

# **We've Read Clausewitz So You Don't Have To: The Principles of War Applied to Tactical Simulations.**

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## **Introduction**

This is an essay on how to win wargames by applying basic military principles to your games. If we examine the history of wargames there are two basic sources that have informed and inspired the writers of rules. On one side there is Kriegsspiel, a war game developed in the 1820's by the Prussian Army in the wake of the Napoleonic Wars as a training tool for officers and as a simulation of warfare. The second are the 'Little Wars' rules written by H.G. Wells about eighty years later; here the emphasis is very much on the game aspect. These two elements, the emphasis on simulation and upon a game have been in dynamic tension since the revival of wargames as a hobby in the 1960's. It can be argued that there are now two distinct wargaming hobbies. One that places emphasis on military simulation and the telling of a story through wargaming. This may include the use of theoretical scenarios or direct refights of historical actions. The other places greater emphasis on the game aspects through balanced points systems, rule-specific approved army lists and the encouragement of tournament play. Both approaches are perfectly acceptable and both can benefit from a proper understanding of military principles.

Warfare has been recorded in human history for over five thousand years but is undoubtedly far older. Detailed military histories and analysis of campaigns and advice to generals have been around for 2,500 years. Since that time there have been thinkers, mostly from military backgrounds, who have attempted to codify how wars are fought and why certain systems or commanders have proved successful. They have, in essence, attempted to work out a set of Principles of War. The Principles of War set out below are drawn from studying both military history and generalship. They were drawn up and refined by serving military officers with direct combat experience. They are broadly based and may be applied to the consideration of all military operations. Now these Principles do have direct application to the wargames table. The problem is communicating them to the average wargamer. Historical wargamers are great consumers of military history, fantasy wargamers are great consumers of both fantasy literature and publications regarding their particular setting. Both groups probably ignore reading military theorists, in part because their erudition makes it difficult to translate what they are attempting to communicate to the average gamer.

As wargamers we all have to start our gaming careers somewhere. I was particularly fortunate in that I started attending the Bath Wargames Society in England during the early 1970's. It was there that I encountered my two wargames mentors; Captain Mike Philpott and Bob Thompson. Both were extremely effective, gentlemen wargamers who believed in fair play but rigorous application of the Principles of War to the tabletop. They wrote a short booklet: "The Application of the Principles of War to the Tabletop Tactical Encounter or How to Win Wargames" it was subsequently published by Skytrex Ltd. Though long out of print it is worth reconsidering what they wrote, where they derived their ideas from, and how we might expand upon their work.

What follows may appear to be just common sense. Good players probably do it automatically and instinctively . . . the rest of us need it spelled out.

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**Congressman:** You say "to paraphrase Clausewitz." What is that? What is Clausewitz?

**DoD Undersecretary:** I apologize for the analogy, which is obscure. The book, I have to say, is impenetrable, and I think the only part of it that is—that anybody mostly has ever read is the one line that "war is the continuation of policy by other means."

**HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE, THURSDAY, MARCH 13, 1997**

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## Section I: The Principles

*Es ist im Kriege alles sehr einfach, aber das Einfachste ist schwierig.  
(Everything in war is simple, but the simplest thing is difficult.)*

Carl von Clausewitz, "On War"

Philpott and Thompson give ten Principles of War. The list was drawn from the military theorist General J. F. C. Fuller. Fuller's list of principles was published in the wake of the First World War. They were adopted by the British Military in the 1920's and continue to be employed by them down to today in assessing military operations. Reviewing the bibliography of 'How to Win Wargames' one of the works quoted is the British Field Service Manual of 1935, in which Fuller's ideas had been adopted by the British Army, although Fuller is not explicitly quoted as their original source. The Principles are as follows:

1. Selection and Maintenance of the Aim.
2. Maintenance of Morale.
3. Offensive Spirit and Action.
4. Co-operation.
5. Concentration of Force.
6. Economy of Effort.
7. Security.
8. Flexibility
9. Surprise.
10. Administration and Logistics.

Other nations have come up with their own versions of the Principles of War. These others reflect something of their own national character and place emphasis in different areas or put the Principles in a different order. For the purpose of this article I have retained the British listing. Fuller was the foremost military thinker of the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century and was the man who came up with the concepts of the blitzkrieg and the all-armored mobile formations with both tanks and infantry transported in armored personnel carriers. Fuller's writings are still studied at military academies today and you should consider doing the same.

### 1. Selection and Maintenance of the Aim

This is the primary Principle. You must ask yourself how you propose to win the game. The exact victory conditions will be dependent upon the particular game or scenario played. If you are playing with an umpire make sure that you understand the victory conditions for that scenario. If the game is based on point values and the simple destruction of your opponent's forces, make sure you know how many units you need to break to achieve different levels of victory. Three basic options are available to ensure victory; first the destruction of enemy forces, second the seizing and holding of a terrain feature and the thirdly, the possible combination of both.

In considering your forces think of a number of things:

- The overall forces available to you,
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of your army,
- The terrain over which the action will take place,
- The ability of your forces to operate in the terrain presented,
- The capacity of your forces for mutual support.

You must develop what Frederick the Great termed *coup d'oeil*, by which he meant not only the ability to estimate how many troops a particular area of terrain can hold but also to distinguish the advantages that can be gained from any feature or if there are areas that should particularly be avoided because you have limited ability to operate there. For example some armies lack light infantry that can operate in rough terrain whilst others are short of cavalry that require open ground and gentle slopes. You must therefore develop the skill of *coup d'oeil* and in analyzing terrain consider the following:

- How will terrain effect each type of troop in both your own and your opponents army,
- When deployed in a fighting formation how will the troops appear on the table, can you deploy them without units getting in the way of one another or is the ground that they have to cover so great as to weaken the line.

Assess each piece of terrain for the following factors:

- What type of troops can operate in that terrain? Does the terrain prevent certain troops from operating there?
- The potential for observation and the fields of fire offered by the terrain.
- The avenues of approach to and from your position
- The ability of your forces to operate in the terrain presented,
- Identify any key terrain that you are either to hold or take to fulfill your victory conditions.
- Identify any key terrain that you have to secure to protect your forces.
- Identify any terrain that you can afford to sacrifice.
- Identify any terrain that you can use to entrap your opponent, by getting him to attack then launching a strong counter-attack.
- Identify any terrain that is impassible or difficult to cross that will funnel any attack. How will this affect your plan for either attack or defense.
- Do the rules you are using have provisions for cover and concealment? If so can you use the terrain to your advantage? Can you opponent use the same rules to his advantage against you.

If the player is to operate on the defensive, either through the scenario design or by choice based upon perceived advantage of the terrain, he must still be aggressive as outlined in the section on 'Offensive Action' below.

Having considered your options, you must do the same for your opponent. What are his probable strength, disposition and intentions? If you are playing a scenario you will have some idea of his objectives, either directly or indirectly. If re-fighting an historical battle or within a specific period, and you have some knowledge of the period, you will probably have some idea of the army you face. If it is a fantasy battle, including those ahistorical ancient and medieval tournament games then you will have some idea of army based upon the publishers approved army lists. Think, if you were your opponent, how you would fight the action? Do not fall into the trap that assumes your opponent will do exactly what you want them to. Few opponents are that obliging. You will, however, not be totally surprised by their actions.

Your objective is to come up with a plan that if properly executed means that your opponent reacts to your moves rather than the other way around.

In a multi-player game it is vitally important to ensure that all the players on your side know what the overall plan is and how their individual parts are integrated into the overall plan. Proper coordination is essential. It is also worth considering the personalities of your fellow commanders when assigning roles. Do not assign a bold cavalry attack to the person who is cautious. Do not assign a solid infantry defense to someone who is fonder of leading an attack from the front. Multiplayer games can be a good means of reproducing some of the confusion and personality clashes that happen in military

operations through what is known as 'military friction' as officers fail to implement a plan or changes in orders correctly.

The second part of this Principle, the Maintenance of the Aim, 'is the prosecution of one's own chosen course of action.' This can be one of the hardest things you are faced with in the heat of the game, particularly if you become fixated on one part of the action. An analogy from history would be Marshal Ney at the battles of Quatre Bras and Waterloo where he forgot his role as a Corp commander and reverted to a far more junior officers role as he became swept up in the action. You must remember that your overall aim is to win at as small a cost as is possible. Do you stubbornly reinforce a vain attack? Do you follow up broken troops when there is an opportunity to turn and catch another formation in the flank? Do you become carried away by a successful attack and forget that the objective of the games was to represent a fighting withdrawal?

You have to consider your overall objective every time that you make a move or watch your opponent move. You need to correctly assess the situation initially, then reassess every turn to ensure that you are taking the necessary steps to achieve your objectives.

## **2. Maintenance of Morale.**

In actual warfare this Principle relates to the whole army from the platoon level upwards. In a wargame it relates to the player rather than his troops. The rules being used will govern the reaction of the miniatures. On occasions we all meet an opponent whom we know to be more experienced than ourselves. This can happen at any stage of our wargaming career, for example, if we switch periods or rules systems. Do not allow this difference in experience to influence our decisions; we still need them to fight the battle of our choosing. If we allow their experience to intimidate us we have taken the first step towards defeat. Do not allow your opponent to get a psychological edge over you.

Various other factors beyond the relative experience of the players can affect your moral; the relative quality of troops, equipment or terrain. Even if you are playing with armies of equal points values you may encounter an army that is not a good matchup for your own. This is particularly true in wargaming the ancient or medieval periods, especially if the rules cover 3,500 years of history. If at all possible learn the rules you are playing in advance sufficiently well that you understand the command and control sections, can calculate casualties, morale, and interpret the results of combat. Do not assume that your opponent is honest or will interpret the rules in your favor.

Do not allow external factors to effect you; you will encounter a run of bad dice throws, or lucky ones from your opponent. Umpires will make judgments that are not in your favor. Take all these things with good grace.

Another factor that must be considered is the actions of your opponent outside of their actual moves and dice throws. A certain amount of good natured banter within a game is natural since we aim for a convivial experience. Some opponents, especially within a tournament setting, delight in using various tricks either in remarks, sighs, eye rolling or other gestures in an attempt to disconcert you. Do not allow this bad sportsmanship to affect you and do not, under any circumstances sink to their level. In games, good sportsmanship is more important than winning.

If you maintain your morale in the face of adversity and refuse to be intimidated you have at least a fifty percent per cent chance of winning, even though your opponent has more experience. In achieving any objective your troops will suffer casualties. Plan for and accept these losses. Depending upon the rules and the period, anticipate losing about a third of your attacking force in reaching their objective. If you do loose a key unit you should have planned for a reserve to take over until the affected unit can be rallied and if possible fed back into the action.

### **3. Offensive Spirit and Action**

This principle can best be summed up as 'Don't just sit there!' No matter whether you are attacking or defending you must be prepared to use your forces offensively. If you have decided to attack, this is obvious. If you have decided to defend it is much less obvious but equally important. No successful defense can be mounted by merely sitting still. If you have the opportunity to use field fortifications you must be very careful to use them wisely; historically few battles have been won by digging trenches or sitting behind fortifications. Section IV of this work on the 'Principles in Defense' will discuss the application of the principles to a defensive posture in greater depth. For now, remember even if you have decided to defend you must retain sufficient forces for counter-attack.

Clausewitz established that the defensive is the stronger form of war; but if you rely entirely upon the defensive you have yielded the initiative to your opponent. The theorist and contemporary of Fuller, Basil Liddle Hart argues for an elastic defense, using certain hard points that you can hold whilst launching numerous minor attacks to throw our opponent off balance. This works well in modern warfare but can be applied in earlier periods as well.

Now some historical gamers may protest that there were successful generals who were defensively minded. Wellington is often quoted as an example, especially by French writers. Wellington fought fifteen major battles between the years 1808-1815. Of these, seven were defensive. In three of these cases he had intended to attack but adopted a defensive posture because of external factors, before the commencement of the actions. Even when on the defensive he launched a series of counterattacks to exploit weaknesses following a failed attack against him or to throw his opponent off balance.

In merely sitting still you make a major mistake. Do not yield the initiative to your opponent; he will be able to attack your forces where he wishes. You may feel safe sitting in what you think is a strong position or hiding behind field fortifications, but your opponent can choose when and where he will attack you and bring sufficient forces at one point that will overwhelm your defenses.

### **4. Co-operation**

There are two parts of this Principle. The first is probably already known to wargamers; that the various component units in the army assist each other as needed within the overall plan. In every period or genre there will be specialized units that have different strengths or weaknesses. By using them together you will be able to maximize the advantages of each component. The rules you are using, the army lists or orders of battle and knowledge of the setting of the game will give you the clues you need to properly apply the units correctly. For example; don't put heavy cavalry in rough ground, cover the flanks of linear formations or units advancing on the enemy with support troops, or soften up your infantry attacks with tanks and don't mask your own artillery with troops so the guns can't fire.

For Coordination to be effective the supporting units must be moved in accordance with the Maintenance of the Aim. If you are the attacker, do not be put off by the defenders attempts to distract you by the launching numerous minor attacks to throw you off balance.

The second principle has already been touched upon in 'Selection and Maintenance of the Aim' above. If you are playing a game with more than one player a side there must be cooperation between the commanders. Napoleon said he would rather fight one bad general than two good ones because he knew that the planning and degree of coordination of troops movements would be not be as good as from a single director of operations.

If you are launching an attack and you have another player who is going to move his forces to cover the flank of your force it is important that he makes the moves. If he becomes distracted in a minor

skirmish that stalls his movement you will find your flanks vulnerable to a counter-attack. The Battle of Edgehill (1642) was used by Philpott and Thompson as an illustration where Prince Rupert used the Royalist cavalry to destroy the Parliamentary cavalry then failed to turn upon the exposed flanks and rear of the Parliamentarian infantry who were destroying their Royalists opposite numbers.

In multiplayer games ensure that each of the commanders knows their part in the plan during pregame discussions used during the phase that forms part of the 'Selection and Maintenance of the Aim' phases of the game. In 'Co-operation' each commander must attempt to carry out their part of the plan to the best of their abilities and in turn not become distracted. Do not be surprised if your fellow commanders do not always follow the plan or your understanding of the plan. Make allowances for their failures; do not be put off by their actions. If you are let down by your colleagues do your best to fulfill your part of the plan.

## 5. Concentration of Force

This is probably the least understood of the Principles but it is essential to a successful attack. The popular misconception is that you gather your forces together for a mass attack and then launch the units forward. The problem is that if you do this the defender can discern when and where your attack will be launched. The Principle of Concentration should be regarded as a dual entity, i.e., the **simultaneous** arrival of all units destined for the attack at the **intended point of impact**. The idea here is that by using this Principle, in conjunction with that of 'Surprise' (discussed below) you will keep your opponent off balance and unable to concentrate his forces to blunt your attack. If at all possible, you should try and conceal your point of attack as long as possible. It is important that you know the rate of movement of the various forces you command, this, together with the ability to judge the terrain and distances, will allow that your forces arrive at the point of attack without your opponent having an opportunity to arrange a suitable defense. Concentration of Force, properly used in conjunction with *coup d'oeil* will allow you to make the most of the terrain available to you.

## 6. Economy of Effort

This Principle is integral to the 'Selection and Maintenance of the Aim'. How it is applied naturally depends upon what you want to do. The forces available to you, both in numbers and composition, will to a large part determine your plan. Having decided on a basic plan of operations, you then allocate forces to that plan. Here the Principle of Economy of Effort comes into effect; to put it simply, don't use more forces than you have to achieve your objective. Work out what troops you will use to attack, what you will use to hold positions. These static troops may have lower mobility and then you can keep others for a mobile reserve to exploit successes or plug gaps arising from failure.

Let us consider the applying this Principle firstly to an attack. In modern military thinking it is normal to require a local advantage for the attacker to have a ratio of three to one to ensure success. If you increase the ratio to six to one, it will create more problems than it is worth through administrative muddle and logistical problems that would not be apparent on the wargames table. But coming back again to *coup d'oeil*, the actual arrangement of units getting in each other's way will slow down and disorganize the attack. Philpott and Thompson also point out that in a larger mass of units you may overlook moving a crucial component.

The three to one ratio of attacker to defender is taken from warfare rather than wargames rules. One question left unanswered is, how do you achieve this three to one advantage? A scenario designer may give you this advantage, although they may not be that generous since the art of scenario design involves presenting both sides with a challenge. If you are using army lists the only way in which you would have a three to one advantage is to sacrifice troop quality for numbers. So this standard of three to one can't be achieved with the entire army. This means you have to select part of your force to achieve a local advantage which will defeat part of your opponent's force. Once one part of the

opposing army is defeated, the idea is that local victory can be exploited to achieve a total victory. In section 4 'Co-operation' above, there was the example of the Battle of Edgehill (1642). This battle must be contrasted with the Battle of Naseby (1645) where the Parliamentary cavalry were now reformed and far better disciplined than the Royalist counterparts. The Parliamentarians beat the Royalist cavalry on the flanks, then turned on the flanks and rear of the Royalist infantry, destroying the army.

Economy of Effort in defense means that you do not put all of your troops into one long defensive line. This formation is very brittle, your opponent can choose one point to hit and overwhelm. When on the defensive you should adopt what is termed 'defense in depth'. You should have troops deployed to break up any attacks, a main defensive line supported by a mobile reserve. The size of the reserve ideally should consist of about one third of your force.

## **7. Security**

The basis of this Principle is that some units are allocated to a specific function of attack or defense whilst others are designated to support them. In moving a unit you may expose its flank or rear to the possibility of counter-attack. Security is the arrangement of other units and their coordinated movements that will prevent your opponent from exploiting such a move.

Security can also be achieved by resting the flank or flanks of your force on terrain that is either impassable or difficult to cross. This gives you either an area of the table that you don't have to worry about or allows you time to react while your opponent crosses that terrain. You may come across the expression in military literature that a flank was 'hanging in the air'. This means that one side of an army was not protected by terrain and was vulnerable to attack. To counter this you would want to stage back some of your units in echelon to cover the exposed units' flanks.

During an attack the purpose of security forces is protection. They should not become distracted and become directly involved in any attack. Their function is to stop any counterattack, but not to become directly involved in the attack itself. This Principle ties back to both 'Maintenance of the Aim' and 'Economy of Effort' if it is properly implemented.

Security in defense will involve ensuring that there are no obvious weak points in the line of defense and that all lines of advance are covered with appropriate forces. If you are involved in some form of map based campaign some of your forces will need to be allocated to an advance guard, the main column, a rear guard and flank guard units placed on either side of the main body. The idea of the advance guard and flank guard is to provide advance warning of the approach of an enemy force and to allow the main body to deploy in an advantageous position or to retreat in the face of a superior enemy. The function of the rear guard is twofold; to protect against an attack from the rear by an enemy that has outmaneuvered you and fulfill the same functions as the other guards. The other function comes during a retreat when the rear guard protects the bulk of the army during a fighting withdrawal. It should be noted that a fighting withdrawal in the face of a superior enemy is one of the hardest military operations that can be undertaken.

## **8. Flexibility**

Do not be misled because you think you instinctively understand the Principle. Flexibility is one of the more difficult Principles introduced because the meaning is not immediately obvious; nor for that matter was the definition any more obvious as originally given because Fuller described it as "best expressed by the idea of equability of temperament combined with foresight."

Equability ties back to 'Maintenance of Morale'. Your opponent will not do exactly what you want him to do. He will make moves that you do not anticipate. Do not let this worry you unduly. Even if you

are worried, do not let your opponent know that you are worried because that will help improve his morale. Under no circumstances should you panic and then make rash moves in response to his actions.

Flexibility begins in the planning stage of the game; this is where foresight comes into play. Think how your enemy would deploy on the table and fight the action. Don't do it once, draw up several plans and think how you would counter each. It is unlikely that your opponent will do exactly what you want but at least you are prepared. The next thing to consider is the use of any reserve units that you can use to either cover some unexpected threat from your opponent or to exploit a mistake that has been made. Be very careful not to be sidetracked, remember what your overall Aim in the action is and keep asking how your moves with further that objective.

Most wargamers wrongly believe Flexibility means a willingness to change their plans as they react to changes in circumstances. Revised plans will be hastily put together and the units are unlikely to be properly deployed or supporting one another. Another misinterpretation of Flexibility is the willingness of wargamers to divert forces from their objective to gain an easy kill by destroying an enemy unit. In going for the easy kill a larger prize may be missed. Let us take another historical example; the Battle of the Dogger Bank in 1915. The Germans sent out a squadron of ships to raid the British coast. The British had advance warning of the raid through radio intelligence and sent out a squadron to intercept the Germans. The British were correct in their interpretation and met the Germans at the point they expected them. The Germans, realizing that they were outnumbered and outgunned turned and ran for safety. What followed was a stern chase with the faster British ships gaining on the Germans. A number of German ships suffered damage, but one started to lose speed. Rather than carrying on the chase and inflicting further damage on the whole fleet, the British broke off the chase and contented themselves with sinking the heavily damaged ship. Yes there was an easy kill and a tactical victory, but the battle could have been an even more significant victory if misplaced flexibility had not been introduced.

## 9. Surprise

Surprise in wargames is not attacking from a completely unexpected direction; this can rarely be achieved on the wargames table. Some rules do allow you to take a portion of your force and bring them on one of the other sides of the table. If you do attempt such a flank march the forces committed may arrive late or not at all. The rules normally require you to declare that a flank march is taking place blunting some of the element of surprise. You may be able to conceal part of your forces by using terrain to achieve local advantage. The effects are likely to be limited but can assist the overall plan by slowing an advance. In real warfare, especially prior to the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, it was possible to use terrain to conceal troops behind or within terrain. With the 'godlike' view afforded to a wargamer such concealment is rarely going to be possible. It is worth studying the rules you are using to determine what concealment is possible.

Surprise, according to Fuller, is the ability to bring a greater than anticipated force to bear against an opponent at an unexpected moment. Surprise can be achieved by carefully studying the relevant movement speeds of troops and appealing this, in conjunction with *coup d'oeil*, to allow you to concentrate against one point of the line and break it.

Why use surprise? There are two reasons. The first to destroy the morale of your opponent. The second is to cause confusion and force him to make mistakes; for example, giving up ground he should hold or to commit reserves too soon. Surprise on its own will not win battles, but it does help by causing mistakes and worry.

The best method of combating surprise is through proper planning and anticipating what your opponent will try to use surprise against you. Flexibility will help you be prepared for surprise.

## **10. Administration and Logistics**

Administration and Logistics are vital in real warfare. They may be used in the more complex types of map campaign games. Very few contemporary tactical wargames rules require this level of detail and can normally be dealt with through elementary mathematics. The main place where you are likely to encounter these rules is amongst the more detailed type of naval wargames covering the period from 1860 on. The main thing to be aware of is normally ammunition consumption. A degree of common sense will ensure that you do not expend all your ammunition in fruitless long range duels.

## **Section II: Preparation**

### **A. Planning**

To put it simply, the better you are at planning, the more likely you are to win.

#### **1. Selection and Maintenance of the Aim**

Before you do anything, including drawing up any kind of plan, decide what you want to do. Have your victory conditions been given to you by an umpire or scenario designer? If not, having examined the table, is it going to be advantageous to be the attacker or defender of the terrain provided? Some rules do have initiative rolls. Do not worry about winning or losing this it merely determines who will move first. Any advantage that can be gained by your opponent being able to deploy after you will be offset by your superior planning.

Having examined the terrain, draw up a basic plan and approximate troop dispositions. Now consider what your opponent is likely to do, not just one plan but alternatives that he may use against you. Modify your plan to take account of what you think your opponent will do. Remember the effect of terrain is likely to have upon movement and if any of the terrain is impassable to any of your forces or your opponent; can you capitalize on that terrain or will it penalize you?

Does the scenario or game have any time limits that will affect your plan? These may be imposed by the scenario designer, say hold a position for a particular number of turns. Alternatively, they may be imposed by the game itself; tournament games have time limits to complete the number of required rounds, or the wargames club may have to close by a particular time. Any of these factors will encourage you to push for a quick victory, since your objective should be to win not to aim at a draw.

Allocate resources to those forces given over to attack, holding, security and reserve. Designate any terrain that you either want to capture or hold. Work out what forces you will need to achieve this objective. Now conduct a cost/benefit analysis on your plan. Are the losses that you are likely to incur in achieve your aim acceptable or will they so weaken your army so much that you will that you can, at best, win a pyrrhic victory? If the losses to be incurred in achieving the Aim are likely to be too high, then the plan must be revised. Granted the limited application you should, if appropriate, consider any administrative or logistical restrictions placed upon you.

Do you have any opportunity to spring a surprise upon your opponent? If so, when and where will you spring your trap? Do this too early and a competent opponent will react and counter your move, probably imposing unacceptable losses upon you. Wait too long and the forces will similarly be wasted because they could have been profitably employed elsewhere.

#### **2. Economy of Effort and Concentration of Forces.**

These Principles are considered during the deployment of the forces. Your rules may require you to draw up a rough sketch map of the terrain and show where your forces will go on the table. If they do not, this is a good idea anyway. This will prove useful in any post action analysis discussed below. Some rules have an initiative roll. The winner of these rolls is sometimes allowed to deploy their forces after their opponent. Winning such a roll is useful, but not disastrous if you lose. Do not let it damage your morale; take this into account during the determination of the Aims.

Effective deployment greatly enhances your chances of winning. Pay particular attention to the speeds of movement of your forces. How will terrain affect the movement rate? Can you increase

your movement rate by using roads or 'march' formations? If so, will you have an opportunity to redeploy to face a threat? Do not move in 'march' formation if you will be caught at a disadvantage.

## **B. Seizing the initiative**

Having drawn up a basic plan, you must now think about the likely course of the first few moves and what steps you are going to take to seize the initiative. In this context, seizing the initiative does not depend upon any initial dice roll to see who moves first. It is perfectly possible to move second on any turn and still have the initiative. What we are looking for here is an initial advantage that will force your opponent to react to your plan rather than the other way around.

In an attack/defense battle, the initiative will normally be with the attacker. The defender can, however, seize the initiative by skillful counter-attacks. The objective of these counter-attacks is to force your opponent to abandon his original plan in order to deal with threat that you have created by blunting an attack or forcing its abandonment.

### **1. Maintenance of Morale**

To gain the initiative you should have higher morale than your opponent. You can achieve this by maintaining a cheerful air and aggressive movements throughout the game, regardless of dice rolls. Remember that dice rolls are governed by the laws of mathematics and no run of good or bad dice will be maintained indefinitely. Some rules use mechanisms where by the number of units or the distances moved are determined by the roll of dice. Assume that you will roll average results. Do not plan on having better than average results; you are going to be disappointed and your morale will suffer. If you suffer poor results, seizing the initiative will be harder, but do try.

### **2. Offensive Action and Security**

Let us consider some different types of action here:

1. Meeting engagements
2. Set piece actions where the disposition of the opposing forces are not revealed.
3. Set piece actions where most or all of the forces are visible to the opposing commanders.

With meeting engagements, the two forces are moving into some neutral ground held by neither side. The objective will be for the forces, as they come onto the board in 'column of march', to seize some features that can be held to gain time and space for the main forces to be brought up and deploy. Being able to bottle up an opponent will seriously compromise his ability to deploy effectively. Historical examples of meeting engagements would be the Battle of Quatre Bras in 1815 or the first day of the Battle of Gettysburg from 1863. It is worth examining these actions to see how they can develop as reinforcements became available to both sides in turns.

Set piece actions where the dispositions of opposing forces are not revealed initially may apply to games covering the early to mid 20<sup>th</sup> century. Here reconnaissance forces are sent forward to probe the enemies position, the response to these probes will reveal the forces involved and their strength. Losses in reconnaissance troops, whilst regrettable, are unlikely to adversely affect the outcome of the action.

In set piece actions where the forces are visible, reconnaissance is superfluous but harassment of the opponent is still required to disrupt his plans and to aid in seizing the initiative. Sometimes these harassing attacks disorder your opponent's troops, and that can be exploited.

### **3. Surprise**

Use surprise to disrupt your opponent by rapid feint attacks to mislead him as to where your main blow will fall or to force him to stop moving forward. Restricting your opponent's movement whilst retaining freedom of movement for yourself ensures you have achieved the initiative.

Napoleon is quoted as saying that 'effective maneuver can only take place about a fixed point.' As long as your opponent can maneuver, he can escape the trap that you have set for him. Pin your opponent with your preliminary moves, then hit him with your own attack.

Rapid movement in the initial moves of the game will, if properly applied, give you the initiative. One type of army which has great difficulty in seizing the initiative are those ancient or medieval armies that were primarily comprised of heavy infantry and lacking in maneuverability. The basic conclusion is that such armies, unless fighting a force similarly organized, are unlikely to gain the initiative and must plan to fight a defensive action from the start, paying particular attention to section on Defense. The big advantage of such forces is in their superior numbers and staying power.

## **Section III: The Principles in Attack**

### **1. Maintenance of the Aim**

If during your planning you have determined that your aim is to attack, you must ensure that from then on every move you make must be directed to achieving your aim. This will involve the destruction of enemy forces at the cost of some of your own. Do not be distracted by your opponent's counter-measures.

### **2. Concentration**

How you achieve concentration will depend entirely upon your original plan but must be carried out at speed. Once contact has been made, press the attack vigorously and maintain the pressure on your opponent. Remember also the relative movement of rates of your forces to allow co-operation.

### **3. Economy of Force**

You need to commit enough forces to your attack to achieve your aim. Study the rules you are playing to determine what ratio of forces and troop types work best to achieve your objectives. Remember that you will probably not be stronger everywhere so part of your force will have to hold off your opponent and you will require a reserve to either counter enemy moves or to exploit success.

### **4. Co-operation**

Your planning and initial deployment of forces must ensure that the forces involved are placed in such a way that they can co-operate in the most effective manner to achieve your objective. In WWII actions armored forces will require infantry support and artillery to soften up your opponent with preliminary bombardment. In the 'Horse and Musket' period artillery will require support or it will be vulnerable, especially if attacked from the flank or rear. Similarly, both infantry and cavalry attacks benefit from supporting artillery fire. An understanding of the period or genre you are playing, together with the rules you are using will allow you to determine how best your forces work together.

Remember also the relative movement of rates of your forces to allow concentration. If you are playing in the 'Horse and Musket' period one thing that you may frequently encounter is the replacement of one attacking formation with a fresh force. Historically, this 'passage of lines' was a difficult exercise and you must consider how you would allow one force to be replaced with another, granted the difficulties of interpenetrating formations in this period under the rules you are using. Your decision to replace one formation of troops with another will be based upon the casualties they have suffered, a degradation of their morale, or a combination of both. Careful timing of a passage of lines is essential if your opponent is not to exploit the situation by employing the Principle of Surprise and Flexibility against you.

### **5. Flexibility**

Flexibility will have been considered during the planning stages of the game. During the game itself flexibility is essential, for example, by allowing supporting troops to profitably remove a secondary objective while pressing on with the primary. Do not allow yourself to become too distracted. If you have planned correctly, or your opponent has left an opening, or through your own actions have forced him into making a mistake. Recognize the opportunity and then exploit the situation with your reserves.

## **6. Morale**

No matter how careful the plan or the preparations, your troops are going to take casualties. In the real world, military planners expect to take up thirty percent casualties of the attacking forces. So you are going to lose troops getting to your objective. In addition, some of those forces are going to suffer failures of morale, either stalling their advance or forcing their retreat. Plan for these losses and reverses; accept them, they are the price you pay for winning.

When planning an attack aim to use some of your highest quality troops in the first wave since these are going to have the best ability to take and absorb hits, either through superior morale, or armor, or both. Lighter armored units or troops with lower grades of morale should be used in support roles or for exploitation. Speed is important in an attack, the faster that you press home an attack the less opportunity for either defensive fire or to move troops to counter the move.

## **7. Security**

If you are the attacker, your main concern will be the security of the attacking force. Allocate forces to cover the flank or flanks of your main thrust. Do not expose the main strike force to the risk of counter-attack that will stop their forward momentum. A properly mounted attack should ensure that no successful counterattack can be launched because your opponent will be spending all his resources holding you off.

## **8. Surprise, Offensive Spirit and Action, Administration and Logistics**

These three Principles should have been considered during the planning and preparation portion of the game. Once started it is unlikely that further surprise can be achieved. Offensive Spirit and Action are vital to any attack. If the rules you are using include Administration and Logistics, do bear this in mind while planning your attack.

## Section IV: The Principles in Defense

Which is stronger, to attack or to defend? Military theorists have argued this point back and forth for centuries. During the Battle of Gettysburg generals Lee and Longstreet disagreed on whether it was better for the Confederates to attack on the second and third days. Clausewitz argues that defense was superior to the attack, his yet near contemporary Suvorov strongly disagreed. All these figures agreed that any form of defense must be active and a mere prelude to a counter-attack to throw back a demoralized or disordered enemy. A proper study of the Peninsular War (1808-14) shows that British success against the French came not just from the proper use of defensive fire but also from a swift counter-attack against their disordered opponents.

### 1. Selection of the Aim

There are two reasons for adopting a defensive posture. The first is imposed upon you by the nature of the scenario you are playing. The umpire will have determined that one side with lesser resources has to hold a position against a superior opponent. This may involve holding a particular terrain feature, or holding on for a specified period of time, or undertaking the most difficult of operations, namely conducting a fighting withdrawal where the object is to remove a portion of the force from the table.

The alternative is where one of two approximately equal forces chooses to initially adopt a defensive position to blunt his opponents attack before launching a counter-attack against a weakened opponent. The reason this would be done is that you hope that making the attack your opponent will make a mistake that you can exploit, or exploit disorganization following a failed attack. This style of play is very common in tournament play.

If a force is on the defensive it must make moves to disrupt and distract any attack. Simply sitting still surrenders the initiative to your opponent and they can determine when and where their blow will fall. You do this with small scale counter attacks or committing light mobile troops to slow an advance. Disruptive attacks may cause your opponent to stop their attack allowing you to exploit their abandonment of their aim.

Depending upon the situation you can adopt a policy of deploying the forces forward and slowly falling back, surrendering ground for time.

Terrain needs careful consideration. Sometimes you have to hold a terrain feature because of the victory conditions that you are given. If so, this must be strongly held. Otherwise the utility of holding a position must be carefully considered. Just because a terrain feature is there does not mean that you must garrison it. Sometimes it is better to give up a feature so that you can destroy other units elsewhere. A classic example would be Napoleon's withdrawal from the Pratzen Heights at the Battle of Austerlitz (1805). Built up areas can present a particular problem; they can prove very difficult to take, as shown at the Battles of Fuentes de Oñoro (1811) or Waterloo (1815). They can also prove a trap into which too many resources are dedicated leaving the overall force vulnerable to defeat, as at the Battle of Dettingen (1743).

Some terrain is useful, especially in armies which rely on linear formations, which are vulnerable once a flank has been turned. These features may need to be held by light troops who can operate in difficult going. In determining the garrison, consider how large a force is likely to be committed by your opponent to attacking that feature and plan accordingly. Any flank of a linear army not adequately protected is said to be 'hanging in the air' and is vulnerable to being attacked or bypassed by faster moving troops and the army attacked simultaneously in the front and the rear. Open flanks can be covered by cavalry forces, but expect a strong attack to be mounted against it.

If you have decided that you are going onto the defensive only until your opponent has committed their forces and is vulnerable to counter-attack, the question must be when to time the move.

## **2. Morale**

As a defender in a strong defensive position you should use this knowledge to bolster your morale. Similarly, your opponents morale will suffer knowing the advantages that you possess. A strong defensive position properly organized is a challenge even to the most experienced player. High casualties will be incurred in gaining the ground and this will further adversely affect the morale of your opponent. Thinking of your advantages should counteract any diminution in your own morale that comes from watching your opponents attack moving against you. Like an attacker, you will suffer losses and you will lose ground. Plan for this and do not let it affect you.

## **3. Security**

Defending a position should afford you with security but do not be tempted to defend too much. A long line thinly held is vulnerable to a concentrated attack.

If you are playing a scenario-driven game, the defender is normally weaker in numbers and must use the terrain to maximum advantage. Particularly cleverly designed scenarios will challenge the defender as much as the attacker and holding a position will be difficult.

Rules that use equal points values often have random generation of terrain. These systems deliberately weight the placement of the terrain in such a way as to leave a largely open center and will not afford the defender a strong position.

Depending upon the period that is being played you may be able to strengthen a position by employing field fortifications. The placement of such works must be carefully considered to enhance the position. This brings us back again to the concept of *coup d'oeil* and the ability to judge ground. The 20th century military theorist Basil Liddle Hart recommend that a general hold defensible positions as islands of resistance and defend in depth. This approach will work with games set in the period after 1930. For early periods or fantasy games you may consider adopting a similar policy. In the 'Horse and Musket' period we have the examples of the Battles of Poltava (1709) or Fontenoy (1745) in which commanders used defense in depth supported by field fortifications. At the Battle of Waterloo (1815) the chateau of Hougoumont and the farm of La Haye Saint provided a similar function.

## **4. Concentration**

Since you cannot be strong everywhere, determine what features afford you the best opportunity for defense. Modern warfare, from say 1930 onward, benefits from islands of resistance where troops can be concentrated, backed up by a mobile reserve.

In early periods forward strong points to break up an attack can be useful but you should be much more concerned with securing the flanks of the army and preventing the turning of the position. The classic example of a failed defense where a flank was turned would be the Battle of Leuthen (1757), whereas the Battle of Fontenoy (1745) shows a skillful use of terrain features to secure the flanks of an army and field fortifications to strengthen the line and to form islands of resistance.

## **5. Co-Operation**

If you have arranged for strong points to be held, ensure that there are covering fields of fire to provide mutual support. Any attempt to bypass the islands of resistance will leave the attacker open to enfilade fire from both sides. If he attacks the strong points the interlocking fields of fire will cause

additional casualties to the attacker.

Attacking a strong point will leave an attacker open to a counterattack while distracted. Another method of distracting your opponent is to employ mobile troops to slow the enemy advance and then fall back to a position covered by fire from the main force. Such moves will force your opponent to waste time and resources dealing with a threat which, if ignored, could be maneuvered to attack a flank or rear.

## 6. Flexibility

The application of flexibility to defense in many ways is dependent upon the period played. With technology of the mid-20th Century, using a combination of armored fighting vehicles, infantry and artillery consider the ideas of Basil Liddle Hart in establishing 'islands of resistance' together with a force of fast moving, hard hitting small units, to be used at a decisive moment against the flank of an attacker who is tied up attacking one or more of the islands. This concept of could be likened the idea of the 'sword and shield' is taken from de Gaulle's "Vers l'armée de métier" (The Army of the Future) from 1934.

The danger of using this defense is to have the reserve drawn into the supporting the islands and not having a counter-strike force available for the critical counter attack. The 'island of resistance' works well for armored warfare, especially for World War II. For earlier periods that require a more linear form of defense the principle can be applied with a strike force of heavy cavalry ideally supported by horse artillery, if available.

## 7. Offensive Action

Surrendering the initiative to your opponent is the biggest error that a defender can make. Do what you can to disrupt his movement, his equilibrium and his plans.

There are two issues to be considered, firstly the adoption of a defensive posture is only to be undertaken for a limited time until your opponent makes a mistake or you judge the time is correct and the counter-offensive can be launched. During the period prior to the launching of the main offensive the defender should not sit idly by surrendering the initiative to the opponent. This can be done by using lighter, rapidly moving forces to launch a series of delaying actions, either by skirmishing at a distance and using superior speed or rough terrain escape a stronger force.

## 8. Economy of Effort

We will consider two types of defensive action; the first is a scenario based action when the defender is smaller in numbers. The second is when using the points based system and one side decides to initially defend and then counter-punch.

In the former case the scenario designer will possibly not provide adequate forces to cover all points. You must determine which area is most crucial to achieve your objective and defend that strongly, using the terrain to your best advantage. This means that you must surrender unimportant ground, bringing us back again to the concept of *coup d'oeil*. You must also ensure that you leave a suitable force out of the main defensive line to provide a mobile reserve, probably amounting to between a quarter and a third of your force.

Some rules that use random terrain generation systems deliberately bias the system to ensure that a large open space is left in the center of the table making the defenders task much harder. The defender in this type of game must place less reliance upon the terrain and arrange for a reserve as well as the allocation of forces to the disruption of an attack.

## **9. Surprise**

The main point of surprise will be throwing our opponent off balance by a strong, timely counter-attack. The first opportunity for a defender to employ surprise comes from the terrain itself, which offers concealment, although this is probably limited in scope as discussed above. The degree to which troops may hide within terrain will naturally depend upon the rules played. Many rule systems do not allow troops deployed on the slope of a hill away from the attacker to be hidden until revealed by a unit cresting the ridge. In these circumstances the only advantage afforded by a so-called 'reverse slope' will be the protection from hostile fire.

## **10. Administration and Logistics**

Normally, as discussed above, administration and logistics will not be applicable under most current wargames rules. Some rules do, however, have provisions for changing orders. Here, the defender may have the advantage because of 'interior lines', the lines of communication being shorter for the transmission of new orders from headquarters.

## Section V: Critical Analysis

*I keep six honest serving-men  
(They taught me all I knew);  
Their names are What and Why and When  
And How and Where and Who.*

Rudyard Kipling

### Journal

One of the greatest generals in history was Helmuth von Moltke (the Elder). One of the main precepts of *Der große Schweiger* was that to be successful you had to study military history and past battles. Under von Moltke the heart of the army was the General Staff, at the heart of the General Staff was the *Kriegsakademie* or War College, and at the heart of the curriculum there lay military history, which absorbed as much time as strategy and tactics. The method of historical study involved an extremely detailed study of a battle from the point of view of the commander. There were two aspects to be considered. The first was the study battles from the point of view of the generals involved with an emphasis on what they knew at the time. The second came from Clausewitz's "On War" and his concept of "critical analysis" or *Kritik*. Carl von Clausewitz was a very different writer from his contemporary Antoni-Henri Jomini. The latter attempted to reduce the art of war to a set of rules and formulae. Clausewitz considered this approach to be futile at best and pernicious at worst. This work assumes that we will follow the principles of Clausewitzian critical analysis. *Kritik* had three elements:

- Discover the facts.
- Trace the effects to causes.
- Investigate and evaluate the means.

In addition to studying what happened, Clausewitz emphasized not only what *did* happen, but what *might have* happened, and to consider other means that might have been used. Officers were expected to use their imaginations.

So, how does this apply to a wargamer? Do you have to study historical battles as though you were a member of the Prussian General Staff? Well, it would help. How will this improve your gaming? That is where the next stage of the process comes in, your journal. Your journal will become, in essence, a document of military history. If you are serious about improving your wargames, you must start seriously analyzing what happened in each of your games. The degree of detail you include and the style of writing is, of course, a matter of taste. The records should be sufficiently detailed for you to undertake some form of Critical Analysis which will allow you to draw some lessons from your games in a systematic manner and learn from them far faster than just casually playing. Review of your journal should show improvement in your games and will, in turn, help to raise your expectations for future games as you are less likely to repeat the same mistakes again. Go back to the first section, remember the importance of "Maintenance of Morale". You will also learn something about the style of play of your regular opponents.

You must aim to learn from both your victories and defeats. The best way of doing this is through Clausewitzian *Kritik*. This is a method of analysis the wargames that you have fought but using the methodology employed by the military.

In your journal you will need to include a detailed list of the troops under your command, if you are part of multiplayer game try to record what your fellow commanders are using. Note who your fellow commanders are and what they command. If possible do the same for your opponents. It is a convention in some periods to state what each of the troop types when the armies are deployed, you

can take notes at that stage and if possible confirm them later with your opponent.

Record who your opponent, or opponents, were. Do the same for your fellow commanders if playing a multiplayer game. Note their style of play adopted. Were they cautious? Were they content to skirmish and not really press home an attack? Was their defense active or passive? Were they aggressive? If aggressive, was it controlled or reckless? Did they follow orders or the plan? If they failed to follow the plan or orders, why did they do so? Try to build up a profile of the people. Were they good sports? Did they try gamesmanship type tricks to put you off your game? If so, were they good natured about it, or were they hyper-competitive and rather unpleasant? By building up a profile of the people you play with regularly you will have an idea how to fight against them or, if they are on your side in a multiplayer game, how they will work both with you and each other.

Draw a sketch map of the table and record the initial deployment. Take photographs of the games during the game. They don't have to be high quality or edited but record the action. Describe what happened during each stage of the game, not necessarily every turn, but certainly during the initial phases, the central portion and the endgame. Since it is unlikely that the game went exactly according to plan, describe what worked and why. Do the same for things that did not work. Record the result.

If possible talk to the other players involved. What were their plans? How did they feel the game went from their point of view? Don't be afraid to ask about how they thought you did and what they would have done instead. Be prepared to accept criticism, take it to heart and learn from it. The judgment of your peers will help you learn and improve your game. Record what you are told, good and bad. At the end of each report you should carry out an analysis of the action using a standard methodology as outlined below.

### ***What is Critical Analysis?***

Critical Analysis is a method developed to provide a systematic approach to the study of battles, campaigns, and other operations. You should use the same method because it offers a systematic approach to the games you have played, both historical and non-historical. Here we are concerned with applying those principles to our wargames as incorporated into the journal. If you wish to apply this basic analysis to historical actions the underlying principles can be easily extrapolated.

### **Define the Subject:**

1. What Battle is being studied? This should be obvious in this context of the journal.
2. Where was the action fought? Define the basic terrain with diagrams and photographs.
3. When was it fought? What period is the game taking place?
4. Who were the participants, both commanders and forces involved in the action? Also record the rules being played. A Napoleonic game played under *Empire V* is very different from a game under *Napoleonic Command II* because of the difference in emphasis the authors placed on their interpretation of the period.
5. Consider other actions could have been taken, look for mistakes made, opportunities that could have been exploited but were missed, and if you were to fight the battle again how would you have done it differently.

The above should be the basis of the introduction to the action in the journal.

## ***Basic Critical Analysis***

- Define the subject. – what, where, when, who.

Research your battle – the more sources, the better your information. Use as many primary sources as possible. In this case, use your battle journal. It's best written up as soon as possible after the action concluded.

- Set the stage. Who were the participants (specific regiments, companies, etc.)
- Have your own list of forces, or Order of Battle if you prefer. Your own will be easy, if it is possible, get your opponent's list too. Most wargamers will share.
- Objectives of the principal antagonists. This is probably more important in scenario driven games rather than a "line them up and have at it" game.
- Military systems. – types of units (cavalry, militia, armor, etc.) Again, go back to the Order of Battles. You might want to highlight differences in organization and capabilities, for example Byzantines versus Bulgars.
- Previous experience of forces, (previous battles fought in). How experienced is your opponent? How well do you each know the rules? You might find a wargamer who's played games for many years, but who has never played the rules before going up against a relative newcomer who has only played that set and knows them thoroughly.
- What rules were used. What are the strength and weaknesses of these rules?
- Describe the action.
- Area of Operations – state areas and try to find a map. This is more important in a campaign game. If you want a good book on wargame campaigns, you can not really do better than read Henry Hyde's book.
- Weather – usually not a factor in most games, although it's probably more important with naval games.
- Terrain – of the battle area. Sketch the terrain board.
- State missions of opposing forces – what was their objective to winning battle
- Detail major phases – if battle was broken down into various stages. Most are.
- State outcome.
- Draw lessons and insights.
- Why did events turn out the way they did? What led to the eventual outcome
- What is relevant about this study to current operations? Possibly more important in the context of a campaign game
- Who won? Who lost?

## ***What lessons can I learn to make my play better?***

This is in many ways the heart of the matter; why we undertake Clausewitzian *Kritik*. Here the dry study of a past game becomes a matter of imagination. Did I follow the Principles set out in the beginning this article? If I didn't follow the Principles which ones were ignored? Which Principles could be applied better? What were the obvious mistakes I made? Could these mistakes have been avoided with more forethought. Why wasn't the correct forethought given? What pressures or carelessness led to mistakes? What missed opportunities were there? Why were these opportunities missed?

What mistakes did my opponent make? What are my opponent's strengths and weaknesses? Were the strengths not used fully? Were there any weaknesses I failed to exploit? Were there any of my opponent's strengths I over looked or ignored? Did I make any elementary mistakes with the rules? Did I have a plan? Was it a good plan? Did I broadly follow my intentions? If I was to fight this battle again, what would I do differently and why? Consider the tactical doctrine of the army you are using. Did you follow it? Armies are designed to be used in a particular way. If properly employed that doctrine should give you historically reasonable results. Research the army. For example; the Soviet army of the Cold War put a great deal of emphasis on flexibility. Did you do the same, or did you fall back on some "Zerg Rush" because you hadn't studied the army you were playing properly? This last section on the lessons learned is at the heart of Clausewitzian *Kritik* and what sets it apart from say, the Battle Analysis as used by say the US Military. The novelist William Faulkner summed it well in *Intruder in the Dust* - "It's all now you see. Yesterday won't be over until tomorrow and tomorrow began ten thousand years ago. For every Southern boy fourteen years old, not once but whenever he wants it, there is the instant when it's still not yet two o'clock on that July afternoon in 1863, the brigades are in position behind the rail fence, the guns are laid and ready in the woods and the furled flags are already loosened to break out and Pickett himself with his long oiled ringlets and his hat in one hand probably and his sword in the other looking up the hill waiting for Longstreet to give the word and it's all in the balance, it hasn't happened yet, it hasn't even begun yet, it not only hasn't begun yet but there is still time for it not to begin against that position and those circumstances which made more men than Garnett and Kemper and Armistead and Wilcox look grave yet it's going to begin, we all know that, we have come too far with too much at stake and that moment doesn't need even a fourteen-year-old boy to think This time. Maybe this time with all this much to lose than all this much to gain: Pennsylvania, Maryland, the world, the golden dome of Washington itself to crown with desperate and unbelievable victory the desperate gamble, the cast made two years ago; or to anyone who ever sailed a skiff under a quilt sail, the moment in 1492 when somebody thought This is it: the absolute edge of no return, to turn back now and make home or sail irrevocably on and either find land or plunge over the world's roaring rim."

### **Analysis of Terrain:**

One point I cannot emphasize enough is enough is analyzing terrain on the table, if you are not used to this concept, it is worth starting understanding during the Kritik phases. To consider the terrain we'll use some modern military jargon; the OAKOC factors:

- Observation and fields of fire,
- Avenues of approach,
- Key terrain,
- Obstacles,
- Cover and concealment.

Now before you dismiss this last point as only being applicable to 20th century warfare, consider von Bredlow's "Death Ride" at the Battle of Mars-La-Tour. Can you use concealment to launch an attack or a counter attack? It's harder in wargames, but it's not impossible.

Once you have learned this art from studying the games you have played, you should be able to do it for the future games you are going to play. In essence what you are aiming to do is train yourself in ability to read a battlefield in advance – the essential art of a general – the so-called *coup d'oeil*. This is why commanders like von Moltke the Elder conducted “staff rides”. looking at terrain with a view to fighting a battle.

This is, of course, one of those items to consider when we go back to planning our games as set out in the Principles in the first section of this essay. Re-analyze what you did and why you did it with the benefit of hindsight.

## Section VI: The Taxonomy of Defeat

Having studied and absorbed this article I hope you will go out and put the lessons learned into practice. If you follow the principles inculcated in them your game will improve, but you will still lose future games. This is where the next stage of the learning principle comes into play, learning from our defeats. You can plan properly, deploy properly; even move properly and still lose.

The primary factor, dice; because rolls will go against you. This can be particularly devastating if you dice for movement and you have an early run of bad dice that loses you any form of initiative. Blaming dice for your defeats can only carry you so far. Mathematically, the roll of multiple additive dice will create a form of graph termed a bell-curve and statistically your results will fall within one or two standard deviations from the mean. Now, I would say that some game designers understand statistics and probability far better than others, even if those who do not understand have written books on war game design and published a series of rules which are wildly popular and involve throwing buckets of six-sided dice. Being a successful rules author does not necessarily correlate to being mathematically sophisticated. Over a wargames career of 50 years I can think of only a few games where a consistent run of bad dice spoiled an otherwise reasonably planned game. Conversely, I can also only recall one game where a run of good dice created a victory despite a less than perfect, although historically accurate deployment. Card driven games even more prone to randomization. Without explanation of the mechanisms involved you might as well have a wizard casting a "Summon Swamp" spell as the result of some card drawn. As a mechanism, card driven games mean that players tend to recall the flow of cards rather than the narrative story of the game. This makes analyzing the battle far harder since the results appear far more arbitrary and chance driven.

There is whole set of military literature devoted to the causes of military failures. The degree of analysis that is put into the failure of a battle or a campaign obviously involved levels examining multiple commanders, including psychological factors that are outside the scope of a wargame, and probably a wargames campaign too. There are, however, types of failure that can be studied with advantage.

The first thing to consider is what constitutes failure? Depending on the scenario you are faced with, it may not necessarily be as simple as a win/loss ratio. For example, you are pursuing a retreating enemy. Your orders are to maintain contact and not to let the enemy escape. In the ensuing action, you sustain more casualties than the enemy, but you have forced him to deploy all his forces. The history of the campaign would describe the battle as tactical defeat, but if it delayed the retreat allowing a later battle it might still be considered a success. The umpire may also rule against you because you took unnecessary casualties, after all winning an elegant victory is always more satisfactory. The essence of analyzing failure is to identify critical tasks and then to see if these were carried out successfully.

We can, however, subdivide failure into three basic categories, with some further sub-division:

**Simple Failure.** Normally one of these factors leads to a disaster,

- Failure to Learn,
- Failure to Anticipate,
- Failure to Adapt.

**Aggregated Failure** This would combine two of the three simple failures with more disastrous results. An example of this would be the defeat of the American Eighth Army in Korea in November-December 1950.

## **Catastrophic Failure**

This would combine all three of the simple failures for a truly epic defeat. At a strategic level this would be the Battles of France (1940), Sedan (1870), Koniggratz (1866), Manzikert (1071), at a more tactical level Jena-Auerstadt (1806) or Cannae (216 BCE).

Let us now examine the simple failures and how they apply to the tabletop simulations.

## **Failure to Learn**

The whole point of this article is to teach you how to apply the Principles of War and learn from your mistakes. Yes, even have read this work you will make mistakes. You are going to have lapses of judgment during your games, and you will be distracted on occasions. For example, it is very easy to become fixed on what is happening on one part of the table and pay less attention to another. It is very easy to do. You think one sector will be the crucial point of the conflict, probably because that's what you planned to be the pivotal point. You may pay less attention to another point on the table and because of that you make mistakes there. Learn that all parts of the table are important. Another factor maybe the rules that you are using. *Hail Caesar*, *DBM* and *Fields of Glory* are all ancient rules, but they will give you very different results and give require time to study to employ your troops properly. Make sure you understand the mechanisms of the rules with regard to the deployment and employment of troops.

After the action you should be undertaking the Clausewitzian Kritik to identify your mistakes. Once you've identified them, learn from those mistakes. Case in point: using a set of Napoleonic rules, I had an advantage in quality of cavalry but not in numbers, which were equal. I deployed four squadrons side by side, with a second regiment behind. This allowed my opponent who had deployed his regiments two squadrons forward and two in support. This meant the damage inflicted by the units was about equal, but it was concentrated in one of my units while it was spread out over two of his units. I learned an important lesson under that rule set that I have not repeated. I've made other mistakes, but not that one.

## **Failure to Anticipate**

There are two aspects to failures to anticipate. The first is that you misread the table and have not considered what your opponent is likely to do. You have to think "what is my opponent likely to do" granted the composition army you are facing.

Let's consider the Napoleonic War in the Iberian Peninsula; French versus British and you are the French commander. You know that the British have very good quality cavalry in small numbers. They are likely to have some Spanish or Portuguese cavalry of lesser quality. The British infantry is very good but will be augmented by Portuguese infantry which are well trained in the British manner and maybe Spanish who are likely to be of lower quality. British artillery was less numerous than the French and likely to be lighter guns. A superficial reading of the period might lead one to assume that the British will be on the defensive and hiding behind the crest of hills using "reverse slope tactics" to protect their infantry from the superior French artillery fire. Let's assume that this game is not scenario driven. You will plan your game to be on the offensive and will choose likely points of attack based on the terrain and your troops. You will assume that the British will just sit there. Stop. Go back to the section of Principles and reread "Offensive Spirit and Action". The basic advice for the defender in that section is "Don't just sit there!" If you're lucky enough to find a supine opponent then you're lucky. Most are not going to surrender the initiative. Think about what your opponent is likely to do. How would you fight this action if you sat the other side of the table? Where would you launch spoiling attacks? Here is a trap. Don't fight the battle you want to fight. Try and think of alternatives.

I'll give you an example. In a refight of the ACW Battle of Perryville, the Confederates were ordered to attack across a fence and up a hill. They had veteran troops, who were better armed than the large, inexperienced Union units defending and the Confederate commanders just sat there, intimidated by the position they were facing. As a Union brigade commander I went to the umpire and asked "Is there anything in our orders that prevents us attacking?" The umpire said "No" and accordingly, I launched an attack. My fellow commanders (we had multiple players on a side) followed me down the hill and the Confederates were pushed back and failed to achieve their objective. Historically, the Union force was driven from the hill. My opponents did not follow the scenario and did not anticipate a counter attack.

Another area where Failure to Anticipate becomes apparent and can cause the player to doubt their plan is in deployment, either initial deployment when playing a "line them up" style game or one where you are obligated the march onto the table and then deploy. Go back to the Principles, remember "Maintenance of Morale"; do not let this put you off. You can recover from this kind of mistake. If your overall plan is sound, minor errors can be recovered. If it was a major miscalculation and you're soundly defeated, it is going to be a great example for your critical analysis.

Related to the problem of Failure to Anticipate is "Failure of Intelligence." This is probably more appropriate to a campaign game than a tabletop battle. If you are interested in campaigns, I would recommend Henry Hyde's "Wargaming Campaigns" to you. Intelligence can best be summed up as "guessing what's on the other side the hill" and you may find yourself in a difficult position because you don't have sufficient information. Some armies, especially in the Ancient and Medieval periods are going to have an easier time with scouting and intelligence than many others, and armies with little or no cavalry are obviously at a disadvantage. Again, go back to the principle, fight your action, and analyze the results.

### **Failure to Adapt**

In many ways failure to adapt is more a matter military doctrine than of wargaming. Examples would be the French military in 1940, or the British in the First Boer War. Even if you are gaming battles from these campaigns, they are not automatic losses, although they are harder for the Allies and British to win. If you are playing these sides, consider your disadvantages when considering your deployment and your plans.

Failure to adapt can also include other factors in the game, which are the responsibility of the player, not the forces that they command. You could command the French Imperial Guard in a Napoleonic game and still lose your advantage by a failure to adapt to a tactical situation. The classic case is when your opponent makes an error in deployment or movement that initially leaves them vulnerable and you fail to exploit this weakness. Historically, this would be the Battle of Suvla Bay in the Gallipoli Campaign (1915). The British and ANZAC forces made a textbook combined arms landing, then, expecting the Turks be strongly entrenched, they advanced very cautiously. The only problem was, the Turks were not there in force but they slowed the British advance, allowing them to rush forces to beachhead. The result was a costly disaster.

Do not make the same mistakes. Exploit weaknesses. Most gamers will not create a deliberate trap by exposing a weak spot to draw you in. If you encounter such a player, pay particular attention to the results . . . you are likely to learn a lot from them.

## **Conclusion**

I hope you have found this essay useful. The only way you will become a better gamer is by playing. Playing with a structure as set out above should make the learning curve easier. Remember, unlike real commanders, there are normally few consequences to losing a game. Enjoy this hobby that has fascinated me since I picked up a book by Donald Featherstone too many years ago.

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