

World War IV: Tactics

The World War Against Islamists, WW IV, is a Strategic Defense in this phase. Islamists need to be contained in the Muslim world. Carry the war to the Islamists at the Operational Level in Offenses in Afghanistan (OEF), Iraq (OIF), the Horn of Africa and the Philippines. Meanwhile, the Tactical level of war will be a bewildering array of defense and offense. From Division to Squads' 'boots on the ground' tactics will have a unique dynamic. Tactics will be different in every theater, on every battlefield, and constantly changing – faster than fighting ever has changed before.

The dynamic behind tactics is idiosyncratic Mission-Enemy-Troops-Terrain-Time-Civilian (METT-T-C) analysis of engagements across a global war of ideas. U.S. tactics fight Islamist Totalitarianism which springs from the relative barbarism of Islamic Civilization to dominate about 10% of the Muslims – maybe 150 million Islamists. Thinking human enemies will find new techniques to fight every day. As the war itself changes, the appeal of Islamists to Muslims can go either way. The perception of our tactics is part of the mix. The fighting in Iraq is an example of thinking enemies (more than the Islamists), shifting tactics and complex perspectives.

The good news is the U.S. Army's history of adjusting on the battlefield, however imperfectly, to reach effective tactical means – since fighting the Redcoats back from Concord. Today, soldiers use the web to share tips for Tactics, Techniques, Procedures (TTP). The frank After Action Reviews (AARs) and Lessons Learned procedures honed in the Army's Training Revolution of the 70/80s deal with harsh realities immediately.

Yet, the challenge is less the fighting, but what the fighting means to Muslims. The strategic center of gravity is the Muslim people. So, the tactical significance of every engagement goes beyond body count to 'what message is sent'. The narrative of reducing Fallujah block by block is 'no sanctuaries'. The story 'limit collateral damage' may mean a bye for an enemy mortar which could be hit by counter-fire artillery but won't be in an urban area. War as an extension of politics is precisely the case for the information emanating from every tactical engagement in this Information Era. Since the politics are local, U.S. national, Western Ally, Muslim Ally, and others – simultaneously – the message that sings to one constituency may not speak to another.

Consequently, good tactics demand clear, top-down Commander's intent for the narrative objective of military operations and very de-centralized, low-level execution. Sergeants and junior officers make the difference in each tactical situation. Good human intelligence (HUMINT) improves everything, as does understanding an alien culture. Local HUMINT and knowledge over familiarization take time to develop.

As much as the tactics will change, the enemy can't exceed our tactical grasp without directed and high energy weapons. The Army is re-organizing, exploiting new technology in new equipment and changing doctrine based on the Future Combat Systems (FCS). This is the biggest change in concepts of operations, organization and technology since GEN George Marshall's WW II reforms. The FCS is based on 'how to

fight', a new American Way of Land Warfare, that replaces the GEN U.S. Grant's 'mass' with the 'Quality of Firsts'. See First, Decide First, Act First and Finish Decisively uses Information Technologies (called C4ISR), robotics, logistics and training – with the latest technology in lethal and non-lethal weapons to transform the Army.

The FCS builds on a decade of 'digitization' improving Information-based capabilities in the divisions. Furthermore, the Army After Next (AAN) Wargames (97-00), especially the Tactical Wargames at Ft. Leavenworth, and the Concept Development phase of the FCS (00-02) captured the intellectual high ground for transforming Land Warfare. The FCS is based on winning the toughest future tactical fights possible – bar none. The FCS enables, where possible, the most devastating tactic – the defense-offense – the ambush. It combines the superior form of warfighting – defense – with the decisive form – offense – in speed and impunity from enemy counters.

WW IV has an allegory in the U.S. Indian Wars (1608-1892). Every Islamist enemy, like every tribe, is different. This phase of the war is about ideas, but the fight might become more brutal. The war could change, especially in Europe, making conquest drive the tactics.

WW IV fights an enemy who uses terrorism as a tactic. The range of possibilities for terrorism are endless. Yet, no terrorism, even nuclear or biological attacks on the U.S. Homeland, can defeat America militarily. Even terrible blows on our economy, like controlling Middle East oil, won't win, unless Americans surrender to fear.

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