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THE PRAGMATISM OF WAR ACCORDING TO SUN TZU AND KAUTILYA

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The phenomenon of war, as a social action, finds its theoretical basis in many of the writings of the time. In a natural logic of societal pragmatism, determined by access to vital sources, the leader’s vision is expressed through strategic relationships, shaped by resources, pathways and objectives. The actions assimilated to war are not an end in themselves, they reflect the national strategy for a well-orchestrated desideratum. Sun Tzu and Kautilya, through their works, The Art of War and Arthashastra respectively, illustrate, in an ingenious way, a strategic pattern, centred on a constructive thinking, using the critical resources of a nation for its general good. Solving the existential dilemma: good vs. evil or peace vs. war is carefully justified by choosing viable options: King’s choice, diplomacy, armed conflict, good governance or alliance system.

Keywords: strategy, state, policy, objectives, resources, war.

Introduction

Nearly 2,500 years after the writing of the *Art of War*, after the fall of six empires, two world wars and maybe thousands more other more or less bloody armed conflicts, to present Sun Tzu again seems to be a *historical pleonasm*. I do not think there are military or civilian strategies that are not based on the philosophy of the Chinese general. Beyond the sometimes mystical character attributed to the singularity and authenticity of the author, *The Art of War* is a classic work about tactics and strategy, a true quintessence of polemology. Even though, obviously, today's war has radically changed its means, its paths and goals have remained almost untouched, the differences appearing in form and not in content. Military theorist Liddell Hart, the author of *Strategy: Indirect Actions*, described Sun Tzu's work as "*the most concentrated essence of wisdom on the leadership of war*"¹. Examining the stages through which the various new ideas have passed, until they were accepted, the presentation of strategic concepts is not absolutely new, but only a revival in a modernised form of time-established but forgotten principles, because ... "*there is nothing new under the sun!*"².

The main purpose of Sun Tzu's work was not, apparently, the creation of a set of elaborate and complex rules for conducting a war. He wanted to develop a *good practice* in the field of army leadership, to support military and political leaders in intelligent planning and leading a victorious war. The theoretical ideas of Sun Tzu are still alive today, and not only within the military system. Their applicability is very popular among major international corporations, which develop business strategies in a very uncertain and versatile environment, and for which the philosophy of *The Art of War* is the way to a fair solution to the Darwinian question: Who survives?

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¹ Samuel Griffith, *Sun Tzu: The Art of War*, Oxford University Press Inc., Oxford, NY, 1963.

² B.H. Liddel-Hart, *Strategia: Acțiunile indirecte*, translated from English by Colonel L. Cojoc, Editura Militară, București, 1973, foreword.



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The Art of War and Arthashastra do not glorify the war nor do they support the aggressive use of military force. Even if they belong to different cultures, Sun Tzu and Kautilya summarise the entire existential philosophy of the state as a form of power by dominion, to the right of the sovereign to dispose of the best ways to increase the welfare of the subjects so that peace replaces the war in all its forms.

Unlike Sun Tzu, Kautilya is less known to European military culture, perhaps because of the recent discovery of his work (20th century), translation difficulties or even the apparent organisational rigours it imposes. The historiographical sources present Kautilya as a teacher, philosopher, economist, jurist and royal counsellor who lived during the Emperor Chandragupta (4th century BC) and played a very important role in the establishment of the Maurya Empire³.

Kautilya's philosophy is described in his book *Arthashastra*⁴, a compendium on the efficient functioning of a state, written in a pragmatic style, sometimes giving the impression of immorality, but which has a primary pyramidal need as a reference element: the welfare of the people, in which diplomacy and war play a central role. *"In the happiness of the subjects lies the happiness of the king; in their welfare, his own welfare. His own pleasure is not good, but the pleasure of his subjects is his good"*⁵. In the preface to his book *World Order*, H. Kissinger stated that *"this work sets out, with dispassionate clarity, a vision of how to establish and guard a state (...). The Arthashastra encompasses a world of practical statecraft, not a philosophical disputation"*⁶. Like the *Art of War*, *Arthashastra* does not describe events that took place, specific actions or historical battles. Kautilya expresses the general aspects of the situation, in a useful and relevant writing for each period, in a variety of situations, making it a transcendental masterpiece of a universal pattern of great national strategy.

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³ Thomas Trautmann, *Kautilya and the Arthasāstra: A Statistical Investigation of the Authorship and Evolution of the Text*, Michigan University, 1971, p. 10.

⁴ In Sanskrit, its translation means *the science of material gain*.

⁵ Kautilya, *Arthashastra*, translated into English by Shamasastri R., vol. I, book I, chapter I.

⁶ Henry Kissinger, *Ordinea mondială. Reflecții asupra specificului națiunilor și a cursului istorie*, Editura RAO, București, 2015.

and death, a road either to safety or to ruin. Hence it is a subject if inquiry which can on no account be neglected”⁷. “Peace is preferred to war”⁸. In-depth knowledge of the war phenomenon is part of the national strategy, adapted to its own organisational culture, which must be integrated into a systemic vision, dependent on endogenous and exogenous factors, but which must bear the print of the uniqueness and originality of its own interpretation.

War Strategy according Sun Tzu...

“Strategy without tactics is the slowest route to victory; tactics without strategy is the noise before defeat”.

Sun Tzu

Sun Tzu’s *Art of War* has influenced the thinking of many generations of military leaders, with more or less known battlefield results, resulting in universal war principles as a phenomenon. These true polemical axioms were also applied during the 1990 Gulf War, when the American General Norman Schwarzkopf Jr., planning the *Desert Storm* operation, formed the doctrinal basis of factors underlying the speed, deception, and exploitation of enemy vulnerabilities. A few years later, *Shock and Awe* resumed the theme, in a little changed direction, but with the same fundamental ingredients.

Chinese philosophy has consistently pronounced against the glorification of the war. Confucius said: “A really great general does not love the war; he is neither revengeful nor passionate”⁹. For this reason, at the core of Sun Tzu’s war analysis does not lie the raw, quantitative force, but the quality, expressed and multiplied by various forms: intelligence, deception, misleading, apparent demotivation etc. The importance of human life is higher than the potential gain as a prey to war. This praxiological approach determines the meaning of deception as a usual practice in war, not as an undue advantage, but as a fulfilment of the intended purpose, even with lower forces.

The effectiveness of a strategy can also be measured by the degree of linearity between goals, paths and means. Sun Tzu understood

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⁷ Sun Tzu, *Arta războiului*, p. 5.

⁸ Kautilya, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

⁹ Gaston Bouthoul, *Războiul*, Editura Militară, București, 1978, p. 32.



Leaders need to carefully examine the reasons for a military conflict, use all soft solutions, especially diplomatic ones, not to deplete resources, and apply all coercive measures for the enemy to give up without a fight.

“What is of supreme importance in war is to attack the enemy’s strategy”!

this idea very well and, through an assessment of the operational environment, he developed his concepts to the extent that the decision-maker has imposed this. Pragmatism is expressed in the final state; once a nation goes to war, *“victory remains the main objective”*¹⁰. Consequently, leaders need to carefully examine the reasons for a military conflict, use all *soft* solutions, especially diplomatic ones, not to deplete resources, and apply all coercive measures for the enemy to give up without a fight. Ultimately, when alternatives to violence have been consumed, war needs to be quick, flexible in planning, not to engage resources in prolonged campaigns, focused on victory, with viable, misleading and intelligent alternatives.

The factors that determine the character of the war, though not very clearly delimited by Sun Tzu, are shock, friction, inconsistency, complexity and unpredictability. *“Just as water retains no constant shape, so in warfare there are no constant conditions. (...) In battle, there are not more than two methods of attack – the direct and the indirect; yet these two in combination give rise to an endless series of manoeuvres”*¹¹. For Sun Tzu, the inherent complexity of the war comes from interacting with the enemy, and therefore depends on the circumstances in which it exposes its own strategy. *“That which depends on me, I can do; that which depends on the enemy cannot be certain. Therefore, it is said that one may know how to win, but cannot necessarily do so”*¹².

*“What is of supreme importance in war is to attack the enemy’s strategy”*¹³! It is a real syllogism that there can be no own strategy without a strategy of the enemy, on whose interpretation future victories (or defeats) depend. The foundation stone in translating vision into facts is the doublegnoseological process, own and enemy’s, augmented with essential information about land, weather, previous facts, etc. We must understand that we are dealing permanently with a quartet of variables, diametrically opposed as interpretation and effects: strong → weak; opportunities → vulnerabilities. The winning

¹⁰ Sun Tzu, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

strategy is to find action plans that equip the doctrinal schemes (resulting from past battles) with the means to accomplish the goals. Even if they can look outdated, I will list five generally valid situations that can be, I think, in the premise of victory:

1. He who knows how to manage their resources will win;
2. He who knows how to make alliances will win;
3. He who anticipates the change, two steps, and not one, surprising the enemy in counter-reaction will win;
4. He who is motivated and maintains the spirit of winning of the entire organisation Will win;
5. He who innovates, respecting the laws but violating the principles, will win.

... and Kautilya

Since ancient times, the means assimilated to war and diplomacy, as the power tools of a state organisation, have been the subject of systematic exposures, in an theoretical attempt to turn them into reference models. From Sun Tzu to Jomini or from Kautilya to Clausewitz, military philosophers discussed and analysed this subject in different ways and exposures, mainly due to the natural evolution of society. It is known that alliances are formed through diplomacy, which guides and develops military and political *leadership*, forms power poles, crystallises peace, manages the crisis, or triggers war. In some measure, Kautilya captures this cycle by discussing the success of a nation in the 15 books of his treaty, *Arthashastra*, in a surrealistic manner for the 4th century BC.

As a whole, Kautilya describes the great strategy in *Arthashastra*. That is, that form of national conduct that looks beyond the war, to the subsequent peace. The one that not only combines power tools, but regulates their use, with a common purpose: the welfare of their own people. Beyond that, in a natural and logical argumentation, *Arthashastra* goes beyond the realm of an *incognito terra*, and presents the strategy for each constituent element of his state. And these are: the ruler (king), the ministers, the urban and rural population, the fortifications, the economy, the army and the allies. Each is described and placed in a hierarchy, in an interactive relationship system

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Regarding the war, Kautilya states, “When the advantages derivable from peace and war are of equal character, one should prefer peace; for disadvantages such as the loss of power and wealth, sojourning and sin, are ever attending upon war”.

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and then subjected to a systematic examination. Kautilya’s theoretical analysis of the functioning of a state includes a breakdown of aspects of internal administration in constituent terms, as well as the analysis of relations between states in terms of the theory **of concentric circles**.

Regarding the war, Kautilya states, *“When the advantages derivable from peace and war are of equal character, one should prefer peace; for disadvantages such as the loss of power and wealth, sojourning and sin, are ever attending upon war”*¹⁴. The Hindu text classifies the war as follows: **the war by counsel** (*Mantrayuddha*), describing the pursuit of diplomacy by a weak king who does not consider an open war opportunistic; **the open war** (*Prakasayuddha*) specifying the time and the place, **the secret war** (*Kutayuddha*), which refers to the irregular war, **the clandestine/silent war** (*Gudayuddha*), using hidden methods to achieve the goal without a real military campaign¹⁵. To each of these types of wars corresponds a type of strategy: **the strategy in sight**, specific to *Mantrayuddha*, whereby all actions to be taken are discussed and publicly presented; **the strategy of direct actions**, specific to *Prakasayuddha*, may be similar to the frontal tactic; **the strategy of indirect actions** for *Kutayuddha*, assumes engaging resources without fully respecting principles of the war and recognising the importance of manoeuvres; **the strategy of guerrilla**, using almost anything for the purpose.

The ultimate goal of the Kautilyan war is the welfare of the king and his subjects, equally. This social balance is one that gives value and rationality to strategies, even if they seem immoral. Supporting the leader does not appear as a partisan *leitmotif* of war, but justifies all actions by accepting them *ab initio*. Success proves morality! Even if it sounds slightly Machiavellian, the king must act according to what will benefit the nation through *“security and welfare”*¹⁶. Similarly, Machiavelli states that *“a prince ought to live amongst his people in such a way that no unexpected circumstances, whether of good or evil, shall make him change; because if the necessity for this comes in troubled times, you are too late for harsh measures; and mild*

¹⁴ Kautilya, *op. cit.*, pp. 370-371.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 305.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 266.

*ones will not help you, for they will be considered as forced from you, and no one will be under any obligation to you for them*¹⁷.

Kautilya's war does not create precedents. It does not become an end in itself, an *instrument of evil*; war does not create addiction to power, like the later monarchs. It prevents and agrees. Defeat and success. Opposes, *pre factum*, to the concept of continuation of politics. It is a policy, an extension of the state, adapted to the temporal limits of success, but unlimited by the welfare of the people.

For Kautilya, the social and economic power surpassed military power. However, supporting the war could not be done without military superiority. Hence the reason for strong armed forces, whose use supports the King's demands. The threat adds a military dimension to the national strategy, beyond purely political aspects, imposing, *ab hinc*, the implicit use of force. And here comes the power, the most important factor, after Kautilya, in conducting a military campaign. For the Indian philosopher, the power becomes an inherent side of the state when all forces converge to the same goal. The two components, tangible (personnel, weapons, mobility, firepower and logistics) and intangible (leadership, morals, discipline, training, doctrine and motivation) complete each other, crystallising a common body that is impossible to defeat. *"Whenever the king is superior, he will not waste any time against the enemy, weakening or crushing him"*¹⁸.

Strategic Thinking

*"The strategy is the art of accomplishing what we have set up"*¹⁹. Strategic thinking was born and evolved as a result of great ideological confrontations, transposed into power conflicts. Based on a set of cultural values, guided by noble intentions, it has often surpassed the limits of cold rationality and of normative limits imposed by archaic models. The future is uncertain, no matter one would dissect it in probabilistic approaches. Anticipation can come from a pragmatic approach, which does not always mean opportunism, by combining



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¹⁷ Medieval Sourcebook: Nicolo Machiavelli (1469-1527), *The Prince*, 1513, in <https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/basis/machiavelli-prince.asp>, retrieved on 1 October 2018.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, p. 374.

¹⁹ Constantin Brătianu, *Gândirea strategică*, Editura Pro Universitaria, București, 2015, p. 263.



Strategic thinking must provide positive force for practical application of the leader's vision, for the creation of the link between the probable events, in the sense of correlating and transforming them into emerging elements of the proposed goal.

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rational and emotional faculties, all integrated into strategic thinking. *"Pragmatic strategy grows out of profound intellectual traditions and subtle life experiences"*²⁰. Strategic thinking must provide positive force for practical application of the leader's vision, for the creation of the link between the probable events, in the sense of correlating and transforming them into emerging elements of the proposed goal.

Nowadays, globally, any confrontational environment, either real, designed or simulated, is characterised by volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity. Sometimes even through infinity, in contingency variants. With the same laws and principles as 2,500 years ago, the 21st century war uses all available instruments – political, economic, social, diplomatic, and military – to persuade the enemy to quit before it begins. Coercive, visible or invisible, expensive or inexpensive methods are preferable to violent confrontation. Sun Tzu and Kautilya's pragmatic war theory addresses this type of environment.

The Art of War and *Arthashastra* analyse everything that lies beyond uncertainty. Risk does not appear as a source of fear, stopping action. It is eliminated through creativity and finding viable alternatives. The concreteness cannot be disclosed in prediction details when we talk about strategy. Strategic thinking deposits the mental capacity of recognition by associating with past or present states, making the transition from apparent assumptions to essence correlations between the variables that act in a system. *"In terms of planning, no unnecessary movement; in terms of strategy, no forbidden step"*²¹.

Sun Tzu was fully aware of the importance of a clearly oriented, easy-to-understand and to-apply direction of strategy. *The Art of War* offers a collection of methods needed to design the resources, calculating the chances of success *in black and white*. In the hypothetical situations presented by Sun Tzu there are no *grey areas*, hazards or unseen risks. It all depends on the calculations and estimates of the leaders, within the reasonable limits of manoeuvring concepts and combat devices at that time (not very different from today!).

²⁰ I. Nonaka, Z. Zhu, *Pragmatic strategy. Eastern Wisdom, Global Success*, Cambridge University Press, p. 15, apud Constantin Brătianu, *Gândirea strategică, op. cit.*, p. 260.

²¹ Sun Tzu, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

Problems had to be solved correctly, otherwise the nation was destroyed. The strategy's logic might seem simplistic, but when the goal was for the nation to thrive, the gains were supposed to be maximum!

We can say that Sun Tzu viewed the leadership of the state in a holistic vision, understanding the importance of maintaining the state balance by a rational approach to government. The limits of the strategy do not stop at the immediate conquests, but they must go beyond the end of the conflict, creating, from the planning stage, the necessary conditions for the functioning of the system of interstate relations. The defeated population does not disappear, it is not assimilated, it does not fail. It must be seen with respect for the nation, ensuring its natural conditions of cultural, ideological, social, manifestation, without unjustified restrictions. An eloquent example is the transition phase of the *Iraqi Freedom* operation, where the US administration failed to implement a clear resettlement strategy by not integrating *soft-power* tools into coercive means, thus giving the insurgency the premises of a continuing conflict.

“An army leader is anyone who by virtue of assumed role or assigned responsibility inspires and influences people to accomplish organisational goals. Army leaders motivate people both from inside and outside the chain of command to pursue the actions, focus thinking and shape decisions for the greater good of the organisation”²².

“The goal of science is power. Power is strength and strength changes the mind”²³. The strategic thinking of the Kautilyan king is oriented towards gaining power. But not by deliberative and deterministic thinking, but by using collective judgment, negotiation and manoeuvre at the right moment and time, understanding the strategic context, anticipating the changes, firm decisions in a complex, ambiguous, uncertain and unsafe environment. In other words, not mathematical models (as Clausewitz later tried), but solutions applicable to a well-specified dynamic context.

In *Arthashastra*, nothing in the administration of the state, whether internal or external, was left to chance: the activity of the king,

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²² US Department of the Army, *Army Leadership*, Field Manual 6-22, Washington, DC, US Department of the Army, 12 October 2006

²³ Kautilya, *op. cit.*, p. 388.



Kautilya sees the period before the war as critical to the final result. It was vital that the king and his counsellors were able to make a rational assessment of their own resources in relation to those of the enemy, also with taking into account the allies' contribution.

ministries, or senior officials; the state of the army, its provenance and preparation; identifying and eradicating corruption; the economic system; trade; social relations, class hierarchy, the obligations and rights of each individual; the legal system; international relations; fraud prevention; preparing and conducting the war; integrating the population of the conquered states; the opportunity to build up the alliance system and its connections. All the actions taken are converging towards a *status quo*, which is primarily focused on the benefit, micro and macroeconomic one, which is the premise for obtaining/maintaining regional power.

*Those who forget the lessons of history are doomed to repeat it*²⁴. This phrase almost became a truism, applicable to all fields of human activity, especially the military one. Kautilya sees the period before the war as critical to the final result. It was vital that the king and his counsellors were able to make a rational assessment of their own resources in relation to those of the enemy, also with taking into account the allies' contribution. Thus, weather conditions, seasonal variations, military training programmes, equipment, moral analysis, consequences assessment, loss estimates in relation to strategic gains, risk analysis were carefully weighed. (It strikingly sounds like the stages of today's planning process!). There was no situation in which an enemy could be attacked without prior consultation with the allies. Everything for the safety of victory, nothing more for hazard. Kautilya encouraged the superior intelligence (specific to the visionaries), considering it more important than the military power in this war strategy.

In ancient India, the central role in the state's gear was owned by the king. Therefore, strategic thinking was an exclusively emanation of noble origin, the attribute of whom, depending on its strategic decisions, depended on the fate of the whole country. The states in which the *vijigishu* (conqueror) maintained the state were: 1. **peace** (sandhi); 2. **war** (vighraha); 3. **neutrality** (asana); 4. **preparation for war** (yana); 5. **membership of an alliance system** (samshrayi); 6. **dual policy** (idhībháva).

²⁴ Jorge Santayana, American philosopher, essayist, poet, fiction writer and critic, 1863-1952.

In the king's strategic approach, the goal was always to defeat the opponent. To each of the six states corresponds a strategy, and the combination of these – the great strategy. War is just one of the means to achieve the goal of hegemony. The other means are **giving gifts** or **bribing** to weak emperors. Against the powerful, the **division of power** (only the impression of power, the control was the conqueror's) or **coercion**. Through a broad strategy, Arthashastra recommends that the future conqueror acts primarily against the hostile neighbour and, with the newly acquired power, to develop the force to the neutral king/state. If he succeeds, he should also subdue the most powerful or "indifferent" king. This would complete his hegemony on the *mandala* as a whole, the rest being in line. If there are only two other states, one hostile and the other friendly, *vijigisu* should crush the neighbouring state, whether hostile or friendly, and then oppose the other.

Sun Tzu becomes even more pragmatic when it comes to the king's profile. He must be intelligent, credible, human, brave, and very disciplined. These features defined (and still define) organizational culture, playing a key role in shaping the strategy. The first step towards knowledge and, implicitly, to the success of action is self-consciousness. Sun Tzu called for the leader to have that *high knowledge* that would allow the understanding of weak and strong points, validated by vulnerabilities and opportunities, of his own forces and the enemy's. *"Know your enemy and know yourself; find naught in fear for 100 battles. Know yourself but not your enemy, find levels of loss and victory. Know your enemy but not yourself, wallow in defeat every time"*²⁵.

Completing it in a timeless and ideological attempt, Lao Tse in *Tao Te Ching (The Book of the Path to the Supreme Truth)* adds to the virtues of a leader the modesty, the altruism and, above all, the trust in people. *"The leader is manifesting with modesty. (...) The best leaders pass unnoticed... When the trust in people lacks/ People cannot trust the rulers neither. / Words are always inferior to the facts"*²⁶.

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²⁵ Sun Tzu, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

²⁶ Lao Tse, *Tao Te Ching*, translated in <https://scorilos.files.wordpress.com/2012/01/lao-tze-tao-te-king-cartea-caii-si-a-virtutii.pdf>, retrieved on 10 October 2018.



Adding the *reflection* to the above features, Sun Tzu's leader model allows him to think of a higher level in analyzing a complex issue. Today we call it critical thinking, creative thinking, systemic thinking, or ethical thinking. Practically, *The Art of War* teaches us to think strategically, to get out of the paradigm, to reason effectively, translating us outside of our own box. Paraphrasing Descartes, *we are strategizing, so we exist!*

Conclusions

Unquestionably, *The Art of War* and *Arthashastra* are the proof of the two geniuses of the strategy. If the Chinese general's teachings were taken over, adapted, and applied in almost everything that depends upon a strategy, Kautilya is a little *disadvantaged*. His work, basically a model of strategic thinking, is less applied, in a completely rational pattern. Indirectly, every great power, from antiquity to this day, can find its own strategy in the Indian books.

The foundation of the establishment of an influential nation state was its power, manifested in all forms and fields of administration. Kautilya realized the importance of the economy in the leadership of the state, transposed into the welfare of the population and later in the development of a broad policy of influencing neighbours. Ability consisted in overcoming constraints of any kind, in all environments. And Sun Tzu and Kautilya look at the economy as a precursor of military power, in different exposures, of course (one indirectly and the other directly). According to the two, the ultimate goal was the multiplication of internal and external power factors.

The military power is only one of the instruments of national power, certified by the resources available (human and material), education and training levels, moral quality of the population and state leadership. In the general equation of gaining power, the war must be the last solution, after exhausting other instruments: political, diplomatic or economic. It must be generated when it should, when it helps, when it brings benefits, when it creates perspectives! Applied or not knowingly, the pragmatism of this art of war found itself in the birth and development of empires. And not only the great

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historical empires, but also the media, financial, economic, real estate empires, etc.

The meaning of the war in these two masterpieces was also included in the United Nations Charter. Article I states: *“To maintain international peace and security and, to that end: to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace and to bring about by peaceful means, and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law, adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations which might lead to a breach of the peace”*.

Today’s war, more than ever, shakes swords and generates conflicts, simultaneously, on several levels: **physically**, through the test of fire power, weapon technology, troop power, and logistics; **psychologically**, by influencing morale, leadership and courage; **virtually**, by creating a **distortion of reality**. The role, or rather the ability of the commanders, consists in assessing all complex battlefield situations, making effective decisions, and formulating superior tactical plans to overcome the critical points of a campaign plan.

Transformed into strategy, the pragmatism of the war could look like that, today:

- based on economic power – e.g.: the European Union;
- based on military power – e.g.: Russia, Iran;
- joint (economic and military) – e.g. US and partly Russia;
- based on the power of military alliances, but with important economic and military influences – Israel.

At the margin of these are the emerging democratic states, which seek (yet) promoter positions in a strategy for defining the role in the region. Unfortunately, many of the national strategies lack the living essence of their development, people and their well-being, emphasizing *deadly areas*: transport strategy, sports strategy, and examples could continue.

Western determinism was possible as a result of easy access to power (through resources, intrigues, conquests, etc.). Defining and calculating war variables can be replaced by strategic thinking, not in the sense



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of abandoning the analysis, but in imposing visionary solutions. A small nation, in a geopolitical and geostrategic context, may have the same chances of asserting itself with the misfortune of *being swallowed* by the great powers. Not the force itself makes you a winner in the war, but the pragmatism in applying the strategy. Not defining some rules leads to well-being, but applying them. Maybe it would not be worthless if we would study the past wars through Kautilya's visionary eyes also, not just Sun Tzu's, trying to find the mistakes of the forerunners, in order not to repeat them. It is not like that, *"only a fool learns from his own mistakes. The wise man learns from the mistakes of others"* (von Bismarck).

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