INTRODUCTION

"The purpose of the objective is to direct every military operation toward a clearly defined, decisive, and achievable goal."

— JP 3-0, Joint Operations

The purpose of this discussion is for students to develop an understanding of the Warfighting Functions as conceptualized by the Marine Corps and to emphasize their importance to success on the battlefield. Students will examine the relationships between the Warfighting Functions and the Principles of War across the levels of war.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the conclusion of this discussion, the Marine should have a better understanding of the relationship of the nature and theory of war to the Marine Corps doctrine of Maneuver Warfare.

PREPARATION

Required Reading:


MCDP 1-2 Campaigning pages 76-94 (19 pages).
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How are maneuver, fires and intelligence related?

2. Are logistics and force protection equally important to support maneuver and fires?

3. Are certain Warfighting Functions more relevant at the tactical level?

4. Are the warfighting functions relevant across the spectrum of conflict?

5. What are the Principles of War and how are they applicable in the current operating environment – specifically during COIN operations?

6. What are some examples from historical battles that demonstrate the application of various Principles of War?

7. How do the Principles of War relate to the Warfighting Functions?

8. Discuss the campaigns described in the MCDP 1-2 readings in relation to maneuver warfare and synchronizing efforts across warfighting functions.

9. How does the addition of perseverance, legitimacy and restraint change the nature of the Principals of war? Does it?

TALKING POINTS (Points refer to the Discussion Notes below):

1. Define Warfighting Functions. (Points 2 and 5)

2. How are maneuver, fires, and intelligence related? (Point 5)

3. Are logistics and force protection equally important to support maneuver and fires? (Point 5)

4. Are certain Warfighting Functions more relevant at the tactical level?

   a. Consider Force Protection against booby-traps during patrols in Viet Nam or the importance of CAS or indirect fire to the success of tactical maneuver. Realize that time is the critical factor in those incidents. Over the course of the battle, the six Warfighting Functions must be harmonized in order to achieve either the tactical or the operational success required at your level of war. Warfighting Functions are relevant across the spectrum of conflict.

5. Are the warfighting functions relevant across the spectrum of conflict?
Unit Commander’s PME Reference

Marine Corps Warfighting: Warfighting Functions and Principles of War

a. MCDP 1 states "planners consider and integrate the Warfighting Functions when analyzing how to accomplish the mission. Integrating the Warfighting Functions helps achieve unity of effort and focus."

b. Whether you are operating at the tactical or operational level of war, you cannot neglect to consider and plan for all six Warfighting Functions.

c. Of course, operational Intelligence and Command and Control and Fires have significant impacts on the tactical execution of missions, and in the planning process, Intelligence, Fires, Command and Control, Logistics, and Force protection create the lens in which the maneuver element is focused.

6. How do the Warfighting Functions relate to “top down” planning? (Point 4).

7. Define the nine Principles of War and how they apply within the context of maneuver warfare. (Point 7)

8. How do the Principles of War relate to the Warfighting Functions? (Point 3)

Discussion Notes

1. **Review the USMC definition of Warfighting functions.**

MCDP 1-0, Appendix B defines Warfighting Functions as conceptual planning and execution tools used by planners and subject matter experts in each of the functional areas to produce comprehensive plans. Warfighting functions should never be viewed independently but as inseparable parts of a whole. Warfighting functions help the commander achieve unity of effort and build and sustain combat power. Their effective application, in concert with one another, will facilitate the planning and conduct of expeditionary operations. Remember “focus” from MCDP-1 and its definition. The commander uses the warfighting functions to achieve focus. MCDP 1-2 further states that maximum impact is obtained when all warfighting functions are harmonized to accomplish the desired objective within the shortest time possible and with minimum casualties.

2. **Briefly review and define the six mutually supporting warfighting functions. Revisit each in detail later.**

**Warfighting Functions:** The six mutually supporting military activities integrated in the conduct of all military operations. **Command and Control:** The means by which a commander recognizes what needs to be done and sees to it that appropriate actions are taken. **Maneuver:** The movement of forces for the purpose of gaining an advantage over the enemy. **Fires:** Those means used to
Unit Commander’s PME Reference

Marine Corps Warfighting: Warfighting Functions and Principles of War

delay, disrupt, degrade, or destroy enemy capabilities, forces, or facilities as well as affect the enemy’s will to fight. **Intelligence:** Knowledge about the enemy or the surrounding environment needed to support decision-making. **Logistics:** All activities required to move and sustain military forces. **Force Protection:** Actions or efforts used to safeguard own sources of strength while protecting, concealing, reducing, or eliminating friendly critical vulnerabilities.

3. **What is the utility of the warfighting functions and principles of war in planning and execution?**

Why study the warfighting functions and principles of war? To answer the question, one first must understand the difference between analyze and synchronize. The underlying issue is not an understanding of the functions, principles and their definitions but how they are applied the art of military. During analysis, each MAGTF staff planner separates the whole into parts to study the mission or problem within their own perspective and area of expertise. Analysis is followed by synthesis, wherein the MAGTF commander combines the analysis to form a new, complex product. Synthesis produces a synergistic effect that comes from the sum of the whole being greater than the sum of the parts.

4. **What is the value of the warfighting functions to “top down” planning? Do they encourage or discourage “stove pipe” planning?**

“Top down planning and the single battle concept ensure the unity of effort, while the commander uses Warfighting Functions as the building blocks of integrated planning.” MCWP 5-1

This is in the first chapter of the MCWP 5-1 (Marine Corps Planning Process). Top down planning encompasses commander’s intent, concept of ops, mission orders and synchronization of the plan. The commander must drive the planning process. Subordinate leaders use the commander’s guidance and concept of operations to accomplish the mission (MCWP 5-1, p.1-2). The 5-1 goes on to state that the tenets of the Marine Corps planning process are derivatives of the doctrine of maneuver warfare. What does that mean to us?

Top down planning is not a bad word. Timely dissemination, good commander’s intent and mission type orders will help. Don’t confuse this with top down interference. Remember, the commander not only participates in the planning – he/she drives the process with his/her initial orientation. 

Single battle concept: The commander must view the battle space as an indivisible entity. Operations or events in one part of the battlespace may have profound effects on other areas and events. While the battle space is conceptually divided into close, deep and rear – it is the top down planning that ensures unity throughout.

Integrated planning: Planning that is systematic, coordinated and thorough, ensures that all relevant factors are considered and information is shared across all functional areas. Integrated planning
across the functions is key to success in this arena. When everyone is on the same sheet of music the battle will flow. Warfighting functions are designed to prevent commanders and staffs from focusing internally. Who is familiar with the term stovepipe planning and its consequences? (Stovepipe is a non-doctrinal term.)

5. Examine the six functions in detail:

Attempt to tie each function to its application within the context of maneuver warfare.

Command and Control (C2): The exercise of authority and direction over assigned and attached forces in the accomplishment of a mission. It involves arranging personnel, equipment, and facilities to allow the commander to extend his influence over the force during planning and execution. C2 is the overarching warfighting function that enables all of the other warfighting functions. Command has two vital components: 1) Decision-Making and 2) Leadership. Control allows the staff to monitor the status of the command, assess the gap between what was planned and what has been accomplished, and direct actions to exploit new opportunities or correct deficiencies. Control serves its purpose if it allows the commander freedom to operate, delegate authority, lead from any critical point on the battle field, and synchronize actions across his AO. Professional competence, personality, and the will of strong commanders represent a significant part of any unit’s combat power. The focus of C2 is on the commander – his intent, guidance, and decisions and how he receives feedback on the results of his actions.

Maneuver: Maneuver does not just refer to movement on the battlefield. It should always be done in relation to the enemy so as to gain a position of advantage and also done in combination with fires or fires potential. MCDP 1-0 goes on to state that the advantage may be psychological, technological, or temporal as well as spatial. MCDP 1 adds that the essence of maneuver is taking action to generate and exploit some kind of advantage over the enemy as a means of accomplishing our objectives as effectively as possible. MCRP 5-12C defines maneuver warfare as, “A warfighting philosophy that seeks to shatter the enemy’s cohesion through a variety of rapid, focused, and unexpected actions which create a turbulent and rapidly deteriorating situation with which the enemy cannot cope.”

Fires: Fires delay, disrupt, degrade, or destroy enemy forces, capabilities, facilities as well the enemy’s will to fight and includes the coordinated and collective use of target acquisition, direct and indirect fires, armed aircraft of all types, lethal and non-lethal munitions. It is normally done in concert with Maneuver to shape the battlefield and set conditions for decisive action. MCDP 1 states that firepower is central to maneuver warfare. We will concentrate fires and forces at decisive points to destroy enemy element. The greatest effect of firepower is generally not physical destruction – the cumulative effects of which are felt only slowly – but the disruption it causes.

Intelligence: Intelligence provides an understanding of the enemy and the battle space – which
should lead to identification of strength and vulnerabilities. Ultimately, it supports the formulation and subsequent modifications of the commander’s estimate. Intelligence addresses military aspects of terrain (OCOKA) and the effects of weather on enemy and friendly forces. Threat analysis identifies enemy strengths and weaknesses and templates the enemy based on the effects of terrain and weather. The results produce products that help identify enemy sources of strength, vulnerabilities, and potential courses of action.

Logistics: Logistical operations provides the resources of combat power, positions them on the battlefield, and sustains them throughout the execution of operations. Logistics includes the serving of a single meal, the effective distribution of tens of thousands of separate parts, and the movement of vast armadas from one corner of the globe to another. Logistics provides the physical means of making war and translates national resources into combat power. Ultimately, logistics establishes limits on what is operationally possible. The goal is to extend those limits as far as possible. Logistics helps the effective use of limited resources. Unlike many other functions logistics is always “on”.

Force Protection: Force protection preserves vital resources, lives, equipment, and material so they can be used to accomplish the mission. Force protection includes more than just self-protection or base security operations, it also includes actions that eliminate or reduce the enemy’s and the environment’s ability to adversely affect the friendly force’s ability to conduct operations.

6. What value are the nine principles of war / twelve principals of joint operations?

Attempts to organize and synthesize the complexities of war are nothing new. In the early 19th century a Swiss Officer serving as a staff officer in Napoleon’s army attempted to distill the various elements of Napoleon’s victories into a coherent list of Principles. The bottom line is that Henri Jomini felt that at the end of theory was a set of timeless principles that would serve as a guideline for action. This list of principles, known here in America as the Principles of War, have been firmly entrenched in U.S. doctrine for well over 100 years.

Current doctrine including the MCDP 1-0 continues to be influenced by Jomini’s principals. Quoting from MCDP 1-0 “The Marine Corps’ warfighting philosophy of maneuver warfare is rooted in the principals of war.” These nine principals known by the age old acronym MOOSEMUSS are, “useful aids to a commander as he considers how to accomplish his mission. They assist the commander in organizing his thinking about the mission, the enemy, the battle space, and friendly forces” (MCDP 1-0).

Also note that they are not a “checklist for success” The Principals of War are not to be used as a prescriptive steps or actions that must be accomplished or considered in any particular order but
rather as analytical tools to help the commander plan, execute and assess operations. Successful application requires judgment. These nine principals are just as important to a General as to a Captain.

7. List and define the nine Principles of War.

The nine principles are maneuver, objective, offensive, security, economy of force, mass, unity of command, simplicity, and surprise.

Maneuver: Place the enemy in a disadvantageous position through the flexible application of combat power. Maneuver is the employment of forces on the battlefield through movement in combination with fires, or fire potential, to achieve a position of advantage in respect to the enemy to accomplish the mission. That advantage may be psychological, technological or temporal as well as spatial. Maneuver alone cannot usually produce decisive results; however, maneuver provides favorable conditions for closing with the enemy in decisive battle. Maneuver contributes significantly to sustaining the initiative, exploiting success, preserving freedom of action, and reducing vulnerability. Effective maneuver—in combination with mass, surprise, and economy of force—allows an inferior force to achieve decisive superiority at the necessary time and place. At all echelons, successful application of this principle requires not only fires and movement, but also flexibility of thought, plans, organization, and command and control.

Objective: Direct every military operation toward a clearly defined, decisive, and attainable objective. The ultimate military objective of war is to defeat the enemy’s forces or destroy his will to fight. The objective of each operation must contribute to this ultimate objective. Intermediate objectives must contribute quickly and economically to the purpose of the operation. The selection of an objective is based on consideration of the ultimate goal, forces available, the threat, and the AO. Every commander must clearly understand the overall mission of the higher command, his own mission, the tasks he must perform, and the reasons therefore. He considers every contemplated action in light of its direct contribution to the objective. He must clearly communicate the overall objective of the operation to his subordinates.

Offensive: Offensive action is the decisive form of combat. Offensive action is necessary to seize, retain, and exploit the initiative and to maintain freedom of action. It allows the commander to exploit enemy weaknesses, impose his will upon the enemy, and determine the course of the battle. A defensive posture should only be a temporary expedient until the means are available to resume the offensive. Even in the conduct of a defense, the commander seeks every opportunity to seize the initiative by offensive action.

Security: Never permit the enemy to acquire an unexpected advantage. Security is those measures taken to prevent surprise, ensure freedom of action, and deny the enemy information about friendly
forces, capabilities, and plans. Security is essential to the preservation of combat power across the range of military operations, even in benign environments. However, since risk is an inherent condition of war, security does not imply over cautiousness or the avoidance of calculated risk. In fact, security can often be enhanced by bold maneuver and offensive action, which deny the enemy the chance to interfere. Adequate security requires an accurate appreciation of enemy capabilities, sufficient security measures, effective reconnaissance, and continuous readiness for action.

Economy of Force: Economy of force is the reciprocal of the principle of mass. The commander allocates the minimum essential combat power to secondary efforts. This requires the acceptance of prudent risks in selected areas to achieve superiority at the decisive time and location with the main effort. To devote means to unnecessary efforts or excessive means to necessary secondary efforts violates the principles of mass and objective. Economy of force measures are achieved through limited attacks, defense, deceptions or delaying actions.

Mass: Concentrate the effects of combat power at the decisive place and time to achieve decisive results. Commanders mass the effects of combat power to overwhelm the enemy and gain control of the situation. Mass applies to fires, combat support, and combat service support as well as numbers of forces. Proper use of the principle of mass, together with the other principles of war, may achieve decisive local superiority by a numerically inferior force. The decision to concentrate requires strict economy and the acceptance of risk elsewhere, particularly in view of the lethality of modern weapons that mandate rapid assembly and speedy dispersal of forces.

Unity of Command: For every objective, ensure unity of effort under one responsible commander. Unity of command is based on the designation of a single commander with the authority to direct and coordinate the efforts of all assigned forces in pursuit of a common objective. The goal of unity of command is unity of effort. In joint, multinational, and interagency operations where the commander may not control all elements in his AO, he seeks cooperation and builds consensus to achieve unity of effort.

Simplicity: Plans should be as simple and direct as the situation and mission dictate. Direct, simple plans and clear, concise orders reduce the chance for misunderstanding and confusion, and promote effective execution. In combat, even the simplest plan is usually difficult to execute. Other factors being equal, the simplest plan is preferred. Multinational operations place a premium on simplicity. Language, doctrine, and cultural differences complicate military operations. Simple plans and orders minimize the confusion inherent in joint, multinational, and interagency operations.

Surprise: The commander seeks every possible means to achieve surprise by striking the enemy at a time or place, or in a manner for which the enemy is unprepared. It is not essential that the enemy be taken unaware, but only that he become aware too late to react effectively. Factors contributing to surprise include speed, the use of unexpected forces, operating at night, effective and timely intelligence, deception, security, variation in tactics and techniques, and the use of unfavorable
8. List and define the three additional Principles of Joint Operations

Perseverance: Ensuring the commitment necessary to attain the national strategic end state requires perseverance. Commanders prepare for measured, protracted military operations in pursuit of the desired national strategic end state, which even some joint operations may require years to reach. The underlying causes of the crisis may be elusive, making resolving it and achieving conditions supporting the end state difficult. The patient, resolute, and persistent pursuit of national goals and objectives often is a requirement for success, frequently involving diplomatic, informational, and economic measures to supplement military efforts. In the end, the will of the American public, as expressed through their elected officials and advised by expert military judgment, determines the duration and size of any military commitment.

United States military forces’ endurance and commanders’ perseverance are necessary to accomplish long-term missions. A decisive offensive operation may swiftly create conditions for short-term success; however, protracted stability operations, executed simultaneously with defensive and offensive tasks, may be needed to achieve the strategic end state.

Legitimacy: A legitimate operation develops and maintains the will necessary to attain the national strategic end state. For US military forces, legitimacy comes from three important factors—First, the operation or campaign must be conducted under US law. Second, the operation must be conducted according to international laws and treaties recognized by the United States, particularly the law of war. Third, the campaign or operation should develop or reinforce the authority and acceptance for the host nation government by both the governed and the international community. This factor is frequently the decisive element.

Legitimacy is also based on the will of the American people to support the mission. The American people’s perception of legitimacy is strengthened if obvious national or humanitarian interests are at stake. Their perception also depends on their assurance that American lives are not being placed at risk needlessly or carelessly.

Other interested audiences may include foreign nations, civil populations in and near the operational area, and participating multinational forces. Committed forces must sustain the legitimacy of the operation and of the host nation government, where applicable. Security actions must balance with the need to maintain legitimacy. Commanders must consider all actions potentially competing for strategic and tactical requirements. All actions must exhibit fairness in dealing with competing factions where appropriate. Legitimacy depends on the level of consent to the force and to the host nation government, the people’s expectations, and the force’s credibility.
Restraint: In an effort to limit collateral damage and prevent the unnecessary use of force, restraint requires careful and disciplined balancing of security, the conduct of military operations, and the desired strategic end state. Excessive force antagonizes those friendly and neutral parties involved; hence, it damages the legitimacy of the organization that uses it while potentially enhancing the legitimacy of any opposing party. The rules of engagement must be carefully matched to the strategic end state and the situation. Commanders at all levels ensure their personnel are properly trained in rules of engagement and quickly informed of any changes. Rules of engagement may vary according to national policy concerns, but unit commanders always retain the inherent right and obligation to exercise unit self-defense in response to a hostile act or demonstrated hostile intent. Restraint is best achieved when rules of engagement issued at the beginning of an operation address a range of plausible situations. Commanders should consistently review and revise rules of engagement as necessary. Additionally, commanders should carefully examine them to ensure that the lives and health of Marines are not needlessly endangered. National concerns may lead to different rules of engagement for multinational participants; commanders must be aware of national restrictions imposed on force participants.

**Historical Examples from MCDP 1-2 (Pg 78-81):**

Maneuver: Gen MacArthur’s Inchon landing (page 78) and Gen Sherman’s march to the sea are both great examples of operation maneuver. Use these examples to show how maneuver can create a gap, allow us to exploit opportunities, retain initiative and keep the enemy in a dilemma. Both of these examples from MCDP 1-2 can be directly tied back to E(C)2240 Conduct of War – Maneuver Warfare.

**Wrap up comment:** The USMC warfighting functions serve as an integrated planning and execution “thinking” framework to both analyze and synthesize operations and missions. The nine Principles of War are complimentary to the Warfighting Functions and serve as general guidelines to consider in the planning and execution of any operation or mission.