

Strategic and Tactical Principles in Sun Tzu's *Art of War* and the Military Strategies of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him): A Comparative Study

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Abstract: *Sīrah* is the source of guidance for all of the humanity, in all walks of the life, be it spiritual, or material. Like in other domains, He has set an eloquent example of a military commandership by not only giving high value moral and ethical war principals, but by victoriously leading His troops in a number of battlefields against enemy armies of different size and capabilities. Sun Tzu was a Chinese general who not only lead his army in battles, but left behind him his strategic and tactical wisdom in the form of a book named "The Art of War" that is still considered valid and valuable in modern day warfare. The purpose and scope of this article is to conduct a comparative study to see the strategic and tactical methods. This study is carried out in accordance with the chapters of the Sun Tzu's book 'Art of War'. Only selected points, in each chapter have been analyzed in this regard. A critical analytical approach has been adopted in this study, using published authentic primary and secondary data and literature, reliable web sites, including consultations with the relevant scholars of the subject also. The article ends concluding that the prophet-hood of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) not only befits with, and stands parallel to the strategic and tactical acumen of Sun Tzu, but also exceeds in many ways as a war genius. While it has been recommended for further research.

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1. Introduction

The Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) has been sent by Allah Almighty (SWT) as a source of Divine guidance for all of the humanity in every walk of life. Among others, He also showed His guiding character in the battlefields as a warrior, and commander. In comparison, Sun Tzu was also a great warrior and commander living in 5th century (400-301) BC,¹ whose strategic and tactical intellect is still alive in his book "The Art of War", which is considered valuable and relevant in various military training institutions around the world. Even used by the US military², as it was suggested to follow his war intellect in "Fight Against Islamic Extremism", ironically against the Muslims around the world.³ Although, numerous studies have been conducted to explore and elaborate the worth and value of the strategic and tactical combat prudence and keenness of both of them, yet, a comparative study in this regard needed to be conducted, which has been presented here under the title of "Strategic and Tactical Principles in Sun Tzu's Art of War and the Military Strategies of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH): a comparative study". Its salient features can be taken into account as follows:

2. Definition of Strategy

A detailed plan for achieving success in situations like war, politics, business, industry, or sport, or the skill of planning for

¹ "Sunzi (Sun Tzu), Chinese Strategist," Encyclopaedia Britannica, accessed September 15, 2025, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Sunzi>.

² Natan Lawrence, "Sun Tzu's The Art of War and the Biblical Principles of Spiritual Warfare," Hoshana Rabbah Blog, accessed September 23, 2025, <https://hoshanarabbah.org/blog/2015/07/16/spiritual-warfare/>.

³ Sean P. Rice, *Ancient Theories for a Strategy Against Islamic Extremism* (USAWC Strategy Research Project, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA, 2006), 1.

such situations.⁴The science and art of employing the political, economic, psychological, and military forces of a nation or group of nations to afford the maximum support to adopted policies in peace or war. The science and art of military command exercised to meet the enemy in combat under advantageous conditions.⁵

Clausewitz defined strategy as, the art of the employment of battle to gain the objective of war.⁶ While according to Liddell Hart, strategy was the art of distributing and applying military means to gain the ends of policy. The aim of strategy was to produce the decision, its continuation by battle to achieve this.⁷

3. Definition of Tactic

Among other meanings, the word "Tactic" is defined as "a method of employing forces in combat".⁸ It is also defined as:

"A planned way of doing something, the organization and use of soldiers and equipment in war. Tactics is science of planning, the arrangement and use of military forces and equipment in war."⁹

Carl Von Clausewitz summarized the both terms as:

"Tactics is the science of securing a victory through the employment of military forces in battle; strategy is the

⁴ "Strategy," Cambridge Dictionary, accessed September 15, 2025, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/strategy>.

⁵ "Strategy," Merriam-Webster Dictionary, accessed September 15, 2025, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/strategy>.

⁶ Muhammad Khan Malik, *The Cache of Islamic War Ethics* (Department of Islamic Studies, University of Engineering and Technology, Lahore, 2005), 2.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁸ "Tactic," Merriam-Webster Dictionary, accessed September 15, 2025, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/tactic>.

⁹ "Tactic," Cambridge Dictionary, accessed September 15, 2025, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/tactic>.

*science of achieving the aim of the war through the linkage of individual battles, or to express it in more elegant terms: tactics is the science of employing military forces in battle; strategy the science of employing the individual battles to further the aim of the war. In general, one can say that the idea of battle underpins everything in which military forces are employed, since otherwise one would have no need to employ military forces."*¹⁰

4. Comparison Significance

Historically, humans have been at wars and conflicts with one another for diverse reasons and motives: like economic and political dominance, expansion of the land, liberation or occupation, power and resource grab etc. A world without wars is unimaginable. So, it becomes essential to employ such strategies and tactics that may help in winning the wars, instead of annihilating a massive proportion of humanity just because of enmity. In this wake, the Qur'anic concept of war is different from that of worldly gains, as its fundamental objective is to annihilate the tyranny (Fitnah), and establishment of Divine Just system (Deen), but not the enemy populace at war,¹¹ because the Qur'an explicitly states that the Tyranny (Fitnah) is far more greater sin and crime than killing the people.¹² This is the reason that the Qur'an and the Holy Prophet (PBUH) have taught a number of moral and ethical rules which dominate any strategy

¹⁰ Carl von Clausewitz, *Strategie aus dem Jahr 1804*, 5; cited in Donald Stoker, "What's in a Name? Clausewitz's Search to Define 'Strategy,'" *Military Strategy Magazine* 5, no. 2 (2025), accessed September 24, 2025, <https://www.militarystrategymagazine.com/article/whats-in-a-name-clausewitzs-search-to-define-strategy/>.

¹¹ Al-Quran, 2:193; 8:39.

¹² Al-Quran, 2:191, 217.

or tactic employed in the battlefield, making war a virtuous act to seek pleasure and blessings of Allah Almighty,¹³ and no commander has ever been allowed to transgress or ignore them. The Islamic doctrine and maxims on conduct of wars is the obedience of Allah Almighty and to maintain His order and discipline on His earth not for worldly gains. But, when war becomes inevitable, there must be some strategic and tactical art of war to meet the divine objectives at the battlefield. For this, a military commander must have a knowhow of appropriate strategies and tactics.

Muslims are obliged to uphold the principal of Jihad, and fulfil its requirements; the method of honoring this principal is a question of strategy. The Holy Prophet Muhammad was a "mercy for whole humanity",¹⁴ but also was the "Prophet of wars",¹⁵ therefore, the history of the battles fought under the command of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) illustrates the high level of efficiency and capability of Muslim soldiers in conducting all forms of military operations, such as: defense, attack, pursuit, disengagement from battle, approach, patrolling, ambush, reconnaissance, intelligence, assault on enemy, and, lying of siege etc. The performance of Muslim troops in these operations is a proof of perfection and effectiveness in the combat strategies and tactics employed by the Holy Prophet (PBUH) with sound moral character.

Almost a millennium before the Holy Prophet (PBUH), Sun Tzu was a great Chinese warrior living in 5th century BC, a reputed author of the Chinese classic "Bingfa" (The Art of War), which is said to be the earliest known treatise on war and military science. Although little is known about

¹⁴ Al-Quran, 21: 107.

¹⁵ Muhammad ibn 'Īsā al-Tirmidhī, *Al-Shamā'il al-Muḥammadiyyah wa-l-Khaṣā'il al-Muṣṭafawiyyah*, ed. Sayyid ibn 'Abbās al-Julaibī (Makkah al-Mukarramah: al-Maktabah al-Tujjāriyyah, Muṣṭafā Aḥmad al-Bāz, 1413 AH), Bāb "Mā Jā'a fī Asmā' al-Rasūl 'alayhi al-salām," ḥadīth no. 368, 307.

him except that, he served the state of Wu as a military strategist and general, and is traditionally considered the author of "The Art of War". But the work is more likely to have been written in the Warring States period (475- 221 BCE), at a time when China was divided into six or seven states that often resorted to war with one another in their struggles for supremacy. "The Art of War" is a systematic guide to strategy and tactics for rulers and commanders, divided in 13 sections or chapters, namely: Lying Plans, Waging wars, Attack by stratagem, Tactical dispositions, Energy, Weak and Strong Points, maneuvering, Variation in Tactics, The Army on the march, Terrain, and, The Use of Spies. The book discusses various maneuvers and the effect of terrain on the outcome of battles. It stresses the importance of accurate information about the enemy's forces, dispositions and deployments, and movements. It also highlights the unpredictability of battle and the use of flexible strategies and tactics. The book's assertion on the close relationship between political considerations and military policy influenced some modern strategists. Like, Mao Zedong and the Chinese communists took from the Art of war many of the tactics they used in fighting the Japanese and, later, the Chinese Nationalists.¹⁶

Although he is said to be associated with the philosophical systems of the Hundred Schools of Thought of the Spring and Autumn Period (c. 772-476 BCE), which advocated military preparedness in maintaining peace and order, yet the existence of Sun Tzu has been questioned by some scholars. But the existence of "The Art of War" and its reflective influence clearly proves that someone existed to produce said work, and tradition holds that the work was written by one Sun-Tzu. Moreover, "*The Spring and Autumn Annals*" (the state records of the Zhou Dynasty from 722-481

¹⁶ Sun Tzu, op.cit.

BCE) and the "Records of the Grand Historian" (c. 94 BCE) by the Han Dynasty historian Sima Qian (145/135-86 BCE) also support the historicity of Sun Tzu.¹⁷

It is worth noting that, warfare in China was considered a kind of sport of the noble gentry in which chivalry prevailed and rules were never broken; but, Sun-Tzu changed the rules by refusing to consider war a sport, and by applying Taoist principles to warfare. He is said to have played a significant role in the victory at the Battle of Boju (506 BCE). "*The Art of War*" was the foundational text in establishing the imperial dynasties which ruled China up until 1912 CE. From China, "*The Art of War*" traveled around the world and, in the present day, is among the bestselling books of all time.¹⁸

5. Literature Review

A notable number of books have been written about the strategic and tactical dispositions employed by the Holy Prophet (PBUH) in His various battles. Like, Maj.Gen. (Retd.) Muhammad Akbar Khan, in his book "Hadith e Difa"; and, Maj.(Rtd.) Ameer Afzal Khan, in his book, "Hazoor e Pak ka Jalal o Jamal" described, analyzed and elaborated the battles of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) from the standpoint of a military professional. A similar elaborative work is found in Muhammad Yaseen Sarohi's book "Nabi Kareem (PBUH) Ki Fouji Hikamt e Amlī"; and Dr. Muhammad Hameed Ullah in his book "Ehd e Nabwi Ky Medan e Jang", have described, analyzed and elaborated the battles of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) from the standpoint of a non-military person. Similarly, Maolana Safi ur Rahman Mubarak Puri in Ar-Rahiq ul Makhtum; Lt.Gen.Aagha

¹⁷Joshua J. Mark, "Sun Tzu," World History Encyclopedia, July 9, 2020, accessed September 23, 2025, <https://www.worldhistory.org/Sun-Tzu/>.

¹⁸ Ibid.

Ibrahim Akram in *Sword of Allah* Khalid bin Waleed; Dr. Yaseen Mazhar Siddiqui in "Ehde Nabwi Men Tanzeem e Riyasat o Hukumat", have discussed the strategic and tactical dispositions of the Magahzi as an indirect, or sideline discourse. But none of the above mentioned books, or other treatise written about Sun Tzu, contains any comparative discussion or analyses about parallels between the Holy Prophet (PBUH) and Sun Tzu regarding their strategic and tactical art of war, as has been studies in the following lines of this article.

6. Research Methodology

This study is carried out in accordance with the chapters/sections of the Sun Tzu's book "The Art of War". To meet the requirements of limited scope and length of this article, only selected points of these sections have been analyzed in this regard. A critical analytical approach has been adopted in this study, using published authentic primary and secondary data and literature, reliable web sites, including consultations with the relevant scholars of the subject also. The Arabic, or Urdu words have been transliterated where needed.

7. Strategic and Tactical Comparison

In the following lines a comparison of strategic and tactical capabilities between the Holy Prophet (PBUH) and Sun Tzu is presented.

7.1. Laying Planes

Sun Tzu describes the art of war of vital importance, a road to safety or ruin, governed by five constant factors, namely: the moral law, heaven,

earth, the commander, and, method and discipline.¹⁹ While Sun Tzu stresses that these five heads should be familiar to every general, he himself suggested the basis of a comparison in this wise.²⁰

Sun Tzu elaborates "moral law" as a complete accordance of people with their ruler, so that they follow him regardless of their lives.²¹ This is in accordance with the pledge undertaken by the companions of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) at the occasion of Bai'at Uqba 2nd, taking a solemn promise of "listen and obey, willingly or unwillingly, in comfort or in distress, aiding the Prophet (PBUH), and protecting Him as they protected themselves and their kin groups."²²

By "heaven", Sun Tzu means night & day, cold & heat, times & seasons; and "earth" comprises small or great distance, danger & security, open ground & narrow passes, the chances of life & death.²³ And this point can be comprehended during Ghazwa e Tabuk, where, the weather was extremely hot,²⁴ target was very distant from Madina,²⁵ and despite of financial and militarily paucity,²⁶ the prophet (PBUH) completed this tedious expedition successfully.

By "commander", Sun Tzu takes for the virtues of wisdom, sincerity, benevolence, courage, and strictness.²⁷ And no doubt, the Prophet (PBUH) possessed all these command qualities, as He was not only very anxious

¹⁹ Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, trans. Lionel Giles (Leicester: Allendale Online Publishing, 2000), 1.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 1.

²² Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *Al-Musnad*, ed. Shu'ayb al-Arna'ūṭ and 'Ādil Murshid (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risālah, 1st ed., 1421 AH), *Musnad al-Mukthirīn*, *Musnad Jābir ibn 'Abd Allāh (RA)*, ḥadīth no. 13934.

²³ Sun Tzu, *op.cit.*, 1-2

²⁴ As described in *Al-Quran*, 9: 81.

²⁵ The fact also described in *Qur'an*, 9: 42.

²⁶ *Al-Quran*, 9: 117 & 92

²⁷ Sun Tzu, *op.cit.*, 2.

for the welfare of His followers, and kind and merciful;²⁸ but an extremely valorous combatant also.²⁹

Sun Tzu says:

*"All warfare is based on deception."*³⁰

A fact which corresponds to the saying of the Prophet (PBUH), that war is (an art of) deception.³¹ Moreover, Sun Tzu elaborated this point as:

*"When able to attack, we must seem unable, when using our force, we must seem inactive."*³²

This denotes a tactic, which was perfectly employed by the Prophet (PBUH), as reported that, whenever the Prophet (PBUH) planned a war, pretended absolutely otherwise.³³

To irritate the enemy, Sun Tzu said,

*"If your opponent is of choleric temper, seek to irritate him."*³⁴

This tactic was employed by the Prophet (PBUH) before the battle of Badr, when the Prophet (PBUH) dispatched various small contingents to intercept the trade caravans of Quraish on the trade rout, mainly to

²⁸ Al-Quran, 9:128.

²⁹ As has been reported that, He was the most valorous of all people. (Bukhari, Muhammad bin Ismael bin Ibrahim, al-Jami al-Musnado al-Sahih al-Mukhtasaro min Umoo e Rasulullahi (P.B.U.H.) Sunanihi wa Ayyamihi, edt.: Zuhair bin Nasir, Dar Towq al-Najah, Beirut, ed.: 1st, 1422 A.H., Kitab ul jihad wa Siyyer, Bab: Ashuja'atu fil Harbi wal Jubun, Hadith: 2608; and, Muslim, Abu al-Hassan bin al-Hajjaj al-Qushairi, Al-Jami' al-Sahih, Dar al-Jil, wa Dar al-Afaq al-Jadeedah, Beirut, Kitab ul Fadail, Bab: Fi shuja'ati Nabi Alaihi assalam wa Taqaddumihi Lil Harb, Hadith: 4266

³⁰ Sun Tzu, op.cit., 3.

³¹ Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl al-Bukhārī, Al-Jāmi' al-Ṣaḥīḥ, Kitāb al-Jihād wa-l-Siyar, Bāb "Al-Ḥarbu Khud'ah," ḥadīth no. 2805; and Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj, Al-Jāmi' al-Ṣaḥīḥ, Kitāb al-Jihād wa-l-Siyar, Bāb "Jawāz al-Khadi'ah fī al-Ḥarb," ḥadīth no. 3273.

³² Sun Tzu, op.cit., 3.

³³ Abū Dāwūd Sulaymān ibn al-Ash'ath al-Sijistānī, Al-Sunan, ed. Shu'ayb al-Arna'ut and Muḥammad Kāmil Qurrah (Beirut: Dār al-Risālah al-'Ālamiyyah, 1st ed., 1430 AH), Kitāb al-Jihād, Bāb "Al-Makr fī al-Ḥarb," ḥadīth no. 2267.

³⁴ Sun Tzu, op.cit., 4.

Syria. These contingents were sent to Saiful Bahar (Ramadan 1st AH), Rabigh (Shawwal 1st AH), Kharrar (Dhul Qa'dah 1st AH), Abwa or Waddan (lead by the Prophet (PBUH) Himself, Safar 2nd AH), Buwat and Safwan (lead by the Prophet (PBUH) Himself, Rabi'ul Awal 2nd AH), Dhul 'Asheerah (lead by the Prophet (PBUH) Himself, Jamadiul Awwal/ Sani 2nd AH), Nakhlah (a spy mission, Rajib 2nd AH). All these expeditions not only irritated Quraish, but inflicted a real threat of a serious harm to their trade caravans, that they were left no choice but to come out of their sacred stronghold of Makkah, and fight with Muslims elsewhere, predominately on the battle field of Prophet's choice, of Badr.³⁵ The said threat was initially inflicted by Sa'ad bin Ma'az (RA), during his Umrah performance at Makkah, before the commencement of war between the Muslims and Quraish in the months to follow. Sa'ad (RA) even told that the Prophet (PBUH) foretold the battles to come, but concealed the target locations of those battles.³⁶ This whole strategy perfectly synchronized with that of Sun Tzu's saying, "*Hold out baits to entice the enemy. Feign the disorder, and crush him.*"³⁷

While engaging the enemy, Sun Tzu said,

*"If he (the enemy) is taking his ease, give him no rest. If his forces are united, separate them."*³⁸

This point can be elaborated by two separate occasions. One is, when after the battle of Uhud, the Quraish left for Makkah, the Prophet (PBUH) ordered to chase them, so that they may not think of Muslims to

³⁵ Şafī al-Raḥmān al-Mubārakpūrī, Al-Raḥīq al-Makhtūm (Lahore: Al-Maktabat al-Salafiyyah, n.d.), 268–275; and Muḥammad al-Suyānī, Al-Sīrah al-Nabawiyyah Kamā Jā'at fī al-Aḥādīth al-Şaḥīḥah, 5th ed., vol. 2 (Riyadh: Maktabat al-'Ubaykān, 1434 AH), 18.

³⁶ Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl al-Bukhārī, op.cit., Hadith: 3656.

³⁷ Sun Tzu, op.cit., 3.

³⁸ Ibid., 4.

be weak, and hence return for a conclusive attack. So the Prophet (PBUH) decided to stay ahead of their thoughts, by not letting them to take their chance with ease. This tactic indeed proved to be effective, as the enemy was in fact considering returning back to Madina to inflict a conclusive harm to Muslim army, but was compelled to abstain, and return without taking any rest.³⁹ Similarly, on the second occasion, when the Quraish managed to bring a massive allied force to attack Madina, the Prophet (PBUH) neutralized their move and halted their onslaught by digging a trench, and during this very critical moment, after having an opportunity, the Prophet (PBUH) successfully managed to break the alliance between the Quraish and Bnu Quraizah with the help of a smart move carried out by Nu'im bin mas'ud (RA).⁴⁰

7.2. Waging War

Despite of being a successful general, Sun Tzu rightly warns that,

*"There is no instance of a country having benefited from prolonged warfare."*⁴¹

That is the wisdom which made the Prophet (PBUH) to offer an open peace treaty to Quraish at the occasion of Hudaibiya.⁴² While regarding the POWs, Sun Tzu said, *"The captured soldiers should be kindly treated and kept."*⁴³

³⁹ Agha Ibrahim Akram, *The Sword of Allah: Khalid bin al-Waleed*, trans. Aziz Hamdani and Shaheer Niazi (Islamabad: National Book Foundation, 3rd ed., 2004), 62–63.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 85–88.

⁴¹ Sun Tzu, *op.cit.*, 6.

⁴² Abū Ja'far Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa-l-Mulūk*, with *Ṣilat Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī li-'Arīb ibn Sa'd al-Qurṭubī*, 2nd ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Turāth, 1387 AH), 624–630; and Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi' al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Kitāb al-Shurūṭ*, Bāb "Al-Shurūṭ fi al-Jihād wa-l-Ṣulḥ ma'a Ahl al-Ḥarb wa Kitābat al-Shurūṭ," ḥadīth no. 2529.

⁴³ Sun Tzu, *op.cit.*, 6.

This is what actually happened after the battle of Badr, when captives of Quraish were kept and treated in such a kindest way, that any other example is impossible to find in human history.⁴⁴

7.3. Attack by Stratagem

The ability to assess the situation and taking appropriate decisions of fighting, or otherwise, is of fundamental importance. War must be considered as a last resort to resolve the conflicts with rivals. In this regard, Sun Tzu said,

"To fight and conquer in all your battles is not supreme excellence, supreme excellence consists in breaking the enemy's resistance without fighting."⁴⁵

The Seerah of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) is evident that whenever it was possible, the Prophet (PBUH) always tried His best to achieve His objectives by avoiding the fight as much as He could, or the circumstances allowed. Like, during the battle of Ahzab, at the occasion of Hudaibiya, and the conquest of Makkah, where the desired objectives were achieved entirely without any battle, or a massive fighting. But, if war may break out, then Sun Tzu advised,

"The highest form of generalship is to balk the enemy's plans; the next best is to prevent the junction of enemy's forces. The next in order is to attack the enemy's army in the fields; and the worst policy of all is to besiege walled cities."⁴⁶

Various strategies have been described here, which can be seen to be employed by the Prophet (PBUH) also. Like after Hudaibiya peace truce in 6 AH, the Prophet attacked the Khyber in 7Ah, followed by the conquest

⁴⁴Safi al-Rahmān al-Mubārakpūrī, op.cit., 313.

⁴⁵Sun Tzu, op.cit., 8.

⁴⁶Ibid., 8.

of Makkah in 8 AH.⁴⁷ As far as fighting the battles in the field, and avoiding the sieges of the walled cities is concerned, it is a matter of fact that most of the battles of the Prophet (PBUH) were indeed fought in the fields, yet at some occasions, the tactic of siege was also employed. Like, most of the battles fought against the Jews were the battles of siege, as the Jews were very fond of fighting behind the fortified walls of their forts; a fact that has been described in Qur'an as:

"They (the Jews) do not fight you even assembled together, but in fortified towns, or from behind the walls."⁴⁸

The first expedition of this sort was the siege of a Jewish tribe Banu Qainuqa' in Shawwal 2 AH, which lasted for almost fifteen days. At first Jews resisted, but ultimately they gave in, as Allah Almighty filled their hearts with cowardice and awe, and they surrendered before the Prophet (PBUH), and were expelled from Madinah.⁴⁹ Similarly, the Jews of the tribe Banu Nudhair met the same fate in Rabiul Awwal 4 AH. They also tried to secure themselves behind the fortified walls of their fort, but eventually had to give in and surrender due to that awe which Allah Almighty filled in their hearts; and, like Banu Qainuqa', were expelled from Madina.⁵⁰ Then in 5 AH, the Jews of Banu Quraizah met their fate in the same way as their predecessors Banu Qainuqa' and Banu Nudhair had met. Earlier they thought that their fortresses will save them, but then fear was casted into

⁴⁷ Ṣafī al-Raḥmān al-Mubārakpūrī, op.cit., 497.

Al-Quran, 59: 14.

⁴⁹ Ṣafī al-Raḥmān al-Mubārakpūrī, op.cit., 328.

⁵⁰ A fact described in the Qur'an as: "He is the one who expelled the disbelievers of the people of the Book (the Jews) from their homes at the time of first gathering. You did not expect that they would leave, and they deemed that their fortresses would protect them from Allah. But Allah came to them from where they did not expect, and cast fear in their hearts..." (Al-Hashar, 59:2); for details, see: Al-Raḥīq al-Makhtūm, 402-404.

their hearts by Allah Almighty, and with their combatant men killed,⁵¹ they were also expelled from Madina.⁵² There is a common factor visible in all these examples, which is the "fear or awe", casted into the enemy's hearts. This "fear" was in fact a special characteristic of the Prophet (PBUH), as described in a Hadith as:

*"My dread has been casted (in the hearts of enemies) far as from the (distance of a) month's travel."*⁵³

And that fear infliction is indeed indicative of the prophet-hood of Muhammad (PBUH), which helped Him winning the battles of the besieged cities. Although, in 8 AH, the siege of Ta'if was lifted after several days, because there was neither any chance of breaching the fort wall, nor was any hope of a conclusive battle with the besieged enemy.⁵⁴ This is evident that the Prophet (PBUH) analyzed every battle situation, and employed the most appropriate strategy, or tactic accordingly, and contrary to Sun Tzu's hard and fast rule, stating, *"the rule is not to besiege walled cities if it can possibly be avoided"*,⁵⁵ but was flexible enough to meet the requirements of the situation on ground.

In the same way, Sun Tzu suggested avoiding any battle, or siege to subdue the enemy as:

⁵¹ As described in the Qur'an: "He has brought those of the people of the Book (the Jews) who had backed them (the allied forces of the Quraish and Ghatafan with others), down from their fortresses, and cast awe into their hearts, so as to make you kill some of them and take others as captives". (Al-Ahzab, 33:26).

⁵² Şafī al-Raḥmān al-Mubārakpūrī, op.cit., 426- 430.

⁵³ Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl al-Bukhārī, op.cit., Hadith: 810.

⁵⁴ Şafī al-Raḥmān al-Mubārakpūrī, op.cit., 568; and, Khan, Ameer Afzal, Maj.(Rtd.), Hazoor e Pak ka Jalal o Jamal, ST Printers, Rawalpindi, Ed.:1, 1993, 420.

⁵⁵ Sun Tzu, op.cit., 8.

"The skilled leader subdues the enemy's troops without any fighting; he captures their cities without laying siege to them; he overthrows their kingdom without lengthy operations in the field."⁵⁶

This description synchronizes with the conquest of Makkah in 8 AH, as there occurred no fighting, or field battle with the enemy, the city of Makkah was not besieged, the Qurashite hold of Makkah was overthrown within a day, and no lengthy operation took place. Moreover, instead of any revengeful bloodshed, all the residents of Makkah were pardoned unconditionally.⁵⁷ The Prophet's military wisdom and humanitarian political conduct during and after this operation was itself evidence of His Prophet-hood, absolutely contrary to any of the worldly kings and generals, as depicted in the Qur'an as:

"In fact when the kings enter a town, they put it into disorder, and put its honorable citizens to disgrace, and this is how they normally do."⁵⁸

The troop's ratio in the battlefield has always been an important, yet decisive factor in the war. Therefore, every general pays a keen attention on this factor, and pre-formulates the troop's ratio to go in war with. In this sense, Sun Tzu described the rule of war as:

"It is the rule in war, if our forces are ten to the enemy's one, to surround him; if five to one, to attack him; if twice as numerous, to divide our enemy into two. If equally matched, we can offer battle; if slightly inferior in number, we can avoid the enemy; if quite unequal in every way, we can flee from him."⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Ibid., 9.

⁵⁷ Ṣafī al-Raḥmān al-Mubārakpūrī, op.cit., 548-551.

⁵⁸ Al-Quran, 27:34.

⁵⁹ Sun Tzu, op.cit., 9.

Quite contrary to Sun Tzu's rule described above, the combat strategy and tactics prescribed in Qur'an, and executed by the Prophet (PBUH), the troop's ratio in the battlefield had often been unfavorable for the Muslim army (like in the battle of Badr, it was 313 against 1000 (1:3); in the battle of Uhud, it was 700 against 3000 (1:4), and during Ahzab, the enemy's troops were ten thousand in number against almost three thousand Muslim combatants (1:3), etc.), yet combat avoidance, or fleeing away had never been an option, let alone be a strategy adopted by the Prophet (PBUH) or the troops under His command. And this kind of morale was due to certain Qur'anic injunctions, as:

*"O you who believe, when you face the disbelievers in a battle, do not turn your backs to them. Whoever turns his back to them on such a day; unless it is for a tactic in the battle, or to join a company, turns with wrath from Allah, and his abode is Hell, and it is an evil place to return."*⁶⁰

Similarly, to boost up the morale of fighting troops, it has been said that the victory or defeat is not dependent upon the bigger or smaller number of troops, but it is the will of Allah, and true faith in Him, which plays a decisive role in this regard, as stated in Qur'an:

"Said those who believed in their having to meet Allah, 'how many small groups have overcome large groups by the will of Allah. Allah is with those who remain patient.'" ⁶¹

So, it becomes quite obvious that the fighting spirit of the Prophet (PBUH) and His troops was a direct resultant of the guidance of Allah Almighty through revelation, which itself was possible only because of the Prophet-hood of Muhammad (PBUH).

⁶⁰ Al-Quran, 9: 15-16.

⁶¹ Al-Quran, 2: 249.

In another point, while describing the essentials for victory, Sun Tzu said,

*"He will win, who knows when to fight and when not to fight."*⁶²

This point can be related to the occasion of Hudaibiyah, when Umar (RA) pointed out the Qurashite hostility, the Prophet (PBUH) exclaimed that, if Quraish would want to fight, then I will fight, but until that, I will try to not to.⁶³ But then the rumor of the murder of Uthman (RA), Prophet's envoy to Quraish, broke out, and then Prophet (PBUH) took a pledge from His companions to avenge Uthman's murder. Although later on, as this rumor proved to be untrue, changing the scenario altogether, the Prophet (PBUH) not only chose, but in fact openly offered the enemy to settle for a truce.⁶⁴ This shows the quality of situational awareness, i.e., to know, when to fight, and when not to, but holding all situation calmly under His firm grasp, and never let go the critical situation to go out of control against Him, or His companions at any moment.

Sun Tzu describes another essential of victory as,

*"He will win, who knows how to handle both superior and inferior forces."*⁶⁵

This point can very well be elaborated by two different examples. During the battle of Ahzab, the Quraish had gathered a large army against the Muslims, and apparently it seemed impossible to resist them in an open fight in the battle field. So this threat was averted by digging a trench, restricting the advancing enemy's infantry and cavalry outside of the

⁶² Sun Tzu, op.cit., 10.

⁶³ Muhammad Akbar Khan, Hadīth-e-Difā' (Islamabad: AR Printers, n.d.), 247–248.

⁶⁴ Ṣafī al-Raḥmān al-Mubārakpūrī, op.cit., 465.

⁶⁵ Sun Tzu, op.cit., 10

Madina, and nullifying the chances of any battle to take place.⁶⁶ On the other hand, during the conquest of Makkah, when the enemy had become weak, inferior, and utterly unable to resist, the Prophet (PBUH) strictly forbade His troops to initiate any skirmish.⁶⁷ So, on both of the occasions, the Prophet (PBUH) exhibited His excellent skill of handling the superior, and inferior enemy forces, employing different strategies and tactic for each occasion. Moreover, it is worth noting that, whether the enemy was superior or inferior, the Prophet (PBUH) employed such a strategy for each situation, which reduced any chances of bloodshed, both for the Muslim troops, and for the enemy troops as well. This level of merciful strategic wisdom is never to be found elsewhere except for the Prophet (PBUH), again proving the fact that He was not just another general or commander amongst others, but was indeed a Prophet and Messenger of Allah Almighty.

Another essential of victory described by Sun Tzu is, "*He will win who, prepared himself, waits to takes enemy unprepared.*"⁶⁸

Again, this point befits with both of the battles of Azab, and the conquest of Makkah, as at both of the occasions, the enemy had to face a situation, for which, they were absolutely unprepared. Be it the trench, for which the enemy had absolutely no idea of its existence, or tackling;⁶⁹ and likewise, the enemy had absolutely no idea of the Muslim army marching towards them, until they reached the "gates" of Makkah.⁷⁰

⁶⁶Muhammad Akbar Khan, op.cit., 333-334.

⁶⁷ Amīr Afzal Khān, Ḥuzūr-e-Pāk kā Jalāl o Jamāl (n.p., n.d.), 333-334; and Abū Ja'far Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, Tārīkh al-Rusul wa-l-Mulūk (Beirut: Dār al-Turāth, n.d.), 397.

⁶⁸ Sun Tzu, op.cit., 11.

⁶⁹ Amīr Afzal Khān, op.cit., 332.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 409.

7.4. Tactical Dispositions

Describing the characteristics of a good fighter, Sun Tzu said, "*The good fighter is able to secure himself against defeat.*"⁷¹

If tactical deployment of troops at the battle field of Uhud is seen in the light of above point, it becomes obvious that the Prophet (PBUH) had positioned His troops in a perfectly secured manner,⁷² and had the archers did not commit the mistake of leaving their post, the battle would have ended entirely different from as it did. In the same way, the digging of a trench to secure both, the city and the troops, was indeed another marvelous tactic employed in a country whose inhabitants were unaware of it. And it proved its worth by ceasing the onslaught of enemy successfully, which befitted with another point, advised by Sun Tzu as,

*"Security against defeat implies defensive tactics."*⁷³

But, in another point, Sun Tzu contradicts himself by saying, "*Standing on defensive indicates insufficient strength; attack, a superabundance of strength.*"⁷⁴

Although Sun Tzu admires the tactic of attack, and describes it as a manifestation of strength, and being defensive is interpreted as being inferior in strength. But contrary to this idea, the way the Prophet (PBUH) handled the whole critical situation at Hudaibiyah, establishing His 'superabundance of strength' despite of being far away from His stronghold, and less in numbers as compared to the enemy, apparently remaining defensive and calm, He not only prudently averted any danger of misadventure from the enemy, but compelled them to agree upon the

⁷¹ Sun Tzu, op.cit., 12.

⁷² Amīr Afzal Khān, op.cit., 292.

⁷³ Sun Tzu, op.cit., 12.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 12.

truce for no war.⁷⁵ Although the whole episode seemed quite distant from the ground realities, that even the companions had some reservations on it,⁷⁶ yet the Prophet (PBUH) did all this confidently, as He was doing it under the direct guidance and revelation of Allah Almighty. This confidence on divine guidance, this level of prudence, this level of calmness in that critical situation is explicitly indicative of His Prophethood, as no worldly general would dare to take such bold step without a strong faith and believe in God Almighty.

No battle can be effectively, or, victoriously fought with a good strategy, and being a good strategist can be decisive in winning or losing a battle. Therefore, Sun Tzu said,

*"The victorious strategist only seeks battle after the victory has been won, whereas, he who is destined to defeat, first fights, and afterwards looks for victory."*⁷⁷

This point directly relates to the planning of the battles of Badr, Uhud, Ahzab, and Makkah, etc., where every operational scheme, like, selection of the battlefield of the choice, and approach course towards it; survey, analyses, and appropriate use of the course and battlefield terrain, field resources, and supplies; troops deployment with appointments of various field officers; use of codes; intelligence gathering of the enemy troops, etc. was always planned beforehand, and successfully executed in the battlefield.

7.5. Energy

A general's best combat plans can be effectively executed by energized troops. Any demoralized army with no energy or will to fight

⁷⁵ Muhammad Akbar Khan, op.cit., 248-250; and, Amīr Afzal Khān, op.cit., 359.

⁷⁶ Ṣafī al-Raḥmān al-Mubārakpūrī, op.cit., 467.

⁷⁷ Sun Tzu, op.cit., 13.

can doom the best plans to ruins. Therefore, Sun Tzu described the characteristic of an energized army as:

*"The onset of troops is like the rush of a torrent which will even roll stones along its course."*⁷⁸

This point corresponds to the statement made by Abu Sufyan (RA) to Abbas (RA) during the conquest of Makkah, where, the former said to the later, that the Prophet (PBUH) Has brought such an army that Quraish have no way to resist or fight.⁷⁹

In every battle, a prompt right decision can play a decisive role in victory or defeat, even life or death. In this regard, Sun Tzu rightly said that,

*"The quality of a decision is like the well-timed swoop of a falcon which enables it to strike and destroy its victim, the good fighter will be terrible in his onset, and prompt in his decision."*⁸⁰

This tactic was significantly manifested right after the battle of Uhud, when, despite of returning back to Madina, and taking care of the wounded soldiers, the Prophet (PBUH) promptly took a right decision to chase the Qurashite army even with the wounded soldiers.⁸¹ This action

⁷⁸ Ibid., 16.

⁷⁹ Ṣafī al-Raḥmān al-Mubārakpūrī, op.cit., 546-647.

⁸⁰ Sun Tzu, op.cit., 16.

⁸¹ As depicted in the Qur'an: "those who responded to the call of Allah and the Messenger, even after they had received wound" (Ale Imran, 3: 172). According to a Hadith Narrated by A'ishah (RA), that after the battle of Uhud, when the Quraishites were returning back to Makkah, The Prophet (PBUH) anticipated the threat of Quraish of their returning back to Madina, to inflict another deadly attack on the Muslims. So, at this stage the Prophet (PBUH) promptly decided to chase them, so that the enemy may know that the Muslims were still strong enough to fight back. Then ordered only those soldiers to take part in this action who had fought in the battle of Uhud in the previous day. (Bukhari, Kitab Al-Maghazi, Bab: Allazinastajabu lillahi warrasul, Hadith: 3769; and, Qurtabi, Abu Abdullah Muhammad Bin Ahmad Bin Abi Bakr, Al-Jami' Li-Ahkam Al-Qur'an,

not only exhibited the high morale of Muslim soldiers, but inflicted a fear in the hearts of the enemy, that despite of having a valid suggestion of returning back to Madina to sweep the remainder Muslim army, hearing about the said chase, they immediately annulled their plans, and fled back to Makkah.⁸²

In the same way, as the battle of Ahzab ended, the Prophet (PBUH) promptly and duly decided to punish the Jewish tribe of Banu Quraizah, for their betrayal against the state of Madina in the said battle.⁸³ Had this action not be taken in a right way, and on the right time, this menace of betrayal would have become so virulent, that could diminish the state and society of Madina.

These examples from the Seerah of the Prophet (PBUH) exhibit not only an excellent capability of taking right decision at right time, but also manifest an exemplary level of energy in the both decision and execution phases, which perfectly corroborate Sun Tzu's following saying,

*"Energy may be linked to the bending of a crossbow; decision to the releasing of a trigger."*⁸⁴

Although, having energy does not always require its display and exhibition, as Sun Tzu said,

*"Concealing courage under a show of timidity presupposes a fund of latent energy; masking strength with weakness is to be effected by tactical dispositions."*⁸⁵

edt.: Ahmad Al-Barduni and Ibrahim Atfeesh, Darulkitab Al-Misriyyah, Cairo, 2nd Ed., 1348 AH.; and, Khan, Ameer Afzal, Hazoor e Pak ka Jalal o Jamal, p: 308).

⁸² Şafī al-Raḥmān al-Mubārakpūri, op.cit., 386-387; and, Amīr Afzal Khān, op.cit., 309.

⁸³ Şafī al-Raḥmān al-Mubārakpūri, op.cit., 426-429.

⁸⁴ Sun Tzu, op.cit., 17.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 17.

This point can be well elaborated by the example of the truce of Hudaibiya, where the enemy was made so confused by the display of strength at one hand, by taking the pledge to avenge the murder of Uthman (RA), and by offering a peace treaty on the other hand.⁸⁶ This "tactical ambiguity" was so profound and perfect that despite of the fact that the whole treaty was made according to the desired conditions of Quraish, who thought it to be their victory, ended up in their ultimate defeat, just as predicted in the Qur'an as:

*"Surely, we have granted you an open victory."*⁸⁷

Any military force is comprised of well trained and highly capable soldiers, yet, fighting a battle always requires a cohesive effort exerted by each individual at his fullest to achieve the sole goal of victory. Any individual soldier may perform better than his comrades in any battle; yet, the armies fight, win, or lose a battle with the collective energy of all the combatants of a contingent. Sun Tzu emphasized this point as:

*"The clever combatant looks to the effect of combined energy, and does not require too much from individuals. Hence his ability to pick out the right men and utilize combined energy."*⁸⁸

i.e., while engaged in a battle, the good commander's troops fight cohesively like a single unified force, while assigning different tasks to different persons, to achieve the common goal of mission accomplishment or victory. This is absolutely in accordance with the strategic concept laid down in the Qur'an as:

⁸⁶ Ṣafī al-Raḥmān al-Mubārakpūrī, op.cit., 465.

⁸⁷ Al-Quran, 48:1.

⁸⁸ Sun Tzu, op.cit., 17.

*"Surely Allah loves those who fight in His way in firm rows, as if they were solid edifice."*⁸⁹

This concept of solid edifice or "*Bunyanum Marsoos*" converts an ordinary combat unit comprising of diversely capable combatants into a cohesive energized war machine with ability to pound the enemy of any size, at any front, as depicted by Sun Tzu as,

*"The energy developed by good fighting men is as the momentum of a round stone, rolled down a mountain thousands of feet high."*⁹⁰

7.6. Weak points and Strong

Armies are comprised of humans, who possess strong, as well as weak qualities and characteristics. A good general must have a significant knowledge of these weak and strong points of not only enemy, but also, must know the limitations of his troops, to overcome them before going into any war. Without this knowledge, any adverse situation can arise in the battle field, resulting sometimes in total chaos and destruction. Amongst these qualities, the quality of initiative is considered important one, and that initiative is taken by taking over the battlefield before the enemy could do so. That's why, Sun Tzu has said,

*"Whoever is first in the field and awaits the coming of the enemy, will be fresh for the fight."*⁹¹

This point can directly be corroborated to the strategies adopted in the battles of Badr and Uhud by the Prophet (PBUH). In both of the cases, the Prophet (PBUH) arrived at the battle fields before the enemy, aptly captured, and deployed troops at the strategically important sectors of

⁸⁹ Al-Quran, 61:4.

⁹⁰ Sun Tzu, op.cit., 18.

⁹¹ Ibid., 19.

battlefield according to its terrain, reducing the enemy to the unfavorable sectors of the battlefield, and compelling them to fight in the place of His choice. Likewise, at the occasion of the battle of Ahzab, the Prophet (PBUH) had taken every defensive measure in to action way before the enemy could approach Madina. Then skillfully and successfully applied the tactic of combat aversion by digging the trench, reducing enemy to stay behind it, impeding the battle to be initiated, tumbling enemy plans and morale, as all their fatigue went into vein. This strategic wisdom accords with that of Sun Tzu's saying,

*"The clever combatant imposes his will on the enemy, but does not allow the enemy's will to be imposed on him. By holding out advantages to him, he can cause the enemy to approach of his own accord; or, by inflicting damage, he can make it impossible for the enemy to draw near."*⁹²

In another place, Sun Tzu suggested,

*"Appear at points which the enemy must hasten to defend; march swiftly to places where you are not expected."*⁹³

This point is comprehensible by the example of Hudaibiya, where the Prophet (PBUH) marched on a course, which was beyond enemy expectations, as they were expecting the Prophet (PBUH) to take the usual course of 'Asfan, but contrary to this, re-routing from Dhul-Hulaifah, the Prophet (PBUH) by taking the unusual and difficult course reached Hudaibiya quite stealthily.⁹⁴ This was a move, which Quraish could never have imagined in their wildest dreams. In another example, during the conquest of Makkah, the Prophet (PBUH) approached Makkah quite

⁹² Ibid., 19.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Muhammad Akbar Khan, op.cit., 254.

swiftly and secretly, even the enemy could not get a hint of this expedition until the Prophet (PBUH) along with His troops appeared "suddenly" just outside of the Makkah, leaving the enemy no option but to surrender helplessly, unconditionally, and peacefully.

Breach able defense is also a weak point, which compromises the security of the installation to be guarded, and the well-being of the personnel at guard. Therefore, about the un-breach able defense, Sun Tzu said,

*"You can ensure the safety of your defense, if you only hold positions that cannot be attacked."*⁹⁵

This point is visibly parallel to the tactic adopted for the battle of Ahzab, where the Prophet (PBUH) managed to make Madinah un-attackable by digging a trench before the enemy approach, impeding the enemy troops from entering the city of Madina, or initiate any battle there. This tactic corresponds to another point said by Sun Tzu, that,

*"Though the enemy be stronger in numbers, we may prevent him to fight."*⁹⁶

In another place, Sun Tzu said,

*"That general is skillful in defense whose opponent does not know what to attack."*⁹⁷

This point can be elaborated by the example of the battle of the Uhud, where the enemy was made confused to choose among two of the targets deployed in opposite directions, i.e., either, to attack the city of Madinah, or to fight with the Muslim army in front of the mount Uhud, where the Prophet (PBUH) prudently established the pivot of maneuvers,

⁹⁵ Sun Tzu, op.cit., 19-20.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 22.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 20.

or strong points by deploying a platoon of archers on the pass of Jablur Rumat, and a contingent under the command of Muhammad bin Muslimah (RA), at the back of the enemy, making the situation more confused for the enemy.⁹⁸

The temptation of a quick short-term victory, while compromising the long-term strategy can also be a weak point. Therefore, while describing the importance of a good long term strategy, over a temporary tactical victory, Sun Tzu said,

*"All men can see the tactics whereby I conquer, but what none can see is the strategy out of which victory is evolved."*⁹⁹

This strategic prudence is also manifested in the example of the Hudaibiya peace treaty, where the Prophet (PBUH) despite of being able to engage in a battle (though a bloody one),¹⁰⁰ not only skillfully averted it, but also molded the circumstances in His favor in such a manner that what seemed to be temporary retreat, in fact became the prologue of the ultimate victory of both Khyber, and Makkah in the subsequent years to come, foretold as an "Open victory" in the Qur'an as,

*"Surely we have granted you an open victory."*¹⁰¹

The wisdom of "tactical retreat followed by a strategic victory", with such a resolute prediction, can only be a characteristic of a prophet directly guided by none other than the God Almighty Himself. This in fact is in accordance with the term used by Sun Tzu as,

⁹⁸ Muhammad Akbar Khan, op.cit., 186- 187; and, Amīr Afzal Khān, op.cit., 292-293.

⁹⁹ Sun Tzu, op.cit., 23.

¹⁰⁰ Muhammad Akbar Khan, op.cit., 255.

¹⁰¹ Al-Quran, 48: 1

*"He who can modify his tactics in relation to his opponent and thereby succeed in winning, may be called a heaven-born captain."*¹⁰²

So, if any "general" truly deserves to be attributed as a "heaven-born captain", then this title stands suitable for none other than the Prophet (PBUH).

7.7. Maneuvering

The art of maneuvering includes course selection, and tactful deviation to avoid any unwanted potential fight. While describing the importance of tactical maneuvering, Sun Tzu said:

*"Tactical maneuvering consists in turning the devious into the direct, or misfortune into gain to take a long circuitous route, after exiting the enemy out of the way, to contrive to reach the goal before him, shows knowledge of the artifice of deviation ."*¹⁰³

This art of tactical maneuvering is exhibited at the occasion of Hudaibiyah, where the potential interception of the pre-perceived course of 'Asfan was abandoned and countered by the tactical deviation and re-routing to Makkah by the course of Hudaibiya,¹⁰⁴ and instigation of fight by the enemy was tactfully averted,¹⁰⁵ by turning the hostile misfortune towards a long term gain of peace treaty, followed by an ultimate conquest of Makkah just after two years.

Similarly, at the occasion of the battle of the Khyber, instead of marching straight towards the target, the Prophet (PBUH) took the course leading between the tribe of Ghatafan and Khyber. So, none of both could assess the intended heading of the Muslim troops. In fact, both of them

¹⁰² Sun Tzu, op.cit., 23.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 25.

¹⁰⁴ Muhammad Akbar Khan, op.cit., 254.

¹⁰⁵ Amīr Afzal Khān, op.cit., 358-359.

were simultaneously terrified of being attacked by the Muslim troops, and instead of aiding each other, both remained concerned about their own defense at their places.¹⁰⁶ This tactic of 'circuitous routing' proved to be successful here, and on some other occasions as well.

On a hilly terrain, the maneuvering becomes not only difficult, but also dangerous due to the safer elevated enemy position, from where he can have an easy "duck hunt" of the defending troops. That's why, Sun Tzu discourages to fight or chase enemy uphill, as said,

*"It is a military axiom not to advance uphill against the enemy, nor to oppose him when he comes downhill."*¹⁰⁷

In another place, he repeats,

*"Do not climb heights in order to fight."*¹⁰⁸

At the occasion of the battle of Hunain, after the massive wave of arrows during the deadly ambush of enemy, the Prophet (PBUH) and His troops (while marching through the 'low ground' of gorge of Hunain) did not advance uphill to fight back, just as Sun Tzu suggested. But, contrary to the second part of his suggestion, the Prophet (PBUH) and His troops not only fought with the enemy who came downhill to 'low ground', but also defeated them. It is also worth noting that at one stage of this battle, the Prophet (PBUH) dismounted from His mule to fight, which not only exhibits His unmatched valor,¹⁰⁹ but this tactic was executed probably as a bait to attract the enemy to leave his advantageous safer 'high ground' position, and to come down to 'low ground' in a hope to capture or harm the Prophet (PBUH) as the commander of Muslim army. This action not

¹⁰⁶ Muhammad Akbar Khan, op.cit., 260-261.

¹⁰⁷ Sun Tzu, op.cit., 29.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 33.

¹⁰⁹ Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl al-Bukhārī, op.cit., Hadith: 3326.

only shows superiority of the tactical wisdom of the Prophet (PBUH) as compared to Sun Tzu, but also His exemplary valor.

7.8. The Army on the March

Sun Tzu said,

*"Take up an easily accessible position with rising ground to your right and on your rear; so that the danger may be in front, and safety lie behind."*¹¹⁰

This point is in an absolute accord with the troops deployment in the battlefield of Uhud; where the Prophet (PBUH), while securing the rear, deployed His troops in front of the mount Uhud, facing the enemy in their face. And coincidentally, after the surprise counter attack of Khalid bin Waleed (RA), the Prophet (PBUH) along with his companions climbed uphill as a defensive maneuver to avoid any further mayhem.¹¹¹ This tactic was not only defensive, but it was employed to establish a 'second defense line' (SDL), after the breakdown of 'first defense line' (FDL).¹¹²

7.9. The Attack by Fire

Fire can be used as a useful combat tool, and its wise use can be beneficial. In this regard, Sun Tzu also described the significance of fire to be used as a tactical combat tool, saying:

*"those who use fire as an aid to the attack show intelligence."*¹¹³

It is interesting to note that the Prophet (PBUH) did use fire as an aid to attack at various occasions. Like, during the enemy chase after the battle of Uhud, the Prophet (PBUH) along with His troops stayed at night at Hamraul Asad, a place near Dhul Hulaifah, and ordered to lit fire at

¹¹⁰ Sun Tzu, op.cit., 34.

¹¹¹ Muhammad Akbar Khan, op.cit., 187.

¹¹² Amīr Afzal Khān, op.cit., 296.

¹¹³ Sun Tzu, op.cit., 57.

almost five hundred points. This tactic successfully deceived the enemy of a larger Muslim army at their chase, which compelled them to flee in awe.¹¹⁴ Similarly, during the seize of Banu Nudair, when the Prophet (PBUH) saw that the date trees were being used as shields by the enemy, the Prophet (PBUH) ordered those trees to be burned down, exposing the enemy from their hide.¹¹⁵ Similarly, at the occasion of conquest of Makkah, while the Muslim troops had been deployed just outside of Makkah, the Prophet (PBUH) ordered to lit the fire in such a manner, that the enemy may view it as a gathering of a large army, not to be resisted.¹¹⁶

7.10. The use of Spies

Armies may march on foot, or crawl on their bellies, but they only can see and hear through their intelligence system. This system comprising of well-trained dedicated personal performs various missions like espionage, spying, reconnaissance, propaganda, field intelligence, and to gather all kinds of information regarding enemy's preparation or mal-intentions etc. although it is a vast discourse, yet as this study has a limited scope, so, only those points described by Sun Tzu have been discussed here.

Sun Tzu describes the five types of spies as:

"Having local spies means employing the services of the inhabitants of a district. Having inward spies, making use of officials of the enemy. Having converted spies, getting hold of enemy's spies and using them for our own purposes. Having doomed spies, doing certain things openly for purpose of deception, and allowing our spies to know of them and report

¹¹⁴ Amīr Afzal Khān, op.cit., 309.

¹¹⁵ Ṣafī al-Raḥmān al-Mubārakpūrī, op.cit., 402.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 544.

them to the enemy. Surviving spies are those who bring back news from the enemy's camp... When these five kinds of spy are all at work, none can discover the secrete system. This is called "divine manipulation of the thread."¹¹⁷

The Seerah studies show that nearly all kinds of spies as mentioned above are found to be employed by the Holy Prophet (PBUH), Like;

- a. After Uhud, while chasing the enemy, three men from Banu Aslam were employed as spies to fetch information about Quraish. Although all three were martyred in the line of duty,¹¹⁸ hence this was an example of employing the 'Local spies'.
- b. During the battle of Ahzab, using a new revert, Nuaim Bin Mas'ood (RA), to inflict infighting between Quraish and the Jews of Banu Quraizah,¹¹⁹ was an example of employing of an 'Converted Spy'.
- c. Just before the battle of Badr, Quraishite spies were captured, and were interrogated about the current status of the Quraish.¹²⁰ This was an example of 'Inward spies'.
- d. Before the battle of Badr, the Prophet (PBUH) deployed a section as an intelligence post for a reconnaissance mission under the command of Abdullah Bin Jahash (RA) to gather information about Quraishite preparations and intentions against the Muslims of Madina.¹²¹ This was an example of 'Surviving Spies'.

8. Conclusion

The combat skill and sense of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) not only befits with, and stands parallel to the traits exhibited

¹¹⁷ Sun Tzu, op.cit., 60.

¹¹⁸ Amīr Afzal Khān, op.cit., 307.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 334.338.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 253.

¹²¹ Ibid., 287; and Yāsīn Maẓhar Şiddīqī, 'Ahd-e-Nabavī mein Tanzīm-e-Riyāsat o Ḥukūmat (Karachi: Kutub Khānah Sīrat, 2019), 431, 442.

by Sun Tzu, but also exceeds in many ways as a war genius and a field commander. It has become obvious that despite of having no formal or former military training, or any immense combat experience, the strategic and tactical prudence and wisdom successfully exhibited in the various forms battlefield skills of attacking, defending, troops maneuvering and deployment, intelligence system, etc., by the Prophet (PBUH) could only originate from the divine inspiration, hence proving of Him to be the Prophet of God Almighty. That was Muhammad (PBUH), always 'leading from the front', His followers in the prayers, or, His troops in the battle fields, inspired by the sole divine source of Revelation from God Almighty. Making the Holy Prophet (PBUH) an ultimate and perfect role model as "Ruhbanum Billail wa Fursanum Binnahar" (A devout worshipper at night, and a resolute warrior by the day).

9. Recommendations

It has been recommended for further research, that an extended study on the subject discussed here should be conducted, by discussing and analyzing each point of "The Art of War" employing the same methodology as in this article. Moreover, similar studies should be conducted based on parallels between the Holy Prophet (PBUH) and the other war strategists, commanders, and war geniuses of the human history. It is also recommended to conduct a study of Sun Tzu's "Art of War" in a comparison with the war ethics as described in the Sirah of the Holy Prophet (PBUH), and those described in the Bible. It is also recommended that a codified composition of the war strategies and tactics along with SOPs, and codes of conduct be compiled, to be taught as a syllabus book in the military training institutions of Pakistan, so that it may be helpful to

introduce about the Art of war of The Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to the respective military communities in an academic and practical way.

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