Analysis of General Douglas MacArthur's Application of the Principles of the Art of War

Cecilia E. Corujo

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.apus.edu/theses

Part of the History Commons

Recommended Citation
http://digitalcommons.apus.edu/theses/150

This Capstone-Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@APUS. It has been accepted for inclusion in Master's Capstone Theses by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@APUS. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@apus.edu.
APUS Library Capstone Submission Form

This capstone has been approved for submission to and review and publication by the APUS Library.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Name [Last, First, M.I.] *</th>
<th>Corjo</th>
<th>Cecilia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Course Number [e.g. INTL699] *</td>
<td>HIST699</td>
<td>Paper Date [See Title pg.]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professor Name [Last, First] *</td>
<td>Woods, Brett F.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Name * See list</td>
<td>History</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keywords [250 character max.]</td>
<td>Douglas MacArthur; Sun Tzu; military strategy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passed with Distinction * Y or N</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security Sensitive Information * Y or N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRB Review Required * Y or N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>If YES, include IRB documents in submission attachments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turnitin Check * Y or N</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>All capstone papers must be checked via Turnitin.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Required

Capstone Approval Document

The thesis/capstone for the master's degree submitted by the student listed (above) under this title *

Analysis of General Douglas MacArthur's Application of the Principles of the Art of War

has been read by the undersigned. It is hereby recommended for acceptance by the faculty with credit to the amount of 3 semester hours.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Representatives</th>
<th>Signatures</th>
<th>Date (mm/dd/yyyy)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Signed, 1st Reader [capstone professor]</td>
<td>Brett F. Woods, Ph.D.</td>
<td>Digitally signed by Brett F. Woods, Ph.D. Date: 2016.12.23 10:34:34 -07'00''</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signed, 2nd Reader (if required by program)</td>
<td>Deborah Kidwell</td>
<td>Digitally signed by Deborah Kidwell Date: 2017.02.07 18:25:14 -06'00''</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendation accepted on behalf of the program director *</td>
<td>Richard K. Hines</td>
<td>Digitally signed by Richard K. Hines DN: cn=Richard K. Hines, o=American Public University System, ou=History and Military History, email=<a href="mailto:Hines@apus.edu">Hines@apus.edu</a>, c=US Date: 2017.02.08 08:20:14 -05'00''</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approved by academic dean *</td>
<td><a href="mailto:gglass@apus.edu">gglass@apus.edu</a></td>
<td>Digitally signed by <a href="mailto:gglass@apus.edu">gglass@apus.edu</a> DN: cn=<a href="mailto:gglass@apus.edu">gglass@apus.edu</a> Date: 2017.02.10 14:37:35 -05'00''</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Required
ANALYSIS OF GENERAL DOUGLAS MACARTHUR’S APPLICATION
OF THE PRINCIPLES OF THE ART OF WAR

A Master Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty

of

American Military University

by

Cecilia E. Corujo

In Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

of

Master of Arts

October 2016

American Military University

Charles Town, WV
The author hereby grants the American Public University System the right to display these contents for educational purposes.

The author assumes total responsibility for meeting the requirements set by United States Copyright Law for the inclusion of any materials that are not the author’s creation or in the public domain.

©2016 Cecilia Corujo

All Rights Reserved
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As with all projects, this thesis would not have come together without the help and support of many people, and a great educational institution, American Military University.

First, I would like to thank two of my professors: Dr. Mark Bowles, who challenged me to find an archive and spend hours there; and Dr. Brett Woods who has expertly directed me through the process of writing this paper, responding patiently to my weekly inquiries about the intricacies of authoring a thesis.

One of the significant challenges in writing a thesis is access to the literature, and my sincere gratitude is owed to Jim Zobel, an extraordinary archivist at the MacArthur Memorial, for opening up the MacArthur Archives to me and guiding me through the labyrinth of over two million archives, to discover the specific documents, letters, maps and declassified reports that I needed to understand MacArthur and his military operations.

I would also like to thank my family of six, who spent many evenings and weekends in “hush” mode, allowing me to read and write for extended periods of time. Additionally, I would be remiss if I didn’t specifically express gratitude to my eldest son, Elijah, who kept me plied with strongly brewed specialty coffee on a regular basis, as I click, click, clicked away on the keyboard late into the evening – I so appreciate you.
The following is an examination of Sun Tzu’s principles, articulated in *The Art of War*, as overlaid onto the operations of Douglas MacArthur in World War I, World War II and the Korean War. General MacArthur was a brilliant tactician, an exceptional strategist and remains one of the most decorated members ever to serve in the United States Armed Forces.

MacArthur was architect of some of the most successful campaigns in U.S. history: the arduous Battle of Cote de Chatillon in WWI; the wildly successful Island Hopping Maneuvers in WWII; and the brazen amphibious landing at Inchon in the Korean War. He also experienced defeats and setbacks; the devastating destruction of his Air Force by the Japanese bombing of Clark Field in WWII and the grisly Pusan Perimeter fight in the Korean War are two examples.

A review of MacArthur’s campaigns, viewed through the lens of Sun Tzu’s war doctrine, reveals that application of the principles preceded victory, whereas not adhering to the laws led to defeat. These timeless truths, written 2500 years ago, hold value in shaping tomorrow’s wars.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. PRINCIPLES OF <em>THE ART OF WAR</em></td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. WORLD WAR I, MACARTHUR AT WAR</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cote de Chatillon, France</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. WORLD WAR II, MACARTHUR AT WAR</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clark Field Defeat, Philippines</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordinated Retrograde to Bataan</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Island Hopping, New Guinea</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. KOREAN WAR, MACARTHUR AT WAR</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stemming North Korea’s Advance</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pusan Perimeter Fight</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inchon Landing</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII. ANALYTICAL CONCLUSIONS</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIGURE</td>
<td>PAGE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 1: Summary of Sun Tzu's <em>The Art of War</em></td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2: Map, 42nd Division and Meuse-Argonne Offensive</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3: Map, 1941 Japanese Invasion of Philippines, WWII</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4: World War II in the Pacific</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 5: Island Hopping, Westward Drive along New Guinea</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 6: U.S. Leaflet used in Psychological Warfare, WWII</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 7: Map of Korean Peninsula, 1950</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 8: Height of North Korea's Advance, August 1950</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 9: Sun Tzu's Principles Applied during Inchon Landing</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 10: Portrait, Douglas MacArthur</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I. INTRODUCTION

Douglas MacArthur is one of the most legendary military figures in U.S. history, having led epic battles spanning fifty years and three large-scale wars: World War I, World War II and the Korean War. One of General Douglas MacArthur’s favorite books was *The Art of War* by Sun Tzu.¹ This book contains ancient principles of war that were written over two millennia ago by the famous Chinese general. They are still studied at nearly every military officer and warfare strategy school in the nation. Some of these principles are as follows: “A general must acquaint himself thoroughly with the terrain…before he can march his army through it,”² and, “To know yourself and to know your enemy, you will gain victory a hundred times out of a hundred…”³ This paper will present a unique and original view of General MacArthur’s methods, battles and strategies, by evaluating them alongside Sun Tzu’s warfare doctrine.

A review of the five decades of General MacArthur’s military service reveals how the application of the timeless principles of *The Art of War* resulted in battlefield successes and how not heeding the principles, resulted in defeat; whether studying WWI engagements like the Meuse-Argonne offensive, the WWII island hopping in the Pacific, or the crushing defeats in the early stages of the Korean War, one can view each historical instance through the lens of timeless warfare wisdom in order to provide insight for tomorrow’s fight.

The problem to be addressed within this thesis is whether or not the application of *The Art of War*’s ancient principles by Douglas MacArthur impacted the results of battles, and outcomes of wars. MacArthur esteemed the wisdom of Sun Tzu, and moreover, he was a student

---


3. Ibid., 21.
of warfare, understanding expertly the complexities of command, logistics, environment, intelligence, geography, psychology and many other facets of battle. This thesis investigates how General MacArthur effectively applied the principles of war in World War I, World War II, and the Korean War, to shape outcomes. It analyzes battles and conflicts where the principles of the art of war were not effectively applied. In those cases where the doctrine was not incorporated, this thesis examines how their use could have potentially transformed the result of battles/conflicts. Moreover, investigation reveals the ways that MacArthur, as a 20th century military strategist, modified the 2000 year old codes to tailor them to modern crises. Most importantly, trend analysis and relevant implications are presented which can inform current and future warfare strategies.

Douglas MacArthur’s warfare successes and failures, analyzed in conjunction with the esteemed and enduring doctrine of *The Art of War*, are relevant for a number of reasons. One reason is that MacArthur served during an epic transition in human history in terms of culture and technology, from the late 1800’s to mid-1900; therefore, he was uniquely postured to shape the development of military warfare tactics, force structure, technology, education and materiel. For example, history reflects that during World War II, General MacArthur strove to advance the integration of naval amphibious capabilities and air power with the foundational army ground force maneuvers. The resultant synergies not only proved to aid the U.S. in gaining an advantage over the Japanese adversary then, but paved the way for growth in combined operations as a core doctrinal precept in modern warfare.

Another reason that a study of MacArthur is significant and informative is that because he was an army soldier for half a century, MacArthur had the distinction of commanding in three separate wars; providing him a breadth of experience and many opportunities to apply hundreds
of Sun Tzu’s principles. For instance, in WWI, he fought the Germans in challenging trench warfare, and through his innate ability to apply powerful principles of the art of war, such as knowing your enemy, he was able to push through fortified enemy positions. During WWII, MacArthur was blind-sided by the Japanese surprise dive-bomb attacks on the Philippines airbase, which destroyed his air force. Through this defeat, he learned how important preparation and adaptability are in war, and how the Japanese implementation of Sun Tzu’s laws of speed, force and surprise determined the outcome of that decisive battle. In the Korean War, MacArthur was at the zenith of his career and therefore operated from a perspective of great wisdom, as evidenced by his execution of the daring landing at the Inchon port, behind enemy lines; in this one operation, MacArthur epitomized the art of war, applying nearly every principle in the ancient writing.

Furthermore, MacArthur commanded under eight presidents, advising many of them on global policy and national affairs; few others in U.S. military history have wielded such political influence as MacArthur. This is relevant as an area of examination because many of Sun Tzu’s principles intertwine military warfare with political strategy. Case in point is the issue of morality in war: Sun Tzu asserts that it is a ruler’s moral compass which will cause people to rally behind him. In WWII, MacArthur advocated the island-hopping plan to retake the Philippines, influencing Washington leaders – Franklin D. Roosevelt included – regarding the moral obligation to rescue the American prisoners of war from their Japanese captors. The operations were a major success, not only because of cleverly employed art of war tactics, but also due to the individual soldier being motivated by the morality of the cause.

As illustrated by the aforementioned introductory points, MacArthur’s victories and defeats in WWI, WWII and the Korean War distinctly molded the 20th century. What’s more,
they continue to impact our world today. The course of history for Germany, Japan, Australia, New Guinea, the Philippines and Korea was irrevocably and directly impacted by General MacArthur. Additionally, the U.S. military is a product of its history – all its strengths, weaknesses, methods and doctrine were heavily influenced by Douglas MacArthur’s generalship. Also, MacArthur was a general who led much like Sun Tzu did – with calculation, purpose, discipline and courage. As Mark McNeilly notes in *Sun Tzu and the Art of Modern Warfare*, “The Art of War … and the lessons it has to teach strategists are as deep and meaningful today as they were 2,000 years ago. As proof of this, the thirteen chapters of this ancient work are still in use by soldiers who fight not with swords and arrows but with cruise missiles and drones, who communicate not by banners but by satellite, and who maneuver not by landmarks but by GPS.”

Considering the crises, war and complex conflict plaguing the world today, it is clear that a study of warfare is as important now as ever.

---

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Douglas MacArthur served in the United States Army while the American military emerged as a global power; he shaped much of the maturity of the forces. There are over twenty-five biographies on this controversial figure – known for his strategic brilliance as well is his arrogant flair. He is studied prolifically in military institutions around the world, and hundreds of books have been written on the various campaigns and battles he was directly involved with. Likewise, Chinese General Sun Tzu is a popular military figure. He captured his observed lessons of warfare thousands of years ago, and they have been a topic of examination and emulation by strategists (both military and political) world-wide for decades. MacArthur was an avid reader and one of the texts he studied was *The Art of War*. The main question is, how did General MacArthur effectively apply the principles of war in World War I, World War II, and the Korean War to shape outcomes? Moreover, surveyors of history will want to discern in what battles/conflicts did General MacArthur not effectively execute the principles of the art of war, and what was the impact? To answer these and other related investigations, one needs to examine the ancient laws of war as dovetailed with modern combat. Furthermore, it is essential to review select instances of military activity to review the impact of applying a single principle of war in a battle, versus multiple principles of war applied over the course of a prolonged conflict.

With General MacArthur’s role in three spectacular conflicts, there are a plethora of military actions to choose from for exploration; nevertheless, seven instances stand out as particularly significant for both MacArthur and for the United States: 1) the battle of Cote de Chatillon, in France, in 1918; 2) the Japanese attack on U.S. assets at Clark Field, in the Philippines, in 1941; 3) Move to, and defense of, Bataan and Corregidor, in the Philippines, from

---

5 Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*
1941 to 1942; 4) Operation Cartwheel’s island-hopping assaults around New Guinea, from 1942 to 1945; 5) the series of delaying maneuvers to stem North Korea’s advance at the onset of the Korean War, in 1950; 6) the grisly combat at the Pusan Perimeter, on the southern tip of Korea, 1950; and 7) the Inchon amphibious landing, in South Korea, in 1950. Ultimately, after an examination of General MacArthur’s methods, battles and strategies, as viewed through the scope of Sun Tzu’s ancient principles of war, the reader will be able to understand what analysis and implications can be drawn to inform current and future warfare.

In terms of the precepts of the art of war, there are a number of translations and interpretations of Sun Tzu’s writing, *The Art of War*. As is often the case with ancient manuscripts, there are corruptions in the text. Furthermore, as copies have been made over the centuries, variations to the material inevitably resulted. This thesis extracts from the Song Dynasty version, written between 960 – 1279 CE as this is the most widely accepted manuscript. From a literature review perspective, it is also important to note that different translators took varying degrees of liberty in selecting words in English to match the classical Chinese language. The ancient Chinese language is written without any punctuation, which increases the number of interpretations of the original text. Due to the aforementioned factors, no two translations of Sun Tzu’s *Art of War* are identical. James Trapp’s translation of Sun Tzu’s *The Art of War* (2011) was chosen for use in this thesis because of its style; in this rendition Trapp allows the context and balance of the prose to dictate his translation. *The Art of War* is divided into thirteen chapters, each focusing on a particular aspect of battle, leadership or strategic planning; this structure is generally undisputed among scholars.

---

*Sun Tzu, The Art of War*

In addition to the original text of *The Art of War*, several historians have written works exploring Sun Tzu’s principles. In Mark McNielly’s book, *Sun Tzu and the Art of Modern Warfare* (2001),\(^8\) he argues the need for reframing the 2,000-year-old theories within the contemporary construct. Another esteemed author and student of Sun Tzu, Bevin Alexander, wrote several books pertaining to the topic. In *How Wars are Won: The 13 Rules of War from Ancient Greece to the War on Terror* (2002),\(^9\) Bevin helps to elucidate how the foundational stratagems of warfare have been exacted by diverse adversaries and across continents. In *How Great General’s Win* (1993),\(^10\) this same author draws connections between the timeless rules and their effective application throughout military history. Each of these pieces contribute explanatory analysis in relation to the principles of war, which is helpful in interpreting the ancient material for modern use.

Additionally, several prominent authors have contributed comprehensive books which catalogue Douglas MacArthur’s entire career, emphasizing his strengths and weaknesses shown during all three of the aforementioned large-scale wars. Among those authors, is Dorris Clayton James (better known as D. Clayton James), one of the most widely recognized scholars on Douglas MacArthur and his campaigns in World War I, World War II and the Korean War. In James’ three-volume set *The Years of MacArthur* – Volume I: 1880-1941,\(^11\) Volume II: 1941-


1945,\textsuperscript{12} and Volume III: 1945-1964,\textsuperscript{13} published in 1970, 1975 and 1985 respectively – he characterizes in extensive detail, each engagement that MacArthur was involved in during his fifty-two-year service. The preponderance of MacArthur authors who have published historical analyses on MacArthur buttress their assertions by referencing James’ authoritative publications. Another broad work is \textit{MacArthur and the American Century: A Reader} (2001),\textsuperscript{14} edited by William M. Leary. This book is unique in that it presents essays and excerpts from several MacArthur experts and historians, to include Stephen A. Ambrose and Stanley L. Falk, as well as first hand narratives from Dwight D. Eisenhower and Douglas MacArthur. Furthermore, Leary assembles a variety of perspectives, comprising diverse interpretations of MacArthur, to include, but not limited to, Australian historian David Horner, naval historian Clark Reynolds, and MacArthur’s military Secretary Faubion Bowers. The distinctive approach taken by Leary provides the reader an insightful, well-balanced review of decisions made and actions taken by MacArthur. It reflects supporter and critic perspectives, as well as vantage points from individuals inside and outside of MacArthur’s close circle. William Manchester’s 1978 \textit{American Caesar: Douglas MacArthur 1880 – 1864}\textsuperscript{15} is particularly helpful in understanding the context of MacArthur’s battles within world affairs, to include the political machinations in Washington which underpinned each military struggle. \textit{Douglas MacArthur: American Warrior} (2016)\textsuperscript{16} by

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{12} Dorris Clayton James, \textit{The Years of MacArthur: Volume II, 1941-1945} (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1975).
\item \textsuperscript{13} Dorris Clayton James, \textit{The Years of MacArthur: Volume III, 1945-1964} (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1985).
\item \textsuperscript{14} William Leary, \textit{We Shall Return: MacArthur's Commanders and the Defeat of Japan 1942-1945} (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1988).
\end{itemize}
Arthur Herman strives to assess the dichotomy of the personage of MacArthur, explaining the polarizing figure that stirs both unabashed adoration as well as unrestrained contempt. An extremely well-researched biography of MacArthur, by Geoffrey Perret, is found in *Old Soldiers Never Die: The Life of Douglas MacArthur* (1996). Drawing extensively from original sources and expert historian and archival accounts of facts and assessments, Perret’s work places the battle for Cote de Chatillon, his island hopping in the Pacific, and MacArthur’s fight during the Korean battles, under the microscope, conveying each instance of victory or defeat in granular detail. In *The Most Dangerous Man in America* (2014), Mark Perry takes a critical approach of the general’s career, disparaging MacArthur’s disregard for political authority, and choosing to highlight the talented men who worked for him as opposed to crediting MacArthur himself. Perry’s work provides key insights as to the motivations and decision making of an often enigmatic leader.

A myriad of books on the military exploits of MacArthur delve into the particulars of one concentrated area or another – a specific war and MacArthur’s strategy contribution; his character and leadership qualities; or the tactical-level fine points of a battle or operation. *The Coldest Winter: America and the Korean War* (2007) by David Halberstam is one such piece. To support his meticulous narrative, he leverages diaries and first-hand accounts of soldiers who fought in the Korean War at various times and at different echelons. Particularly useful are the included maps and tactical perspectives presented regarding specific skirmishes such as the stem

---


of North Korea’s advance, the Pusan perimeter engagement and the Inchon landing. Another carefully researched study is James P. Duffy’s, *War at the End of the World: Douglas MacArthur and the Forgotten Fight for New Guinea, 1942 - 1945* (2016), which explores an oft overlooked episode in World War II, during which MacArthur’s clever island-hopping positioned the United States to effectively counter Japan’s Southeast Asia offensive. War veteran and author Winston Groom, in *The Generals: Patton, MacArthur, Marshall, and the Winning of World War II* (2015), analyzes the characteristics of great leaders, to comprehend the battlefield instincts displayed by proven victors. His narrative equips the reader with clear examples of exemplary intelligence and calculated combat risk displayed by several American icons, including Douglas MacArthur.

The major historiographical issues surrounding the topic of Douglas MacArthur are three-fold. First, while each scholarly writing investigates primary sources which are available by the millions in archives around the United States, because of the sheer volume of archives, there is no one comprehensive book which could possibly address all relevant aspects of MacArthur’s service on over a hundred battlefields. Secondly, because war is dynamic and asymmetric the accounts vary widely: perspectives change day-to-day as conditions on the battlefield shift; and war is actioned by different nations, at dissimilar echelons of the military (national, operational, tactical), as well as by various branches of service (Army, Navy, Air Force). It is not likely that a review of any particular operation takes fully into account the hundreds of thousands of data points which contribute to the total understanding of that event. For instance, the four year struggle in WWII’s island hopping from Australia, through New


Guinea, to the Philippines contained over a thousand days of activity; moreover, there are hundreds of accounts of that activity – whether it is from a perspective of a leader in Washington, from MacArthur himself, from a naval officer, from an Australian, American, Philippine or Japanese soldier. These factors contribute to the numerous viewpoints within the body of literature available on MacArthur’s WWI, WWII and Korean War engagements.

Thirdly, MacArthur is a figure who evokes powerful emotions and opinions; he is both passionately admired for his distinctive courage and battlefield genius, and vehemently villainized for his arrogance and failures. Though there are authors who strive to present a balanced view, published works are generally polarized in one of two groups: supporters or critics. Therefore, in studying MacArthur, the examiner needs to assimilate the aforementioned historiographical concerns, survey the material of most significant value, and present an accurate, focused analysis.

Journal articles provide an even wider repository of critique, expertise and perspective for reviewing General MacArthur’s contribution in warfare. One article in the Royal Geographic Society, proves quite enlightening in the sense of understanding the cultural climate surrounding MacArthur during World War II; that is “The Pacific Theatre of Operations,”\(^{22}\) by William Courtenay, written ominously during the height of Japanese aggression and merely six months prior to the U.S. dropping of the atomic bomb. In this February 1945 piece, Courtenay, a war correspondent for several years in MacArthur’s headquarters, discusses his journalistic impressions of the day-to-day ebb and flow of military operations. In contrast, is a particularly insightful article by Peter Lowe, titled, “An Ally and a Recalcitrant General: Great Britain,\(^{22}\)

Douglas MacArthur and the Korean War, 1950-1.”23 Lowe emphasizes the general’s perception of Europe, including Great Britain, and how that perception influenced his military actions in the twilight of his career. Additionally, MacArthur expert and former chief historian for the Air Force, Stanley Falk, streamlines the narrative on the general, by crafting a pithy piece describing major milestones and characterizations for the Journal of American History: “The Nation and Beyond: Transnational Perspectives on United States History.”24

In addition to the wide-ranging scholarly work on applied warfare concepts and Douglas MacArthur’s career, there is a vast array of original source material. In regards to MacArthur’s five-decade military career, there are millions of archival records maintained in various locations, such as the National Archives in Maryland and the MacArthur Memorial Archives in Virginia. Included in these archives are photographs, film reels, declassified intelligence reports, personal letters, newsprint and journals. One of the most informative and revealing primary sources in terms of MacArthur’s psychology of war is his personal memoir, Reminiscences (1964).25 It was completed only weeks before his death, and therefore was presented from a comprehensive, reflective and hindsight perspective. Extremely valuable in decomposing the Cote de Chatillon Battle in World War I are the numerous letters from operators, collected by the American Battle Commission in the early 1920’s. The Commission sent a report of the U.S. fight, complete with maps to a number of veterans; over eight commanders of units at several


echelons sent back their recollection of the events that took place in October of 1918. The accounts, like that of Lloyd Ross, are archived as part of the “Meuse Argonne Collection” at the MacArthur Memorial Archives. Also, the National Security Agency cryptologic documents contain declassified reports by U.S. Army Ultra representatives, demonstrating the breakthroughs in information collection that was made possible with radio intelligence and MacArthur’s code breaking units. Advancements in this discipline equipped field commands in several theatres of operations, to include the Pacific, from 1944 to 1945. Maps, photographs, planning documents, letters and military reports pertaining to relevant battles and operations reveal the tactical information needed for rigorous analysis. Those include material in the MacArthur Archives on the following activities which took place under Douglas MacArthur’s command: 1918 Battle of Cote de Chatillon; the 1941 Japanese attack on US assets at Clark Field; the 1941 to 1942 Bataan and Corregidor operations; the 1943 to 1944 New Guinea island-hopping assaults; and the Korean War fighting, to include the 1950 Inchon amphibious landing.

The aggregate works and archival material deconstruct in considerable detail MacArthur’s military engagements. Additionally, in the aforementioned analyzed works on Sun Tzu’s *The Art of War*, such as those by Bevin Alexander, conclusions are drawn on how the ancient principles of war have been effectively employed in the 2,000 years since they were written. Insight presented aids in correlating abstract and broad concepts, such as Sun Tzu’s teaching on gaining momentum, into modern warfare. Regarding the published books on Douglas MacArthur, Dorris Clayton James’ three-volume series concludes that MacArthur, despite some significant character flaws and lapses in judgment, monumentally influenced the

success of several U.S. endeavors in the first part of the 20th century. His all-inclusive books support both a deep and wide-ranging study of MacArthur’s actions leading up to, during, and following each of the wars: WWI, WWII and the Korean War. Other prominent authors as noted—William Manchester and Arthur Herman—uncover the complex personality of MacArthur, describing potential motivations behind decisions he made at various stages of war. This is particularly beneficial because it acts as a counter-balance to MacArthur’s own original work, *Reminiscences*, which is in some ways lofty, embellished and one-sided in its perspective. The compiled narrative of William Leary, which includes excerpts from acclaimed MacArthur historians, former U.S. presidents, foreign parties, military experts and naval historians, are particularly useful in providing perspective in this thesis. The diverse array of writers provides differing opinions of events, which support contextualization, while the expert analyses reflect rigorous examination and vetted conclusions. When analyzed in the context of Sun Tzu’s foundational precepts, the body of literature on Douglas MacArthur reveals warfare insights that transcend time, geography and foe. Synthesized, they assist in examining the most effective methods and tactics for battlefield success.
III. PRINCIPLES OF THE ART OF WAR

“What has been will be again; what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun.” 27 ~ Bible

This chapter explores the original text of The Art of War and analyzes each of the thirteen chapters that Sun Tzu wrote. The purpose is to provide a foundation for the thesis analyses; specifically it is the lens through which this thesis will evaluate Douglas MacArthur’s engagements in WWI, WWII and the Korean War. The Art of War is a book of military strategy written circa 770 to 476 BCE. In accordance with long-standing tradition, the doctrine is said to have been penned by a tactician by the name of Sun Tzu (also referred to as Sun Wu, and Sunzi) who was a general in ancient China approximately 2,500 years ago, in the service of King He Lu of Wu. 28 As is to be expected with ancient translated manuscripts, there is fair speculation of document corruption and mistranslation as well as scholarly debate surrounding authentic authorship. For his translation, James Trapp used a copy of the document that is one of the most widely accepted versions, derived from the Song Dynasty period (960 – 1279 CE). 29 Challenging the acceptance of the translated principles is not only the question of corrupt text or accurate authorship, but the difficulty in accurately deciphering ambiguous phrases and terms. The book was written in classical Chinese and dovetails abstract Daoist philosophy with practical rules of warfare, allowing for variant interpretations of the text’s meaning. What is more relevant than the book’s origin, author or cultural nuances, however, are its proven truths on being an effective general and waging war. It is no secret that The Art of War has been, and continues to be, an


29. Ibid.
established resource for students of warfare. Translator Trapp notes that the military manual is on one level “intensely practical,” and on another level, its “elegance of prose” gives it a depth of meaning which is universally appealing. 30 It is no wonder that it was a favorite of such a well-read and expert military man as General Douglas MacArthur. 31 In order to analyze MacArthur’s operations with the overlay of Sun Tzu’s principles of war, it is imperative to first examine the precepts in the ancient manuscript.

The text is divided into thirteen chapters, each emphasizing a different aspect of warfare. Some chapters are saturated with dense, profound wisdom, of endless applications, such as the chapter titled, “Maneuvers against the Enemy” in which Sun Tzu advises, “You must be swift as the wind, dense as the forest, rapacious as fire, steadfast like a mountain, mysterious as night and mighty as thunder.” 32 Conversely, other chapters, like “Attacking with Fire,” in which one learns the uses of fire arrows, hold less in the way of pertinent knowledge for the contemporary military analyst. Interestingly, although the organization of the principles within a specific chapter sometimes seem fitting, such as the discussion of fire arrows within the chapter about fire attacks, at other times the teachings are quite broad, transcending the section they belong to. This is natural because a broad principle about the effectiveness of speed in battle, is just as important in maneuvers against the enemy, as it is in attacking with fire, for instance. In studying the principles, if the truth is organically connected to its parent chapter, then it is worth noting how Sun Tzu organized it within the context of the thirteen chapters (the use of the oblique as part of the Momentum chapter for example); at other junctures, it is the principle itself that is

30. Ibid., 5.
31. Ibid., 4.
32. Tzu, 45.
noteworthy for investigation, rather than its anchoring within one consortium. Finally, the
thirteen chapters of *The Art of War* are as follows:

1. Planning/Estimates
2. Waging War
3. Strategic Offense
4. Deployment
5. Momentum
6. The Substantial and the Insubstantial (also known as Strengths and Weaknesses)
7. Maneuvers Against the Enemy
8. The Nine Variables
9. On the March
10. Terrain
11. The Nine Types of Ground
12. Attacking with Fire
13. Using Spies

There are approximately 360 principles nested within the chapters, and of those, this
analysis will focus on roughly fifty of the most insightful and significant for modern warfare.
This chapter will highlight several principles while subsequent chapters will analyze when and
how various rules were employed by Douglas MacArthur in World War I, World War II and the
Korean War. The precepts vary from granular to wide-ranging.

33. Ibid., 3.
In the chapter on “Planning,” also referred to as “Estimates,” Sun Tzu lays the foundation upon which all the other principles are built. Planning is so integral to warfare and is such a determinant of whether there will be victory or defeat, that it is no wonder the concept is given the position of prominence in *The Art of War*. The author advises leaders who want to plan a victory, to “act according to the situation and make use of external factors. To act according to the situation is to seize the advantage by adapting one’s plans.”34 In this, he exhorts agility, flexibility and adaptiveness on the battlefield. Countless fights have been lost because of a military’s inflexibility – their inability to respond swiftly and effectively to change and opportunity. Sun Tzu also references external factors in the above principle; some examples could include fog, wind patterns, terrain, tidal conditions, moonlight, politics, wildlife and fauna. *The Art of War* also underscores deception and surprise within planning for war, and estimating one’s adversary. Featured prominently in the “Planning” chapter of the text is Sun Tzu’s assertion that there are five decisive factors in war: the first is a Moral Compass, which denotes just national cause (in other words, do the fighters believe in the war); the second is called Heaven, encompassing “night and day, heat and cold and the changing of the seasons;” the third decisive factor is labeled Earth, and includes essentially the land, sea and air domains; the fourth factor in war is the Commander, who “must be possessed of wisdom, honesty, benevolence, courage and discipline;” and the fifth element of decisive war is Regulation, which is characterized as the organization, mobilization, training, and equipping of the forces.35 In direct fashion, Sun Tzu explains the significance of planning by plainly stating, “A victorious leader

34. Ibid., 11.
35. Ibid., 9.
plans for many eventualities before the battle; a defeated leader plans for only a few. Many options bring victory, few options bring defeat, no options at all spell disaster.”

In the second chapter of *The Art of War*, “Waging War,” Sun Tzu instructs both in the matters of state and military leadership. Furthermore, he espouses truths which on the surface, one might be tempted to take for granted, but in actuality, are quite philosophical and profound. He teaches, “… in war it is winning alone that matters and there is no merit in prolonging a campaign.” Modern leaders might do well, to review this page from the ancient leader’s wisdom. The United States has been technically at war with North Korea for over sixty years, and the conflict in Iraq has bogged down precious forces and money for over a decade, with little in the way of sustainable, peaceful resolution to speak of, on either fronts. Sun Tzu insightfully explains the political outcome of a nation who is not well acquainted with this wisdom in warfare: “A protracted campaign depletes the state’s resources. With your soldiers and weapons dull, strength and resources spent, your rivals will seize their chance and rise up against you. Then, no matter how wise you are, you can turn nothing to your advantage.” In this chapter Sun Tzu also gives other wide-ranging advice on waging war, explaining for instance the cleverness in recycling and re-using captured military equipment, and the tactic of treating prisoners of war well. During World War II, Japan ignored this rule and enraged Americans with their ruthless bayonetting and torture along the Bataan Death March; these actions ultimately

36. Ibid., 11.
37. Ibid., 15.
38. Ibid., 13.
invited the wrath of the U.S. as expressed in the dropping of the atomic bombs on the nation of Japan.\textsuperscript{39}

The third chapter of Sun Tzu’s original text focuses on “Strategic Offense.” Probably one of the most espoused truths in contemporary military circles is captured at the conclusion of this chapter: “…know yourself and know your enemy.”\textsuperscript{40} The side which gains information dominance and can accurately assess their own strengths and weaknesses, is nearly one hundred percent, the side that wins the war. Understanding of this reality will almost single-handedly carry a leader to victory, or conversely, seal his defeat, should he not appreciate its depth. Still, gathering comprehensive, accurate intelligence on one’s adversary, and forecasting the limitations of the army’s ability, is easier said than done, as millennia of war have attested. Sun Tzu explains this key which underpins every element of war: “Thus we may say that if you know yourself and know your enemy, you will gain victory a hundred times out of a hundred. If you know yourself but do not know your enemy you will meet one defeat for every victory. If you know neither yourself nor your enemy, you will never be victorious.”\textsuperscript{41} In this chapter on strategic offense, the author holds out several challenges to the reader, both in terms of military cunning, as well as in philosophy of war; “The highest form of warfare is to out-think the enemy,”\textsuperscript{42} Tzu notes, and, “Winning a hundred victories out of a hundred battles is not the ultimate achievement; [rather] the ultimate achievement is to defeat the enemy without even

\textsuperscript{39} Herman, \textit{American Warrior}, 649.

\textsuperscript{40} Tzu, \textit{The Art of War}, 21.

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., 21.

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid., 19.
coming to battle.”

Along the spectrum of out-thinking one’s adversary, there are infinite applications. As will be analyzed in this paper, Douglas MacArthur was a master at strategic offense. Because he comprehended the tremendous value of knowing your enemy and your own force, and he possessed the mental acuteness and creativity to outwit his foe, he tasted on many occasion the sweetness of a hard-won victory on the military combat chess board.

In the fourth chapter of the centuries-old manuscript Sun Tzu teaches about “Deployment.” The topic involves expertly assessing where and how to employ one’s forces; it includes the disposition of troops, conditions which necessitate defense and advantageous times for attack. It is within this chapter that Sun Tzu both equips the reader with a roadmap to victory, and perhaps oversteps, or misguides his protégés. Beginning with the latter, The Art of War counsels that, “Whilst you are unsure of victory, defend; when you are sure of victory, attack.”

Contrary to Tzu’s guidance, one can never be absolutely sure of victory, because the enemy gets a vote, war is dynamic and even outnumbered adversaries can employ innovative cunning to advance an upper hand in battle. Besides, if leaders wait for absolute surety before acting, they may find themselves offered up sacrificially, to a bolder, more decisive enemy. But Sun Tzu’s point of careful decision-making and proper preparedness is undoubtedly of significant value for any successful operation. In answering how to effectively deploy one’s forces, the writer coaches, “In the Art of War, first comes scoping, then measurement, then calculation, then balancing and finally victory. The Earth is the basis for scoping, scoping the basis for measurement, measurement the basis for calculation, calculation the basis for balancing, and

43. Ibid., 17.

44. Ibid., 23.
balancing the basis for victory.”45 In this way, Sun Tzu shows a clear, building block progression. Scoping uses intelligence gathering to understand the battlespace environment. The output of scoping is then used in measurement; measurement can also be explained as assessing the adversary’s strengths and weaknesses, as compared to one’s own. Subsequently, the information flows into calculation; this can be understood as a process of detailed assessment of the possible actions, strengths of forces, time needed for achieving certain objectives and equipment required, among other calculations. Once all necessary calculations are ascertained, only then can strategy truly begin – strategy in which one chooses the time, place, actions and forces needed to balance one’s application of force appropriately to achieve the desired effect. In this way, Sun Tzu outlines a blueprint for successful military operations.

The fifth chapter of Sun Tzu’s The Art of War regales the reader with elegant prose on the subject of “Momentum,” which is sometimes denoted as energy. Momentum on the battlefield is a concept that is situation-dependent and naturally subjective. In its simplest form, momentum can be understood as strength and force that a military has when moving, and the perpetual increase in might and speed of a kinetic force. Sun Tzu offers ideas on how to create momentum in war, and that is through the employment and mastery of the oblique and the direct.46 He explains that, “A general who understands the use of the oblique has a source of tactics as inexhaustible as Heaven and Earth, which like the Rivers and the Oceans, will never run dry. … [he continues] there are only five basic notes to music, but their variations are infinite…In military strategy, there is only the direct and oblique, but between them they offer an inexhaustible range of tactics.”47 Another way to view the oblique is as obscure, indirect, and

45. Ibid., 25.
46. Ibid., 27.
47. Ibid., 29.
concealed through deception. When it comes to combinations of direct and indirect, along the continuum of strategies in warfare, there are options as endless as one’s imagination and resources.

Strengths and weaknesses are analyzed in the sixth chapter titled “Substantial and Insubstantial.” Sun Tzu urges leaders to attack in areas that do not have strong defenses, and as analysis of World War II and the Korean War will show, General MacArthur employed this method again and again. It may seem obvious, yet oddly, many crises are fought with strength on strength; World War I’s trench warfare in which entire armies fought head on for weeks, with casualties in the hundreds of thousands, is a prime example. Specifically, Sun Tzu explains, “Military strategy is like water, which flows from high ground towards low ground; so, in your tactics, avoid the enemy’s strengths and attack his weaknesses. Water adapts its course according to the terrain; in the same way you should shape your victory around the enemy’s dispositions. There are no constants in warfare, any more than water maintains a constant shape.”48 In the aforementioned passage Sun Tzu encapsulates beautifully the need to be fluid – flexing to the dynamic fight. MacArthur, as this paper’s analysis will reflect was a master at adaptive maneuver. Additionally, it is within this chapter of Sun Tzu’s writing that one of the most powerful exhortations lies – that of intelligence gathering. Winning the information war can lead to an exploitation of the enemy’s weaknesses and a maximization of one’s own strengths. Sun Tzu recommends, “Lay plans to discover the enemy’s intentions and their likelihood of success; provoke him to understand the dynamics of his movement and inactivity; … take his measure so that you know where his dispositions are under-manned and where they are over-manned.”49

48. Ibid., 37.
49. Ibid., 37.
Detailed examination of World War II will depict how MacArthur won the “information war” and utilized the art of intelligence gathering, thereby turning the tide of the war in the Pacific.

*The Art of War* captures wisdom on “Maneuvers against the Enemy” in the seventh chapter. This section addresses many aspects related to movement and management of one’s force. The author discusses how to take advantage of the enemy’s morale; how to keep order in the force, even amidst the chaos of combat; proper exploitation of a land’s natural features; as well as timing of maneuver. In probably one of the most poetic verses of the Chinese text, Sun Tzu describes the essence of effective maneuvering against the adversary: “You must be swift as the wind, dense as the forest, rapacious as fire, steadfast like a mountain, mysterious as night and mighty as thunder.”50 There are myriad applications that one could extrapolate from the preceding similes – that is the mystery, beauty and universal appeal of the ancient text. Clearly speed is prized, by Sun Tzu’s reference to wind. Might, strength and an impenetrable character in one’s military can be compared to a thick forest. Aggression and intense application of destructive force is highlighted in the connection to fire. An unyielding, immovable military springs to mind as one assimilates the solid, reliable structure of a mountain. The ability to move undetected, to control surprise is inferred by the connection to the darkness of night. And lastly, Sun Tzu challenges the general leading troops into war to ensure one’s force is powerful, like the clap of thunder – thunder is unstoppable, its destination is certain. Later in the chapter, the writer nestles a gem of warfare truth: good communication. Anyone who has served in a military force understands immediately the necessity of clear communication which provides a common operating picture for troops at every echelon. Since Sun Tzu is writing from the perspective of his own time period (eighth to fifth centuries BCE), he highlights the use of gongs and flags, but

50. Ibid., 45.
the concise message is the same: “… Make the army hear with the same ear and see with the same eye. Thus unified in understanding … This is the art of troop movement.” As this paper will analyze, General MacArthur exemplified this same precept in the coordinated retrograde to Bataan at the onset of WWII.

In chapter eight, “The Nine Variables,” the student of warfare learns of numerous situations that military commanders might find themselves in, as well as Sun Tzu’s lessons with regards to each. Oddly, there are not actually nine variables articulated in this chapter; nonetheless, the content does provide what today’s leaders might label, “Lessons Learned.” For example, the author plainly states, “There will be positions that should not be fought over,” and “by considering the potential advantages of a perilous situation, [a wise leader] can find a way of resolving his difficulties.” A discerning reader will look beyond the surface simplicity of these statements and discover that for a general on the battlefield, these two principles could mean the difference between life and death for thousands. In assessing the first, one might notice for instance, that there are periods in conflict when it is time to step back from an objective; reassess; approach the problem from another perspective; or even compromise, as some gains are not worth the cost of lives and resources. In the second assertion, an analyst may decipher that desperation can beget creativity and difficult problems can result in the most audacious strategies of war. As an example, in 1950, American soldiers found themselves overwhelmed by the lightning blitz of the North Korean advance through South Korea, to the point that they were nearly pushed off the Pusan Peninsula. This extreme peril led General MacArthur to launch what is called one of the most daring military maneuvers in history – the Inchon Landing. By doing

51. Ibid., 45.
52. Ibid., 51.
so, he channeled the spirit of optimism that is expressed in Sun Tzu’s precept, which ultimately changed the course of the Korean War.

“On the March” is the title of the ninth chapter in *The Art of War*. In it is an eclectic collection of wise words ranging from how to avoid disease amongst the troops, to punishing men when the situations calls for it. “A general who punishes his troops before he has won them over, will never be accepted by them and they will be useless to him. If he has already won them over but does not punish them when appropriate, they will still be useless. So you must bring your troops together with humane treatment, and bind them with discipline – this is the path to invincibility.”53 There is some very strategic guidance tucked within this chapter as well. Sun Tzu notes that there are situations where a force may be outnumbered, and when in that precarious position, a general should concentrate his military and build a larger force. This may sound obvious to some, but history has shown that it is not – often times, commanders spread their forces thin to cover more territory or meet objectives; other times government leaders aren’t willing to financially invest in building a larger force – both are perilous. Sun Tzu’s words of wisdom give leaders a clear view of what the priorities should be when outnumbered – increase the force and concentrate strength.

The next section, chapter ten, covers “Terrain.” The writer was limited in the scope of his lessons, to ground terrain, due to the time period and the early limitations of domains of war. However, an astute observer may find broader applicability to the truths, such as within the air, naval, space, electronic and cyber battlespaces. Though the chapter is titled “Terrain” and there is insight as to navigating entangling, versus narrow, ground for instance, the substantial value in this section of the manuscript is the vision on generalship, and what are called the “six degrees of

53. Ibid., 51.
misfortune which can befall an army, none of which stem from natural causes but all of which are the fault of the general. They are: flight, insubordination, decline, collapse, chaos and rout.”

They are characterized in *The Art of War* as follows: Flight is branded as the scenario where a leader compels his outnumbered force to face a foe ten times its strength, causing troops to abandon their post; insubordination arises when a military unit has strong members with weak leaders; conversely, when the reverse is true – strong, overbearing leaders with weak and passive troops – decline is sure to follow, according to Sun Tzu; collapse is described as breakdown in command and control, when senior leaders act on their own accord, without waiting on the general, who has the big picture, to provide clear vectors; chaos ensues when there is a weak general, lack of clear guidance or consistency in selection of troops and leaders; and lastly, there is rout – noted as a general acting on bad intelligence or lack of accurate intelligence, which causes him to misread the impending battle, and be outnumbered and/or outmaneuvered. Sun Tzu explains, “These are the 6 paths to defeat and it is a prime responsibility of any general thoroughly to understand them.”

General Douglas MacArthur seemed to intuitively appreciate these concepts, and embodied many of them naturally, as will be shown in the ensuing examination.

Chapter eleven, “Nine Types of Ground,” provides clear explanation of various types of ground, such as slight ground, contentious ground and dispersing ground; but more importantly, it reveals principles that are obviously hard-won points of wisdom – battle-tested revelations. For example, the manuscript reads, “The essence of military operations is speed. Take advantage of the enemy being unprepared; march by unexpected routes, and attack where they are not fortified

54. Ibid., 65.

55. Ibid.

56. Ibid., 67.
against you."\textsuperscript{57} If more commanders in modern warfare prioritized speed, operations would likely be shaped quite differently than they are today. As is common in Sun Tzu’s writing, the meaning is both simple and complex, singular and multi-faceted. He leads with the concept of speed being the very essence of operations; then he explains several doctrinal points that stand strongly on their own, such as striking an adversary unprepared, moving with surprise in uncontested areas, and advancing at vulnerable points. Yet, when one looks deeper, the aggregate of the three detailed instructions, if followed, will actually lead to achieving the broader doctrine of speed. It is Sun Tzu’s ability to communicate with practical pith as well as with clever layering that sets his work apart from others.

Another aspect of chapter eleven to highlight is the organizational structure of the principles which offer layered meaning. Typical in the translation of \textit{The Art of War}, are rules of warfare placed as sub-sections within a chapter, which clearly have more far-reaching usage. Case in point is the following instruction: “If the enemy leaves you an opening, rush through it … Modify your plans according to the enemy’s movements until you can bring him to the crucial battle.”\textsuperscript{58} This principle is nested within the eleventh chapter on types of ground, and while it would have applicability to a commander moving over different types of ground, it is also undoubtedly quintessential to warfare in general. MacArthur, more than most, seemed to have had a keen comprehension of the need to be nimble in battle, as this chapter of Sun Tzu’s doctrine instructs.

“Attacking with Fire,” is the title of chapter twelve. On the surface, the content of this chapter appears to be somewhat outdated, lacking in relevance for today’s fight. However,

\textsuperscript{57} Ibid., 73.

\textsuperscript{58} Ibid., 83.
should a leader look past the specifics (such as not attacking upwind of a fire), and deeper into
the core of the principles, useful discoveries can be extrapolated. Sun Tzu explains that there are
five ways to attack with fire: “The first is to burn the troops themselves; the second is to burn
their stores; the third is to burn their equipment; the fourth is to burn their arsenals; and the fifth
is to use fire arrows.” At the onset, a reader may suppose that if not attacking with fire, that this
information is of no use; however, in describing the uses of fire, Sun Tzu notes what targets are
critical to an enemy. From that standpoint, one can deduce that there are four critical targets for
any adversary: their fighting force and commanders, their supply chain, their materiel (tanks,
aircraft, and the like), and their ammunition (missiles, bullets, artillery, and weaponry of that
nature). Moreover, when this principle of critical enemy assets is coupled with others in *The Art
of War*, such as “know your enemy,” a perceptive reader will reason that these are the areas that
require intelligence collection. An informed general will learn about enemy troop size, readiness,
and morale; about supply material and distribution methods/limitations; what equipment is used
by the enemy for their defense and operations (anti-aircraft radar, submarines); and what types of
ammunition an enemy has, and how many of each. This is called Intelligence Preparation of the
Operational Environment (IPOE) or Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield (IPB), in
contemporary circles of military strategists.60

Additionally, within chapter twelve there are, as in other chapters, broader warnings to
consider, such as, “It is disastrous not to consolidate your achievement if you are … successful in
your attacks – this is called waste and delay … a good general builds on his victories.”61 There

59. Ibid., 87.

1990), 7-5.

are junctures throughout Douglas MacArthur’s career where he strongly suggests to his superiors that they strike while the iron is hot, so to speak – to capitalize on successes, in order to maintain the momentum of victory. His attempts were met with varying results, perhaps because his leaders were not as equally acquainted with the art of war.

The final chapter in *The Art of War* is called, “Using Spies,” yet it would likely be dubbed “Military Intelligence” in today’s lexicon of military terms. Reinforcing this assertion is the guidance from Sun Tzu, which states, “What enables a wise ruler and an able general to attack decisively and to succeed where ordinary men fail, is foreknowledge.”

Couple that with the widely reported, primary indictment of the 9/11 Commission Report being that the terrorist attack on America in 2001 was a result of intelligence failures, and the connection is clear: Whether one is using spies in ancient times, or satellites and signals intelligence in modern times, information is a force multiplier on the battlefield. Sun Tzu philosophically argues that war is an affair that impacts the whole nation, and because of that, rulers should spend the funds needed to gather accurate intelligence about the adversary, so as to spare a nation from a prolonged, costly engagement. He judges, “Spending years in stalemated campaigning, which could be settled in one day’s decisive battle, because you are too miserly to lay out 1000 silver pieces in rewards to discover the enemy’s circumstances: this is inhumane in the extreme.”

Within chapter thirteen, there are thorough instructions for how to handle different tiers of spies, and what sorts of intelligence they should seek. This analysis will examine how MacArthur used human intelligence collectors in World War II as well as his prioritization of intelligence collection in all three global conflicts: World War I, World War II and the Korean War.

62. Ibid., 91.

The following table summarizes the thirteen chapters of Sun Tzu’s *The Art of War*, describing briefly the content of each. It is intended to serve as a reference figure for the material within this thesis chapter.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Planning/Estimates</td>
<td>Leaders must plan for many eventualities in war and be prepared to adapt to changes in the situation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Waging War</td>
<td>Prolonged campaigns drain national resources; victory is the ultimate goal of war.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Strategic Offense</td>
<td>Knowing your adversary is a determining factor in war; strategy involves out-thinking your enemy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Deployment</td>
<td>Scoping, measuring, calculating and balancing are integral aspects of timing and maneuver in war.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Momentum</td>
<td>Creating positive momentum on the battlefield involves using the endless array of tactics available to advance one’s strength and force in a conflict.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. The Substantial and the Insufficient</td>
<td>Avoid the enemy’s strengths and attack his weaknesses; be fluid, strategizing your movements based on the enemy’s disposition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Manoeuvres Against the Enemy</td>
<td>The attributes of victorious movement are strength, speed, aggressiveness, consistent application of pressure and surprise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. The Nine Variables</td>
<td>Successful warfare requires a leader know how to respond in various situations, such as when to fight and when to retreat, as well as how to extract from dangerous positions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. On the March</td>
<td>Warfare is about generalship as much as it is anything else; correct troop management and health of the soldier is critical for victory.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Terrain</td>
<td>Expert movement in various types of battlespaces will help avoid collapse, chaos, insubordination or flight within one’s forces.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. The Nine Types of Ground</td>
<td>A great general needs to know how to move with speed, skill and flexibility over different types of ground – constricted, difficult, significant or desperate ground.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Attacking with Fire</td>
<td>Four critical targets of fire attacks include troops, supplies, equipment and the arsenal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Using Spies</td>
<td>Information provides foreknowledge. Methods of collecting good battlefield intelligence are a high priority and should be invested in by a nation, for they can shorten a war and enable victory.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1: Summary of Sun Tzu’s *The Art of War*  

IV. WORLD WAR I, MACARTHUR AT WAR

“The Bravest of the Brave” ~ Engraving on a gold cigarette case, gifted to General MacArthur after WWI, by his fighting men of the Rainbow Division

64. Ibid., 1 – 95.
This chapter characterizes Douglas MacArthur’s battlefield prowess during World War I. Its purpose is to analyze which of Sun Tzu’s principles of war were exercised within the Cote de Chatillon fighting, and moreover, how their application influenced the victory of the allies and the defeat of the Axis powers. Douglas MacArthur had made his debut on the stage of the United States military before World War I, but it was his courage and results-oriented commitment to excellence in this global conflict that centered the spotlight on him. The pinnacle of MacArthur’s service in WWI was the October 1918 battle at the Cote de Chatillon. Analysis on this distinct encounter will reflect that it was the application of time-tested codes of war which enabled MacArthur’s success against great odds.

The backdrop to MacArthur’s entry into WWI includes three years of global machinations and essentially a domino effect of actions and reactions resulting in nations around the world in violent conflict. The first domino to fall is widely recognized as the 1914 assassination of Austria-Hungarian Archduke Ferdinand in Sarajevo by a group opposed to Austria-Hungary’s reach into Serbia. It triggered Austria-Hungary’s turn to its ally, Germany, for support in subduing Serbia. Before long, Italy aligned with Austria-Hungary and Germany. With the strength of this triple-alliance, Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia on July 28, 1914. In response, and in light of its role as guardian of Serbia, Russia began mobilization. France, considering itself ally to Russia, offered its backing to what became known as the Allied Force.

The agenda-driven procession of events continued, as Germany then declared war on Russia and France. However, because German leadership strove to avoid a two-front war, they planned to conduct a swift defeat of France, so they would be ready to turn their concentrated

effort on Russia by the time Russia completed their six-week mobilization.\textsuperscript{66} In order to achieve a crushing blow to France, Germany intended to advance directly to Paris, through Belgium. The problem with this initiative was that Belgium was neutral, and had a treaty safeguarding her neutrality – a treaty which Great Britain and Germany had signed. Germany clearly ignored the treaty as evidenced by its maneuvering to pass through Belgium. Great Britain elected to uphold the treaty and therefore declared war on Germany in August of 1914.\textsuperscript{67} German forces pressed toward Paris but ultimately were unable to penetrate, and in the end, they dug in about forty miles outside of France’s capital, near the River Aisne. What was initiated as a fast-paced offensive, transformed into a defensive posturing, in which both the Germans and Allies raced to construct trenches. Historian Rupert Colley wrote, it “became known as ‘the Race to the Sea’ as each army tried to out lap the other until they both hit the [English] Channel. A similar charade extended the line of trenches south from the Aisne to the Swiss border.”\textsuperscript{68} At the conclusion of this 1914 sprint, there lay four hundred miles of trenches on the Western Front, from Switzerland all the way to the English Channel. And there they would remain for the entirety of the war. With the clock ticking, Germany’s worst case scenario of a war on two fronts had manifested. Additionally, Germany was compelled to entrench themselves for 1,000 miles, along the Eastern Front, to confront the Russians who had mobilized. Years of life in the trenches ensued – life filled with lice, rats, boredom, mud and frightful battles. As Germany sought to cut off Great Britain from all supplies, they also used aerial bombardments and naval mining tactics in the war. Initially, the United States decided to remain neutral in the war; however, Great Britain was a major trading partner and Germany’s mines were destroying U.S. shipments. Further

\begin{thebibliography}{9}


\bibitem{67} Colley, \textit{World War I}, 22.

\bibitem{68} Ibid., 26.

\end{thebibliography}
exacerbating the U.S. sentiment of neutrality was the wonton attacks by German U-boats on unarmed naval ships and cruise liners such as the torpedoing of the Lusitania on May 7, 1915 – this attack on non-combatants cost 128 Americans their lives.\(^{69}\) In 1917, Germany resurged its unrestricted naval warfare on any vessel that was found to be a threat to its victory. Moreover, as revealed in the Zimmerman letter, they hatched an elaborate plot to collaborate with Mexico, against the United States. The American government discovered the letter and Germany’s treachery proved to be the tipping point. Consequently, the U.S. declared war on Germany, on April 6, 1917.

Cote de Chatillon, France

Having explained the context of World War I and the U.S. entry, the study will characterize Douglas MacArthur’s role in the conflict. Douglas MacArthur was one among hundreds of thousands U.S. military members to serve in World War I. Yet, his service was exceptionally distinguished. MacArthur’s ability to operate using Sun Tzu’s principles of generalship emerged long before he was awarded the rank of General. The famed World War I division, the Rainbow Division, was brainstormed by MacArthur, as a way to use the National Guard to increase force numbers of the U.S. Regular Army – numbers that would be extremely important for gaining the advantage on the battlefield where a million-man German force awaited them.\(^{70}\) The Rainbow’s members heralded from twenty-six states, stretching “over the whole country like a rainbow,” MacArthur described.\(^{71}\) MacArthur, the division Chief of Staff, went to extensive lengths to train the troops for the grisly battles to come, whipping the ill-

---

70. Ibid., 22.
prepared men [Alabama cotton growers, Iowa farmers, and the like] into physical and mental shape. 72 “The mornings were spent on close and extended-order drills, physical exercising, and bayonet practice, while the afternoons were devoted to instruction in schools of the soldier and company, care of weapons, target practice, sentinel duties, and a host of other subjects,” historian D. Clayton James characterizes. 73 In November 1917, the Rainbow Division, formally designated the 42nd Division, began its movement into France to strengthen the beleaguered Allied troops. [Note: a division generally consisted of about 15,000 soldiers – comprised of three brigades or regiments, approximately 4,500 men each]. 74 As the 42nd’s Chief of Staff, Colonel Douglas MacArthur demonstrated an innate understanding of Sun Tzu’s core principle on planning. Tzu instructs that, “a victorious leader plans for many eventualities before the battle; a defeated leader plans for only a few. Many options bring victory, few options bring defeat, no options at all spell disaster.” 75 MacArthur’s aide in WWI, Captain Wolf, noted that MacArthur was an excellent planner – up in the early hours of the day, mapping out the movement plans and strategy; Wolf recalled, “He asked for our opinions but, more often than not, we all concurred with his. His plans invariably covered the optimum situation as well as the minimum.” 76 Considering the best and worst case scenarios as well as thinking through all of the calculations and potential undulations of a battle were precisely what Sun Tzu wrote about.

Several operations which preceded the Cote de Chatillon, functioned as a proving ground for Douglas MacArthur, as well as a military school house in which his acute mind could be put 

72. Ibid., 66.
73. James, Years of MacArthur: Volume I, 142.
75. Sun Tzu, The Art of War, 11.
76. James, Years of MacArthur: Volume I, 156.
to the test. Those operations included, but were not limited to, the Salient du Fey, the
Champagne-Marne offensive and the St. Michel assault. In March 1918, at the Salient du Feys,
MacArthur was lauded by his commander for his on-the-scene presence, direct guidance to unit
commanders, and courageous supervision of the operation – all which ensured the mission was a
successful one.\textsuperscript{77} His commitment and selflessness demonstrated to subordinate and superior
alike that MacArthur was wholeheartedly invested, that he cared about the men enough to stand
there with them in the thick of it, and that he planned to mentor them from the front, not from the
rear in relative safety. What became clear to all was that he was more concerned with achieving
the military objectives, than he was for his own security. But in his men’s welfare, he “always
showed a lively interest.”\textsuperscript{78} Not too many months after the March Salient du Feys, MacArthur
was on the line during the Germans’ Champagne-Marne offensive, their last great effort to take
Paris. This was some of the most severe fighting in the war, for the Germans knew it was their
last opportunity to press their cause. General MacArthur could be seen all along the line, in the
center of the action. In fact, the commander of the 42nd, General Menoher, later remarked,
“MacArthur is the bloodiest fighting man in this army. I’m afraid we’re going to lose him
sometime, for there’s no risk of battle that any soldier is called upon to take that he is not liable
to look up and see MacArthur at his side.”\textsuperscript{79} That first-hand account speaks volumes about the
courage of Douglas MacArthur – courage that distinguished him from his peers for decades,
courage that Sun Tzu spoke about in his ancient manuscript. On September 12, 1917, at five
a.m., as the American and French assault at St. Michel kicked off, the new commander of the

\textsuperscript{77} Ibid., 159.
\textsuperscript{78} Ibid., 196.
\textsuperscript{79} Ibid., 181.
Rainbow Division’s 84th Brigade, Brigadier General MacArthur, “to no one’s surprise… accompanied the first assault troops to climb out of the 84th’s trenches,” James notes.\(^8^0\) MacArthur’s actions in these three examples reflect what kind of person he was – brave, inspiring and determined.

In analyzing these three aforementioned events, in light of *The Art of War*, it is evident that MacArthur uniquely had an innate sense of what it took to be effective in battle. In *The Art of War*, the writer speaks of the importance of knowing yourself and knowing your enemy, and at the onset, it seems obvious that a leader needs to know what his forces are capable of and what the composition of the adversary is. But what is spectacular about MacArthur is that he matchlessly understood various echelons of activity both on the friendly side, as well as the enemy force’s side. As a general, he had the bird’s eye view and understanding of what General Pershing’s strategic vision was, as well as what the enemy was doing more broadly in the European theater. Additionally, as a soldier who was eager to jump into battle with the troops, he also appreciated the granular attributes of the fight and had a tactical vantage point of the enemy. In battle, one’s senses are bombarded, the nuanced behavior of an adversary is recognized, details are observed that may not appear significant at the time but later are recalled and assimilated with other knowledge – it is from these and thousands of other battlefield experiences that a soldier develops combat senses and learns to perceive impending danger, gauge an enemy’s calculus and strategize as to what will work, and what won’t. MacArthur gained this sense from his hands-on, boots-on-the-ground style of leadership. Operating at both the strategic and tactical levels, MacArthur distinctly bridged the delta of knowledge and perspective that so often eludes leaders.

---

80. Ibid., 203.
Douglas MacArthur’s direct, involved technique also had the intoxicating effect of kindling infectious courage, fearless fervor and devotion amongst the fighting men. As Sun Tzu wisely notes, “Do not ask [men in your army] simply to trust your word, show them with your actions.”81 MacArthur’s actions said, “Follow me,” rather than “Go take that hill.” And that is why many of the men who served under him were fiercely loyal. MacArthur’s established courage contributed to their demonstrated bravery in battle. The character traits which Sun Tzu describes a great general must be possessed of – “wisdom, honesty, benevolence, courage and discipline” – MacArthur had in abundance, and at a very early stage in his military service.82 All of these aspects would come into play during the U.S. offensive at the Cote de Chatillon.

The Battle of the Cote de Chatillon was part of a larger operation labeled the Meuse-Argonne Offensive, undertaken by the First Army, part of IV Army Corps. General Pershing, as commander of the overall American Expeditionary Forces (AEF), began this offensive on September 26, 1918; the goal was to break through an eighty-mile front of the Meuse-Argonne – the center-point of German defenses in the Western Front. Success here would increase the vulnerability of Germany’s two logistical rail hubs – Sedan and Mezieres. If these collapsed it would choke off all German supplies and troop reinforcements to the Western Front, as well as disadvantage Germany’s army in the west, opening her up to Allied flank attacks.83 General MacArthur, in his memoir, reminisced about the Meuse-Argonne front: “The terrain was so difficult, so easily defended, that the French had never attempted to attack. It was so powerfully fortified over four years that doubt existed in Allied high circles that any troops in the world

82. Ibid., 9.
could drive out the Germans.” The situation leading up to MacArthur’s Cote de Chatillon fight helps contextualize the challenge he faced as well as punctuate how transformational the battle was, within the larger Meuse-Argonne offensive; historian James describes the following:

The hastily drafted plan of battle was seriously wanting in anticipating transportation and control problems. Soon the advance was measured in yards; by the third day the offensive momentum had disappeared in a welter of command and logistical confusion. Several units could not be located, supplies were not reaching the front, the terrain was more difficult than expected, enemy resistance was intense, and American losses were frightfully high, particularly in view of the small gains. … By [early October] the weather had become bitterly cold, and to add to the First Army’s woes, an influenza epidemic had broken out, with 16,000 soldiers stricken already.

It was at this scene that General MacArthur, as the 84th Brigade Commander, was tasked with advancing through the Hindenburg Line (Germany’s defensive line in the Western Front) in a geographical area known as St. Georges and Landres-St. Georges (see Figure 2). This site was firmly in the hands of entrenched German forces who had spent years fortifying their positions atop hills, laying barbed wire and more or less establishing kill boxes for any advancing troops.

As General MacArthur reconnoitered the terrain in his sector of the Meuse-Argonne and studied the situation, he recognized that the Cote de Chatillon was the main stronghold of Germany’s position along that entire section of the Hindenburg Line, not just within the sector of the 42nd Division. Furthermore, MacArthur postulated that until the Chatillon area was out of German hands, the American offensive into the Sedan region would be consistently pushed back. Armed with this revelation, and an understanding of the difficulty in securing the Cote, his recommendation to leadership was that they concentrate significant troops – over 8,000 – on

84. Ibid.
87. Ibid., 66.
the objective, rather than splitting the soldiers up. 88 Sun Tzu notes in his chapter on planning, “To act according to the situation is to seize the advantage by adapting one’s plans.” 89 Tzu also advises a great general to try and split the enemy’s forces. 90 MacArthur seems to have recognized that the Germans had in fact split the Allied force up, by forcing them to stretch out along the Hindenburg Line. Coupling that realization with his assessment on the importance of the Chatillon, and the impregnable fortifications that prevented advance, he modified the U.S. plan. His proposal was accepted.

88. James, Years of MacArthur: Volume I, 225.
89. Tzu, The Art of War, 11.
90. Ibid., 19.
Nevertheless, MacArthur was apprehensive about the prospect of his men crossing "open country absolutely dominated by the German fire from around the base of and on the

---

[hills of] Cote de Chatillon,”’ James quotes MacArthur. But, MacArthur’s Corps Commander, General Summerall, now understanding the Cote de Chatillon as the pivotal point to the entire operation, in desperate, demanding fashion said to his subordinate, General MacArthur, “‘Give me Chatillon, or a list of five thousand casualties,’” MacArthur recalls. And, in tenacious, optimistic fashion, Douglas MacArthur replied, “If this Brigade does not capture Chatillon you can publish a casualty list of the entire Brigade with the Brigade Commander’s name at the top.” In this response, MacArthur embodied the bravery that Sun Tzu says a general must be possessed of.

In WWI, due to his junior rank, MacArthur was unable to shape the battlefield to fully incorporate Sun Tzu’s principles of strategy, such as speed, deception and surprise. Though, analysis will reflect that MacArthur used every opportunity and faculty available to him to overlay concrete philosophies of war, onto the seemingly insurmountable battleground upon which he was thrust. His planning of the Chatillon operation began on October 11, 1918. He learned that the two hills needed, Hill 288 and Chatillon, (see Figure 2) were a morass of “‘thick woods, tangled underbrush, scarred trees, gaping shell holes, deep ravines … [and that] dead bodies, some of them in a bad state of decomposition, littered the woods and slopes,’” James quotes MacArthur. One thing that MacArthur had observed throughout the lead up to the Cote de Chatillon was how the Germans heavily fortified their main center line, but along the edges of

92. James, Years of MacArthur: Volume I, 215.
94. Ibid.
95. Tzu, The Art of War, 9.
96. James, Years of MacArthur: Volume I, 216.
their positions, and along the flanks, defenses diminished. He applied this experiential knowledge to his current obstacle at the Cote. It is important to note the way that MacArthur had come by this knowledge of the enemy, and the uncommonness of his method of leadership: MacArthur didn’t learn the aforementioned weakness about the enemy simply from pouring over maps in a secure headquarters; but rather he gleaned this from personally conducting reconnaissance – reflective of another key principle of war (being familiar with the environment). MacArthur’s biographer Geoffrey Perret states that MacArthur often performed his own reconnaissance prior to operations. After walking the line at night alone, MacArthur organized a patrol to ferret out the thin area of the line. “Crawling like insects over the darkened landscape, the patrol probed the German flanks … In the phantasmagorical light of bursting shells, MacArthur had glimpsed where the wire, normally twenty feet deep, thinned out to something that men with wire cutters could snip through fairly quickly,” Perret writes.98 The Art of War instructs, “A general must acquaint himself thoroughly with the terrain.”99 Study of original source material coupled with expert analysis concludes that this principle was part of who MacArthur was – he characteristically felt the need, even as a general, to get first-hand perspective of the landscape. In relation to that night time reconnaissance at the Chatillon, MacArthur notes in his recollection that, “I discovered that, as usual, the flanks were vulnerable. His deep belt of wire entanglements and trench dribbled out at the ends.”100 For three long,

99. Tzu, The Art of War, 43.
100. MacArthur, Reminiscences, 66.
bloody days, the men of the Rainbow Division crept up hilltops at dawn, and worked to envelop the Germans at various hills by night – including Hill 288 and Chatillon Hill.\(^{101}\)

Testimonies of those nights, like that of Major Henry Bootz (Commander in the 165\(^{th}\) Infantry Division), describe “terrific machine gun fire and artillery fire” raining down on the advancing U.S. party from the German enemy; Bootz recalls that the “German flares transformed the night into day.”\(^{102}\) The strategy of MacArthur did not alleviate the intensity of the fight, but it did bring victory within reach, as his account shows:

As dusk was falling the First Battalion of the 168th under Major Lloyd Ross moved from the right, while a battalion of the 167th … stalked stealthily from the left toward the gap in the wire. The two battalions, like the arms of a relentless pincer, closed in from both sides. Officers fell and sergeants leaped to the command. Companies dwindled to platoons and corporals took over. At the end, Major Ross had only 300 men and 6 officers left out of 1,450 men and 25 officers. That is the way the Cote-de-Chatillon fell, and … won the approach to final victory.\(^{103}\)

As Figure 2 depicts, once the Chatillon Hill was firmly in U.S. hands on October 16, 2016, the rest of the American offensive unfolded quite quickly. An area that had been impenetrable for years – a target area that had been mightily defended – was conquered in less than a month’s time. By November 11, the 42nd Division and others had advanced over twenty miles to the Sedan area. As history testifies, the cascading effect of MacArthur’s win at the Cote de Chatillon was swift and complete defeat of Germany, ending World War I with the November armistice; this cessation of hostilities occurred within thirty days of MacArthur’s victory in the Meuse-Argonne Offensive.

---


When reviewing this one battle to discern applied art of war principles, it is essential to characterize it within the context of other battles, as well as within the broader war. Several clashes within WWI serve as powerful comparisons to the Meuse-Argonne Offensive. One such example is the Battle of Somme which had taken place earlier in the war, in 1916. After 140 days of fighting, “approximately 400,000 British lives were lost, 200,000 French, and 400,000 German. For this the Allies gained five miles. The Germans, having been pushed back, merely bolstered the already heavily fortified second line, the Hindenburg Line,” historian Rupert Colley writes.\footnote{Colley, \textit{World War I}, 86.} In stark contrast, Douglas MacArthur’s synthesis of several of Sun Tzu’s principles just two years later in the three-day Battle of Cote de Chatillon, on very similar battlefields and against the same enemy, led to the decimation of Germany’s defenses on the Eastern Front ushering in victory for the Allies. When confronted with what were seemingly unsurmountable defenses, MacArthur understood Sun Tzu’s philosophy, that “in the Art of War, first comes scoping, then measurement, then calculation, then balancing and finally victory.”\footnote{Tzu, \textit{The Art of War}, 25.} He had scoped the terrain, calculated the force strength needed, and had balanced his pressure on the vulnerable points, ultimately resulting in victory. Furthermore, he had applied tactical wisdom and knowledge of the enemy – both principles in \textit{The Art of War}. Lastly, through his continual presence on the front lines, he modeled such courage and strength that the men of the Rainbow Division were stirred all the more to fight to the last. MacArthur’s actions at the Cote de Chatillon, which embodied the principles of war, appear ground-breaking when compared to the years of war that preceded them. Instead of following Sun Tzu’s combat doctrine, the Allies fought strength-on-strength, in four years of bloody, muddy trench warfare. This cost an
estimated nine million lives in WWI. Yet, MacArthur’s calculated triumph at Chatillon helped close the book on one of the deadliest conflicts in history.

---

V. WORLD WAR II, MACARTHUR AT WAR

“It was crystal clear to me [General MacArthur said] ... that the future and, indeed, the very existence of America, were irrevocably intertwined with Asia.” ~ Douglas MacArthur as quoted by biographer, Arthur Herman

This chapter investigates MacArthur’s influence in World War II, specifically reviewing the following three events: the Clark Field defeat in the Philippines; the coordinated retrograde to Bataan, Philippines; and the New Guinea island hopping maneuvers as part of Operation Cartwheel. Its purpose is to analyze first, how the lack of application of Sun Tzu’s principles of war led to MacArthur’s significant loss of air power at Clark Field; secondly, how skilled use of the ancient precepts of war enabled the safe movement of U.S. forces from Manila to Bataan while foiling Japanese plans for a swift defeat of the Philippines; and thirdly, how MacArthur’s ingenious employment of Sun Tzu’s doctrine led to the transformational power shift in Asia, from Japan in 1942, to the U.S. by 1945.

A few years prior to World War II’s commencement, General Douglas MacArthur was sent to the Philippines. The nation had been granted commonwealth status as a precursor to their total independence, and MacArthur was to lead the new U.S. military missional post. He arrived in July of 1935 and served as a military advisor. In this role, he went to task on preparing the Philippines to defend itself, which it would need as a self-governing nation. Little did anyone know that the Philippines would need to be defended so soon after MacArthur’s arrival. While he busied himself with mapping out a ten year plan to establish a formidable Filipino defense force,

107. Herman, American Warrior, xiii.
108. Manchester, American Caesar, 161.
Japan lurked a mere six hundred miles away on the island of Taiwan, with designs to expand their control throughout Southeast Asia.

World War II encompassed eighty-one nations and endured for six years (1939 – 1945). And while much of the world’s attention was on Europe and Hitler’s Nazi maneuverings, there was another sinister strategy unfolding in Asia. Japan viewed China’s growing economy as a threat and they had deep sentiments of imperial greatness; as a result, Japan sought to press its influence in China and the Far East. War broke out with Japan and China. Then, in 1940, Japan signed a Tripartite Pact with Germany and Italy. They also aggressively moved into Thailand and other sovereign Asian territories. In response, the United States initiated several movements intended to stifle and aggravate Japan, including embargoing oil trade with Japan and freezing their assets. Japan viewed the U.S. Navy Pacific Fleet stationed at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii and the U.S. Far East Air Force, in the Philippines, as the two largest threats to their goal of establishing the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere (a plan for Japan’s complete hegemony over China, Southeast Asia, and the western Pacific). Therefore, on December 7, 1941, Japan delivered a shocking surprise attack at Pearl Harbor. In only four hours, the Japanese had destroyed 400 aircraft and fourteen ships, along with killing or wounding over 4,000 Americans. The U.S. Congress voted 388 to 1 in favor of declaring war on Japan. A few hours later airbases in the Philippines were hit, decimating any hopes of scrambling an air operation to attempt defense of the Philippines. The Philippines, situated as they were along Japan’s sea lane arteries, were viewed by Japan as the key to dominating the Asian waters.


111. Ibid.
Clark Field Defeat, Philippines

The first of the three World War II engagements for review is the defeat at Clark Field in the Philippines. The purpose is to analyze the 1941 Japanese defeat of U.S. air forces in the Philippines, through the lens of Sun Tzu’s doctrines of warfare. This study elucidates that the U.S. and Filipino governments as well as MacArthur failed to apply the principles of *The Art of War* at this early stage of conflict: neither government invested well enough in gathering intelligence on their adversary, nor had they effectively planned for war; MacArthur did not know his enemy well enough to anticipate his actions; MacArthur did not act swiftly; he was outnumbered and outmaneuvered; and he had not planned properly for various eventualities. Conversely, his adversary, the Japanese, effectively employed Sun Tzu’s principles of speed, surprise, force and knowledge of the adversary. MacArthur’s non-application of the ancient truths contributed to the weakened U.S. and Filipino position and allowed Japan to invade the Philippines virtually unchallenged.

When war came, General MacArthur had no real assets to speak of to fend off a Japanese invasion of the Philippines. He requested a fleet of fifty patrol torpedo boats, or PTs, to guard and prevent naval advances on the chain of 7,083 islands which comprise the Philippines. In his elaborate plan for safeguarding the Philippines he asserted that the primary island, where half of the Filipino’s lived, “could be held by waging a ‘war of relentless attrition’ with PT boats, a force of 250 aircraft, and a semiguerilla army of 400,000 Filipinos, to be created over a decade by conscripting all men between twenty-one and fifty and providing five and a half months’ training each year for 40,000 conscripts,” historian Manchester catalogues.112 But alas, MacArthur’s structure was not to be realized – time and money were not on his side. At the onset

112. Manchester, *American Caesar*, 168
of the Philippines invasion, his inventory was a measly nine PT boats. And complicating any coherent military force establishment were the eighty dialects spoken by the potential conscripts, as well as the twenty percent illiteracy rate.113 Revealing of the shoe-string budget that MacArthur was on, is the 1940 instance in which he had entreated a small fifty dollar annual allotment for each Filipino draftee; the government leaders in Washington denied his petition. Beyond these obvious shortfalls in U.S. preparedness to counter Japan, was the ethnocentrism that permeated the American mindset, such that MacArthur, and other U.S. leaders, simply underestimated Japan as an adversary – a fatal flaw when studying Sun Tzu’s art of war doctrine, which reflects the essential truth to victory, is knowing yourself and knowing your enemy.114

Japan, on the other hand, had been preparing for such a situation for quite some time. As early as 1934, reports of growing Japanese immigration to the Philippine Archipelago reached Washington. Major General Frank Parker, the commander of the Philippines during that period, noted the immigrants were “men of military age – some, indeed known to hold reserve commissions in the Nipponese [Japanese] army… [and] they were mapping the coasts,” Manchester quotes.115 Furthermore, the Japanese military numbered six million, including several highly trained divisions with combat experience.116 On the other hand, MacArthur commanded twenty-two thousand U.S./Philippine Scouts, and a commonwealth army of eighty thousand Filipinos – some had never even seen a rifle.117 The preparedness of the Japanese as compared to the Filipinos, with their U.S. assistance, is a prime example of the warfare concept

113. Ibid.


115. Manchester, American Caesar, 170.

116. Ibid.

117. Ibid., 191.
that Sun Tzu espouses on planning; he states, “A victorious leader plans for many eventualities before the battle; a defeated leader plans for only a few. Many options bring victory, few options bring defeat, no options at all spell disaster.”118 We see that in this case, Japan had a detailed long-term strategy for increasing its influence throughout the region.

The December 8, 1941 attack on Clark Field on the island of Luzon in the Philippines, astonished MacArthur and many others. And because Japan conducted surprise attacks several times in past incursions, the waves of aircraft that targeted the main island of Luzon should not have been totally unexpected. In hindsight, it was clear that several indications of Japanese intent prior to the December bombing in the Philippines were discernable. These included the reporting of Japanese naval convoys in the South China Sea and the sightings on December 1st of Japanese reconnaissance planes over Clark Field.119 In a tragic irony, the very B-17s that were destroyed on Clark Field had been ordered to move down south just weeks earlier by MacArthur’s air commander, Major General Lewis Brereton. If executed, this single movement would have placed them out of Japan’s range. Unfortunately, the order was not obeyed in a timely manner, and only half of the planes made the trip to the southern base of Del Monte.120 The unfortunate reality was that the U.S. was slow in reacting to many signs of impending danger. On November 27, 1941, MacArthur asserted that there would be no Japanese attack on the Philippines before spring of 1942; paradoxically, only one day earlier, Japan held a secret planning session aboard Vice Admiral Takahashi’s flagship, the Ashigara, to go over the particulars of the imminent

---


120. Ibid., 198.
General MacArthur writes in his memoir that when he received the call telling him of the Pearl Harbor attack, no details were given and so he supposed that with the significant military might at the Hawaii base (America’s finest aircraft, heavily defended fields, anti-aircraft units, warning mechanisms and the Pacific Navy Fleet), that surely Japan had been degraded. One of the most preventable defeats of General MacArthur, is described by historian and author D. Clayton James, with eye-witness account of Lieutenant Strong, as follows:

It was about 12:20 p.m., December 8, 1941 (December 7, Honolulu time), at Clark Field, the large American air base lying in the Central Luzon Plain northwest of Manila. Nine hours had passed since news of the attack on Pearl Harbor had been received, yet the Clark Field planes had not been attacked or ordered to attack the enemy. Lieutenant W. Dupont Strong, a bomber pilot, had finished lunch and was walking to his quarters when he heard “a low moaning sound” and looked up to see “a whole crowd of airplanes” approaching from the north-west.

Several flights were made by Japanese Zero fighters, who strafed Clark Field for hours, demolishing two full squadrons of B-17 heavy bombers. Follow on attacks were made on another base, Iba Field – in total, MacArthur lost more than half of is air component (fifty-five P-40 ground attack fighters, eighteen B-17 heavy bombers and twenty-five other aircraft) on the first day of Japan’s Philippine operation. By any measurement, the Japanese dealt a decisive blow to MacArthur, the U.S. and the helpless Filipinos. They masterfully employed The Art of War concepts of scoping, calculating, measuring, speed, surprise, deception, spies, force of numbers and planning.

121. Ibid., 201.
122. MacArthur, Reminiscences, 117.
123. James, Years of MacArthur: Volume II, 3.
124. Ibid., 4.
Coordinated Retrograde to Bataan

Having discussed the defeat at Clark Field, this study will now review the next stage of MacArthur’s WWII’s involvement, the retrograde from Manila to Bataan. The purpose is to analyze the complex coordinated movements led by MacArthur, in the context of Sun Tzu’s principles of war. Research shows that MacArthur incorporated a number of the codes in *The Art of War* during this maneuver: he maintained unified communication; he had a firm knowledge of the terrain; he used speed and cunning; and he turned disadvantages into opportunities. These and other practiced truths were contributory to the U.S. resistance in the Philippines, which boosted American and Filipino morale and resolve.

What followed Japan’s landing in the Philippines was a complete invasion of the island archipelago. Japan made several advancements securing air and naval superiority over the Philippines in less than a month, despite General MacArthur’s valiant efforts in sinking enemy transports in Legaspi and the Vigan assault on twenty-five Japanese aircraft. Once envelopment of Manila was a foregone conclusion, the U.S. commenced a complexly organized retrograde led by General MacArthur. General Pershing (famed WWI general) called MacArthur’s maneuver “‘a masterpiece, one of the greatest moves in all military history,’” historian Manchester quotes. Although the initial shock waves from the Clark and Ibo Field attacks stunned the general and found him lacking in wise judgment, the Luzon invasion by the Japanese was a catalyst for what proved to be a swift and clever move of defiance by MacArthur. In mid-December of 1941, MacArthur studied the map and noted that ten thousand Japanese were only sixty miles from his location in Manila and enemy forces were about to close in on his

---

forces, like a pincer.\textsuperscript{127} He immediately made plans for a double retrograde – extraction of the twenty-eight thousand North Luzon Force and the fifteen thousand South Luzon Force, and then a uniting of the two.\textsuperscript{128} He understood the tactic of Sun Tzu which advises a wise general to split the force of the enemy, and MacArthur was determined that the Japanese would not divide his troops.

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{Philippines_MAP.png}
\caption{Map, 1941 Japanese Invasion of Philippines, WWII\textsuperscript{129}}
\end{figure}

A successful retreat is a difficult maneuver to accomplish even in the best of circumstances. What General MacArthur attempted in the last few days of December of 1941 was rife with potential pitfalls. The operation involved movement of division units in a backward

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{127} Ibid., 217.
\item \textsuperscript{128} MacArthur, \textit{Reminiscences}, 120.
\end{itemize}

59
leapfrog tactic. Precise timing at every juncture was paramount, otherwise the Japanese would be able to intercept and separate the retreating forces. The Japanese had to be kept pinned down and fighting while small components of the larger force moved successively to strategically selected points – General MacArthur had designated five delaying lines to be used by his southern and northern force commanders. The two forces were separated by 160 miles of terrain, complicating the synchronization of momentum and retrograde jumps. Neither were the people participating in these drives part of a cohesive unit of professional fighting men; rather, what MacArthur had were Filipino conscripts (many worried and confused) alongside several thousand American servicemen, all under the command of a small handful of skilled U.S. commanders – including Major General Wainwright and Brigadier General George Parker.130 Due to language barriers amidst the heterogeneous forces, primitive sign language was employed to communicate tactical orders. The Japanese force estimated by MacArthur was 80,000 strong, twice his own force strength on Luzon.131 The general had informed Philippine President Quezon of the retreat, and they both slipped out of Manila quietly, so as not to cause violent chaos in the capital, and in the case of Quezon’s escape, to keep the Japanese from using him in a propaganda war directed towards the Filipinos. The General’s new headquarters for directing the retrograde and defense of the forces was just off the coast of Bataan (See Figure 3) – the small island of Corregidor. General Wainwright, MacArthur’s most competent field commander was saddled with the arduous task of slowing the Japanese General Homma’s advance south, so as to provide the Southern Force commander enough time to slip his force through Manila. Wainwright’s North Luzon Force fought a savage series of skirmishes, and exploded bridges after his soldiers moved through, delaying Homma successfully. Historian and author William Manchester, drawing from

primary sources, describes the battlefield situation and MacArthur’s non-stop involvement in the retrograde.

The General, sleepless and haggard, held a phone in one hand while the fingers of his other hand moved over the map coordinates of terrain which he had first explored as a junior officer, and had later surveyed. Warning his two leaders of mounting threats, urging them to move faster, telling them where to hold, stiffening their resolve, he saw that the key to the battle lay twenty miles northwest of Manila. It was the twin-spanned Calumpit Bridge, which crossed the unfordable torrents of the Pampanga River and its surrounding marshes … Since all roads from the capital and the plain converged there, troops and equipment headed for the prepared positions in Bataan would have to pass through the Calumpit funnel.132

Calumpit was the spot where the highway from northern Luzon to Manila adjoined the route to Bataan (on Figure 3, it is approximately half way between Manila and Bataan, just north of the coastal area). The final delaying point of General Wainwright was situated ten miles northeast of the bridge. The climax of the entire retrograde was upon them as U.S. commanders needed to hold off the Japanese long enough to allow transport of field equipment, several divisions and escaping civilians across the bridge. The linchpin move of the operation would be a collapsing of the bridge before the Japanese became wise to their synchronized withdrawal. For two full days and nights “Calumpit was the site of a ten-mile-long traffic jam as commandeered taxis, … limousines, [and] oxcarts … ferried back and forth carrying refugees. … Finally, at first light on December 31, the South Luzon Force started to cross. One formation of Mitsubishis [fighter aircraft] could have destroyed their vital stepping-stone to safety,” Manchester characterizes.133

On New Year’s Day 1942, as dawn broke, and the last of the soldiers safely crossed, General MacArthur ordered the bridge blown. MacArthur had studied Philippine terrain and conducted

133. Ibid.
copious surveys during an earlier tour in the country, and he knew the unique value of the bridge as a primary node connecting Luzon to Bataan and Manila to Bataan. General Homma, on the other hand, was less familiar with the territory, and had earlier in the month decided to let the bridge alone. His lack of knowledge of the terrain – a key concept in Sun Tzu’s art of war doctrine – proved to be the deciding factor in this phase of the conflict. The Japanese had been outwitted by the U.S. during this accelerated movement.

In the retrograde maneuver, General MacArthur exercised great order, discipline and wise discernment, exemplifying this standard of Sun Tzu, “A skilled general will avoid the enemy when they are full of fight … He uses discipline in the face of disorder, and calmness to confront frenzy. This is mastery of emotion.”¹³⁴ Moreover, General MacArthur managed a mammoth feat in simply communicating effectively during the unplanned, unrehearsed retreat. Timing was precise – and even a five minute delay might have spelled disaster. The fact that he was able to unify these disparate forces in the synchronized movement, on such a tight time table, is a testament to his expertise in command communications during troop movement. Sun Tzu asserts the following in relation to battlefield common operating pictures, and their connectedness to the art of war: “… Make the army hear with the same ear and see with the same eye. Thus unified in understanding … This is the art of troop movement.”¹³⁵ Military historian and expert, D. Clayton James, quoting the official Army history of the campaign, “‘The success of this complicated and difficult movement, made with ill-equipped and inadequately trained Filipinos, is a tribute to the generalship of MacArthur, Wainwright … and to American

¹³⁴. Tzu, The Art of War, 47.

¹³⁵. Ibid., 45.
leadership on the field of battle.’” Furthermore, the Japanese adversary saw the genius in MacArthur’s unexpected move from Manila to Bataan. Following the war, records noted that Hirohito’s staff had anticipated the primary battle effort to be in Manila and they had not prepared to flex to the situation that MacArthur created; they had regarded his withdrawal to Bataan as “great strategic move,” historian Manchester notes. Additionally, MacArthur weighs in with his assessment of the movement, by stating, “I have always regarded my decision as not only my most vital one of the Philippine defense campaign, but in its corollary consequences one of the most decisive of the war.” Notably, it enabled the follow-on, three-month defense of the Philippines from Corregidor and Bataan; this in turn showed the Filipino people that America intended to fight with them for their homeland. Coupled with the Japanese’s later horrific treatment of Filipinos, it ignited a rebel movement within the Philippines, as young military men took to the hills, and formed guerilla fighting units – units which would later spy for MacArthur in preparation for his return to the Philippines. Of note, the clever use of spies is given a whole chapter in The Art of War. In the retrograde movement within WWII, MacArthur showed that he was a versatile leader, adaptable to the circumstances, and agile in stratagem.

After the retrograde to Bataan and his move to the island of Corregidor, events unfolded unfavorably for the Americans and eventually the strength of the Japanese offensives forced MacArthur out of the Philippines. At first, MacArthur put up a stiff resistance from the fortified Corregidor bunker. However, after several months of Japanese air raids, it seemed to many in Washington that the little enclave of opposition was doomed to fall into Japanese hands. With Japan having naval and air superiority, a mass exodus or escape from the southern tip of Luzon


was problematic. Washington leadership, recognizing that Douglas MacArthur was now the hero in American minds – the singular face of U.S. resistance after Japan had struck at Pearl Harbor – the thought of him being killed or captured by the Japanese, was cause for great alarm. Consequently, U.S. military and civilian leaders suggested MacArthur leave Corregidor Island. Being a soldier’s soldier, the idea of leaving his men behind on Bataan, to fall into enemy hands, was an inconceivable one. He was then told several times to leave, and he refused each time, and only upon being directly ordered by the U.S. President, Franklin Roosevelt, did MacArthur go. Historian Arthur Herman explains, using a quote from MacArthur, “February 23, FDR issued a direct order to MacArthur to leave Corregidor for Australia to assume command of a new Southwest Pacific theater…. [MacArthur said to observers that day] ‘This order I must disobey.’ Then he bowed his head and wept.”\(^{139}\) So convinced was he that this was an order he could not submit to, he drew up a letter of resignation, sincerely planning to do the only honorable thing – resign and join his men on Bataan as a civilian fighter. His staff persuaded him that evening that the only way to exact real change for the soldiers on Bataan, was for him to go to Australia, mount his force, and return for his men. Finally, he relented. A few days later, MacArthur exited the archipelago via speedboat under the cover of darkness.

MacArthur arrived in Australia in March of 1942. The context of Australia at this juncture in the war is helpful: Australians turned to the U.S. for assistance and protection because they calculated that the British troops in Malaya might be unable to stem the tide of Japanese advance, and they knew that the Dutch East Indies (the final land mass between them and Japan) had a feeble defense.\(^{140}\) Accordingly, MacArthur was offered up by the U.S. to

\(^{139}\) Herman, *American Warrior*, 392.

\(^{140}\) Manchester, *American Caesar*, 214.
Australia, to help them defend their nation against would-be Japanese aggression – which was a very real threat. When MacArthur landed safely in Australia, he gave this short speech: “The President of the United States ordered me to break through the Japanese lines and proceed from Corregidor to Australia for the purpose, as I understand it, of organizing the American offensive against Japan, a primary object of which is the relief of the Philippines. I came through and I shall return.”

MacArthur’s American and Filipino forces who were left in the Philippines simply did not have the troops or equipment needed to mount any sort of proper defense against the Japanese invasion force. Bataan fell on April 9, 1942 and what resulted is known as one of the worst inhumanities of modern war – the sixty-five mile march to captivity, made by 80,000 American and Filipinos; over ten thousand died in the Bataan Death March event – many shot or bayoneted by their ruthless captors. “Corregidor fell twenty-seven days after Bataan, when the surviving Filipinos were used for live bayonet practice. The Japanese indulged in an orgy of rape, torture and murder against the local population, culminating in the ‘razing of Manila,’” historian Colley writes, quoting a witness. In this, the Japanese violated one of Sun Tzu’s lessons of war: “Treat the captured soldiers well and look after them. This is the tactic of using the defeated enemy to increase your strength.” It was one in a long list of principles they violated, which fittingly would spell their slow demise over the next three years. Despairing the whole loss of the Philippines, MacArthur wrote, “the history of failure in war can be summed up

---


143. Ibid.

in two words: Too Late. Too late in comprehending the deadly purpose of a potential enemy; too late in realizing the mortal danger; too late in preparedness; too late in uniting all possible forces for resistance; too late in standing with one’s friends.” In this summation, he reflects a clear understanding of the foundational nature of Sun Tzu’s principles which note, “A victorious leader plans for many eventualities before the battle; a defeated leader plans for only a few.”

For it was our lack of planning, lack of preparation, lack of investment as a nation that contributed to the fall of the Philippines in the early part of WWII.

Island Hopping, New Guinea

This section of chapter five, “World War II, MacArthur at War,” focuses on the time period between 1942 and 1945, during which General MacArthur fought to retake the Philippines from the Japanese. The intent is to analyze the strategy known as island hopping in the context of Sun Tzu’s principles of war. Investigation reveals that MacArthur incorporated a number of the codes in The Art of War during this series of battles: he bypassed strengths and attacked vulnerable nodes; he applied Sun Tzu’s concepts of momentum; and he understood the ancient text’s philosophies about the health and management of troops. These and other practiced truths were instrumental in the U.S. defeat of Japan in WWII.

From the minute General MacArthur stepped foot in Australia, in March of 1942, he was already planning his rescue of the Philippines. He was assigned as Commander in Chief of the Allied Forces in the South West Pacific Area (SWPA). What was conceived by MacArthur and others at this time became known as the Island Hopping Campaign, also labeled Operation Cartwheel. The broad strategy was to capture the Pacific Islands one at a time, allowing Allies to

146. Tzu, The Art of War, 11.
both liberate the Philippines and press in towards Japan. An integral tactic within this proposal was to sidestep Japanese strongpoints in the Pacific. Instead Allied Forces targeted and secured strategic locations where there was little-to-no Japanese resistance. A primary aim in the island hopping strategy was to cut off Japanese supply lines, while simultaneously securing airfields for the Allies, from which successive operations could be launched.\footnote{MacArthur, \textit{Reminiscences}, 184.}

General MacArthur coordinated with Admiral Chester Nimitz in the scheduled two-pronged attack. MacArthur, for his part, would advance northwest along the New Guinea coast and into the Bismarck Archipelago, situated just north of New Guinea. Admiral Nimitz’s role was to sail through the central Pacific, hopping through the Gilbert, Marshall, Caroline and Marianas islands (See Figure 4).\footnote{Herman, \textit{American Warrior}, 479.} The planned cascading effects of Operation Cartwheel were to emplace U.S. assets in close enough proximity to Japan, that U.S. bombers could strike the mainland; this would clear the way for a full ground force invasion of Japan.
Japan first landed on New Guinea on January 23, 1942. Here, as on other islands, they established a series of outposts, strong holds and air bases from which they could secure their possessions in Southeast Asia. If MacArthur was to fulfill his words “I shall return,” in reference to the Philippines, then his combined U.S./Australian forces would have to face an enemy as ferocious as any – the jungles of New Guinea; “The road to Manila was through New Guinea,” historian Duffy quips. MacArthur could not very well leave tens of thousands of enemy

---


reinforcements in his rear, as he pressed on to the Philippines – so New Guinea became the
goal. The island hopping began in August of 1942. Initially, there was discussion in
Washington, and within MacArthur’s headquarters, of targeting Rabaul (See Figure 5). Rabaul
had become a major base of operations for Japan. Its geographical position allowed Japanese
warships to control the surrounding sea and the Solomon Islands. Moreover, the two airports in
Rabaul afforded the Japanese a monopoly on air superiority. However, rather than pitting
strength against strength, which is what would be required for taking Rabaul, a shift in U.S.
strategy began percolating in the minds of leaders, and it was precisely in line with one of Sun
Tzu’s major principles of war: “…Avoid the enemy’s strengths and attack his weaknesses. Water
adapts its course according to the terrain; in the same way you should shape your victory around
the enemy’s dispositions.”151 This is in essence what Operation Cartwheel proposed, to hop over
Japan’s fortifications and incrementally encroach upon their base area of operation by
establishing or capturing strategically placed air runways and forward posts. The New Guinea
operations represented the first official U.S. policy of circumventing strong nodes of
resistance.152 A quick reference back to WWI fighting (strength on strength, trench warfare)
reminds us how monumental this shift in WWII really was, in terms of acceptable national
military strategy.

The following sections highlight and summarize the extensive series of battles fought
against the Japanese during the Island Hopping Campaign, in order to lay a contextual
foundation for the analysis of applied Sun Tzu principles. The first sequence of island hopping
conflicts included U.S./Australian fighting in the August to September 1942 Battle of Milne Bay;

---

the November 1942 to January 1943 struggle for Buna; and the April to May 1943 contest for Lae (See Figure 5).\(^{153}\) Following these, MacArthur’s forces drove westward in 1944 with the steps to Admiralty Island, Hollandia and Biak (See Figure 5).\(^{154}\) While there were many heroic stands by soldiers and marines during the Island Hopping Campaign, for the purposes of this paper, the emphasis is on the concept of the operation. Therefore, only brief excerpts will be examined to illustrate the application of *The Art of War* doctrine.

The first aspect of the island hopping underscored and evaluated is the way in which the bypassing of strong points and gaining momentum contributed to the overall subdual of Japanese


\(^{154}\) Ibid., 187.

\(^{155}\) Ibid., 186.
in the Pacific. The U.S. avoidance of Rabaul is a prime example of Sun Tzu’s principle of avoiding enemy strengths and instead attacking weak points. Rabaul, being Japan’s strong-hold in the area, if taken, would have been a major blow to the enemy. In fact, Japan expected America to attempt an assault at Rabaul. The scene was late 1943, and several drives had been made into various islands near Japan’s home base of Rabaul, to include at Kiriwina, Talasea and Cape Gloucester on the New Britain coast (See Figure 5). “The enemy’s proud bastion in the Southwest Pacific was rapidly being transformed from an asset to a liability,” historian William Manchester notes.\textsuperscript{156} The men on Rabaul anticipated that they were next (Talasea was the half way point between Cape Gloucester and Rabaul) and so 100,000 infantryman set to work digging fresh trenches, vowing they would fight to the last man, and putting on their senninbari (a cloth belt made of a thousand decorative stiches by Japanese women for their men warriors, believed to confer courage and protection).\textsuperscript{157} But, according to Manchester, something quite unexpected transpired on Rabaul.

The Americans never came. \textit{They never came}. Month after month the embattled garrison awaited a blow in vain. Word reached its men of tremendous battles elsewhere … but the sky over Rabaul was serene … All they wanted was an opportunity to sell their lives dearly before they were killed or eviscerated themselves in honorable seppuku …[ritualistic suicide by disembowelment] … MacArthur was denying them [an honorable fight to the death], and they were experiencing a kind of psychological hernia.\textsuperscript{158}

In addition to the aforementioned psychological confusion caused by the island hopping, General MacArthur gained momentum by impacting supply lines, via a concerted military campaign against Japanese shipping. MacArthur attests that, “The wholesale destruction by our planes, 

\textsuperscript{156} Manchester, \textit{American Caesar}, 335.

\textsuperscript{157} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{158} Ibid., 336.
submarines, and PT boats of enemy coastal vessels, transports, barges, schooners, and sailing
craft gradually paralyzed Japanese efforts to supply, reinforce, or evacuate the remnants of his
armies as they were cut off. More than 8,000 of these craft were destroyed.”159 Japan simply
could not replace their sea crafts fast enough to keep pace with their losses. The impact was
crippling. In *The Art of War*, Sun Tzu speaks about gaining the momentum in a fight. “The
skilled general seeks combined momentum and does not rely on individual prowess; he knows
how to choose his men for maximum combined effect. … The momentum of skilled warriors is
like a round boulder tumbling down a thousand-foot mountain. This is what I have to say on
momentum.”160 MacArthur worked tirelessly to combine effects across the battlespace amongst
naval, ground and air assets – spearheading essentially the first full implementation what came to
be known in modern warfare as joint operations. The strategy of the Island Hopping Campaign
achieved Allied momentum in the Pacific War that became for the Japanese, very much like Sun
Tzu’s boulder rolling down a mountain.

The second aspect of the Island Hopping Campaign to be evaluated is the health of troops
– a priority for successful operations, according to *The Art of War*. Analysis reveals how General
MacArthur implemented Sun Tzu’s standard, and kept the force strong in what has been assessed
as the worst possible location to fight a land war. As is shown in Figure 5, much of the island
hopping took place on New Guinea. “Fought in monsoon-soaked jungles, debilitating heat;
impassable mountains; torrential rivers; animal-,insect-, and disease-infested swamps – the
combat raged across what one American soldier called ‘a green hell on earth,’” historian Duffy


At first the U.S. troops were being struck down not so much by bullets, but by malaria and dysentery – some men were shipped back home for what might be a year-long fight for their lives. In response to the challenge, General MacArthur, ever mindful of the health and welfare of his men, employed an elaborate system of training, medicine and repellant designed to nip the problem in the bud. A special committee was established by MacArthur to curb the alarming malaria outbreaks: lectures were held; surveys were conducted; and formal military directives were issued. Posters and pamphlets were distributed to the soldiers, and “every man was urged to wage his own personal war against the mosquito,” MacArthur noted. Along these lines, General MacArthur’s steps were in sync with Sun Tzu; the ancient warrior guides, “If you look after the health of your men … your army will avoid all the usual diseases. This is a sure recipe for victory” MacArthur’s efforts worked and almost immediately the heavy flow of debilitated men slowed to a trickle, becoming a negligible consideration to the overall war effort. This was an enormous triumph for MacArthur and the Allies.

The aforementioned cases speak to MacArthur’s ability to focus his attention on the right issues at the right time, whether it was strategizing the best techniques to navigate around Japan’s fortifications in the Pacific; cutting off enemy supplies; securing naval assets to facilitate island hopping, directing amphibious landings; or waging war on the mosquito. Whatever the obstacle between MacArthur and his objective, it was sure to meet its match. Sun Tzu speaks of a great general being wise, and there are thousands of seemingly small decisions that MacArthur

made on a regular basis, that when scrutinized and studied in aggregate, truly reveal his nearly unparalleled ability to win war.

The third feature in the Island Hopping Campaign to highlight and analyze is in relation to handling troops well, which is paramount in the book, *The Art of War*. MacArthur was an involved leader, someone who wanted to see things for himself. He was also detail-oriented and somewhat of a perfectionist when it came to waging war. In one instance, MacArthur, ever a hawk eye over his troops, took notice of what he perceived as a lack of reporting from the front line by a commander named General Clowes. He was concerned that Clowes had not fully committed his troops in the fight for the strategically valuable Milne Bay (See Figure 5). General MacArthur took swift action and ordered Clowes to submit daily reports and immediately to clear the bay.\(^{165}\) In another instance he relieved a commander who lacked courage. Sun Tzu says that cowardice and courage determine the momentum of a conflict – MacArthur having fought in the trenches in WWI, and often alongside his men, knew that courageous leadership bred brave men, and cowardly leadership would produce a timid force.\(^{166}\) The two noted personnel actions taken by MacArthur demonstrate that he understood the importance of proper governance of soldiers and had the fortitude to take corrective measures, as Sun Tzu instructs in *The Art of War*: “A general who punishes his troops before he has won them over, will never be accepted by them and they will be useless to him. If he has already won them over but does not punish them when appropriate, they will still be useless. So you must bring your troops together with humane treatment, and bind them with discipline – this is the path to invincibility.”\(^{167}\) If he was anything,

---


167. Ibid., 61.
MacArthur was disciplined and a soldier through and through. Good order, bravery, proper training and obedience were hammered home to those who worked under him.

One conflict during the Island Hopping Campaign typifies the four years of fighting in the Pacific, illuminating the repetitive struggles MacArthur’s forces faced, as well as their outmaneuvering of their adversary: The Battle of Wau in 1943. Though it is a single fight among so many that occurred in the Pacific, it is somewhat archetypal of the combat for strategic points on New Guinea. It buttresses the supposition that General MacArthur’s application of Sun Tzu’s principles in Operation Cartwheel directly correlates to the victorious outcome. Analysis will reflect that MacArthur knew which ground was worth contesting as Sun Tzu lectures in *The Art of War*; even though Wau was a difficult location to access, its value in the context of the broader objective, made it worth battling for. Moreover, examination will demonstrate that MacArthur understood the importance of knowing your enemy, gathering intelligence and establishing superior numbers of force. Combined, these practiced philosophies of Sun Tzu resulted in the U.S. gaining the significant airbase at Wau.

Wau (approximately forty miles inland from Lae) was the location of an airfield that was in Allied hands at the beginning of 1943 (See Figure 5). It was situated 3,300 feet above sea level, and totally surrounded by mountains. The valley atop Wau contained a grass strip that served as a rudimentary runway – a runway that was operationally significant to both the Allies and the Japanese.\(^{168}\) There was not a single road leading to the valley airstrip. The only ways in and out were either on foot, navigating along native trails, or by air. Dense forest abounded everywhere, with poor visibility causing units to easily lose sight of one another for hours. The wet marshes and swamps of New Guinea meant that boots would be literally sucked off the feet.

of men, as they marched to their objective. Insects of all varieties infested nearly every inch of forest (leeches, fever-bearing insects and the relentless mosquitos), causing malaria and other diseases to incapacitate men by the thousands, as aforementioned. The kunai grass that flourished in the tropical jungle grew taller than a man, and contained sharp toothed edges, embedded with piercing crystals; Kunai was also known as Japanese bloodgrass – the blades sliced through exposed flesh. If all of that was not enough to impede progress towards any military goal, there was the cassowary, native bird of New Guinea. This fowl is the second largest bird behind the ostrich, and is known as the most dangerous bird in the world. When frightened, they attack either with their five inch claw or their powerful kick, and have been known to kill humans. These are the challenges that faced both Allied and Japanese alike in the inhospitable island of New Guinea. Wau, despite its dangers, offered an important air base which gave its owner air access around the coast and the Bismarck Sea.169 The Japanese recognized it as a perfect asset for harassing Allied fortifications throughout New Guinea, including Port Moresby, a key base of operations for the Australians (See Figure 5).

In January of 1943, the Wau air strip was manned by what was known as the Kanga Force, a mixed group consisting of New Guinea volunteers and Australians.170 This small unit had proven to be a thorn in the side of the Japanese, threatening their positions in Lae and nearby Salamaua. Therefore, the Japanese commander on the scene, General Imamura, knew he needed to unseat the Allied position at Wau before it became an increasingly fortified outpost and airfield. However, the size of Imamura’s force was insufficient for the task. He arranged to move

169. Ibid, 190.

170. Ibid., 191.
5,000 men, the Okabe Detachment, into Lae to bolster his emplaced 3,500 force.\textsuperscript{171} Wau was soon to become a much contested piece of land.

Unfortunately for Imamura, Allied codebreakers provided exceptional intelligence to MacArthur during the Pacific portion of WWII, and prior to the Battle of Wau they informed the general of Japanese radio traffic signaling massive troop movement by Japanese into the South West Pacific Area.\textsuperscript{172} It was postulated by MacArthur that this transfer of Japanese was intended for an assault at Wau’s airfield. Therefore, he ordered a counter-force be readied. In December of 1942, reconnaissance had increased and overhead photos of Japan’s main Rabaul base revealed 300,000 tons of supplies docked at the harbor, along with ninety-one ships, including twenty-one warships.\textsuperscript{173} General MacArthur ordered that transports which might carry troops, medicine and supplies be targeted; this is in line with Sun Tzu’s identification of the most critical targets for engagement as first-troops, second-supplies, and third-equipment.\textsuperscript{174} In the ensuing attacks, several Japanese ships were damaged or destroyed, to include the Nichiryu Maru and the Myoko Maru.\textsuperscript{175} Furthermore, “Large quantities of supplies waiting for removal under cover were destroyed, including an ammunition dump.”\textsuperscript{176} Despite these strategic Allied gains, the Japanese still managed to land approximately four thousand troops for the Wau assault.\textsuperscript{177}

\textsuperscript{171} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{173} Duffy, \textit{Fight for New Guinea}, 191.

\textsuperscript{174} Tzu, \textit{The Art of War}, 85.

\textsuperscript{175} Duffy, \textit{Fight for New Guinea}, 191.

\textsuperscript{176} Ibid., 193.

\textsuperscript{177} Ibid., 192.
Due to their damaged supplies, Japanese that did land near Wau packed only enough food for fourteen days – this proved to be a fatal misstep in terms of proper calculation and planning on their part. They carried the two weeks’ worth of rations on their backs as they proceeded into the jungle towards Wau on January 16, 1943.\(^{178}\) If they moved during the day through open fields and the like, they would be attacked by air strafing, so they decided to move off the main trail – Black Cat Trail – cutting their own path as they trekked the thirty miles from shore to Wau. While the Japanese progressed over the next two weeks, the Allies reinforced Wau (for they had been expecting the assault). The Allies brought in over five hundred fresh troops to fight. By January 27, the Japanese men had been navigating the tropical forest for two weeks; they were fatigued and hungry – historian Duffy notes, “They had not eaten in days and were beginning to show signs of starvation.”\(^ {179}\) Consequently, during their initial attempts to take Wau in their weakened condition, the Japanese troops were quickly driven back by the Allies’ growing number of defenders. The commander of the Japanese force, Colonel Maruoka, then watched as 130 Allied transport planes landed on Wau.\(^ {180}\) These carried artillery, machine guns, and a thousand fresh troops. Maruoko realized on February 1 that they would not be able to take Wau, and by February 13 he began a withdrawal. But, his force was a skeleton of what he had begun with. According to military historian James Duffy, “They had suffered in battle and from lack of food. Estimates of numbers lost to combat and starvation reach as high as twelve hundred men. Over 70 percent of the survivors suffered from malnutrition, malaria, dysentery, and other diseases that left them unfit for combat duty.”\(^ {181}\) New Guinea broke the Japanese in more ways

\(^{178}\) Ibid., 193.

\(^{179}\) Ibid, 194.

\(^{180}\) Ibid.

\(^{181}\) Ibid.
than one. Wau was so important that the Japanese attempted another take-over of the air field at a later date. The tremendous resources expended to secure and maintain New Guinea proves how significant a component the island was to the Japanese strategy. In the end, the Japanese in the Pacific were bested by MacArthur’s hybrid U.S./Australian/New Guinea force. MacArthur had out-thought and out-calculated them, gaining the momentum of force needed for victory.

Having presented the details of the Island Hopping Campaign in the previous section, the next segment will present a granular look at some of the actions and outcomes, aligned with the principles of war to further characterize how General MacArthur gained the upper hand in this four-year war. As Sun Tzu exhorts, MacArthur accurately scoped, measured, calculated, and then balanced all the efforts to assure victory. Specifically, he knew the enemy well, knew his own military’s limitations and prepared for many different circumstances, like Sun Tzu instructs. He gained momentum and remained steadfast, as The Art of War prizes. MacArthur placed his forces in positions to control the enemy, rather than allowing them to control his movements. These, too, are essential elements of successful warfare according to The Art of War.

One example of MacArthur’s mastery of Sun Tzu’s principles, was his familiarity with the topography in the area of operation. In General MacArthur’s Australia headquarters he developed a map room to acquaint himself with the land, air and sea of the battlespace, as well as to strategize maneuvers and counter-strikes. It was in this map room that he spent long nights, “mastering the intricacies … [of] the beaches, bays, inlets and tides of the oceanic islands between him and the Philippines,” historian William Manchester writes. 182 The general used this knowledge to command eighty-seven amphibious landings in the fight against the Japanese in

---

182. Manchester, American Caesar, 280.
the Pacific.\textsuperscript{183} Knowing the terrain is a foundational precept in Sun Tzu’s art of war writing. At this tactical task, MacArthur was more than adept.

Moreover, MacArthur became proficient at Sun Tzu’s principle of unified operations. \textit{The Art of War} advises, “Unite your forces with ingenious tactics and keep the enemy off-balance.”\textsuperscript{184} MacArthur learned the art of combining air, ground and sea operations during Operation Cartwheel, which contributed greatly to the ultimate success of the action. Air power made all the difference in the war in the Pacific and MacArthur had known this would be the case – forecasting it nearly a decade earlier – and therefore he had designed the Cartwheel strategy around the securing of air bases, and eradicating Japan’s air force. Operation Cartwheel facilitated a 40\% reduction in Japanese Air Forces; until September of 1944 Japanese AF had steadily increased in size but by June of 1945, their tactical units had decreased from 6,200 to 3,800, primarily due to U.S. B-29 heavy bomber attacks.\textsuperscript{185} Furthermore, MacArthur realized that using the navy forces would strangle the sea lanes and diminish the flow of supplies needed by the Japanese on New Guinea, to a dribble. In these tactics, MacArthur advanced the U.S. momentum, while diminishing Japan’s. In the island hopping MacArthur epitomized Sun Tzu’s description of a victorious general: “A great warrior takes control of others and does not let others control him.”\textsuperscript{186} Historian James Duffy notes, “Japanese generals themselves, interrogated

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{183} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{184} Tzu, \textit{The Art of War}, 75.
\item \textsuperscript{186} Tzu, \textit{The Art of War}, 33.
\end{itemize}
after the war, concluded that the New Guinea campaign had contributed a good deal to their losing the war [WWII].”

As a direct result of the Island Hopping Campaign, MacArthur was in position to re-insert his forces into the Philippines. In an intriguing twist, he craftily employed Sun Tzu’s most difficult principle; it reads, “The ultimate achievement is to defeat the enemy without even coming to battle.” Part of re-taking the Philippines meant ousting the Japanese occupiers in a way that did not involve long-drawn out warfare. So, in contrast to the brutal treatment of POWs by the Japanese (which only enragèd fighting men to battle harder) MacArthur enticed the ever proud Japanese to do what was unthinkable in their culture – surrender. This is truly one of the most remarkable feats when one considers that the Japanese military culture inculcates a “fight to the death” mentality so fierce that most battles up to this late WWII point would see very few Japanese POWs. While details of the actual Philippines’ liberation are beyond the scope of this paper, this one psychological warfare tactic of MacArthur’s, which was implemented subsequent to the Island Hopping Campaign, will be examined in the next section.

As MacArthur’s forces landed on various shores of the Philippines and took back bits and pieces of the island archipelago, there still remained stiff resistance by the Japanese – many men took to the hills in order to wage guerrilla war on the Allies. MacArthur needed to dislodge them from the forests – but routing out massive numbers of rogue armed men holed up in woods, if handled militarily, would result in inefficient, prolonged manhunts. Therefore, MacArthur went about it in an innovative way. First, he had English/Japanese leaflets created which stated that

---


humane treatment would be provided to all who surrendered. These were dropped, but to no avail – there was little response by Japanese militia. Then, in conference with linguists and native Japanese, psychological officers recommended a rewording of the leaflet, to something that would penetrate the stiff “non-surrender” position of the Japanese soldier. Leaflets were fashioned with a different phrase, “I Cease Resistance,” and because of the clever modification in messaging, the Japanese came down from the mountains in droves. (See Figure 6)

Figure 6: U.S. Leaflet used in Psychological Warfare, WWII

---


190. Ibid.

191. Ibid.
MacArthur had out-thought the enemy as Sun Tzu encourages. Furthermore, the general demonstrated a knowledge of the land, air and sea that beget wise decisions and strategy. He knew his own force and that of the enemy, as The Art of War instructs. Fighting in mainland Philippines began in October of 1944, and by February of 1945 the island nation was liberated by MacArthur’s forces.192

In both the 1941 retrograde to Bataan, Philippines and in the island hopping in New Guinea, General MacArthur confirmed his boundless skill in applying The Art of War concepts. In particular, he was a master in planning, as amplified in the following principle of Sun Tzu: “An ability to assess the enemy and control the chances of victory, to calculate obstacles, dangers and distances: these are what make a great general. If he understands all this and puts it into practice, he is certain of victory. If he neither understands nor practices it, he will be defeated.”193 Analysis reflects that fifty-eight of the more than three hundred and sixty principles of Sun Tzu were applied in the liberation of the Philippines. That is more than coincidence. If there is such a thing as a roadmap to victory in war, this paper asserts that it should reflect several stop offs along Sun Tzu’s well-worn paths.

192. Colley, World War II, 84.
VI. KOREAN WAR, MACARTHUR AT WAR

“The history of the world has taught from the beginning of time: that timidity breeds conflict, and courage often prevents it.” 194 – General Douglas MacArthur

This chapter reviews General MacArthur’s final war, the Korean War, and critically overlays Sun Tzu’s principles of war onto three major operations of that war. The goal is to explore first MacArthur’s stemming of North Korea’s advance in the earliest days of the Korean War; then the disastrous Pusan Perimeter fight; and lastly, the Inchon Landing – undisputedly, MacArthur’s finest hour. The examination will illustrate that there is a direct correlation between the utilization of Sun Tzu’s doctrine, and victory. In the Korean War, there are examples where the North Koreans effectively applied The Art of War concepts, and gained the upper hand; as well as instances where the U.S. implemented Sun Tzu’s principles, turning the tide. Some of the more prominent of Sun Tzu’s rules which surface in the Korean War include: the use of deception, surprise, momentum and speed. Furthermore, evidence suggests that the greater the quantity of laws utilized, the better the odds are of success; conversely, the side that employs the lesser number of principles, is the state that often loses on the battlefield.

On the cusp of the Korean War, in 1949, General MacArthur was stationed in Japan, operating as the Supreme Commander for Allied Powers (SCAP), where his mission focused on rebuilding Japan following the devastation of World War II. The events that unfolded between 1950 and 1953 during the Korean War were set in motion five years earlier, following WWII. WWII had ended thirty-five years of Japanese rule in Korea. The U.S. and the Soviet Union had cooperated during WWII under the Allied umbrella, and they agreed to temporarily occupy Korea with the line of division established along what became known as the 38th Parallel (See

Figure 7). However, relations grew icy between the two nations for a number of reasons – the most sharply-defined cause was their difference in government philosophy. The U.S. sought to stem the tide of communism; whereas the Soviet Union, under the leadership of Joseph Stalin, pursued its strengthening and expansion. No agreement for a unified state of Korea could be reached. The result was that the northern portion of Korea ended up tightly under Russia’s communist thumb, and the southern side was established as a democratic republic under the watchful eye of the United States. Russia installed Kim Il Sung as the quasi-leader/Soviet puppet of the North, ironically named the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK); meanwhile, following United Nations-sponsored elections, Syngman Rhee became the newly elected head of the Republic of Korea (ROK).\textsuperscript{195} To complicate matters further, Korea’s neighbor had crested the hill of its own independence movement, with Mao Zedong at the helm of a new communist establishment, the People’s Republic of China – Zedong, for his part, also sought to solidify the “inner dynamics of the Chinese revolution, after its nationwide victory,” meaning an amicable, collaborative relationship between China and the U.S. at this time was out of the question, according to author Jian Chen.\textsuperscript{196} Muddying the geopolitical waters even more was the murky policy of the United States in relation to the security of South Korea. In 1949, the preponderance of attentive world leadership, including the U.S. Joint Chiefs, General MacArthur, Kim Il Sung, and Joseph Stalin, were operating under the assumption that the United States would not intervene in the event of a North Korean initiative to reunite the peninsula. The reasoning? Korea was not “very greatly…[sic] important” in the context of achieving U.S. security objectives, as the chairman of the Senate’s Foreign Relations Committee communicated in May of 1950, notes

\textsuperscript{195} MacArthur, \textit{Reminiscences}, 319.

\textsuperscript{196} Jian Chen, \textit{The New Cold War History: Mao’s China and the Cold War} (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 38.
historian Manchester. U.S. Secretary of State Dean Acheson had amplified this U.S. perspective, stating quite plainly that the defense perimeter, “so far as the military security of the United States is concerned,” did not include Korea, and that “should such an attack occur … the initial reliance must be on the people attacked.” The implications were clear to Russia – if North Korea attacked South Korea, the U.S. would not intervene; unfortunately for the U.S., leadership failed to connect the dots that would have prevented such a gaffe in political communiqué.

Stemming North Korea’s Advance

The first of the three Korean War actions for review is the stemming of North Korea’s advance into South Korea in 1950. The purpose is to analyze the U.S. response to counter North Korea’s attack of South Korea, from the viewpoint of Sun Tzu’s creeds of battle. Evidence will show that MacArthur efficiently applied several principles of *The Art of War* at this early stage of conflict: MacArthur acted with speed and surprise; he crafted his strategy around the enemy’s positions, fluidly countering their advance in successive calculated movements; and he effectively out-thought the enemy, using deception to slow the North Korean forces. MacArthur’s application of the ancient truths bought the U.S. time to mobilize a true army presence on the ground, preventing the full invasion of South Korea.

At 4:00 a.m., on Sunday, June 25, 1950, the North Korean People’s Army (PA) stormed through the 38th Parallel. With the thousands of PA troops, came the most sophisticated technology of modern warfare: the Soviet’s most recent model of tank, heavy artillery and

198. Ibid., 541.
fighter planes. The fledgling nation had been fully equipped by its patron, Russia. Their 200,000 strong force mowed through the flimsy defenses of the ill-equipped South Korean divisions, who were caught entirely unawares by this well-concealed, professionally-orchestrated invasion.

Figure 7: Map of Korean Peninsula, 1950

200. Ibid., 330.
201. Ibid.
North Korea, for its part, understood Sun Tzu’s principles of deception. The Art of War explains, “Successful war follows the path of Deception … When deploying, feign inactivity.”203 General MacArthur testifies in his memoirs, “The Communists showed great shrewdness in masking their preparations for attack. Along the 38th parallel itself they deployed only a lightly armed force similar to that of their neighbors to the south. But this was only a screen for the purpose of deception. Behind this first line of offense, they concentrated a powerful striking army.”204 The In Min Gun, as the North Korean military was known, had excelled in the school of warfare strategy – mastering the concepts of speed and surprise. Within a few short hours they had pressed through all opposition, and were threatening to overtake South Korea’s capital, Seoul. Their plan was to push all the way to Pusan and control the Korean Peninsula in three short weeks.205

Despite the general view in the U.S. government that Korea was not of particular strategic importance to the United States, there was one contingency plan which caused U.S. leaders to consider a military response to North Korea’s most recent belligerent aggression – a policy paper from Truman’s National Security Council, known as NSC-68.206 This classified document, formulated after China had fallen to communism, laid out U.S. intent to dedicate up to twenty-percent of the gross national product to resisting communism around the world.207 In the wake of PA’s blitz into South Korea, U.S. fears piled up: How far would communism spread if this advance went unchecked? Would China be encouraged to attack Formosa (modern-day

203. Tzu, The Art of War, 11.
206. Manchester, American Caesar, 542.
207. Ibid.
Taiwan)? If the U.S. sat idly by while South Korea was taken over in an unprovoked attack, would World War III start? 208 Things moved very quickly as Truman ordered an immediate conference. Harry Truman notes in his memoir that in fact, a unified, non-communist Korea was a point of discussion – rather than a simple defense of South Korea. 209 On June 27, 1950, a special session of the United Nations met. They concluded, “Urgent military measures are required to restore international peace and security,’ and recommended ‘that the members of the United Nations furnish such assistance to the Republic of Korea as may be necessary to repel this armed attack,’’ Manchester quotes. 210 The U.S. would lead the U.N. effort. Consistently adroit at ushering in military success, General Douglas MacArthur was the obvious choice to spearhead the counter-force. General MacArthur received orders from Washington along with a new title, Commander in Chief, Far East (CINCFE). 211

MacArthur wanted to get a first-hand look at the situation, to assess the adversary, study the terrain and measure the situation – exactly as Sun Tzu instructs. Immediately MacArthur, over seventy years old at this point, ordered a plane to take him from his headquarters in Tokyo, Japan, to the front lines – directly where the North Koreans were coming through. He arrived twenty miles south of Seoul, then hopped in a jeep, to move into the center of the fray. He catalogues the tragic scene in his memoir:

Across the Han [River] Seoul burned and smoked in its agony of destruction. There was the constant cramp of Red mortar fire as the enemy swooped down toward the bridges. Below me, and streaming by both sides of the hill, were the retreating, panting columns

208. Ibid., 549.
211. Manchester, American Caesar, 549.
of disorganized [South Korean] troops … There was nothing to stop the Communists from rushing their tank columns straight down the few good roads from Seoul to Pusan at the end of the peninsula … All Korea would be theirs. Even with air and naval support, the South Koreans could not stop the enemy’s headlong rush south. Only the immediate commitment of ground troops could possibly do so … Completely outnumbered, I would rely upon strategic maneuver to overcome the great odds against me. It would be desperate, but it was my only chance. 212

MacArthur’s initial strategy in this spontaneous war was to delay the enemy’s advance long enough to allow the U.S. to move a large military presence into South Korea. General MacArthur had to mobilize an army, get them equipped and in place for a full defense, while simultaneously slowing down the opponent’s six infantry divisions. 213 He intended to out think the enemy, as Sun Tzu notes in The Art of War, and make North Korea believe they were fighting a much larger force than what was in the country. His immediate objective was to buy the U.S. time, by employing deceptive actions. MacArthur recalls in his book, Reminiscences, that he strategized, “the presence of American ground forces in the battle area would chill the enemy commander into taking precautionary and time-consuming methods.” 214 With this goal in mind, MacArthur moved with haste, deploying units into Korea piecemeal – elements of the 24th Division arrived by plane and units rapidly formed ground barricades; other forces flew overhead and destroyed key bridges. The secondary objective of this initial series of actions was to rally the bewildered South Korean troops, and synch their movements with those of the U.S., further bolstering the overall defensive posture. This stroke of brilliance by MacArthur gained the U.S. ten days: as MacArthur predicted, the North Koreans halted, not knowing what this change in the


213. Ibid., 335.

214. Ibid., 336.
battlespace meant in terms of their advance.\textsuperscript{215} The PA commenced moving heavy artillery across the Han River, not wanting to be unprepared for the contest with the newly arrived American units. Unbeknownst to North Koreans, the whole sequence of movements was really just a rouse, a delaying tactic to secure time. While North Korea’s Army was harried and slowed by the various emplaced U.S. troops, MacArthur used the additional ten days to set up the Eighth Army (nearly 100,000 men) in Korea, around Pusan - the base of operations (See Figure 8).\textsuperscript{216} The General wrote, “By the time this happened, the enemy commander had realized his mistake. He had been stopped not by a massive American defensive force, but merely by the appearance of force – by that arrogant display of strength.”\textsuperscript{217}

There are several principles which can be studied in the chain of maneuvers that were employed to stem North Korea’s advance. In \textit{The Art of War} manuscript, one learns that, “Successful war follows the path of Deception … when you are distant, appear close.”\textsuperscript{218} This is precisely what General MacArthur did – feigning strength to deceive the enemy. Analysis also reflects that MacArthur, because of his experience, wisdom, cunning and free reign as Commander in Chief of Far East, was able to implement what Sun Tzu labels the five keys to victory: 1) Knowing when to fight and when not to; 2) Knowing what to do when superior in numbers; 3) Knowing what to do when outnumbered; 4) Holding officers and men united in purpose; 5) A skillful general given free rein by the ruling authority – “These five together are

\textsuperscript{215} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{216} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{217} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{218} Tzu, \textit{The Art of War}, 11.
Breaking each of these down, one notices first that MacArthur knew “speed” was paramount and his forces had to move in and fight straightaway, or the PA would envelope South Korea; in other words, he knew when to fight, and did not delay. Next, he identified what to do when outnumbered – “buy time for space.” In adherence to Sun Tzu’s fourth key, MacArthur worked to bring the confused South Korean force into alignment with the U.S. objectives and maneuver, uniting them in purpose. Lastly, Truman had sensibly given MacArthur wide authorities – with them, the general was able to commandeering every mode of transport and move an entire army into battle positions, in under two weeks – this command and control arrangement answered the call of Sun Tzu’s fifth key to victory. Moreover, in stemming the North Korean advance, MacArthur exemplified this pillar of Sun Tzu: “The highest form of warfare is to out-think the enemy.” He estimated correctly how the enemy would react to the piecemeal deployment of U.S. forces and their accompanying harassment schemes. Lastly, MacArthur had demonstrated a mastery of the direct and indirect in warfare. Indirect, or oblique tactics obscure movement, intent and objectives, making it difficult for an adversary to understand what is happening, and efficiently respond. As Sun Tzu states, “A general who understands the use of the oblique has a source of tactics as inexhaustible as Heaven and Earth, which like the Rivers and the Oceans, will never run dry. … In military strategy, there is only the direct and oblique, but between them they offer an inexhaustible range of tactics.” This is a profound and complex principle that Sun Tzu espouses. Military leaders for millennia have attempted to effectively employ effects-based tactics that are dynamic, creative and deceptive.

219. Ibid., 21.
220. MacArthur, Reminiscences, 335.
221. Tzu, The Art of War, 19.
222. Ibid., 29.
General MacArthur grasped the direct and oblique and he shrewdly understood that they offered him options, when the odds seemed daunting. Had MacArthur not expertly synchronized the usage of the aforementioned principles of war, effectively defending South Korea at that period in time, the Korean Peninsula might appear quite different than it does today.

Pusan Perimeter Fight

The second of the three analyzed Korean War engagements for appraisal is the degradation of U.S. defense at the Pusan Perimeter Fight – it represents one of the darkest hours in U.S. military history. The objective of this section is to study the North Korean offensive attack on U.S. lines in South Korea, from the vantage point of Sun Tzu’s guidelines of warfare. Investigation elucidates that the U.S. government as well as MacArthur neglected to adhere to the principles of *The Art of War* at this early stage of conflict: the U.S. government did not calculate the adversary well enough, nor did they properly prepare for potential conflict in Asia; MacArthur was unable to bring enough force to equal, let alone outnumber, his adversary; and the U.S. was forced to defend difficult positions – a sure sign of impending disaster, according to Sun Tzu. North Korea gained so much momentum and force leading up to the Pusan Perimeter fighting, that there were limited options for MacArthur. He did the best he could to rally more troops and strategize a breakout. Still, in these early months of war, the non-application of *The Art of War* principles resulted in significant U.S. casualties, as the North Korean military crushed many U.S. positions along the Pusan Perimeter.

The U.S. was abysmally unprepared for the Korean War, in more ways than one. For starters, in the years preceding the Korean War, President Truman had gutted the defense budget, significantly hampering military preparation for any future crisis. There simply weren’t enough infantrymen to send in to meet the fighting power of the determined North Koreans, and those
that were available had been lulled into laziness by the five years of relative peace following WWII. In *The Art of War*, the ancient strategist lays out the five decisive factors of warfare which must be taken into account and planned for – one of these is Regulation; Sun Tzu lectures, “Regulation means the marshalling of the army, correct organization and control of supplies.” 223

Records show that the U.S. was in an abysmal state in terms of military preparedness at the onset of North Korean hostilities. One captain who was involved in the early stages of the Korean conflict noted, “We turned the vacuum cleaner on. It sucked up men from everywhere, behind desks, out of hospitals, from depots. We filled up fast.” 224 The following reflects the lack of preparedness of the Americans, as the Korea crisis loomed, according to historian David Halberstam:

> At first there was talk of six weeks of combat training before the men were shipped out but there turned out to be no time for that; then there was talk of ten days of training once they arrived in Korea, but that too was discarded; finally, there was talk of three days of special training once they got to Pusan, but there was no time for that either, as the North Koreans pushed closer and closer. So men arrived in the [Pusan] port directly from the States, drew their gear, and more often than not, were immediately shipped up to combat positions often without having zeroed in their rifles… [Adjusting the rifle’s sights to ensure point of aim is the same as point of impact]. 225

With the sad state of affairs characterized in the preceding description, it is no wonder that the poor men buckled under the barrage of the bloodthirsty In Min Gun soldiers. The U.S. servicemen were outnumbered, outgunned, and saturated with weak officers and inexperienced men – these are the conditions which Sun Tzu writes doom a military to defeat. These particulars, coupled with the elongated supply lines (California to Korea) and stretched line of...

223. Ibid., 9.


225. Ibid.
Pusan Perimeter defense (over 100 miles), meant that the U.S. commander of the Eighth Army, Lieutenant General Walton Walker, was getting hammered hard. Each night in July, the In Min Gun seemed ready to break through American lines at four or five different places. Walker’s job was always to plug the next leak – to try and decide which of the many places was most important, historian Halberstam explains. Although MacArthur had implemented several integral principles during his initial delaying action, it wasn’t enough to undo the momentum that North Korea gained at the onset of hostilities. The PA pressed their advantage hard, nearly pushing the outnumbered U.S. forces right off the tip of Pusan.

*The Art of War* states, “Attack at points which the enemy must scramble to defend, and launch lightning attacks where they are not expected.” North Koreans along with their Soviet war planners, had skillfully employed this tactic in the initial offensive across the parallel, taking everyone by surprise. Furthermore, they had been effective in pinning Walker’s Eighth Army down, leaving him in a position militarily in which he could only scramble left and right to prevent collapse of his defensive line. Whether they realized it or not, North Korea was following Sun Tzu’s guidance, which notes, “A great warrior takes control of others and does not let others control him.” It is clear from the testimonies of those defending the Pusan Perimeter, who was in control of the situation.

The Pusan Perimeter was an area situated on the southern tip of Korea. The zone was bordered by the Sea of Japan on the east and the Korean Straight on the south (See Figure 8).

---


229. Ibid.
The portion of land requiring defense against the North Korean People’s Army was approximately 140 miles; this perimeter was aided by the natural boundary of the Naktong River, which provided a western protective boundary. UN forces flew air coverage as Eighth Army dug in for the fight of their lives. By August 31, 1950, roughly eighty thousand troops defending the Pusan Perimeter braced to halt a one hundred thousand man In Min Gun. In many instances, General Walker had been able to stifle North Korean advances at Pusan through gaining valuable intelligence, via aerial surveillance and intercepted radio transmissions; conversely, preceding the Battle of Naktong Bulge, the U.S. forces were caught completely unprepared. The Naktong Bulge was just north of where the Naktong River joins the Nam River – in this place the river winds west before it bends east, causing a nine-mile bulge, in which the waters have a depth of around six feet and a width of approximately 400 meters (See Figure 8).

Figure 8: Height of North Korea's Advance, August 1950

Charley Company was positioned along the bulge that fateful August night. Lieutenant Joe Stryker witnessed that “perhaps as many as fifteen to twenty thousand men, poured through the general area held by Charley Company. Normally, Stryker noted, a company, which has a strength of about two hundred men, covers a sector of twelve hundred yards,” historian Halberstam writes. On that night though, the number of men defending the line boiled down to groups of twenty-five men, each group securing an area the size of seven football fields, or seven hundred yards; at best it was a “giant human sieve,” describes Halberstam. The massive

231. Ibid., 155.
232. Ibid., 258.
233. Ibid., 257.
gaps in the line exacerbated an already arduous situation. Additionally, North Korea’s night time attacks further hindered visibility of the troops, complicating communication and unity of effort for the U.S. forces. Interestingly, the North Korean People’s Army was known for coming out under the cover of darkness and creating what became known as invisible bridges – they would lay sandbags under the surface of the water, which would allow them to seemingly walk on water, as they crossed the Naktong River. At 8:30 pm, August 31st, the eerie movement of the In Min Gun began. Author Halberstam records Lieutenant William Glasgow’s account as follows: “A bizarre sight, what seemed like countless enemy soldiers holding torches and moving toward the river, the torches spelling out, he reported, the letters V and O. No one ever figured out what the letters meant.” Another man on the line that night, a clerk named Rusty Davidson, recalled, “‘someone in our platoon had shouted out that it was going to be a turkey shoot, but then there were so many of them and so few of us, that soon we realized were the turkeys,’” documents Halberstam.

Only a very small percentage of Charley Company survived the attack, and theirs was just one story amongst many of the Battle of Naktong Bulge, which lasted from August 31 to mid-September of 1950. It was estimated that there were around seventeen distinct attacks by the In Min Gun during this heavy fighting. Many American units lost over forty percent of their manpower, with command changing three to five times in the short period. In one particularly harrowing account, Master Sergeant Graham, platoon leader within Charley Company, recounts

234. Ibid., 260.
235. Ibid.
236. Ibid., 261.
237. Ibid., 286.
his unit’s decimation at the hands of the In Min Gun. His team had run out of ammo, so they began to hunt for ammunition on dead bodies of their friends and battle buddies. In doing this, they held out a little longer against the PA, but then had to retreat to a nearby hill. Graham was shot in the rear and then again in the leg. Most in the unit had been killed or wounded. Historian Halberstam records Graham’s account: “A few of the men who were still functioning asked him what they should do – run, fight, or surrender? … but they had all heard stories – true ones, as it turned out – of American prisoners found with their hands wired behind them, shot through the head, and left in shallow graves. But how could they fight, he thought, when there wasn’t a clip of ammo among them?” Graham’s story is a unique one – but it represents the caliber of many in the United States military. Having been shot, he created a make-shift pressure dressing out of his underwear and a belt. The North Koreans came upon him, stripped him of everything – boots, lighter, socks. They began to poke him in the head with the butt of a bayonet, but eventually seeing him bleeding profusely, they figured he was a dead man already and moved on. Graham reports that twelve hours later, he miraculously gained enough strength to begin moving. He crawled and hobbled for twelve days, licking dew off of grass, losing fifty pounds in the process, but finally he stumbled upon an American position.

In addition to the aforementioned principles that the North Koreans effectively applied, examination also reveals that they capitalized on the strength of numbers. The ancient manuscript advises, “When deploying your troops, if you outnumber the enemy ten to one, surround him; five to one, attack him; two to one, split him.” North Korea orchestrated

238. Ibid., 265.
239. Ibid., 266.
movements that allowed them to be in each of these positions at one time or another in the Pusan Perimeter fighting – they surrounded, they attacked and they split the U.S. forces. Moreover, they forced the U.S. to inadequately defend the line along the Naktong River. *The Art of War* guides, “Weakness in numbers stems from having to mount defenses; strength in numbers stems from forcing the enemy to mount such defenses.”241 The Americans did not have a clear picture of when and where attacks would come; therefore, they mounted defensive positions over the 140 mile long perimeter, which meant that invariably, the line was thin and in some cases, easily penetrated. Moreover, as described in the Pusan Perimeter fighting, the In Min Gun were swift, dense, rapacious, and mysterious as the ancient tactician advises: “You must be swift as the wind, dense as the forest, rapacious as fire, steadfast like a mountain, mysterious as night and mighty as thunder.”242 At the close of World War II, the United States was arguably one of the most powerful militaries in the world; yet, only five years later, North Korea’s novice army, having been supplied and advised by experienced Soviet forces, was proving to be a formidable adversary against the U.S.; the evidence here would argue that the U.S. condition was in large part due to the non-observance of Sun Tzu’s principles of war.

**Inchon Landing**

This section of chapter six, “Korean War, MacArthur at War,” focuses on the amphibious landing at Inchon, during which General MacArthur led an envelopment operation, advancing behind North Korea’s lines. The goal of this section is to characterize the operation in the context of Sun Tzu’s lessons of war. Several pieces of evidence will bolster the argument that with Inchon Landing, MacArthur incorporated nearly the whole text, *The Art of War*. He brilliantly

241. Ibid., 35.

242. Ibid., 45.
employed Sun Tzu’s precepts of deception, speed, surprise and knowledge regarding the enemy as well as the terrain. These and other applied principles resulted in a monumental turn of the tide in the Korean War.

It was upon the backdrop of the Pusan Perimeter fighting and despair, that General MacArthur performed the most daring amphibious landing assault in history – Operation Chromite, more colloquially referred to as the Inchon Landing. MacArthur alone conceived of this plan, and he boldly defended it against nearly every military leader of the day; each expert was wholly opposed to the operation, and most leaders tried to dissuade him. MacArthur was unwavering. Having over forty years of military experience would likely have been a natural springboard for audaciousness, because in reality, who else could see from his vantage point? With that perspective, it’s actually not that surprising that he was steadfast in his judgement. Few, if any, could tangle intellectually with him on the topic of warfare strategy, for he had lived through a most unique and comprehensive classroom on the subject, and had graduated top of his class, figuratively. Inchon was South Korea’s second largest port, and the principal port for Seoul. It is situated twenty miles west of the capital and 150 miles northwest of Pusan (See Figure 8). MacArthur noted that a landing at Inchon would enable American forces to catch North Korean forces in Seoul off guard. The capital was a powerful thoroughfare for the adversary, permitting them to keep their force in Pusan well supplied with materiel and reinforcements. The general calculated that taking Inchon and then Seoul would immediately relieve the pressure on the Eighth Army in Pusan because the pincher maneuver would trap the enemy army between the U.S. forces coming through Seoul, and the American troops postured along the Pusan Perimeter in the south. Desperate times called for daring action. General Walker, Eight Army Commander, had been given his orders – the soldiers at Pusan were to “stand or
die,” MacArthur testifies. 243 And while they were putting up a fight, the North Koreans rushed replacement troops and supplies to the front line at a steady rate, making the U.S. defense difficult. The CINCFE asserted that an amphibious touchdown at Inchon would shift the balance of power in the war.

Amphibious assaults generally abound with danger, but Inchon was exceptionally treacherous in every way imaginable. One observer encapsulated Inchon in this colorful language: “Almost everyone agreed that Inchon had the look of a place created by some evil genius who hated the Navy,” historian Halberstam writes. 244 MacArthur himself records in his memoir that Inchon was more fraught with risk than any of his past campaigns. But, he asserted to Washington, “I am firmly convinced that early and strong effort behind his [North Korea’s army] front will sever his main lines of communication and enable us to deliver a decisive and crushing blow. The alternative is a frontal attack which can only result in a protracted and expensive campaign.” 245 Three weeks after MacArthur’s request to Washington for Marine forces to conduct the operation, top experts were sent to meet with him directly in the Dai Ichi command headquarters in Tokyo. Those in attendance at the August 23, 1950 conference included Admiral Forrest Sherman (Chief of Naval Operations), General Joseph Collins (Army Chief of Staff), Admiral James Doyle (amphibious expert), Lieutenant General Lemuel Shephard Jr (Marine Chief), General Ned Almond (MacArthur’s Chief of Staff and designated commander of the 10th Corps that was to make the Inchon landing), and many other staff officers. 246

244. Halberstam, The Coldest Winter, 295.
246. Ibid.
the meeting, the experts raised a litany of issues with the prospective landing, catalogues historian Halberstam:

It had no beaches, only seawalls and piers. The small Wolmi-do (Moon Tip) Island, presumed to be well garrisoned, sat smack in the middle of the harbor, effectively guarding the port and splitting the landing zone in two. The currents inside were notoriously fast and tricky – and none of these factors was the worst of Inchon’s perils; the real danger was in the tides. Other than the Bay of Fundy [Canada], these might be the highest in the world, reaching peaks of thirty-two feet. At low tide… anyone trying to land would have to walk across at least a thousand yards, and at other points up to forty-five hundred yards, of mud flat, with the gooey consistency of “solidifying chocolate fudge” … If someone had thought to mine the harbor, and some harbors in Korea had already been minded with the help of the Soviets, it would be an unmitigated disaster. … Worse yet, the window of opportunity during which the operation could take place was unbelievably narrow. There were only two days in the near future when the tides would be high enough to permit landing craft access to Inchon’s seawalls and piers: September 15, when the tides would be 31.2 feet high, and October 11 …

Furthermore, Wolmi Do Island stood guard in the channel, fortified with In Min Gun troops and surrounded by currents that flowed as fast as eight knots – a ship could easily be disabled on the nearby rocks and shoals. The island would have to be captured prior to any Inchon landing could even be attempted. As if that weren’t enough to persuade MacArthur against the Inchon landing, during the meeting Navy experts referred to hydrographic studies and moon patterns, describing the near impossible window of opportunity on the general’s target date, September 15. They explained that the first high tide would be at precisely 6:59 a.m. and that the evening tide would come in at 7:19 p.m. The landing party would only have two hours (from 6:59 a.m. to 8:59 a.m.) to subdue the North Korean fortifications on Wolmi-do Island, and then two and a half hours (from 7:19 p.m. to 9:49 p.m.) under darkness, to land the assault force at Inchon, neutralize any enemy force there, and move the weaponry and supplies needed for the

troops to press on with their Seoul objective.\textsuperscript{248} The assault craft carrying the marines would be immobilized on the mud flat, a sitting duck, until morning tide permitted it to float again. To make matters worse, the landing was intended to be made smack in the center of the main city, where man-made structures were more than adequate for the enemy to use in mounting defenses. Other locations, like Kunsan – further south – were suggested as alternatives for the landing. Halberstam notes that in Admiral Sherman’s review of the Navy’s presentation, Sherman concluded by saying: “‘If every possible geographical and naval handicap were listed – Inchon has ‘em all.’”\textsuperscript{249} General Douglas MacArthur listened to their hours of speaking, naysaying and objecting, along with their suggestions for alternate amphibious landing locations. When recalling that day, MacArthur describes the room as tense, the silence as pregnant, as he explained his rationale:

The very arguments you have made as to the impracticabilities involved will tend to ensure for me the element of surprise. For the enemy commander will reason that no one would be so brash as to make such an attempt. Surprise is the most vital element for success in war … As to the proposal for a landing at Kunsan, it would indeed eliminate many of the hazards of Inchon, but it would be largely ineffective and indecisive. It would be an attempted envelopment which would not envelop. It would not sever or destroy the enemy’s supply lines or distribution center, and would therefore serve little purpose … It would be sending more troops to help Walker hang on, and hanging on was not good enough … But seizure of Inchon and Seoul will cut the enemy’s supply line and seal off the entire southern peninsula … This in turn will paralyze the fighting power of the troops that now face Walker.\textsuperscript{250}

The room was captivated by the skilled orator, the expert strategist, and the confidence with which MacArthur assured them all of the soundness of the Inchon plan. And with his speech, he

\begin{footnotes}
\item[248] Ibid., 348.
\item[249] Ibid.
\end{footnotes}
has swayed them. In turn, they flew back to Washington, and approved the general’s 15 September Inchon operation.

MacArthur, never one to shy away from danger, was aboard the Mount McKinley, the amphibious force command ship, in the wee hours of the morning on September 15 as the 5th Marines deactivated Wolmi Do. Only seventeen U.S. men were wounded in the stage-setting offensive. MacArthur followed the landing force once the fighting was well in hand. Standing on a hilltop, MacArthur glanced down at the resultant destruction of six degraded Soviet tanks as several members tried to move him to safety – that was all they needed, some sarcastically recalled, the Supreme Commander killed on the scene. MacArthur, ever defiant and sure, glared in the direction of sniper fire that had whizzed his way.

The main Seoul airport, Kimpo, was secured and while minor skirmishes between U.S. and North Koreans continued, the main threat had been neutralized. At the conclusion of it all, tallies would reflect that the Inchon landing subdued around 40,000 In Min Gun defenders around Seoul, with their dead and wounded totaling 536 and 2,550 respectively. U.S. Navy Fleet Admiral William Halsey, called the Inchon operation, “the most masterly and audacious strategic course in all history,” Manchester writes.

---

251. Manchester, American Caesar, 579.
252. Ibid.
253. Ibid., 580.
254. Ibid.
The North Korean Army responded to the encirclement, not with an orderly retreat movement, but in haphazard disintegration. In fact, out of the approximate 100,000 soldiers who had crossed the 38th Parallel a few short months earlier, a paltry 30,000 made a successful northward flight home. 255 The rest were killed in action or captured. MacArthur’s biographer, Geoffrey Perret, eloquently captures it when he writes, “In the life of every great Commander there is one battle that stands out above all the rest, the supreme test of generalship … For MacArthur that battle was Inchon.” 256 The North Koreans had forgotten a paramount rule of warfare, which Sun Tzu instructs: “Being prepared for all circumstances is what ensures certain victory.” 257 And in this, their own forces freely admit failure. As Yoo Sung Chul, a retired North Korean general, said years later, “‘The Korean War was planned to last only a few days so we did not plan anything in case things might go wrong. If you fight a war without planning for failures, then you are asking for trouble,’” historian Halberstam records. 258 Some lessons are hard learned, and had the North Korean’s studied Sun Tzu better, they might have guarded themselves against this fatal flaw.

There are over 360 principles in Sun Tzu’s directives on warfare. An investigation of the concepts outlined in The Art of War as overlaid onto Operation Chromite, reflects that nearly every one of the ancient doctrinal points were applied by General MacArthur. The following is a list of some of the more prominent.

256. Perret, Old Soldiers Never Die, 548.
257. Tzu, The Art of War, 45.
General Douglas MacArthur, in a stroke of military genius, managed to aggregate a multitude of the ancient principles, creating battlefield momentum. The cumulative effect was precisely what the general had forecasted: the cutting off of supply lines, the surprise to the enemy and the crushing of the In Min Gun between the U.S. Inchon forces and the Eighth Army. It is to the U.S. government’s credit that they approved Operation Chromite even though few, if any,

---

259. Tzu, The Art of War, 1 - 95.
besides General MacArthur actually thought it would work. And this is a primary reason why General MacArthur stands out amongst even the great generals. He goes down in history for conceiving of, and orchestrating what is known world-wide as one of the most brilliant and bold military operations of all time.

MacArthur unbalanced the enemy; he used deception and ingenious tactics; he calculated the many obstacles, but in the light of his measurements, he alone saw that Inchon would gain the advantage; through stratagem and knowing yourself as well as your enemy, he was able to reverse a perilous situation; he was courageous not only in being the visionary behind such a brash move, but in setting his mind like a flint, against all of those that would call themselves experts in military warfare. He struck like lighting, and avoided the enemy strength by hitting them where they were less fortified. He used the indirect and direct in masterful fashion. MacArthur used wisdom to march by the unexpected route, and in doing so, he was victorious. In this operation, MacArthur’s strategic mind, understanding of the principles of Sun Tzu, and unparalleled ability to synthesize and execute with precision, hundreds of warfare concepts, are truly remarkable.
VII. ANALYTICAL CONCLUSIONS

“We have seen thousands of our young men vainly sacrifice their lives in blind pursuit of sterile policies of appeasement based on ignorance of history and of [the] enemy.”

~ General Douglas MacArthur

Figure 10: Portrait, Douglas MacArthur

In our nation’s 240 year history, there have been less than ten men who have attained the rank of Five Star. General Douglas MacArthur, along with a handful of decorated warriors such as George Washington, have earned this honor and prestigious position. The evidence presented here illustrates what makes a general extraordinary. Furthermore, it investigates the linkages between adherence to the principles of war and victory. The two are inextricably connected. Victories are won by extraordinary generals, and extraordinary generals recognize how to


masterfully overlay the array of foundational war principles onto the myriad challenges they face
during dynamic battle. This is evidenced in the World War I’s Battle of Cote de Chatillon, which
degraded Germany’s stronghold, opened the door to swift defeat of their main supply node, and
ushered in an end to the First World War. Additionally, the aforementioned associations are clear
in the examination of the purposeful retrograde maneuver from Manila, which MacArthur led at
the onset of World War II. These movements resulted in a prolonged harassment by the
U.S./Philippine forces in Bataan and Corregidor, which significantly disrupted Japan’s timetable
for conquering the Philippines. As one might figure, not all of Sun Tzu’s principles carry the
same weight of significance; avoiding the enemy’s strengths while targeting vulnerabilities is
clearly in the top ten. This is exactly what General MacArthur spearheaded in the New Guinea
Island Hopping of WWII. With these precise leap-frog movements the U.S. was able to position
for an air, naval, ground assault on Japanese forces in the Philippines, liberating the archipelago.
Finally, one would be hard pressed to find a single principle in Sun Tzu’s art of war that was not
applied in the famed Inchon Landing of the Korean War. In the face of a lightning-paced
advance of North Korea’s Army to conquer South Korea, MacArthur conceived of and managed
the most daring amphibious landing of all time – with it, he secured the capital, isolated North
Korea’s forces from their supply line, and enveloped the enemy. This would be General
MacArthur’s final stroke of genius in what was a renowned, five-decade, military career.

Equally relevant, this writing also examined where correlations can be drawn between
battlefield defeat and lack of adherence to Sun Tzu’s ancient text, The Art of War. These
parallels are observed in the disastrous U.S. defeat at Clark and Ibo Fields in the Philippines at
the hands of the Japanese. The United States had not prepared, did not know their enemy well
and allowed themselves to be outnumbered and taken by total surprise. General MacArthur was
not entirely responsible for the loss, though he bears some blame for allowing his aircraft to be
positioned wing-tip, to wing-tip, on the ground during Japan’s bombing, which resulted in
destruction of half of the air force in the Philippines at that time.\textsuperscript{262} The lesson was not learned
by the United States, as is evidenced by a similar underestimation and miscalculation of the
adversary, which was made in 1950 as the Korean War dawned. MacArthur did not use the
intelligence that was available to him to anticipate the impending attack in South Korea;
Furthermore, the U.S. did not understand the terrain and had not properly regulated their force, to
equip them for the battlefield. Again, MacArthur was taken by surprise because of the
bombardment by North Korea that occurred at the 38th Parallel.\textsuperscript{263} The North Koreans were
underestimated, just as the Japanese had been in WWII, and the deadly sequence of attacks along
the Pusan Perimeter are the bloody proof of the relationship between not heeding the doctrine of
\textit{The Art of War}, and military defeat.

Having catalogued a summation of when MacArthur applied Sun Tzu’s principles of \textit{The
Art of War}, and when they were not implemented – impacting outcomes – the next section will
provide broader perspective of General MacArthur’s contribution to military history and to the
United States. Additionally, it will propose across-the-board assessments regarding the use of
Sun Tzu’s principles in battle. Lastly, the following will analyze current engagements in light of
the ancient text, to extrapolate relevant assessments for future warfare.

General Douglas MacArthur is called the bicentennial soldier. He began his life in 1880,
on America’s western frontier, where military skirmishes were conducted on horseback against

\textsuperscript{262} James, \textit{Years of MacArthur: Volume II}, 4.

\textsuperscript{263} MacArthur, \textit{Reminiscences}, 327.
foes like Geronimo. He helped lay the foundations of much of what we know today as our United States military force, including the officer West Point training, joint operations combining Army, Navy, Air Force strengths. MacArthur finished his years in 1964, in the age of nuclear weapons, and a few short years before the U.S. put a man on the moon and began satellite intelligence collection. Perhaps it is both his brilliance and his distinctive time in history which gave him a truly one-of-a-kind ability to apply The Art of War principles of Sun Tzu. He was known for being well read, and The Art of War, understandably, was one of his preferred books. The conflicts he fought in the nineteenth century contrast from those fought by Sun Tzu in ancient Asia, and the instruments of warfare couldn’t have been more dissimilar (fire arrows as compared to atomic bombs; horse in comparison with aircraft carriers). Yet, MacArthur was able to extrapolate the foundational doctrinal points and apply those, hundreds of years later, using vastly divergent technology.

Today’s wars have altered significantly from conflicts of the past – we are fighting with cyber intrusions, we have unmanned aerial drones to surveille our enemy’s territory, objectives like “win the hearts and minds of the people” are ambiguous, and the shape of our adversary shifts – shop keeper by day, bomb-maker by night. But, we must not forget the lessons of previous battles. History speaks to us from millennia past. Sun Tzu’s principles of wise, courageous generalship; attacking vulnerabilities rather than strength; investing in a superior numbered and equipped force; calculating conditions and planning for many eventualities; using intelligence to know your enemy, and taking a hard look in the mirror to know ourselves; employing oblique tactics; and ensuring deception, surprise and force strength underpin every maneuver, are timeless characteristics of successful warfare.

264. Ibid., 13.
Unfortunately, the U.S. has not applied *The Art of War* precepts consistently or successfully in the past half century. For example, Sun Tzu lectures, “In waging war, victory is the prize but, if it is delayed, both troops and weapons are blunted; besieging a city exhausts your strength; a protracted campaign depletes the state’s resources. With your soldiers and weapons dull, strength and resources spent, your rivals will seize their chance and rise up against you. Then, no matter how wise you are, you can turn nothing to your advantage.”265 Anyone perusing the news headlines of the past decade knows that the United States has been bogged down in conflicts all around the globe with split forces – Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and other hotbeds of contention. Trillions of dollars have been spent to fight terrorism both abroad and at home.266 Likewise, anyone studying the initial objectives of the campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan would be hard pressed to discover any tangible, sustainable, correlating achievements to resolve the turmoil in those two states. Additionally, American military members are on steady deployment rotations overseas into combat zones – for some younger ones, it’s an exotic, exhilarating experience; for others, it levies a high cost on families as parents miss children’s birthdays and prolonged separation of spouses often begets divorce. Protracted campaigns are not only depleting financial resources, but are eroding our most foundational national assets and strengths – soldiers and families.

Even more disturbing is that most – government leaders and military soldiers alike – don’t even know what we are fighting for, or could identify if we achieved victory. We are depleting resources with little-to-no gain. A critical inquiry into recent conflicts like that of Odyssey Dawn in Libya (2011) or Operation Inherent Resolve (ongoing) in Syria will surface

alarming revelations. For example, we have not identified what constitutes conclusion to the conflict in Syria. We did not characterize the end state in either instance, which is foundational to developing a strategy. We have not clarified who the enemy is in Syria, nor do we have sufficient information about their activities, intentions or allegiances. The objectives of both Libya and Syria remain unclear. Moreover, one is left to wonder why the U.S. is committing millions of dollars without following our own regulations for declaring war via an act of Congress. The last formal declaration of war was WWII. We are obligating resources and lives without sufficient measuring, calculating, balancing and planning. In addition, America is conducting engagements without effective deception or surprise; we announce the month and year when we are withdrawing forces – in the name of transparency, or in the hopes of presidential election. If winning is the primary objective of war, as Sun Tzu lectures, how do we know when it has been achieved, if our aims are nebulous, and read like that of Odyssey Dawn’s: “protect civilians and civilian populated areas under threat of attack…?” 267 The answer is, we don’t. Therefore, we expend resources and redefine our goals continually. But, resources are limited; the lives of servicemen and women are not expendable; and the truths of speed, morality, and regulation of the force are just as important to today’s warfare as they were two millennia ago.

In *The Art of War*, discerning readers will find that Sun Tzu’s ideologies, written over 2,500 years ago, hold ageless truths. An analysis of those principles overlaid onto operations by General MacArthur’s forces during WWI, WWII and the Korean War, reveals insight and direct correlations between adherence to the principles leading to victory, and ignoring of the truths

resulting in defeat. The United States government and military are not reflecting on the past enough to ensure successful war strategies are implemented in today’s conflicts. We can do better, and we must do better if we are to build a stronger nation for future generations. Nations more vast and powerful than ours have fallen in past centuries. Our survival as a country may very well be dependent upon whether we choose to heed the principles of war or not.
Primary Source Material


Secondary Source Material


