

The Inspiring Purpose of the Art of War

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In the last decade, the whole idea of war has become a very unpopular subject among certain groups. It is possible to attribute that outcome to the publication and captured images of war throughout magazines and television of the last century. Those once unknown facts of violence of war have left the general public in shock, fear, and horror. However, in their disgust the people of the world have forgotten why war is of vital importance to human development. Sun Tzu, the author of *The Art of War*, understood this importance, and my own knowledge of the *Art of War* itself has impacted my desire to participate in war as a future soldier and officer. I believe I speak for all warriors of any historical age when I say that peace and friendship should always be sought first in any relationship, but knowledge and preparedness for battle is vital if and when one party betrays peace for violence. I will illustrate, through analysis of the *Art of War*, that certain ideals, skills and mindsets developed by warriors, and shared with people of the planet, are qualities worth fighting for and why I will spend a career as an officer gladly defending those principles from truly evil people.

One idea that I find very important enough to defend, as a principle of war, is the idea of mental will power. Sun Tzu said, “Hence to fight and conquer in all of your battles is not supreme excellence; supreme excellence consists in breaking the enemy’s resistance without fighting.” This means two things: it explains that the mark of a truly disciplined and duty bound warrior utilizes peaceful diplomacy if fighting and killing

can be avoided, and that a soldier of true strength of will can dominate a weaker adversary in any conflict, including a debate or a war. Another example of will power, explained by the *Art of War*, is the teaching of putting yourself, and others, in difficult situations and willing excellence of output to succeed. In war that is typically a life or death situation. Sun Tzu said, “Soldiers when in desperate straits lose the sense of fear. If there is no place for refuge, they will stand firm.” That loss of fear and mental realization that you do or die in any situation is how we defeated the British in America’s first war. This iron will, as well as a conscious value of life, is a characteristic that will be with me throughout my military and professional career.

This is a quality of war that most people in the general public do not usually recognize: the value of life and of people in general. It is obvious that while in the heat of battle an individual soldier is intent on killing his enemies before they kill him. However, the responsibility that same soldier has to his comrades, the innocent people he fights to protect, and the enemy soldiers that surrender and ask for mercy is an equally important mentality. I have seen many of these cases regarding the protection of lives from unnecessary violence more in the Middle East in recent years, such as the US Army helping to rebuild and defend the nation of Afghanistan since 2001. There is also the virtuous quality of family love and care for people within a military unit. I attribute that to Sun Tzu stating, “Regard your soldiers as your children, and they will follow you into the deepest valleys; look on them as your own beloved sons, and they will stand by you unto death.” That ultimate sense of loyalty and care a commander is expected to have for his or her troops is a quality that I would like to see more vibrant in the civilian

world instead of criticized by it. A militarily intelligent desire to value life and to protect it from destruction, like protecting the value of liberty, should not be forgotten.

From recent research, as well as a continuous reading into the brilliance of the *Art of War*, I have discovered that victory in war is accomplished more with the brain before it's accomplished with physical force. The ability to learn and to grow with our intelligence is why the United States has been victorious in most of the wars it has fought over the ages. To my delight, I have seen the Army practice this *Art of War* tactic very often, "The quality of decision is like a well-timed swoop of a falcon which enables it to strike and destroy its victim." It is always intelligent to be ahead of the enemy/ahead of the challenge. What's also important is that the mindset of soldiers is what achieves victory in the field. I can profess with my constant training in PT, that my mind perceives success before my body gets physically strong. Thus proving the statement by Sun Tzu, "It is in war 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." Not only do I find intelligence a privilege and a responsibility to soldier and civilian alike, I also find it to be an honor to have attained intelligence enough to grow in peace and war.

The main reason why I see, and appreciate, war as the great equalizer, is because its natural danger shows which side has the soldiers with honor in the face of fear. That then tells the person studying about the war who the "Good Guys" are. Much like how the US Army has combated dishonorable terrorists over the last decade, Sun Tzu and the Chinese Army fought the dishonorable barbarian Huns. We know these adversaries to be dishonorable due to the fact that their soldiers targeted innocents and non-

combative civilians, without remorse, due to the greed and fanaticism of their commanders. It is not a secret both America and China have had issues with greedy and fanatical commanders as well, but the educated standard of an officer and commander was never in question. That is why Sun Tzu said, “His victories bring him neither reputation for wisdom nor credit for courage,” to explain that an honorable soldier and commander selflessly serves against a self-serving enemy. The historical capabilities of honor have won victory for these two historical armies and I also shall bring my honor to the table by knowing myself and knowing my enemy.

To conclude, and also to reiterate, my love for *The Art of War* has made me a passionate warrior that is ready for battle, and not a warlord who seeks power through violence. Those are the people I would like to see decimated from this world. These values worth defending I have taken the time to illustrate are things I have learned from great military commanders that have spanned the centuries. I find that having a military understanding, mixed with whatever profession that creates positive things in this world, is a practice I would like to see in people today, as it has built great men and achieved results. To that end, the *Art of War*, as a principle, is something I gladly teach to people, and one of the profound reasons why I am honored to be even considered as a US Army officer, so I may have the opportunity to apply the art form in defense of my people, my country, and my planet.