

## The Book Title: “The Art of War”

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### Abstract

I have read Sun Tzu's book entitled “the Art of War.” It is a military treatise written by a Chinese general 2500 years ago. It is the oldest military treatise in the world, first written in Chinese then translated in to French and English respectively. The treatise contains thirteen chapters. Each chapter provides numbered lists of military strategies and tactics.

**Keywords:** Art of War; Military; Strategies; Tactics

### Introduction

The book includes five factors that affect the generals, five dangerous faults that might be committed by a general and five types of information gathering systems. No doubt, these concepts are extremely crucial not only in military sciences but also for any other tasks throughout time and space. The five constant factors are the moral law, heaven, earth, the commander, and method & discipline. Every effective general is expected not only to know these five factors but also to analyses and act accordingly. He who knows them, and responses accordingly will be victorious. The moral law causes the people to be docile to their ruler so that they will follow him regardless of their lives court danger. The “heaven” principle is proposed in a non-religious context that it signifies night and day, cold and heat, times and seasons. Earth comprises distances, great and small; danger and security; open ground and narrow passes; the chances of life and death. The Commander stands for the virtues of wisdom, sincerity, benevolence, courage and strictness. By Method and discipline are to be understood the marshaling of the army in its proper subdivisions, the graduations of rank among the officers, the maintenance of roads. These factors are just as SWOT analyses. He also included five dangerous faults which might affect a general if committed: Recklessness, which leads to destruction; cowardice, which leads to capture; a hasty temper, which can be provoked by insults; a delicacy of honor which is sensitive to shame; over-solicitude for his men, which exposes him to worry and trouble. The last five are about spies. He stated five types of information gathering methods: Local spies, inward spies; converted spies; doomed spies and surviving spies.

### Discussion

The author raised numbers of important strategies of war that can be also applied for other missions too. He strongly advises to critically look inwards to oneself and outward to the enemy. According to him, your foe should never know about any aspect of you, you have to fib to your foe. All warfare has to be based on deception. This includes concealing owns real movements and offering distorted information for foe. Hence, when able to attack, we must seem unable; when using our forces, we must seem inactive; when we are near, we must make the enemy believe we are far away; when far away, we must make him believe we are near, pretend inferiority and encourage his arrogance.

In the second chapter of his book Sun Tzu criticized the prolonged war; he advised that the operations should be rapid and sudden as much as possible. In the same chapter he also explained about what to be done in the relationship between peasant and army and extended his advice about the role of rewarding army and punishing army. In the third chapter, he provides his advice about handling captive wisely; breaking the enemy's resistance without fighting; how to defeat

the enemy without fighting; how to balk the enemy's operations and the importance of controlling emotion or patience for generals. The impact of hobbling the army, knowing when to fight and when not to; how to handle both superior and inferior forces have been also widely explained in this chapter with practical examples. If your enemy is superior, evade him and if he is in problem invade him. In chapter four Sun Tzu again explained how to win enemy with little cost or zero cost if possible. In chapter five, he described how and when to deploy direct and indirect warfare. For instance, when the enemy men are huge in number than your indirect warfare is the best strategy. In chapter six he strongly advised that military tactics should not be repeated. Very dynamic and inestimable tactics should be used. Chapter seven is about maneuvering. Sun Tzu gave a due emphasize on identifying internal strength and limitations, the establishment of harmony and confidence between the higher and lower ranks before venturing into the field; how to cooperate with host community. He believes in forming a single united body. According to him, both the advance bravely alone and cowardly retreat alone are risky. He appreciates strength through unity and cooperation. In chapter eight and nine, he has analyzed the external environments: opportunities and threats. Sun Tzu discussed the role of topographical for war and how to get advantages from each landscape and topography. The contents of chapter ten also similar with above concept but this one deals about roads which are under foe's control, in hand and open road. The concept of chapter eleven is also not far from the above three chapters. It is about handling controlled, semi controlled, controlled battle fields. The art of war recognizes nine varieties of ground. He described war strategies to be deployed in each of the grounds. In chapter twelve he advised how to use fire against enemy. Indeed, this seems obsolete strategy in the era of modern bombs and missiles. The last but not the last chapter deals about information gathering methods: spying. Types of spies that mean way of gathering information from enemies have been well-defined. These mechanisms are valuable, acceptable and applicable in the modern military intelligence and other tasks too.

After thousands of years, the military treatise of Sun Tzu can serve as a guiding principle in the modern military sciences and other business.

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Most of, if not all, the principles are unbounded by time and space. But few principles and strategies of Sun Tzu seemed overshadowed because of modern technologies, better thoughts and change of socioeconomic situations. Here under I tried to discuss the cases in point.

Most of war materials used at that time which repeatedly mentioned in the examples are abrogated and replaced by modern technologies. For instance, fire, chariot, horse are no longer used for war today. At the same time to some extent problem of topography has been solved following the emergence of helicopters, unmanned air force and others. However, it doesn't mean that these issues are totally irrelevant. It is possible to contextualize these concepts and apply accordingly. Another point of weakness probably is he appreciates one-man rule. A typical example for this one is found in page 88; it says: "You must deceive even your own soldiers. Make them follow you, but without letting them know why". This has its own risk. For one thing it is totally authoritarian. For the other reason, the operation will be totally failed if

the general is killed or died naturally. Or if he has no advisory, a general might made ill decision. For me, this expression is unacceptable in nowadays.

## Conclusion

All in all, the book is valuable and live after 2500 years. It is both a heritage and a strategy guideline for modern strategic businesses. In addition to its historical value to historians, the book still amazingly retains its full value in its ability to advise the reader, manager and generals because one can contextualize and apply the wisdoms for this treatise to his/her day to day decisions and activities. For example, Art of War can be applied to resolve the various problems of the business world today such how to remain strong competitor, how to pass accurate decisions under tremendous pressure, how to mobilize resources, and how to motivate the workforces.