



United States Marine Corps
Professional Reading Program
MCDP 1 Warfighting Discussion Guide



Purpose and Overview

The purpose of this discussion is to introduce the Marine Corps' principal doctrinal publication in and explore its impact on the tactical and operational functions of the MAGTF. Like MCDP 1, the discussion is divided into four parts: The Nature of War, The Theory of War, Preparing for War, and the Conduct of War.

Method

Read and discuss MCDP 1.

Endstate

Each Marine should leave the discussion with a firm foundation in Marine Corps doctrine describing the nature of war, theory of war, preparation for war and conduct of war.

Additional Reading Linked to MCDP 1

Since MCDP 1 is heavily influenced by Sun Tzu and Clausewitz, the following additional reading is recommended for discussion leaders: Sun Tzu's *The Art of War* edited by the late BGEN Samuel B. Griffith, USMC (Ret.) is required reading for Sergeants, Warrant Officers and Second Lieutenants in the Marine Corps Professional Reading Program; selected pages of Carl von Clausewitz's *On War* – the 1984 Princeton University Press translation edited by Michael Howard and Peter Paret – are identified in the issues for consideration below. *On War* is not a requirement in the Professional Reading Program.

Chapter One: The Nature of War

1. Identify and discuss some of the factors that cause friction in war. How can we operate effectively within the medium of friction? (MCDP 1 pp. 5-6)

In any endeavor a certain amount of friction exists. "Murphy" is alive and well in something as simple as a company training exercise. But nowhere is friction more prevalent or potentially deadly than on the disordered and uncertain battlefield. Some significant sources of friction are as follows:

2. Discuss the single most important source of friction: Opposing Wills

The single most important source of friction in warfare is the enemy's will. For every task you try to successfully complete, your adversary's goal is to disrupt that process. Your enemy is an independent, thinking force on the battlefield whose actions are motivated by a will in direct





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conflict with your own. Failure to visualize the enemy in this light can lead to disaster on the battlefield.

3. Friction can be described by four causal factors. What are they?

- a. Mental friction. The ability to make rational decisions under extreme stress and in the environment of uncertainty will be tested to the limit. Sources of this type of friction could be indecision by those above, below, and around you. Conflicting battlefield reports about the enemy, the terrain, and friendly forces may lead to hesitation in decision making, creating additional stress on subordinates whose loss of confidence detrimentally affects their ability to comply with the commander's plan.
- b. Physical friction. As with any endeavor, in war there will be physical limitations.
- c. External friction. External friction is a broad category that encompasses factors outside your direct control, including enemy action, the terrain, weather, and simple chance. Potential sources of external friction might include loss of radio communications just when you need to transmit or receive important information, a messenger who gets lost and fails to deliver an attack order, and so forth.
- d. Self-induced friction. Self-induced friction is caused by such factors as lack of clearly defined goals, lack of coordination, unclear or complicated plans, complex task organizations or command relationships, or complicated technologies. Poorly defined commander's intent or a newly formed staff or unit can generate a tremendous amount of self-induced friction. Expectations that do not deal realistically with the chaos, constant change, and uncertainty of the battlefield may also create self-induced friction.

4. How do we operate effectively within the medium of friction?

- a. While we should always strive to minimize self-induced friction, the first step to overcoming friction in war is acknowledging that it will always exist.

An understanding of friction is a large part of that much-admired sense of warfare, which a good general is supposed to possess. To be sure, the best general is not the one who is most familiar with the idea of friction, and who takes it most to heart (he belongs to the anxious type so common among experienced commanders). The good general must know friction in order to overcome it whenever possible, and in order not to expect a standard of achievement in his operations which this very friction makes impossible.

—Clausewitz





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- b. While attempting to overcome friction through persistent strength of mind and spirit (will), we must attempt at the same time to raise our enemy's friction to a level that destroys his ability to fight.
- c. Experience offers us the best possibilities for learning what is, and is not, possible in war. Free-play exercises, force-on-force training and exercises, and exercises in which we must actually move people and equipment under conditions that most closely approximate war provide the best substitute for experience.
- d. A study of history provides us insight into events on past battlefields and campaigns and the manner in which various leaders overcame friction or allowed it to rule them.
- e. Other means to reduce friction include a clear commander's intent, simple plans and orders that are flexible, well-written SOPs, battle drill, wargaming, and habitual relationships.

If you or your students wish to study this topic in-depth, pages 16-18 and 113-123 in *On War* (Clausewitz) are good places to begin.

***The most important part of this whole discussion is tied to a central theme: War is inherently disorderly, uncertain, dynamic, and dominated by friction. To think otherwise is to deny the very nature of war. By learning to thrive in this environment, and limit its effect on us, we can use the environment as a weapon against an enemy who cannot cope as well.*

5. How is risk related to gain? (MCDP 1 pp. 7- 9)

- a. The very nature of war makes certainty impossible; all actions in war will be based on incomplete, inaccurate, or even contradictory information.
- b. Uncertainty involves the estimation and acceptance of risk.
- c. Risk is inherent in war and is involved in every undertaking. Risk is also related to gain; normally, greater potential gain requires greater risk.
- d. Risk is equally common to action and inaction.
- e. The practice of concentrating combat power necessitates the willingness to accept prudent risk.
- f. The acceptance of risk does not equate to the imprudent willingness to gamble the entire likelihood of success on a single, improbable event.





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6. How do we determine the amount of “acceptable” risk? (A “school solution” answer will not be found in MCDP 1.)

- a. Lacking complete information on the enemy, the terrain, and sometimes friendly forces, the best we can hope to do is determine probabilities, always keeping in mind that some actions will fall outside the realm of probability.
- b. A process we use in the Marine Corps, and here at EWS, to help in the analysis and decision process is Mission, Enemy, Terrain and Weather, Troops and Fire Support Available, and Time (METT-T). This process does not attempt to provide a measure of certainty in the decision-making process. It does aid the commander and his staff in determining the fluid (unknown or changing) and the static (known) elements of both his own and the enemy’s situation and capabilities.
- c. This logical process assists in determining the degree of risk involved in the various courses of action. This estimate process will be used as a tool to develop judgment.
- d. Finally, after determining probabilities, friendly and enemy capabilities, and the known and unknown elements, the commander must reflect on the amount of potential gain and compare it to the risk he is willing to accept.

7. How do we capitalize on or exploit disorder? (MCDP 1 pp. 10-12)

- a. A summary of the nature of the battlefield should include friction, uncertainty, and fluidity. War gravitates naturally toward disorder because of friction, uncertainty, and fluidity. This natural disorder creates the conditions ripe for exploitation by an opportunistic will.
- b. If we accept that the battlefield will be chaotic, then we must realize that as the battle progresses the battlefield will become increasingly disordered.
 - (1) Decisive results are rarely the direct result of initial, deliberate action.
 - (2) The initial action creates the conditions necessary for subsequent actions to develop from it.
 - (3) As the opposing wills interact, they create various, fleeting opportunities for either foe.





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- c. If we cannot impose precise, positive control over events, we can impose a general framework of order on the disorder (i.e., prescribe a general flow of action rather than try to control each event) by the following means:
 - (1) Decentralized control
 - (2) Simple plans that are flexible
 - (3) Commander's intent
 - (4) Mission tactics using mission-type orders
 - (5) Fostering initiative in subordinates so they will seek opportunities
 - (6) A designated main effort in our concept of operations.
- d. By exploiting opportunities, we create more opportunities for exploitation in increasing numbers.
- e. It is often the ability and willingness to ruthlessly exploit these opportunities that generate results. The ability to take advantage of opportunity is a function of speed, flexibility, boldness, and initiative.

8. What are the moral and physical forces of war? (MCDP 1 pp. 15-17)

- a. Moral forces are psychological rather than tangible in nature. Moral forces include the mental aspects of war.
- b. Although moral forces are difficult to grasp and impossible to quantify, it is important to understand that moral forces exert a greater influence on the nature and outcome of war than do physical forces.
- c. Examples of moral and physical forces include national will, military resolve, national or individual conscience, emotion, fear, courage, morale, leadership, and esprit.
- d. Following are two key points regarding moral and physical forces:
 - (1) When we are making estimates of a situation or analyzing relative combat power, we cannot concentrate on the physical factors to the exclusion of the moral factors.
 - (2) Our maneuver warfare doctrine focuses on shattering the cohesion of the enemy both morally and physically.





Chapter Two: The Theory of War.

9. "The single most important thought to understand about our theory is that war must serve policy." Discuss this statement. (MCDP 1 pp. 23-25)

- a. War does not exist for its own sake. It is an extension of policy with military force. The defeat of the enemy's fighting forces must be accomplished in a manner and to a degree consistent with the national policy objective.
- b. The application of violence will vary in accordance with our policy aims. When the policy motive of war is intense, such as the annihilation of an enemy (e.g., unconditional surrender of Germany and Japan during WWII), then policy and war's natural military tendency toward destruction will coincide, and the war will appear more military and less political in nature. On the other hand, the less intense the policy motive, the more the military tendency toward destruction will be at variance with that motive, and the more political and less military the war will appear.
- c. If you are comfortable with the idea and the background, this is a nice place to talk about the political and military aims in WWII and compare them with Korea and the relief of General MacArthur. Also consider how MacArthur's relief may have affected our military leaders during the initial involvement in Vietnam.

For further information, see On War (pp. 577-637, review pp. 605-610).

10. Why are lesser regional contingencies (low-intensity conflict) more probable than combat operations at the higher end of the spectrum? (MCDP 1 pp 26-28)

a. Briefly discuss the "spectrum of conflict" so the group is comfortable with the idea. We no longer use the term "military operations other than war." Recall from General Krulak's Foreword to MCDP 1 that *Warfighting* represents "a way of thinking" that guides everything Marines do from humanitarian assistance to counter terrorism to general wars like World War II. Emphasize that the spectrum of conflict usually refers to the entire war or operation. It is acknowledged that for the individual or small unit there is no such thing as violence or combat that is "low in intensity."

(1) Low intensity. The application of military power is restrained and selective.

(2) High intensity. General war (e.g., World War II).

- b. Many nations do not possess the military means to wage war at the high end of the spectrum. Those that do are generally unwilling to accept the risks associated with wars of high intensity.





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11. How are the offense and the defense complementary forms? (MCDP 1 pp. 32-35, review pp. 9-10)

- a. Combat manifests itself in two different but complementary forms: the offense and the defense. They are neither mutually exclusive nor clearly distinct—each includes elements of the other.
- b. The offense is the preferred form; only through the offense can we truly pursue a positive aim and impose our will on the enemy. Offense = striking power.
 - (1) The offense cannot sustain itself indefinitely.
 - (2) At some times and places, it becomes necessary to halt the offense to replenish, and the defense automatically takes over.
 - (3) The requirement to focus forces at the main effort for the offense often necessitates assuming the defensive elsewhere or at least assumes some economy-of-force measures.
 - (4) Out of necessity we include defensive considerations as part of our concept of the offense.
- c. The defense is the stronger form of war; we resort to the defense when weakness compels. Defense = resisting power.
 - (1) The defense is an essential component of the offense.
 - (2) The defense cannot be purely passive resistance.
 - (3) An effective defense must assume an offensive character, striking the enemy at the moment of his greatest vulnerability.
 - (4) The truly decisive element of the defense is the counterattack; thus, the offense is an integral component of the concept of the defense.
- d. Refer back to "fluidity." No episode can be viewed in isolation. Each merges with those that precede and follow it—creating continuous, fluctuating activity replete with fleeting opportunities and unforeseen events.
- e. The offense and defense exist simultaneously as necessary components of each other, and the transition from one to the other is fluid and continuous.

***See Clausewitz On War (pp. 357-359)*





12. Explain the concept of the culminating point. (MCDP 1 p. 34)

- a. It is essential to understanding the relationship between the offense and defense.
- b. Not only can the offense not sustain itself indefinitely, it also generally grows weaker as it advances.
- c. Eventually, the superiority that allowed us to attack and forced our enemy to defend in the first place dissipates and the balance tips in favor of our enemy. We have reached our culminating point, at which we can no longer sustain the attack and must revert to the defense.
- d. It is precisely at this point that the defensive element of the offense is most vulnerable to the offensive element of the defense, the counterattack.

Some additional thoughts by Clausewitz:

The diminishing force of the attack is one of the strategist's main concerns. His awareness of it will determine the accuracy of his estimate in each case of the options open to him.

If we remember how many factors contribute to an equation of forces, we will understand how difficult it is in some cases to determine which side has the upper hand. Often it is entirely a matter of the imagination.

What matters therefore is to detect the culminating point with discriminative judgment.

13. What are the characteristics of attrition warfare? (MCDP 1 pp. 36-39)

- a. Seeks victory through the cumulative destruction of the enemy's material assets by superior firepower and technology.
- b. Sees the enemy as a target to be engaged and destroyed systematically.
- c. Focuses on efficiency – methodical, scientific approach to war.
- d. Emphasizes the efficient application of massed, accurate fires.
- e. Movement tends to be ponderous and its tempo relatively unimportant.
- f. Progress is gauged in quantitative terms: battle damage assessment, body counts, and terrain captured.
- g. Seeks battle under any and all conditions, pitting strength against strength to exact the greatest toll from the enemy.





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- h. Achieves results that are proportionate to efforts; greater expenditures net greater results (i.e., greater attrition).
- i. Desire for volume and accuracy of fire tends to lead toward centralized control.
- j. Emphasizes efficiency, which tends to lead to an inward focus on procedures and techniques.
- k. Demands the willingness and ability to withstand attrition, because warfare by attrition is costly.
- l. Requires numerical superiority—at the national level becomes as much an industrial problem as a military problem.

14. What are the characteristics of maneuver warfare? (MCDP 1 pp. 36-39)

- a. Seeks to circumvent a problem and attack it from a position of advantage rather than straight on.
- b. Applies strength against selected enemy weaknesses. Maneuver warfare relies on speed and surprise to concentrate strength against enemy weakness.
- c. Uses tempo as a weapon—often the most important weapon. Decentralized control is the key element for generating tempo; thus, military judgment at all levels is very important.
- d. Seeks results that are both physical and moral. The object of maneuver warfare is not so much to destroy the enemy physically as it is to shatter the enemy's cohesion, organization, command, and psychological balance.
- e. Depends on the ability to identify and exploit enemy weakness, not simply on Applying superior physical force.
- f. Makes a greater demand on military judgment (at all levels of leadership).
- g. Potential success by maneuver is often disproportionate to the effort made.
- h. Applied incompetently, maneuver warfare carries with it a greater chance for catastrophic failure, while attrition is inherently risky.





14. Why are focus and speed so important and what do they produce when combined? (MCDP 1 pp. 40-42 and note 18 on pp. 102-103)

a. Focus is the convergence of effects in time and space.

(1) Effective focus may achieve decisive local superiority for a numerically inferior force.

(2) Focus is the means by which we develop superiority at the decisive time and place.

b. Speed is a measure of how fast you do things in both time and space. Note 18 on pages 102-103 describes the Boyd Cycle, also known as the Observe, Orient, Decide, Act Cycle. The opponent who goes through the Observe, Orient, Decide process faster than his opponent gains an edge in time which he exploits by doing something in space. The two opponents now have a new situation – they have to Observe, Orient, Decide and Act again. Thinking (Observing, Orienting and Deciding) and Acting (executing the decision) both take time. The opponent who thinks and acts faster gains an advantage over his enemy.

(1) Most important, speed is necessary in order to concentrate superior strength at the decisive time and place.

(2) We desire speed in two forms. First, we want to operate quickly. Second, we want to move faster than our adversary.

(3) Both forms are genuine sources of combat power.

(4) Superior speed allows us to seize the initiative and dictate the terms of combat, forcing the enemy to react to us.

(5) Speed provides security.

(6) Speed is a requirement for maneuver and surprise.

c. Combining focus and speed magnifies the “punch” and “shock effect” of our actions. Being faster starts with identifying where and when the decisive moment will occur before your enemy figures it out. Being faster then means delivering superior combat power at the decisive moment faster than your enemy can react.

****A good source for additional reading is Clausewitz’s *On War* (pp. 194-209). Sun Tzu also dedicated significant thought to the concepts of speed and decisiveness (pp. 69, 70, 92, 134).**





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16. How do surprise and boldness multiply combat power? (MCDP 1 pp. 42-45)

- a. Surprise is a state of disorientation resulting from an unexpected event that degrades the enemy's ability to resist. We achieve surprise by striking the enemy at a time or place or in a manner for which he is unprepared. It is not essential that we take the enemy unaware, but only that he become prepared too late to react effectively.

- (1) Surprise is necessary to develop superiority at the decisive point.
- (2) The psychological effect of surprise can decisively affect the outcome of combat far beyond the physical means at hand.
- (3) Surprise is the paralysis, if only partial and temporary, of the enemy's ability to resist.
- (4) Surprise is the genesis of maneuver; it allows us to circumvent the enemy's strength to strike him where he is not prepared.

b. Boldness

- (1) Boldness is a multiplier in much the same way that surprise is.

- (2) From *On War*:

- (a). "...it is the very metal that gives edge and luster to the sword."
- (b). "Let us admit that boldness in war even has its own prerogatives. It must be granted a certain power over and above successful calculations involving space, time, and magnitude of forces, for wherever it is superior; it will take advantage of its opponent's weakness. In other words, it is a genuinely creative force."
- (c). "Boldness can lend wings to intellect and insight; the stronger the wings then, the greater the heights, the wider the view, and the better the results; though a greater prize, of course, involves greater risk."

- (3) From *The Art of War*:

- (a). "[B]oth advantage and danger are inherent in maneuver."
- (b). "When you see the correct course, act; do not wait for orders."





Chapter Three: Preparing for War

17. Are we currently fostering boldness and initiative in our leaders? How might you encourage the development of these characteristics in your subordinates?

There is no specific answer in mind for this question. It is important to move from theory and philosophy into the realm of practicality. Most will be assuming command of some sort of unit within the next year, and this is a good time for them to begin thinking about the implementation of our philosophy of war.

Thoughts to consider introducing into the discussion group:

What kinds of mistakes are acceptable?

When conducting performance evaluation counseling or writing fitness reports, are you rewarding those who display boldness and initiative? Should the Marine Corps concentrate on TDEs that focus on thinking and decentralized training?

Commanders have the responsibility to balance the development of bold, innovative "thinking" leaders. Being able to explain the reasoning that led to your decision is a key element to growth as a "thinking" leader. We must recognize that errors by junior leaders stemming from excessive boldness are a necessary part of learning. Depending on the junior leader's stage of development and ability to explain the rationale behind the decision, these errors should be dealt with leniently. However, just as we should deal severely with errors of inaction or timidity, commanders must not encourage "bold" actions that clearly demonstrate a lack of serious analysis or forethought.

18. Where on the spectrum of conflict should the emphasis in our training focus?

The Marine Corps, as the nation's force in readiness, must have the versatility and flexibility to deal with military and paramilitary situations across the entire spectrum of conflict. This is a greater challenge than it may appear; conflicts of low intensity are not simply lesser forms of high-intensity war. A modern force capable of waging a war of high intensity may find itself ill prepared for a "small" war against a poorly equipped guerrilla force.

19. Are we preparing for the most likely conflict?

- a. Our educational system and the operating forces are not devoted to preparing for all levels of conflict.
- b. We now have MEF campaign plans that help emphasize our commitments to areas that are likely arenas for low-intensity conflict. Additionally, our professional journals and educational system have begun focusing more attention on peacetime engagement and lesser regional contingencies.





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- c. We probably should tie our training efforts to the national military strategy and the warfighting and campaign plans of the combatant commanders.

20. As a leader, what is your responsibility with regard to professional military education? (MCDP 1 pp. 61-64)

- a. Professional military education is designed to develop creative, thinking leaders.
- b. Keep in mind that the responsibility for implementing professional military education resides not only with the education establishment but also with the commander and the individual Marine.
- c. Commanders should consider the professional development of their subordinates a principal responsibility of command.
- d. Commanders are expected to conduct a continuing professional education program for their subordinates that include: developing military judgment, decision-making, general professional subjects, and specific technical subjects pertinent to occupational specialties.
- e. Self-study in the art and science of war is at least equal in importance to maintaining physical condition—and it should receive at least equal time.
- f. A leader without either interest in or knowledge of the history and theory of warfare—the intellectual content of his profession—is a leader in appearance only.

21. How will you fulfill this responsibility for professional development?

Useful tools for general professional development include supervised reading programs, map exercises, war games, battle studies, terrain studies, staff rides, historical battlefield tours, and guided discussions of books or specific topics.

22. How is the Marine approach to organizing forces for the conduct of operations unique among the military services? (MCDP 1 pp. 54-55)

In a MAGTF, the command element (CE), ground combat element (GCE), aviation combat element (ACE), and combat element (LCE) deploy together and, in most cases, train together under one commander.





Chapter Four: The Conduct of War.

**23. What requirements does maneuver warfare place on our philosophy of command?
(MCDP 1 pp. 78-82)**

The answer to this question can be found throughout MCDP 1. These requirements include

- a. Decentralized command and control.
- b. Clear understanding of the commander's intent.
- c. The use of mission tactics.
- d. Study and analysis based on human characteristics rather than on equipment and procedures.
- e. Exploitation of our ability to communicate implicitly.
- f. Commanding from well forward.
- g. Mental preparedness to thrive in an environment of chaos, uncertainty, constant change, and friction.
- h. Not striving for certainty before we act or make a decision.
- i. Not trying to maintain positive control over subordinates.
- j. Not attempting to impose precise order to the events of combat.
- k. Being prepared to adapt to changing circumstances and exploit opportunities as they arise.
- l. Competent leadership at all levels.
- m. Initiative, an essential condition of competence among commanders.
- n. Practice during both training and preparation for war as well as during war.
- o. Confidence among seniors and subordinates.





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24. What is the relationship of courage to fear? What are the methods used to overcome fear? "Leaders must study fear." Should we study courage instead? (MCDP 1 pp. 13-17, 78-82)

- a. Recognize that violence and danger are fundamental characteristics of war and that the human reaction to danger is fear. Any view of the nature of war would hardly be accurate or complete without consideration of the effects of danger, fear, exhaustion, and privation on the men who must do the fighting.
- b. Since fear has a significant impact on the conduct of war, leadership must foster the courage to overcome fear, both individually and within the unit. Courage is not the absence of fear; it is the strength to overcome fear.
- c. In order to overcome fear, commanders should
 - (1) Lead from the front.
 - (2) Introduce stress during training.
 - (3) Adopt physical conditioning programs to build endurance and confidence.
 - (4) Build confidence in individuals and units through realistic training (live fire and adverse conditions) and MOS credibility.
 - (5) Promote the study of personal accounts of those who have excelled in war.
- d. It is the leader's responsibility to study fear, understand it, and be prepared to cope with it, both individually and within the unit.

25. Why is military judgment so critical to maneuver warfare? (MCDP 1 pp. 36-38, 85-87)

- a. Maneuver warfare requires the ability to quickly analyze a situation and make a decision (the ability to identify and exploit enemy weakness).
- b. Each situation in war is unique and requires an original solution. Success depends in a large part on correctly identifying the essence of the situation and influencing the events to exploit tempo.
- c. Maneuver applied incompetently carries with it a greater chance for catastrophic failure.
- d. Leaders at all levels must make sound decisions in a decentralized environment to enhance tempo.





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- e. Military judgment is the key to identifying and exploiting the fleeting opportunities on the disordered battlefield.

26. How do we develop military judgment in our junior leaders?

- a. Provide professional military education to help build the strong knowledge base required to conduct a proper analysis.
- b. Incorporate exercises that force leaders to make decisions and explain the rationale behind their decisions.
- c. Create an environment that fosters
 - (1) Decentralized decision-making.
 - (2) Creativity.
 - (3) Initiative.
- d. Allow subordinates to make honest mistakes and coach them to help them avoid repeating the same mistakes.

27. What elements are necessary to employ a doctrine of Combined Arms?
(MCDP 1 pp. 94-95)

We must thoroughly understand the capabilities and limitations of all the resources we have available, whether those resources are the traditional combat arms designed for physical destruction or the resources associated with information warfare which can degrade the enemy's cohesion before we fight. There must be cooperation among the different arms in supporting each other and when developing specific doctrine, tactics, techniques, and procedures. We must train as a combined arms force. Effective training will lead to a greater understanding among the arms as to the capabilities and limitations of each.

28. Why designate a main effort? (MCDP 1 pp. 91-92)

The main effort is the commander's bid for success. It is appropriately weighted with combat power and is supported by the other units in the command to help ensure its success.

Generally, during practical exercises, the students will shift the main effort as often as they do phases. It should be explained to them that each phase of an operation does not





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need a main effort as long as the designated main effort accomplishes the overall mission and all other efforts support that end. On the other hand, the main effort can shift to exploit success either by design or "on the fly." There is a difference between main effort and main attack.

One final point is to ensure the students understand that the main effort does not need priority of fires all the time. If the main effort is to be committed in the third phase of a three-phased attack, it may not need to have the priority until the supporting efforts have completed their tasks.

29. Why is a well-articulated commander's intent important? (MCDP 1 pp. 89-91)

We achieve harmonious initiative in large part through the use of the commander's *intent*, a device designed to help subordinates understand the larger context of their actions. The purpose of providing intent is to allow subordinates to exercise judgment and initiative – in a way that is consistent with higher commanders' aims.

30. What are the elements of a commander's intent? (MCDP 1 pp 89-91)

Commanders express themselves with reference to Task, Purpose, Method, and Endstate. There are two parts to any mission statement: the task to be accomplished and the purpose (reason or intent) behind it. The intent is thus a part of every mission. The task denotes what is to be done, and sometimes when and where; the purpose explains why. Of the two, the intent is predominant. While a situation may change, making the task obsolete, the intent is more lasting and continues to guide our actions. The method is a concept of operations explaining how the task and purpose will be accomplished. The Endstate is always stated in relation to the enemy, the terrain/environment, and friendly forces. Understanding the intent of our commander allows us to exercise initiative in harmony with the commander's desires.

31. What is the relevancy of MCDP 1 given that it was written almost 10 years ago? If it needs to be updated, how should it be updated?

Inevitably a member of your conference group will point out that MCDP 1 is no longer relevant to the contemporary operating environment or make some startling comment about revolution in military affairs etc. and the impact of technology. Ask for opinions and get people to back them up.





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Additional Questions to consider (time permitting).

1. Is war an art or a science? Why?
2. Compare and contrast maneuver warfare and attrition warfare styles.
3. Why is the defense the inherently stronger form of warfare?
4. From what sources does MCDP 1 draw most heavily?
5. Compare speed and focus to characteristics of maneuver warfare?
6. Do you believe self-study of the art and science of warfare is at least equal in importance to maintaining physical condition—and should receive at least equal time? Is that what we practice?
7. Does our assignment policy support developing tactical experts? Will PME overcome any shortcomings?
8. Based on what is stated in MCDP 1, what is your understanding of centers of gravity (COGs) and critical vulnerabilities (CVs)? Do COGs exist at the tactical level?

