

## Q. Prophet Muhammad<sup>ﷺ</sup> as a Military Strategist

### 1. Introduction

The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is a role model for human beings across the globe. He stands as a luminous candle that guides people in social economic, political, and educational aspects of life. Like the other aspect of his life, the military aspect of the Prophet<sup>ﷺ</sup> is also unique. From commanding 313 believers in Ghazwa-e-Badar to commanding an army of 30,000 in Tabuk, Prophet Muhammad<sup>ﷺ</sup> has proven to be a unique and a strong military strategist. The most important thing about Prophet Muhammad<sup>ﷺ</sup> as a military strategist is that he had well-defined tactics not only during the war but also before and after the war. This essay analyzes Prophet Muhammad<sup>ﷺ</sup> as a military strategist by highlighting his tactics before, during, and after war that made the necessary evil of war less brutal.

### 2. Before the War

#### (a) Reconciliation

Prophet Muhammad<sup>ﷺ</sup> always gave education about peace and adjustment. For him, believers should reconcile and work towards Peace if the enemy wants to get

reconciliation. For example, when the Prophet<sup>ﷺ</sup> and his companions went back to Makkah, they were stopped by the Meccans at Hudaibiyah. Even though, war was an option, Prophet Muhammad<sup>ﷺ</sup> chose peace. According to the Holy Quran:

"If the enemy is inclined toward peace, make peace with them. And put your trust in Allah".

(Surah Al-Anfal)

### **(b) Intelligence and Reconnaissance**

It was a very important pre-war strategy for Prophet Muhammad<sup>ﷺ</sup> to gather information of the enemy movements through reconnaissance. He (PBUH) had deployed detectives across the Arabia Peninsula who provide key information regarding the enemy. An example of this can be taken from the time of Badr-e-Kubra when the Prophet<sup>ﷺ</sup> sent a group who then reported about the movement of the caravan of Abu Sufyan. Also, during the Battle of Khandaq, he sent a group for vigilant night patrolling - forming a proto police unit.

### **(c) Consultation and Strategic Innovation**

The prophet<sup>ﷺ</sup> established advisory councils to build an inclusive war strategy. The primary function of such a council was to discuss options available



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which demonstrated the early adoption of strategic planning. He also pioneered trench warfare in Arabia in which he designed defences and supervised trench digging in response of an adversary who had large numbers of troops.

### **(d) Secrecy in War Planning**

The Prophet<sup>v</sup> also maintained secrecy in his war planning so that the surprise factor remained. For example, the Prophet Muhammad<sup>v</sup> maintained secrecy of his planning which helped their army to surprise their enemies during the conquest of Makkah.

## **3. Strategies during war**

### **(a) Minimum Casualties, Maximum expansion**

Prophet Muhammad<sup>v</sup> believed in inflicting minimum casualties. This can be proven by the amount of deaths in all of his 104 campaigns. 259 Muslims and 759 non-Muslim combatants were reportedly killed during these campaigns that also resulted in the Muslims capturing about 1 million square miles of territory. This shows the excellence of Prophet Muhammad<sup>v</sup> as a military strategist.

### **(b) Positioning of the army**

The Prophet<sup>v</sup> also arranged his troops in such a way that mirrored the principles of maneuver warfare, which emphasized on rapid, focused operations that

also played a role in deterrence.

	Front Row	
Left wing	Middle Row	Right wing
	Back Row	

This allowed the Muslim to be in a structure at all times, making attacking and defending swift and structured.

### **(c) Division of the Army**

The Prophet <sup>ﷺ</sup> placed a lot of emphasis on role orientation. Every battalion knew its role, which increased the efficiency of the army. The army was divided into:

- (i) Infantry - main force
- (ii) Cavalry - For flanks and rapid response
- (iii) Archers - Ranged support
- (iv) Support units - baggage holder, camp guards, and patrols.

### **(d) Rights of the non-combatants**

A strong emphasis was placed on the rights of the non-combatants. The Prophet <sup>ﷺ</sup> prohibited the killings of women, children, elderly, and those who were physically disabled. Later, he also added individuals that were engaged in worship.



### (e) Prohibited Night Assault

The Arabs before the Prophet<sup>ﷺ</sup> had the habit of striking the enemy at night. The Prophet<sup>ﷺ</sup> abolished such a custom and ordered his troops not to attack before dawn. An example of this can be taken from the battle of Khyber where the prophet<sup>ﷺ</sup> chose not to attack the enemy at night.

### (f) Collateral damage and mutilation

The Prophet<sup>ﷺ</sup> banned destruction of property and mutilation of dead bodies. The Holy Quran says:

"And when they leave you, they strive throughout the land to spread mischief in it and destroy crops and cattle. Allah does not like mischief."  
(2:205)

Regarding the mutilation of dead bodies, the Prophet<sup>ﷺ</sup> said:

"Do not break bones, promises and never mutilate."  
(Al-Hadith)

### 4. Strategies after War

#### (a) Good treatment of the prisoners of War

Prophet<sup>ﷺ</sup> placed a lot of emphasis on the good treatment of the prisoners

of war. Even after Ghazwa-e-Badar, the capture of Quraysh commanders were ransomed with a unique condition, which included the prisoners to teach 10 Muslims to read and write. This <sup>was</sup> a strategic cultural investment made by the Prophet<sup>ﷺ</sup> during a time where the leaders would kill prisoners of war as vengeance. His (PBUH) battlefield regulation strictly forbade targeting prisoners of war, which demonstrated mercy and strategic integration rather than vengeance.

### **(b) Prohibition of Breach of Treaty**

Breaching a treaty was one of the worst crimes anyone could have committed according to Prophet<sup>ﷺ</sup>. He condemned the acts of mutiny, breach of treaty, and assaulting partners of treaty on several occasions. Allah also commands in the Holy Quran:

"Honour your pledges, for you will surely be held accountable for them."

(Surah al Isra)

### **(c) Principle of General amnesty**

In many cases, when Prophet Muhammad<sup>ﷺ</sup> won the war, he would announce general amnesty to the defeated.

An example of this can be taken from the conquest of Makkah in 8AH, when the Prophet<sup>ﷺ</sup> announced



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the amnesty for Quraysh and forgave those who took refuge in the kaban and the house of Abu sufyan.

## Conclusion

The Holy Prophet<sup>ﷺ</sup> stands as a beacon of light for people of this world and of every generation. He (PBUH) stands as a sole role model for the people in every aspect of life. As a military strategist, he has shown the world how evils of war can be made less brutal through assuring minimum casualties, prioritising reconciliation, and giving rights to non-combatants and prisoners of war. His warfare tactics also provides modern military with the tools to maximise the completion of objectives with minimum casualties. Most importantly his emphasis on the ethics of war is something contemporary world leaders need to learn from as modern warfare has blurred the lines between enemy combatants and non-combatants. In a world that makes the necessary evil of war more evil, the Holy Prophet<sup>ﷺ</sup> made it less brutal.