

Islamic Studies

CSS 2019

Q. Give a general estimate of the Holy Prophet (PBUH)'s character in the battle field as a Commander.

Ans. The Holy Prophet (PBUH) is considered the history's greatest military Commander and war strategist due to the fact that he gained most in wars as far as results are concerned but by incurring minimum human losses. He was not only a man of superior military ability but a master of all kinds of situations owing to tactics before and after wars, diplomatic efforts alongside wars and earning the love and devotion of his followers. The Holy Prophet (PBUH) showcased his military genius in many ways including his qualities as a commander, the military strategies or tactics he applied in wars.

Qualities of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) as a Military Commander

① Outstanding Achievements

The Muslims, following the great leadership of the Holy Prophet (PBUH), were able to conquer more than two million square

kilometer of the Arabian peninsula in a mere decade. Moreover, he was able to unite a society that had a long history of war and unrest.

② Bravery

The Prophet (PBUH) was the bravest of the brave, which is apparent in the testimony of Hazrat Ali (R.A) who narrated:

"When the battle used to become fierce and the eyes seemed to be coming out of the sockets, we used to look for the Prophet (PBUH) in order to find a refuge behind him. Then, we found none closing up with the enemy as the Prophet (PBUH). This was how it happened in Badr; we were taking shelter behind the Prophet (PBUH) who was then going at the enemy more closely than anyone of us".

As Hazrat Ali (R.A) was himself named the "Lion of God", his testimony is sufficient to prove how courageous the Prophet (PBUH) was.

③ Loving and Affectionate

Every follower and soldier wanted to

Use elaborate, self explanatory and relevant headings

sacrifice his own life upon the Holy Prophet (PBUH). The love for the Prophet (PBUH) of every companion surpassed their love for anyone else after Allah. For instance, at the battle of Uhud when pagans surrounded the Holy Prophet (PBUH), the companions surrounded the Prophet (PBUH) and faced arrows and swords on their own hands. When the Prophet (PBUH) came back ^{from} the battle, a sahabia enquired only about the safety of the Prophet (PBUH) even though she was told ~~that~~ that her husband and son had been martyred.

Tactics / Military Strategies in War

After reaching Madina along with his companions, the Holy Prophet (PBUH) gave more attention to military organization of the Muslims as the infidels became more and more adamant ~~on~~ annihilating them. In order to ~~fight~~ those wars, the Holy Prophet (PBUH) laid out principles of war and applied many strategies, including:

a) Altered the Philosophy of War

Previously wars were waged on personal grudges, as a way to show power, for looting or ~~for~~ racism. The Prophet (PBUH) gave the

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concept of war as to fight in the way of Allah for the propagation of His message. ~~or to defend oneself~~ War in Islam or 'Jihad' aimed at spreading security, safety, mercy and compassion, and were only fought motivated by self-defence and had to be limited in nature. Some of the principles that the Holy Prophet (PBUH) put forth were:

- i) To fight against aggression and defend Islamic lands
- ii) To assist the oppressed in non-Islamic lands.
- iii) To eradicate mischief and fitnah
- iv) To remove hindrances in way of Islam
- v) Killing of children, women and even beheading them was forbidden.
- vi) Cutting down of trees and killing of animals was also forbidden.
- vii) The Holy Prophet (PBUH) used to instruct his followers:

"Let your invasion be in the name of Allah and for His sake. Fight those who disbelieve in Allah. ~~Invasions~~ but do not plunder nor conceal booty. Never deform the corpse of a dead person or kill an infant child".

b. Preparations of War

The Holy Quran says in Surah Anfaal (8:60):

"Against them make ready your strength to the utmost of your power, including steeds of war, to strike terror into (the hearts of) enemies".

The Holy Prophet (PBUH) always used to make great preparations for war for example he made arrangements for imparting military trainings to Muslims, organized races of men, horses and camels, competitions and were held of wrestling and archery, and even sent some Muslims to Yemen for getting training on use of weapons. Every Muslim foot-soldier and horse-men carried sophisticated weapons required in wars.

c. Espionage and Surveillance of Enemy

The Holy Prophet (PBUH) prepared his warriors both practical steps to find out the enemy's plans, the strength of their forces and the nature of their weaponry in order to plan accordingly. Espionage is a crucial strategy for risk assessment to be able to better prepare for the upcoming

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war. The Holy Prophet (PBUH) also deployed his companions all over the Arabian Peninsula as a way of army patrolling to keep him informed of the enemy's activities.

d. Secrecy in War Planning

The Holy Prophet (PBUH) used to prepare for his wars very carefully and ensured that only his close advisors knew of his plans; to avoid the enemy being aware of his war plans as a way of counter Intelligence.

e. Swiftess Strategy

The Holy Prophet (PBUH) applied the modern day concept of "First Mover Advantage" in his time - He made sure that the Muslims reached the location before the arrival of the enemy to get a hold of strategic locations, as he did in Battle of Badr, Uhud and Khaibar.

f. Ensured minimum human loss

According to the book Muhammad at Medina by Montgomery Watt, the Prophet (PBUH) fought in 100 wars (27 Ghazwat and 73 Saryat) but he only the number of

Casualties was only 1058/1059 Muslims and 799 ~~non~~ non-Muslims) saying the intensity of war waged by and under the Prophet (PBUH) was the least in the history.

g. Innovative War strategies

The Prophet (PBUH) always adopted new war techniques in order to thwart the plans of the enemy. In the battle of Ahzab, he dug out trenches to block enemy access to Madina. Moreover, in the Siege of Jalf, the Prophet (PBUH) used catapults to destroy the enemy forts. Lastly, in the conquest of Makkah, the Prophet (PBUH) ordered his 10,000 soldiers to cook their food individually rather than in a collective kitchen. Resultantly, 10000 fires could be seen and the Quraysh concluded that an army of 50,000 men was prepared to attack Makkah. Fearing the number, the Quraysh surrendered and the Muslims won without even shedding a single drop of blood, due to the excellent strategy of the Holy Prophet (PBUH).

h. Effective War strategies in Battlefield

In the Battle of Badr, the Prophet (PBUH) reached the battlefield before the enemy and selected hard ground for his force and fought from

Such a point where the sun was at his back while it beamed in the enemy's eyes, resulting in the Muslims with only a force of 313 men winning from 1000 strong and well equipped non-Muslims. Moreover, in the battle of Uhud, he ordered a band of 50 archers under the command of Hazrat Abdullah bin Jubayr to stand at the western slope of Mount Uhud on top of which was a little pass from where the enemy could possibly attack.

i. Maintained strict discipline among his men

A very high ethical code of conduct was enjoined upon each soldier and breaches of discipline were strictly prohibited. The real secret to the success of Muslims against their more numerous and better equipped enemies was qualities of calm, courage and discipline. The Holy Prophet (PBUH) personally delegated arrayed his armies and no premature actions were permitted. Order among the ranks was always ensured.

j. Inclination toward Reconciliation or Peace

The Holy Prophet (PBUH) always tried to bring about peace through his compromise strategy although he could have eliminated the enemy's power. The Prophet (PBUH) signed the Treaty of Hudaibiya which was humiliating to the Muslims. This is the best example of a peace-loving leader.

k. Treatment with Prisoners of Wars.

Before the advent of Islam, captives of war were killed brutally. However, the Holy Prophet (PBUH) treated the prisoners well and advised his companions to do so too.

In the Battle of Badr, seventy pagans were captured who were distributed among the Prophet (PBUH)'s companions with strict instructions by the Prophet (PBUH) to treat them well, give them food and honour them. The Holy Prophet (PBUH) forbade killing of the prisoners and liberated them on easy conditions like embracing Islam, paying ransom, or educating Muslim children.

Conclusion

The Holy Prophet (PBUH) presented a role model in complete perfection for coming military

strategists to follow. By following his strategies and principles of war, military commanders of today can ensure maximum success in least loss of human life. Moreover, the Prophet (PBUH)'s greatest success was the training of his companions in such a manner that even after his demise, the dependents of Islamic lands remained successful in their endeavours. About the valour of the Prophet (PBUH), Napoleon Bonaparte in his book writes:

"Muhammad was a great man, an intrepid soldier; with a handful of men he triumphed at the Battle of Bender; a great captain, eloquent, a great man of state, he revived his fatherland and created a new people and a new power in the middle of Arabia".