

The Establishment of the Art of Islamic Warfare

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The establishment of 'the art of Islamic warfare' emerged after the migration of the Holy Prophet (s) to Madina with the implementation of the first Sariya mission. During this period, battles took place continuously and the Muslim army had hardly recovered from one conflict when it was faced with another battle. Wars were also fought in a similar sequence. The foundation that the [continuous] battles and wars of the Prophet (s) formed was like a spring that never stopped gushing in strengthening the structures of military management, which were responsible for designing the strategies of war.

The supreme commander of these battles, due to his perfect genius and insight, made this form of management perdurable and complimented it with determination, dynamism and practicality. To such an extent that many of the documenters of war chronicles, in their books of 'Expeditions and Wars' have made efforts to outline and survey this and present it as the principles, laws and regulations that can be referred to [and implemented] in future events by

those who read [and study] about these battles in the books of expeditions and history. Indeed, because of the [consecutive] battles and wars that took place between Islam and the enemies and adversaries of this faith and its teachings, there was a need for a strong army that would be led by a skilled and capable leader who was well versed in military management and universally accepted and supported, so that he could implement Jiha-d as one of the most important ordinances and commandments of Islam. And in addition to these principles, he would give importance to the humanitarian aspect of warfare and the understanding of the

human condition while calling for, and sparing no efforts in trying to achieve, global reform. With regards to war and its military aspects, by having clear goals that he would strive to attain and with strong foresight that results from a dynamic intellect, and also by being quick to act and carry out surprise attacks and implementing new strategies, he (s) became an excellent commander. With observation we find that this form of [military] management was superior in terms of 'the sublime ethics of war' meaning bravery, boldness, fearlessness and lack of lassitude in difficult situations. Aside from this, with greater intelligence and contemplation, and with insight and illumination, he sought to evaluate the important issues and take advantage of the resources and means at his disposal without negligence or indolence, presenting plans of action, and relying on dynamic organization and diverse leadership.

As in the present age 'ideology' was similarly accepted as a sublime spiritual fountainhead

which armies are supposed to take benefit from, any commander who would read about their ideology [in the future, even] after centuries would take inspiration from it and follow it. Acquiring techniques of warfare depends upon various external factors, conditions and available resources that are beyond time, place or numbers, and are tools that the commander has at his disposal. Verily, the most important factor that distinguishes this form of military management from other types of military management that came later is the 'ethics and moral attributes' of the military command, which developed from war. It is an undisputed fact that the Prophet (s) had all the qualities of a political, social and universal leader in himself, and that he sought help from the Almighty with complete faith.

He had the attributes of faith, valor, steadfastness and insight in matters of principles and military sciences, and he inherited these lofty traits from his forefathers. Similarly, in his social interaction with friends and foes, he was magnanimous and would always keep his word and fulfill his vows and promises. He would spend time in contemplation and then form his opinion with regards to planning and strategizing [for battle] and would employ exemplary organization skills.

As for the relationship between the commander and the army, he (s) was distinguished for his sacrificing and ever-friendly disposition. Obedience [to him] was strengthened by full cognizance and acceptance of his prophethood by the people under him; therefore this was an impetus for them to believe in his orders out of conviction [that he was commanded by the Almighty].

The Prophet was always aware of the problems being faced by his troops. He would be sympathetic towards them and would always, both in times of war and peace, be with them and act as a good role model for them so that they could emulate him in all matters and follow him. He would never proceed with his forces without seeking counsel first, as is observed in the battles of Badr, Uhud etc. His relationship with the troops was always based on the principles of humanity, compassion, compromise, sympathy, reform, magnanimity, aiding the oppressed, assisting in the doing of good, actively opposing tyranny and transgression, and equality among the people.

And this would include all the people despite their differences. In order to achieve this objective, he had to bring the community together at the same level under one common rubric and imbibe love and compassion for each other in their hearts. He needed to establish a link of brotherhood between them and counter their lassitude and uncertainty. Because of this, those who had gathered around him were all pleased with him and had come to accept this matter. All the goals that he worked towards and strived to attain, and the preparations that he made

so that the brutal battles may be won internally and externally, are truly astounding for the people who read about them, and all the people who have learnt about this type of leadership are left with no option but to admit its greatness. The American Michael Hart says: 'My choice of Muhammad to lead the list of the world's most influential persons may surprise some readers and may be questioned by others, but he was the only man in history who was supremely successful on both the religious and secular level.'

The Englishman Montgomery Watt says: 'His readiness to undergo persecutions for his beliefs, the high moral character of the men who believed in him and looked up to him as leader, and the greatness of his ultimate achievement - all argue his fundamental integrity. To suppose Muhammad an impostor raises more problems than it solves. Moreover, none of the great figures of history is so poorly appreciated in the West as Muhammad.'

As for the reason behind my choosing this subject, it is because of the military and historic significance that it has. It clarifies aspects of ingenuity, management and administration that have been largely ignored by researchers or have only been mentioned by them in passing. This is because they only try to concentrate their efforts in approaching the subject of military expeditions in a specific manner, not in the way the great documenters of expeditions and battles have presented them. In this regard, this present research can be taken as an example for the personal and social interactions between all the nations and peoples of the world. We .will present certain parts of this in summary

One: The Military And Its Historical Significance

From the time he entered Madina, the Prophet (s) started raising an army in order to counter the threats of the enemy. He organized numerous secret fact-finding military missions, sending them to different parts of the Arabian Peninsula. By sending these secret missions and appointing commanders for each of them, the Holy Prophet (s) was able to fight both the internal and external (i.e. outside the Arabian Peninsula) enemies. The result of these wars was the foundation of faith and conviction in humane warfare that became fundamental for the Muslims and others.

Numerous scholars like Ibn Shiha-b al-Zuhri, Wa-qidi, Ibn Hisha-m and others have written about this. It is certain that this belief originated from faith in God and it was evident that it bestowed a special energy to the fighters that made them fearless and as a result, their struggles and bravery became unmatched and not even the slightest inkling of fear remained in them.

As for the factors and motivations of this ideology, they were manifested in the most beautiful

form in faith in a specific goal that consisted of the establishment of justice and the struggle towards universal peace and security, and also in countering oppression and exploitation, treachery, greed, evil habits and imprudent patrimony of authority and power that was practiced by the Arabs in the age of Ja-hiliyya. I have studied this ideology and its basis after the advent of Isla-m. During the reigns of the Umayyad and Abbasid Caliphates and after that, many wars took place and in all of them lessons were taken from the past. They would refer to this very period (i.e. the time of the Prophet) and seek to take lessons from it.

That which transpired later, after the battles in the early days of Isla-m, was all a continuation of that which took place during the time of the Prophet (s) in its basis, motivations and factors except that it transpired under a different set of circumstances. Thus we find this ideology being adopted after the companions of the Prophet (s) such as Abu 'Ubayda Ibn Jarra-h, Sa'd Ibn Abi Waqqa-s and Kha-lid Ibn Walid had become accustomed to it, having implemented it with precision and understanding in the battlefields alongside the Holy Prophet (s), and after him in Qa-disiyya and Yarmuk, and later during the time of the Caliphs. Therefore, they and others gained guidance through this ideology and fundamental principle that was observed in the first battles, and these principles were like a keepsake that was brought from the biggest wars and battlefields of victory. However, with the passing of time, their successors began to forget these principles and became lax and negligent in preserving them, and for this reason they had to face losses in battles.

This is a plain indication and a strong proof for the necessity of studying and analyzing the art and method of warfare at that time. So even now, after so much time has passed, the importance of studying these wars and battles has not waned. It continues to seek an in-depth reading and a profound understanding in order to deduce and discover matters concerning warfare that are lesson-giving, because it is this aspect that does not expire. The ideas and effects related to the 'principles of war' have not perished or reduced in value over the period of .time

Two: Novel Warfare

The Prophet (s) gave real meaning to the term 'military management' and aside from being a science, he gave it originality; something that the Arabs before him were unfamiliar and unacquainted with. The wars of the Muslims would take place in a manner which was unlike the wars based on vengeance and barbarism. These wars were not for personal pleasure or blind hatred in useless matters, nor were they chaotic, unplanned and disorganized onslaughts. When the Prophet (s) was appointed to Prophethood, he made a lot of efforts regarding this

matter. The most important issue that he would concentrate on in war was the constant readiness for it. Many of the missions and expeditions that took place were in actuality a kind of preparation and military exercise that the troops needed. The advantage in the end, when these missions and expeditions returned home, was the invention of new arts and strategies of warfare which played an important role in the organization of the ranks of the army in the Battle of Badr, in commanding these ranks, procuring arms and the necessary equipment, and the distribution of tasks among the troops.

Aside from this, the most important instrument that he (s) used was the sending out of spies in order to gather information about the enemy during the preparatory stages of war, and through this he was able to secretly gain knowledge about the numbers of the enemy and their accoutrements. For example, he sent Hudhayfa in the Battle of the Confederates (Ahza-b), telling him: 'Go and gather information about this group and during this mission do not make contact with anyone until you return back to me.'

The Holy Prophet (s) used 'psychological warfare' as one of the most important strategies of war and in this way he was able to put fear and awe in the hearts of the enemy so that they may be forced to flee or surrender without the need for combat. This is just what he did in the Conquest of Makkah. He ordered that the army should light ten thousand fires, so that by this he could put fear and anxiety in the hearts of the enemy.

Similarly, the Prophet (s) initiated pre-emptive war in order to avert possible threats from the enemy that he was unable to counter. In this way, before the enemy could gather all its forces for war, he would take quick action. For this type of war, he put in place rules and regulations and encapsulated them with perfect precision and profound understanding. He then placed them alongside 'speed, agility and stealth'. In this method, by conducting 'surprise attacks' on the enemy, they would end up being stunned and straggled and became, from the start of the invasion, crippled and rendered helpless in their very own land, and this action would bring with it many other advantages and benefits.

In the same way, the Prophet (s) would conduct 'lightening-strikes' which was a form of war wherein it would not take a significant amount of time and would be 'swift, short, unexpected and stealthy'. It would also require a smaller force with fewer accoutrements. This type of operation would be carried out in the face of an enemy that was larger in number and in many instances, with [other] new strategies, it gave an upper hand to the Muslims, especially in the battles of Badr, Khandaq and Hunayn.

The Prophet (s) also employed the 'war of uprising' and through it, he would raise the inhabitants of a town, including their men, women and children, to stand up and fight against

the invading armies that were intent on destroying them. This type of action was clearly seen in the Battle of the Confederates. In this instance, he made all the people participate jointly to dig a ditch in the battlefield, and this was considered a novel tactic that was previously unknown.

This method then became an example for those who took part in later wars. He (s) similarly used the strategy of 'laying siege' and completely surrounding the enemy so that in this way, they would be cut off from the outside world and could not send for reinforcements and support. Of course he was careful to ensure that they were out of the range of enemy arrows and would set camp in a place where he and the forces would be safe from the reach and view of the enemy, continuing this until those who were besieged were forced to come out and surrender.

The Holy Prophet (s) made use of the 'war of impediments' which was previously unknown to the Arabs and with which they were unfamiliar.

When the Prophet (s) was informed that the enemy had gathered at night in order to carry out a dangerous attack against him, he sought counsel from his troops. The advisers agreed with the proposal made by Salma-n al-Fa-rsi that a ditch be dug (around the city of Madina). Thus by digging a ditch, the basis of a unique and new form of war, meaning the 'war of impediments' was created, which was in line with the idea of defense and using of the appropriate weapon in the given situation.

The result of this tactic was that it made the enemy perplexed and baffled. They did not know how to react to what they saw. Being unable to pass over or go through the ditch, they turned back hopeless. This later became known as the 'Battle of the Ditch' because of this great feat.

When the Holy Prophet (s) foresaw rebellion, siege and one on one combat from the side of the defenders of the city, he would turn to the 'war of the city and streets' which consisted of precise and particular measures. The Conquest of Makkah is indeed one example of this type of warfare. In this case, the army of Isla-m entered the city of Makkah in order to conquer it, after having strengthened its siege in the four corners of the city. Troops were placed in each corner according to the importance of that part of the city, and specific accoutrements were used and commanders appointed. The effect of this was that the people in Makkah became terrified as they looked at the great numbers of soldiers in the Muslim army. When this strong army entered Makkah, no blood was spilt. This was something the likes of which has never been witnessed, nor has anything like it been recorded or reported in the past.

The Prophet (s) had some strategies that he would always use against the enemies in all the battles. Some of these strategies were: 'creating a possibility for easy movement', 'sending secret information gathering missions', 'carrying out surprise attacks on the enemy' along with

'movement with stealth and furtiveness', 'use of traps and artifices', 'taking advantage of the most suitable time and place and appointing the most appropriate commanders for each mission'. And in all these issues he displayed no lassitude nor did he fall short from implementing them perfectly.

In order to promote the needed balance, create hope and increase the morale of the army, he would try to study the facets of the tactics and strategies used either before, during or after the battle. Every factor that contributed in giving the Muslims an upper hand over the enemy in battlefield was considered carefully and studied by him, because victory is a goal that every commander strives for in the wars he fights.

At this point it is necessary mention the issue of attacking those who were fleeing and running away from the battlefield - about which many have erred. The Prophet (s) never used to attack those who were fleeing from the battlefield after having lost the battle, just in order to fulfill his desires or act upon his inclinations. However, some have said that the Muslim army would pursue the defeated enemy, especially as in the case of the battle of Hunayn. It must be said that the Prophet (s) would avail the opportunity to the defeated enemy to flee if they so wished; because throwing a spear towards the back of the enemy was something that would lower the respect of the commander in the eyes of the soldiers and would cause him to be despised.

In the battles of Dha-t al-Suwayq, Dha-t al-Ruqa-' and al-Gha-bah, he did not attack those who were fleeing; and also in the battle of Hunayn, he only pursued those enemies who were not surrendering or fleeing, but were instead trying to move to a better position in order to regroup and launch further attacks on the Muslims, because at this stage the battle had not ended and it only came to an end when the forces of the Hawa-zin were defeated and Ta-'if came under siege. Similarly, in other missions that resulted in war, the fleeing enemy was .never attacked

Three: Management Of Supplies And Munitions

With the advancement of different facets of daily life and its changes, it can be observed that the issue of 'munitions and support' was very serious and had an important impact on the outcome of the war; because if the needs of an army are not met, the forces are faced with inconvenience, loss and dispersion, and the enemy is also likely to take the first opportunity and overpower them. In this way, its paramount importance in terms of the management of war and the tactical and strategic planning, become evident.

It is necessary that different aspects of this matter and its hardships and difficulties be discussed, because people in the past have not recounted the conditions of the management

of warfare for us in a way that can be relied upon or trusted. If one wanted to learn about the strength of the military infrastructure of the Muslim army at the time of the Holy Prophet (s), he would find that the first thing that the Prophet gave importance was the abundance of locally available resources that would be utilized, whether it be in the form of foods - the most important of which were dates - or other resources that the soldiers and troops would take as provisions for the war. The Muslim army never gave importance to the idea of storing or hoarding foodstuffs and for this reason, in many of the battles, the soldiers would suffer from hunger due to lack of sufficient food, and this forced the commanders to distribute the little available resources among the soldiers in an equitable manner, and in situations where soldiers had nothing, they were forced to eat the meat of horses, wild donkeys etc. With respect to drinks like water, which was not always enough or accessible due to the lack of wells, the situation was very difficult and the same procedure of equal distribution was applied.

As for the modes of transport that mostly consisted of camels and other animals, the soldiers would use them for traversing long distances and transferring booty that was gained from the battles. Actually, this booty was considered an important source for the acquisition of weapons and military provisions, in addition to the sale of horses and other equipment which constituted another source.

On the other hand, the Noble Prophet (s) gave importance to the disabled and the handicapped, because they would always remain with the army until the necessary resources for tending to their needs became available. For this type of forces, there was no special arrangement in the Muslim army (as is the case today). Their role and important responsibilities included: Keeping watch and constant surveillance, providing partial reinforcements, tending to the injured, removing the bodies of those who were killed from the battlefield and burying them, patrolling and serving during the night, taking care of those who were in shock, gathering and settling, selecting suitable places where there were no plagues or infectious diseases - in which the commander would himself assist them - and in the end, the injured would be taken [by them] to a tent in Madina that was erected for them next to the Masjid of the Prophet (s).

Despite all the difficulties [they faced], and the lack of provisions and reinforcements, the army of Isla-m would overpower the enemy that was better equipped in all these respects. The reason for this was that the Prophet (s) would use various forms of warfare according to what .he deemed appropriate given the circumstances, based on his experience and brilliance

In this study, the important events in the battles of the Prophet (s) have been discussed with the view of outlining the profundity of thought and consideration that was employed. In order to make things easy for the readers and students, we shall discuss the details of the subject at hand in such a manner and at such length that they would find no need to refer to numerous other available sources on the subject. This discussion regarding all the different aspects and

the conclusions drawn will be presented separately.

For example, the matter of *istitla'* (gathering information and intelligence) which includes the modes, types and importance of intelligence gathering in battles and military missions and also the ways and methods that are used for this. In this discussion, all the tactics that are employed in information gathering, the role of every individual and group including [that of] the commander of the army and its leaders, their responsibilities and the conditions that need to be met by them and also how the information should be gotten from the enemy, the means that must be used, how to send this information to the commander of the army and how the

information is used by the commander, are all explained.

In these discussions, we give another example of the organization of the soldiers and their formations in different situations. They would sometimes be arranged into one, two or three groups. The 'arrow makers' would be in the first or second group along with the archers, and the infantry would be behind the cavalry. The commander and the central watcher would be

positioned in the center of the formation.

Taking this into consideration, the subject being discussed comprises of both detailed and general topics about effects and consequences, and explanation of the important points and goals. Actually, we find that this subject includes a variety of topics, some of which are examined closely and thereby linked to others. All these topics are important for arriving at a .clear and conclusive understanding of the subject

Fifth: Striving For Humanity

The Prophet of Allah (s) was truly a mercy for the entire human race. He never excluded anyone because of color or ethnicity. All people were considered servants of God by him. For

this reason, he (s) would invite and call people towards the following:

1. Growth and advancement of humanity as a whole. He would say: All of you are from Adam, and Adam was from clay.
2. Agreeing to a peace treaty before war.
3. Forgiveness and pardon before punishment.
4. Leniency and clemency before retribution.

Therefore, we find that all the battles he fought were always for the good of humanity, so he would not seek to punish anyone before they had done anything wrong, as [opposed to what] we see in our present day.

The Prophet of Allah (s) would prevent the killing of the aged, women, children, prisoners and those who did not participate in the war and did not help the enemy. He would prohibit this fervently. He also forbade torture and the disfiguring of dead bodies. He instructed the Muslims to be good, kind and compassionate to the people and to be affable and friendly with them.

He gave a perfect example of mercy in the Conquest of Makkah where, despite victory over the enemy, he treated them with the utmost kindness and compassion. If he wanted, he could have just as easily taken revenge on all of them, but instead he forgave them saying: Go, you are all freed. In the battle of Dhat al-Ruqa-', 'Amr bin Ha-rith was captured trying to assassinate the Prophet, however the Prophet pardoned him and set him free.

The Prophet (s) would treat the captives and prisoners of war with mercy and kindness. He would do favors to many of them (and set them free). At the same time, he told the soldiers to treat them well. For example, in one of the battles, he personally untied the hands of one of the prisoners whom he heard wailing.

He propagated the idea of World Peace and instituted the word 'peace' as a greeting among all the children of Adam. He showed this in the Treaty of Hudaibiyya when he sent Uthma-n bin 'Affa-n to negotiate with the Quraysh, and he accepted a number of representatives and groups that were selected to carry out this task. According to this treaty, he accepted the conditions put forward by the oppressive enemy for the cessation of war.

During the conquest (of Makkah), he deposed the commander whom he had given the order to take the city because of the slogans that he was chanting which gave a totally different impression about the goals of the conquest.

He paid special attention in choosing pious and righteous representatives to take the message to the rulers and kings of the world, because these representatives would have to convey the message using logic and wisdom in order to successfully invite them to accept Isla-m.

In the present age, there is no need that is greater than what the Prophet (s) was striving for. A strong need is felt for sincere action that is free from vain desire and hostility and for leadership that is truthful and righteous, which can lead the people towards humanity and a moral ethic of warfare that is far from mere bloodshed and slaughter.

These issues encompass a vast plethora of discussions that a humble person such as myself feels incapable of doing justice to. However, I shall spare no effort in trying my utmost to work

on it. I do not claim that this research is complete and final, but I pursued this subject because I found it delectable and interesting, and I realized that the fruits of this research would be very beneficial.

I would truly like to express my gratitude to Dr. Ibrahim Baydhun of the University of Lebanon for his help and guidance in the arrangement and layout of this work and his attention to detail regarded the material presented in it. I will never forget his mentoring and the explanations and elucidations that he shared with me and assisted me with, to such an extent that he would at times leave his entire library - which is filled with many valuable works - at my disposal and I was able to gain access to many original sources and handwritten manuscripts.

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Was-salaam

Muhammad Dha-hir Watr

Note

To study the book "Military Management in the Battles of the Prophet (s)", please click here:

<http://alhassanain.org/english/?com=book&id=1281>