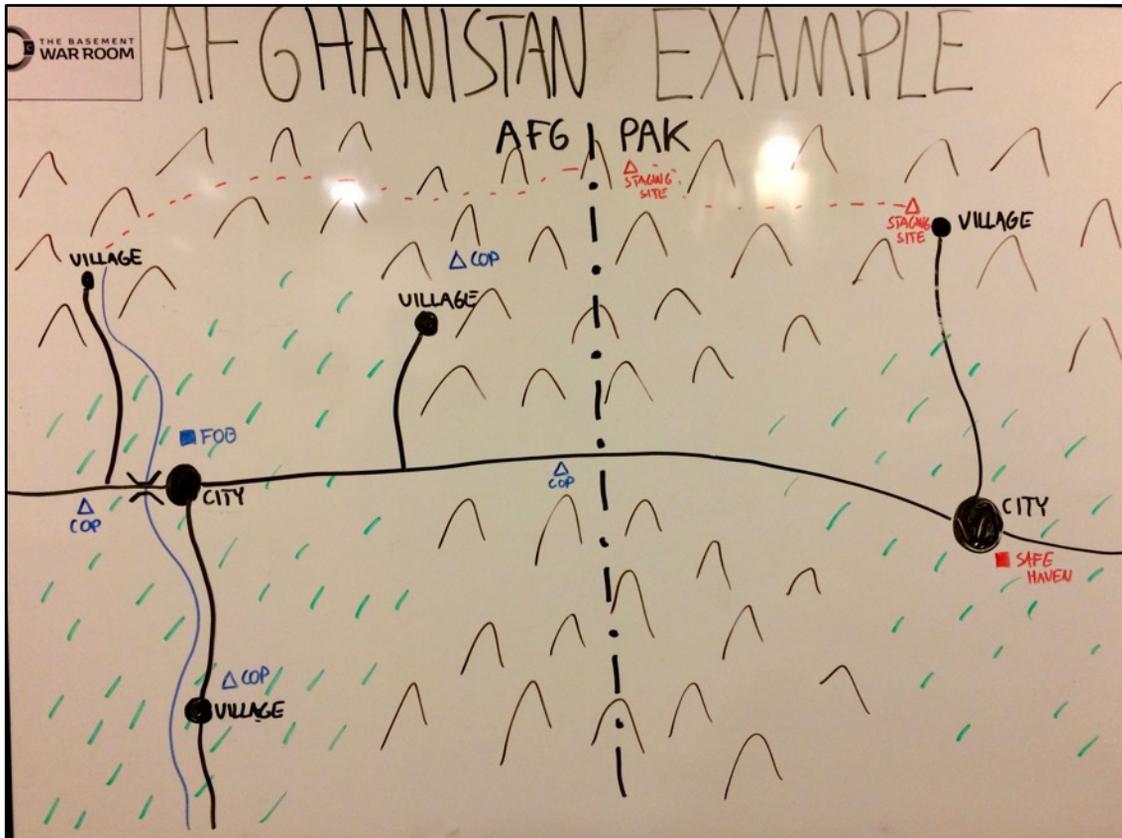




### BOARD 3: THE NINE CONTINGENCIES

- This board cross references Sun Tzu’s Nine Contingencies to the modern Ten Elements of Operational Art. So what? The relevance is that our current doctrine is vague - what does Center of Gravity mean? Master Sun’s simple prescription that “There are cities not to be attacked” illuminates the meaning of Center of Gravity.
- “He should not make camp on difficult terrain” = Basing; tempo, risk
- “He should join with his allies on strategically vital intersections” = Decisive points, lines of operation, tempo, operational reach
- “He should not linger on cutoff terrain” - (enemy territory - 11:160) = End state, tempo, culmination, risk
- “He should have contingency plans on terrain vulnerable to ambush” = Lines of operation, risk
- “He should take the fight to the enemy on terrain from which there is no way out” Decisive points
- “There are roadways not to be traveled” = Lines of operation, risk
- “Armies not to be attacked” = End state, center of gravity, culmination, risk
- “Walled cities not to be assaulted” = End state, center of gravity, tempo, culmination, risk
- “Territory not to be contested” = End state, center of gravity, tempo, culmination, risk



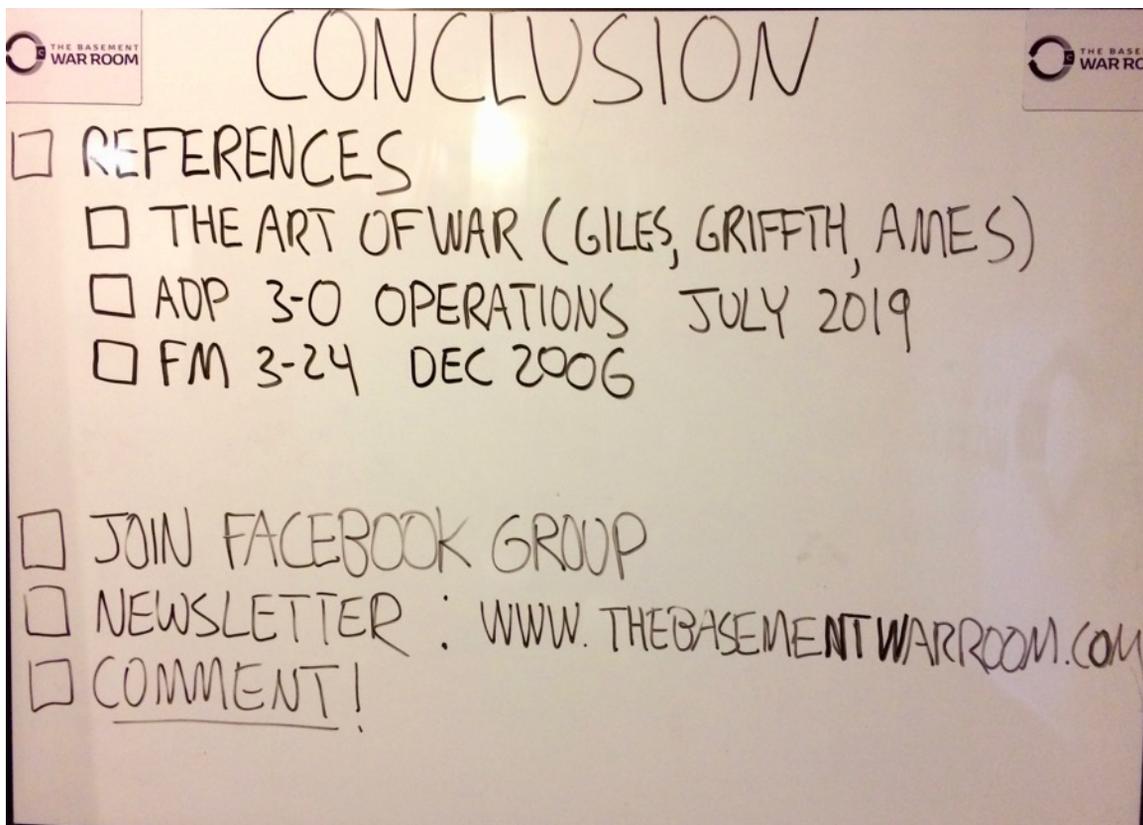


### BOARD 4: AFGHANISTAN EXAMPLE

- Distribution of FOBs and COPs directly relates to operational reach.
- Taliban lines of operation through the mountain affect tempo because they create a seasonal fighting cycle. (The mountains are impassable during the winter.)

The Art of War	US/NATO/GIRoA	Taliban/Insurgents
Do not camp on difficult terrain	Wrong – Establish COPs where there is a purpose	Wrong – Difficult terrain is protection
Join with allies at vital intersections	Yes – Example of COP in the pass partnered with Pakistan Military	Yes – Example of partnership with village elders and local people
Don't linger in cutoff terrain	N/A	Contextual. Sun Tzu defines cut off terrain as crossing the border, but the border means nothing – it is all “Pashtunistan.”
Contingency plans for ambush	Yes – The IED is the enemy's primary weapon system	Yes – The government tries to interdict insurgents as they infiltrate from Pakistan
Fight the enemy on terrain with no way out	Yes – Hard to do, night raids are an example but they anger the population	No – The insurgents can't get a superior correlation of forces
Roadways, armies, cities, territory not to be attacked	Yes – <b>Clear, hold, build!</b> This is an example of prioritizing effort.	Yes – Again, the insurgents can rarely muster superior combat power.





## REFERENCES AND CONCLUSION

### References:

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

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

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

ADP 3-0 Operations July 2019.

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FM 3-24 Counterinsurgency December 2006.

### Conclusion:

- If this presentation was valuable, **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!

