
CHAPTER ONE
UNDERSTANDING WAR

I. Introduction

All Marines have a perception of what combat is like. You educate and train your subordinate Marines for war based on this perception. In combat, you will make tactical decisions and act based on your estimate of the situation--your perception of what the enemy is doing and how you can bend him to your will. This process does not begin with your decision to envelop the enemy or attack him frontally. It begins with how well you **understand** war and the forces at work in it. You cannot make sound tactical decisions unless you understand war and can place your situation in proper context.

Your study of tactics begins with a study of war: its very nature and the two distinct styles for its conduct. This chapter will help you develop a sound understanding of war consistent with maneuver warfare doctrine.

II. Nature of War

Let's start with a definition of war that identifies its essential qualities:

War is a clash between two hostile and independent wills in a chaotic and rapidly changing environment.

This definition has two elements. The first is: War is a clash of wills.

Hostile, independent wills

The enemy has an **independent** will. That is why fighting a battle is very different from building a bridge over a river. The river does not see what you are doing and fight back by moving away or flooding over you. The river has no independent will. But in combat, the enemy does. He reacts to whatever you do, trying to impose his will on you just as you are trying to impose your will on him. Often, he does something you did not expect. You can never be certain what he will do next.

This clash of wills is physical, mental, and moral.¹ The physical aspects of war are relatively easy to see and measure. Combatants fight and maneuver to gain a material or positional advantage over their opponent. Destroying equipment and taking casualties are tangible ways of measuring success. In peacetime, we focus training on the physical aspects of war and combat.

The mental aspects of war are less tangible. But they are just as important as the physical aspects. This is evident from a pamphlet which the Third Marine Division produced during the Pacific Campaign in 1944:

... there comes a point in every close battle when each commander concludes that he is defeated. The leader who carries on wins.

Positions are seldom lost because they have been destroyed, but almost invariably because the leader has decided in his own mind that the position cannot be held.²

Mentally, you want to shock and paralyze the enemy. You do this by presenting him with multiple, rapid threats that overload his ability to respond or adapt. When you do this, you shatter his cohesion and isolate him. Of course, he will be trying to do the same to you.

Fear is a major part of the mental side of combat. Fear has a tremendous effect on men in combat. In *The Soldier's Load and the Mobility of a Nation*, General S.L.A. Marshall pointed out that fear immobilizes a man just as readily as physical exhaustion. As one officer observed on Omaha Beach, June 6th, 1944:

They lay there motionless and staring into space. They were so thoroughly shocked that they had no consciousness of what went on. Many had forgotten they had firearms to use. Others who had lost their arms didn't seem to see that there were weapons lying all around them. Some could not hold a weapon after it was forced into their hands. Others, when told to start cleaning a rifle, simply stared as if they had never heard such an order before. Their nerves were spent, and nothing could be done about them. The fire continued to search for them, and if they were hit, they slumped lower into the sand and did not even call out for an aid man.³

Danger and violence are inherent in war yet impossible to simulate in peacetime training. You cannot fully appreciate fear until you have been in combat. Marines will react differently in combat than they do on peacetime exercises. Therefore, you must study and understand fear so that you can recognize its effects and cope with it in combat.

The moral element of war overrides both the mental and the physical. Eliminating the enemy's will to resist--defeating him morally--is the ultimate aim in war. In his dictum, "The moral is to the material as three is to one", Napoleon recognized the significance of moral forces.

The Vietnam conflict is an excellent example of how a military can win in the physical sense, in terms of casualties and destruction, but lose in the moral sense. U.S. forces won most of the physical battles in Vietnam. They lost one moral battle, however, the battle to maintain support for their effort on the home front. Our moral defeat occurred during the Tet Offensive in 1968. By most accounts, U.S. forces won all the Tet Offensive battles in the field. But U.S. government claims of diminishing communist resistance were discredited because the communists could mount such a large offensive in the first place. The support of the U.S. public eroded, which put increasing pressure on the country's leadership to end U.S. involvement. The rift that developed between the public and our country's leadership proved irreparable and resulted in the withdrawal of U.S. combat forces in 1972 and the fall of Saigon to the Communists in 1975. Wars are fought by nations, not just combatants, and the support of the people is no less important than the tactics or weapons used. The support of the people is part of the moral aspect of war.

In combat, you may attack the enemy's moral, mental, and physical qualities simultaneously, or you may focus on only one. However, you must be conscious of the importance of all three and how they interrelate. For example, firepower's greatest effect is not the amount of physical destruction it causes the enemy but the effect of that destruction on the enemy's moral strength. In the end, it is the moral quality, his will to fight, that must be collapsed.

Chaotic, rapidly changing environment

The second element in the definition of the nature of war defines the battlefield as confusing, chaotic, and subject to rapid change. This is often called the fog of battle.

The fog of battle means you never have an accurate or complete picture of the situation. An aggressive and independent enemy generates this fog. Smoke, noise, fear, casualties, and confusion add to it. The fog of battle may be reduced by, for example, good reconnaissance, but it can never be eliminated.

Fog contributes to what Clausewitz called the friction of battle. "Friction is the force that makes the apparently easy so difficult".⁴ Let's say that a combat order has been issued that appears simple and easy to execute. Suppose, however, that the weather changes suddenly, and you lose the air support you were counting on. Perhaps a unit gets lost and misses a critical linkup, or the enemy does something unexpected, and the entire plan falls apart.

That is friction. Friction reduces a unit's level of performance. You must consider it when planning and executing in battle. Like fog, you may be able to reduce it through SOPs, keeping your plan simple, and fostering initiative, but you will never eliminate it.

By defining the nature of war as a clash of wills in a chaotic environment, you should begin to see some important characteristics of modern combat. The modern battlefield is **disorderly**. Forces become intermixed as each tries to impose its will on the other. Leaders often have to act on incomplete and sometimes inaccurate information. Chaos reigns, but chaos becomes an ally to the force that can best operate in it. In an environment dominated by fear and fatigue, combat always includes moral, mental, and physical aspects.

You cannot fully simulate combat in peacetime training. But you must understand and anticipate its effects. You must have an accurate picture of combat in your own mind.

III. Styles of Warfare

Historically, armed forces fight using one of two styles of warfare: methodical battle⁵ or maneuver warfare. While no armed force meets all the criteria of a particular style, each style is distinct, and most armed forces generally follow one or the other. There are many reasons why an armed force uses one style or the other: cultural heritage, tradition, and the influence of its commander, to name but a few.

Methodical Battle

The essence of methodical battle is the **focus inward**⁶ on reducing your own fog and friction. You do this by careful, detailed planning and closely controlled execution. Orders to subordinates are detailed, explicit, and allow little initiative. The emphasis is on *reducing your own uncertainty and mistakes*. Methodical battle has the following characteristics:

Emphasis on the Physical Aspects of War. Methodical battle uses attrition warfare: breaking the enemy's will to resist by destroying his men and equipment. Attrition warfare requires superior firepower, manpower, or both to defeat the enemy. It measures success **quantitatively** through body counts, battle damage assessments (BDAs), and terrain conquered and occupied. Attrition warfare relies heavily on technology, not only to provide greater firepower, but also to provide greater protection against enemy firepower.

Centralized Command and Control. Decision making tends to be centralized, resulting in top down or *command push* tactics. Objectives and axes of advance are selected by the highest level staff and pushed onto subordinate units. If the situation changes, demanding a new course of action, permission to adjust must be requested from higher headquarters. This results in low tempo operations; units at all levels find themselves waiting around for orders. Lower level initiative is discouraged because it might contribute to internal friction. Combat is conducted in three deliberate phases: preparatory, conduct, and consolidation. Then, a new plan is devised and the procedure repeated. Tactical surprise is sought, not to generate panic in the enemy, but to maximize your use of firepower while reducing the effects of his.

Qualities in Commanders. In methodical battle, commanders are valued for obedience and orderliness. They tend to be very cautious and risk averse, and stick to the predetermined plan regardless of changes in the situation. They are uncomfortable in chaotic situations and like to follow formulas and checklists to maintain order. Although sometimes rewarded, initiative and creativity are not common qualities among leaders.

An excellent analogy to methodical battle/attrition warfare is the sport of boxing. When two boxers begin a bout, their will to fight is high (if this is not true in one of the boxers, the match will be a short one). Each boxer maneuvers to punch the other fighter (maneuver supports firepower). The bout continues until one fighter is either physically defeated (knocked out) or decides he has had enough and quits (throws in the towel).

The classic example of methodical battle in combat was the defeat of the French Army by Germany in 1940. The French used methodical battle. The French army was ineffective against the German blitzkrieg because the French could not keep up with the high tempo maneuver style warfare of the Germans. French commanders often made the right decisions but acted too late--the Germans were already doing something else, which made French actions irrelevant. Consequently, the Germans defeated the French in six weeks.

You may have seen examples of methodical style-warfare in your own training, in exercises that were planned in detail, closely controlled subordinate maneuver, were low in tempo, and focused on seizing terrain objectives. Such exercises may have been valuable for practicing techniques, but the absence of a hostile, independently-willed enemy made their tactical value nonexistent.

With a few notable exceptions, Americans have traditionally fought using a methodical battle/attrition style of warfare. Historically, the U.S. has enjoyed a significant advantage in firepower and material due to its tremendous industrial base. Attrition warfare may be appropriate when your side has a tremendous advantage in manpower and material over the enemy. But the United States no longer has such an advantage. In light of Napoleon's dictum that "Victory usually goes to the force with the bigger cannons," the smaller force must find a better way to fight.

Maneuver Warfare

Recognizing that Marines are likely to be outnumbered and/or outgunned in future conflicts, the Marine Corps adopted a doctrine of maneuver warfare in 1987.

Maneuver warfare is the opposite of methodical battle. In maneuver warfare, you **focus outward** on the enemy. *The goal is to collapse the enemy by disrupting his forces and shattering him.* It is a major change from the Marine Corps' traditional style of warfare.

Traditionally, the mission of the Marine infantryman in the attack was to "locate, close with, and destroy the enemy by fire and maneuver".⁷ By maneuvering to place effective and superior fire on the enemy's battle positions while in the assault, you forced him to either retreat, surrender, or die in place. The Marine Corps' firepower advantage resulted in heavy attrition of enemy forces, and battles were won as his resistance wore down.

In maneuver warfare, the mission is not to close with and destroy, but to **bypass and collapse**. The goal is to attack key enemy targets (centers of gravity), the destruction of which will generate chaos and confusion among his units. Enemy strongpoints are isolated and bypassed by attacking units who search for vulnerable rear area targets. Often, panic results, and a large percentage of enemy casualties are taken as prisoners of war rather than killed or wounded. Firepower is used to suppress enemy positions at breakthrough points, not solely to destroy his men and equipment. In maneuver warfare, a smaller force, acting aggressively, can defeat a larger force that fails to keep up with a rapidly changing situation.⁸

Maneuver warfare is not new. Grant at Vicksburg in the Civil War, Patton, MacArthur, the German Blitzkrieg during World War II, and the Israelis all used it.⁹ Successful maneuver warfare is based on the following principles:

Tempo as a Weapon. A unit that acts and reacts faster than the enemy is operating at a higher tempo. Tempo is very important in maneuver warfare. It is the key to seizing and retaining the initiative. Forces operating at a higher tempo keep the enemy off balance and dictate the course of the battle.

To operate at a higher tempo, Marine units must be more active and aggressive than the enemy. Doing something is always better than doing nothing. The spirit of

activeness must run through everything, including all training. On Grenada, BLT 2/8 operated very actively and aggressively. Grenadian forces were compelled to surrender very early because bold and aggressive action by the Marines made resistance seem futile. The Grenadians were beaten more by 2/8's tempo than by its firepower. As a weapon, tempo is important in every unit in the Marine Corps, from fire team to division.

Decentralized Command and Control. To operate at a higher tempo than the enemy, a military unit must decentralize its decision process. Subordinate commanders must have the latitude to act on their own initiative and seize opportunities.¹⁰ The Army calls this *powering down* or giving subordinate commanders more latitude to act without explicit instructions. As the Israeli military historian Martin Van Creveld has observed:

From Plato to NATO, the history of command in war consists of an endless quest for certainty. Certainty concerning the state and intentions of the enemy's forces; certainty concerning the manifold factors which together constitute the environment, from the weather and the terrain to radioactivity and the presence of chemical warfare agents; and, last but definitely not least, certainty concerning the state and activities of one's own forces... Historically, commanders have always faced the choice between two basic ways of coping with uncertainty. One was to construct an army of automatons following the orders of a single man, allowed to do only that which could be controlled; the other, to design organizations and operations in such a way as to enable the former to carry out the latter without the need for continuous control. ...the second of these methods has, by and large, proved more successful than the first; and...the ongoing revolution in the technology of command notwithstanding, this is likely to remain so in the future and indeed so long as war itself exists.¹¹

A major concern with decentralizing command and control is that the commander will lose control of his subordinate units if they are exercising great initiative in battle. There must be something to keep their efforts focused and harmonized with what the commander is trying to accomplish. In maneuver warfare, this cohesive force or "glue" is twofold:

First, cohesion is accomplished through **mission orders**. A mission order tells the subordinate commander **what** his superior wants him to accomplish, but leaves **how** to accomplish it up to the subordinate. While keeping in mind the final result that his superior desires, the subordinate is allowed to adjust as the situation changes. A mission order consists of the commander's intent and the subordinate's assigned mission.

The **commander's intent** is his vision of what he intends to have happen to the enemy. It must be well thought out and articulated clearly. Subordinate leaders need to understand the intent of the commander two levels up. If he is a squad leader, he must know both his platoon and company commander's intent.¹²

The second element of the mission order is the **assigned mission**. It is the subordinate's part in what his superior plans to do to the enemy. In some cases, like a deliberate attack, the assigned mission may be very specific. In more fluid situations, the mission may be very general, demanding great initiative from the subordinate commander. How specific the assigned mission is will be based entirely on the situation and the capabilities of the subordinate leader.

The second cohesive force or glue is the **focus of effort** or **main effort**. This is the subunit or force where the commander concentrates his combat power to achieve a decisive result. The main effort is critical to any force that fights outnumbered, because it allows that force to direct all its power to one purpose. It will normally receive most of the combat support assets. Other subordinate commanders must ensure that their actions work to support it. This is why the main effort acts as a glue in harmonizing the actions of subordinate commanders.¹³

Units operating under a "power down" system undoubtedly make mistakes. These mistakes are minimized by tough, realistic training, and by troop leaders and staff officers working together to develop a stable, cohesive team. The benefits from the increase in the tempo of operations far outweighs the mistakes which subordinate leaders, acting intelligently as a team, make under a decentralized system of command.

Avoiding Strengths, Attacking Weaknesses. In maneuver warfare, enemy strengths (surfaces) are bypassed, and weaknesses (gaps) are attacked and exploited. Weaknesses are not solely physical gaps between enemy units. They may also be his lack of initiative, inflexibility, inferior mobility, or other characteristics that may be tactically exploited. Key centers of gravity, like his command and control, logistical, or fire support assets, are attacked to shatter his cohesion.¹⁴ A fragmented, shattered enemy is much easier to defeat than a cohesive force.

Focus on the Enemy. Where methodical battle concentrates inward on a unit's own command and staff, fire control, and other procedures, maneuver warfare focuses outward on the situation and the enemy. Commanders and leaders at all levels are expected to do whatever is necessary to defeat the enemy.

Unlike methodical battle, which attempts to give orderliness to battle, maneuver warfare accepts chaos. In fact, it works to generate chaos and uncertainty in the enemy at a rate faster than he is able to cope with.¹⁵ Units with a decentralized command and control system can effectively operate in an environment where chaos and rapid change dominate.

Supporting Maneuver by Fire. The maneuver/firepower relationship in maneuver warfare is exactly opposite that of methodical battle. In maneuver warfare, firepower supports maneuver by fixing and suppressing the enemy.¹⁶ Firepower is also used to create gaps in the enemy where none exists. This does not mean that positions will never be destroyed. But an armed force which relies on firepower to destroy a prepared enemy position is using a technique that has not historically proved

successful. At the Somme, in 1916, Allied forces poured in more than 4,000,000 rounds of explosives in a weeklong bombardment before a major attack. The bombardment had nowhere near its anticipated effect on German defenses, and the Allied attack failed miserably at a cost of almost 60,000 British casualties on the first day alone.¹⁷

Surprise--No Fixed Schemes. Unpredictability is important in any style of warfare. It increases in importance in maneuver warfare. In the attack, **stealth** and **surprise** are used to penetrate, envelop, and encircle the enemy to destroy him. In the defense, you use fluid tactics to deceive the enemy and draw him into a trap where you destroy him with a sudden counterattack. **Surprise** and **shock** are the key elements in shattering the enemy. Neither can be attained by a unit that relies on set, predictable patterns or formulas. Each situation is unique, and what was successful last time may be inappropriate for a new situation. Chances are, the enemy has adapted; each new problem requires a new, imaginative solution.¹⁸

In Marine exercises, you will often see maneuver warfare principles used by aggressor forces. Think back to your own experience as an aggressor. Were you ever tasked with harrassing the other side, or infiltrating him to raise havoc in his rear areas? In many cases, these are mission orders. The spirit present in most aggressor forces must be standard in all Marine combat units.

Maneuver warfare poses a major challenge for the Marine Corps. It implies a significant change from the way Marines have traditionally done business, from the MEF commander to the individual rifleman. While some techniques still apply, many new techniques need to be tried and evaluated.

Table 1-1 summarizes significant differences in the two styles of warfare.

IV. Levels of War

War is a national undertaking which must be coordinated from the highest levels of policy making to the basic levels of execution. The conduct of war consists of the planning and executing of combat actions. These actions are conducted at several levels simultaneously. Each level has differing characteristics and requirements. There are three basic levels of war: strategic, operational, and tactical.¹⁹

Strategic level

Military strategy is the art and science of employing the armed forces of a nation to secure the objectives of national policy by the application of force or the threat of force. Strategy sets the fundamental conditions of operations in war. It establishes goals in theaters of war. It assigns forces, provides assets, and imposes conditions on the use of force.²⁰

Since only a few Marines--the Commandant and other officers on high level staffs--are directly involved in making strategy, you need not concern yourself with the process of developing and revising strategy. What you should understand, however, is the Marine Corps' role in the nation's military strategy. The Marine Corps provides the nation a **strategically mobile force**. When combined with naval or air forces, the Marine Corps has the ability to project military power anywhere in the world on short notice. This power translates into the Marine Corps' most important mission: expeditionary warfare.

TABLE 1-1
STYLES OF WARFARE

<u>Maneuver Warfare</u>	<u>Methodical Battle</u>
Operates in chaos--focus outward	Fights chaos--focus inward
High tempo	Low tempo
Decentralized tactics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mission orders - Bypass and collapse - Firepower supports maneuver - Recon pull tactics 	Centralized tactics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Detailed, explicit orders - Close with and destroy - Maneuver supports firepower - Command push tactics
High subordinate initiative	Low subordinate initiative

Although you will not make strategy, your actions in combat will often have strategic implications. One example is the Marine Amphibious Unit deployed to Lebanon from 1982 to 1984. Each time the Marines engaged Lebanese militiamen in combat, it made the evening news and the front page of the morning newspapers. In 1982, Captain Charlie Johnson stopped a column of Israeli tanks with his .45 caliber pistol. This single incident had an effect on our relations with the Arab countries, and, to a lesser extent, Israel. In future combat, particularly in operations short of war, you will find yourself in similar situations.

Operational Level

The operational level of war is the link between a military's strategy and its tactical actions (battles). Operational planning and execution usually results in a campaign--a series of battles that attain strategic goals. One example is the island hopping campaign in the Central Pacific from 1942 to 1945. Marine victories on Guadalcanal, Tarawa, Iwo Jima, and Okinawa all contributed to the defeat of Japan's armed forces. The campaign linked tactical actions (battles) to the strategic goal--defeating Japan.

Central to operational level planning is the operational art:

The art of using tactical events--battles and refusals to give battle--to strike at an enemy's strategic center of gravity. In other words, it is the art of deciding when and where to fight battles, and when and where not to, on a strategic basis. It includes the idea that a goal is to win strategically with the fewest possible battles.²¹

The Operational Art is the art of generalship--of choosing where and when to fight so that battles attain meaningful results. Napoleon is regarded as the classic practitioner of operational art. Others include Patton, Grant, Stonewall Jackson, and several German generals in World War II. Jackson's campaign in the Shenandoah Valley during 1862 is regarded as the classic American example of operational art. In that campaign, Jackson's army engaged Union forces on several occasions during the spring of 1862 throughout the Shenandoah Valley. Although Jackson lost several of these battles, he attained the strategic goal of preventing an attack on Richmond. Jackson's aggressive behavior so worried Union generals that they decided not to attack Richmond because they feared Jackson might attack Washington D.C.. This campaign also highlights a very important principle: The higher level of war dominates the lower. Even though Jackson failed tactically (losing battles), he succeeded strategically.

The classic amphibious operational art example was MacArthur's choice to land behind North Korean lines at Inchon in September of 1950. The First Marine Division spearheaded the campaign that liberated Seoul and cut the North Korean Army's line of communication. The North Korean Army virtually disintegrated.

Tactical Level

It is at the tactical level where two forces come together in battle. Tactics is the art of battle--of applying combat power to defeat the enemy. A series of victorious battles often, but not always, translates into operational or strategic success.

Engagements are small conflicts between opposing forces. Patrols, security forces, units in the defense, and units advancing to contact fight engagements when they encounter the enemy. Engagements normally are of short duration; they may or may not develop into a battle.

A **battle** consists of a series of related engagements in which both forces commit themselves to fight for a significant purpose. Battles last longer than engagements and often produce decisions that affect the subsequent course of the campaign or operation. Battles often have operational or strategic results.²²

As a junior officer or NCO, you are most concerned with winning battles. The Marine Corps has a long, proud record of success in battle. Today's Marines are charged with maintaining that tradition.

Special Operations

A special operation is a tactical action that in and of itself has **operational** or **strategic** significance.²³ Special operations are undertaken for a variety of reasons, both in and out of war. The raid on the Son Tay POW camp in 1970 and the Israeli raid on Entebbe in 1976 were both special operations. The Marine detachment that blew up the Iranian oil platform in the Persian Gulf in 1988 conducted a special operation. Like all combat, special operations are dominated by uncertainty and rapid change. Although some special skills and preparation may be required, special operations are not **qualitatively** different from any other combat. They may be **quantitatively** different, in that the range of uncertainty may be wider and the change even more rapid. But the essence of what makes them special is not what happens **in** the action, but the fact that you expect its **results** to be operational or strategic.²⁴

Notes

1. Colonel John Boyd, USAF Ret., "Patterns of Conflict," (Unpublished outline, January, 1981), p. 111.
2. *Battle Doctrine for Front Line Leaders*, (Third Marine Division, Fleet Marine Force, January 1944), p. 7.
3. Colonel S. L. A. Marshall, *The Soldier's Load and the Mobility of a Nation*, (Quantico: Marine Corps Association, Copyright 1950), p. 38.
4. Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. by Michael Howard and Peter Paret, (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 121.
5. The term methodical battle is taken from *The Seeds of Disaster*, by Robert A. Doughty (Hamden, CT: Archon Book, 1985).
6. The idea of characterizing styles of warfare by either focusing inward or outward was originated by William S. Lind.
7. *FMFM 6-4, Marine Rifle Company/Platoon*, (Marine Corps Development and Education Command, 1978), p. 1.
8. William S. Lind, *Maneuver Warfare Handbook*, (New York: Praeger, 1984), p. 4.
9. Lind, pp. 5-6.
10. Lind, p. 6.
11. Martin van Creveld, *Command*, (DoD Contract MDA-903-81-C-0480), pp. 256-260.
12. Lind, p. 13.
13. Lind, pp. 17-18.
14. *OH 6-1, Ground Combat Operations*, (Quantico: Marine Corps Combat Development Command, January 1988), pp. 1-5 to 1-6.
15. Lind, p. 7.
16. Lind, p. 19.
17. John Keegan, *The Face of Battle: A Study of Agincourt, Waterloo and the Somme*, (Great Britain: Penguin Books, 1983), p. 260.
18. Lind, p. 20.
19. *OH 6-1 Ground Combat Operations*, p. 2-4.
20. *FM 100-5 Operations*, (Headquarters, Department of the Army, May, 1986), p. 9.
21. William S. Lind, "The Operational Art," (*Marine Corps Gazette*, April, 1988), p. 45.
22. *OH 6-1 Ground Combat Operations*, p. 2-5.
23. Lind, "The Operational Art," p. 47.
24. Lind, p. 47.

Chapter Review

War is defined as a clash of two hostile and independent wills in a chaotic and rapidly changing environment. The first element of this definition describes war as *a clash of hostile, independent wills*. This clash of wills has physical, mental, and moral qualities. The moral overrides both the mental and the physical. The second element describes the environment of war as *chaotic and subject to rapid change*. This environment is often called the fog and friction of battle.

Historically, armed forces fight using one of two styles of warfare: **methodical battle** or **maneuver warfare**. Methodical battle **focuses inward** on reducing internal fog and friction. Typically, methodical battle-style forces use attrition warfare to measure success, centralize decisionmaking, and train commanders to be cautious and deliberate. Forces using maneuver warfare **focus outward** on the enemy. The goal in maneuver warfare is to *collapse the enemy by disrupting his forces and shattering him*. Typically, forces using maneuver warfare have a high tempo of operations, decentralize decision-making (power down), and use firepower primarily to support maneuver. The high initiative instilled in maneuver warfare style commanders is guided by **using mission orders and designating a main effort**.

There are three levels of war: strategic, operational, and tactical. Military **strategy** establishes goals in theaters, assigns forces, provides assets, and imposes conditions on the use of force. The **operational** level is the link between a nation's strategy (goals) and the tactical level (battles). Central to understanding this level is the **operational art**: the art of using battles, and refusals to give battle, to achieve strategic goals as quickly and efficiently as possible. The **tactical** level is that of battles and engagements. It is the level most Marines are concerned with. Finally, special operations are tactical actions (raids, demonstrations, bombings, ect.) that have **operational** or **strategic** significance.

Chapter Exercise

1. In this chapter, war was defined as *a clash between two hostile and independent wills in a chaotic and rapidly changing environment*. List the two elements of this definition. Explain what each element means.

2. War has physical, moral, and mental qualities. List examples of each.

3. Explain how the Tet Offensive in 1968 was a defeat for the United States.

4. Define the *fog of battle*.

5. Give an example of **friction** in a combat situation.

6. What is the **essence** of methodical battle? List some of its characteristics. From your own experience, can you think of an example showing the characteristics of methodical battle?

7. What is the goal in maneuver warfare?

8. To operate at a high tempo, Marine commanders decentralize decisionmaking as low as possible. To provide guidance and keep subordinate units from running chaotically on the battlefield, the commander **issues mission orders** and **designates a main effort**. Explain what each of these are and how they act as *glues*.

9. Name the three levels of war. Briefly explain what each level is.

10. Define special operations. Give an example of a special operation.

Exercise Solution

1. The two elements in the definition of war:
 - a. Clash between two hostile and independent wills.
 - b. Chaotic and rapidly changing environment.

The two hostile wills represent the competing forces. Each force tries to impose its will on the other. Furthermore, each force has an **independent** will. This means that the other side will try to deceive you and seldom do what you expect it to. The chaotic and rapidly changing environment is the *fog of battle*. Fog is uncertainty. In battle, you will never be completely certain of the situation. Fog contributes to friction. Friction is when things go wrong unexpectedly. Fog and friction are always present in battle. (See pages 6-8.)

2.
 - a. Physical: Equipment, personnel, weapons.
 - b. Mental: Fear, shock.
 - c. Moral: Will to keep fighting, morale. (See pages 6-8.)

3. Although U.S. forces won most of the physical battles, public support for the war eroded after the 1968 Tet Offensive. This happened because our government's claim that the communists were losing strength was discredited when the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army launched a major surprise attack. Eventually, public pressure forced the President to withdraw all U.S. combat forces from Vietnam. Public support is part of the moral aspect of war. (See page 7.)

4. The fog of battle means you always have incomplete knowledge of the situation. An aggressive enemy, smoke, noise, fear, casualties, and confusion all contribute to this fog or uncertainty. (See page 8.)

5. One example was the U.S. raid on the Son Tay prison camp in North Vietnam to rescue U.S. POWs. After months of detailed planning and training, the raid was executed on 21 November 1970. All went smoothly until the raid force arrived at the camp and found that the prisoners had been moved somewhere else. (See page 8.)

6. The essence of methodical battle is the **focus inward** on reducing internal fog and friction.

Characteristics:

- a. Emphasis on the physical aspects of war (attrition warfare).
- b. Centralized command and control.
- c. Overly-cautious, inflexible commanders.

One example might be a commanding officer or OIC who insists on grammatically and typographically perfect paperwork at the expense of timely routing. Let's assume you have a training area request that must get to base operations right away, or you won't get the training area you want. You quickly prepare the request, but in your haste, you make a few mistakes--not enough to make your request unclear, however. If your CO demands that you redo it so that it is perfect when he signs it, then he is, most likely, taking a methodical battle approach. However, you must also look at it from your CO's point of view. If his superior must sign the request and won't until it's

perfect, then you are out of luck. Also, if time isn't critical, then your CO is probably right to insist that the request be done correctly. In this case, the input (sloppy work) overrides the output. This raises an important point: All situations are unique, and the degree to which you focus inward in one situation may be different in the next. (See pages 7-9.)

7. In maneuver warfare, the goal is to *collapse the enemy by disrupting his forces and shattering him*. (See page 10.)

8. When you issue a mission order, you tell your subordinates **what** you want them to do, but not **how** to do it. You do this by giving them your intent--what you want to have happen to the enemy--and then assigning them missions consistent with that intent. Each mission may be very specific or general--the degree to which it is either is always situational.

The main effort is the subunit where a commander concentrates his combat power to *achieve a decisive result*. Every action performed by other subunits should support the main effort. (See pages 11-12.)

9. The three levels of war are the strategic, operational, and tactical levels. The strategic level is the big picture. Strategy establishes theater goals, assigns forces, and imposes conditions on the use of force. The operational level is the link between strategic goals and tactical actions (battles). The tactical level is that of battles and engagements. (See pages 13-15.)

10. Special operations are tactical actions that have operational or strategic significance. One special operation was the navy and air force bombing raid on Libya in April of 1986. The raid was a tactical action that had the strategic effect of reducing Libya's support for international terrorism, particularly against American targets. (See page 16.)