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## The Art of War for the anti-war movement

It's high time to recognize that we as a nation are engaged in a life-or-death struggle of competing ideologies with those who promote war as an American value and virtue.

**By Scott Ritter**

**04/01/06 "Alternet"** -- -- In the months leading up to the invasion of Iraq by a US-led coalition, and for three years since, I have spent many hours speaking to numerous anti-war forums across the country and around the world. I have always been struck by the sincerity of the vast majority of those who call themselves anti-war, and impressed by their willingness to give so much of themselves in the service of such a noble cause.

Whether participating in demonstrations, organizing a vigil, conducting town-hall meetings, or writing letters to their elected officials and the media, the participants in the anti-war movement have exhibited an energy and integrity that would make anyone proud. For myself, I have been vociferous in my defense of the actions of the majority of the anti-war movement, noting that the expression of their views is not only consistent with their rights afforded by the Constitution of the United States, but also that their engagement in the process of citizenship is a stellar example of the ideals and values set forth in that document, and as such representative of the highest form of patriotism in keeping with service to a document that begins, "We the People."

Lately I have noticed a growing despondency among many of those who call themselves the anti-war movement. With the United States now entering its fourth year of illegal war in and illegitimate occupation of Iraq, and the pro-war movement moving inexorably towards yet another disastrous conflict with Iran, there is an increasing awareness that the cause of the anti-war movement, no matter how noble and worthy, is in fact a losing cause as currently executed. Despite all of the well-meaning and patriotic work of the millions of activists and citizens who comprise the anti-war movement, America still remains very much a nation not only engaged in waging and planning wars of aggression, but has also become a

nation which increasingly identifies itself through its military and the wars it fights. This is a sad manifestation of the fact that the American people seem to be addicted to war and violence, rather than the ideals of human rights, individual liberty, and freedom and justice for all that should define our nation.

In short, the anti-war movement has come face to face with the reality that in the ongoing war of ideologies that is being waged in America today, their cause is not just losing, but is in fact on the verge of complete collapse. Many in the anti-war movement would take exception to such a characterization of the situation, given the fact that there seems to be a growing change in the mood among Americans against the ongoing war in Iraq. But one only has to scratch at the surface of this public discontent to realize how shallow and superficial it is. Americans aren't against the war in Iraq because it is wrong; they are against it because we are losing.

Take the example of Congressman Jack Murtha. A vocal supporter of President Bush's decision to invade Iraq, last fall Mr. Murtha went public with his dramatic change of position, suddenly rejecting the war as un-winnable, and demanding the immediate withdrawal of American troops from Iraq. While laudable, I have serious problems with Jack Murtha's thought process here. At what point did the American invasion of Iraq become a bad war? When we suffered 2,000 dead? After two years of fruitless struggle? Once we spent \$100 billion?

While vocalizing his current opposition against the Iraq War, Congressman Murtha and others who voted for the war but now question its merits have never retracted their original pro-war stance. Nor have they criticized their role in abrogating the Constitutional processes for bringing our country into conflict when they voted for a war before the President had publicly committed to going to war (we now know the President had committed to the invasion of Iraq by the summer of 2002, and that all his representations to the American people and Congress about 'war as a matter of last resort' and 'seeking a diplomatic solution' were bold face lies). The Iraq War was wrong the moment we started bombing Iraq. Getting rid of Saddam Hussein is no excuse, and does not pardon America's collective sin of brooking and tolerating an illegal war of aggression.

The reality is, had our military prevailed in this struggle, the American people for the most part would not even blink at the moral and legal arguments against this war. This underlying reality is reflected in the fact that despite our ongoing disaster in Iraq, America is propelled down a course of action that leads us toward conflict with Iran. President Bush recently re-affirmed his embrace of the principles of pre-emptive war when he signed off on the 2006 version of the National Security Strategy of the United States, which highlights Iran as a threat worthy of confrontation. This event has gone virtually unmentioned by the American mainstream media, un-remarked by a Congress that remains complicit in the war-

mongering policies of the Bush administration, and un-noticed by the majority of Americans. America is pre-programmed for war, and unless the anti-war movement dramatically changes the manner in which it conducts its struggle, America will become a nation of war, for war, and defined by war, and as such a nation that will ultimately be consumed by war.

It is high time for the anti-war movement to take a collective look in the mirror, and be honest about what they see. A poorly organized, chaotic, and indeed often anarchic conglomeration of egos, pet projects and idealism that barely constitutes a "movement," let alone a winning cause. I have yet to observe an anti-war demonstration that has a focus on anti-war. It often seemed that every left-wing cause took advantage of the event to promote its own particular agenda, so that "No War in Iraq" shared the stage with the environment, ecology, animal rights, pro-choice, and numerous other causes which not only diluted the anti-war message which was supposed to be sent, but also guaranteed that the demonstration itself would be seen as something hijacked by the left, inclusive of only progressive ideologues, and exclusive of the vast majority of moderate (and even conservative) Americans who might have wanted to share the stage with their fellow Americans from the left when it comes to opposing war with Iraq (or even Iran), but do not want to be associated with any other theme.

The anti-war movement, first and foremost, needs to develop a laser-like focus on being nothing more or less than anti-war.

The anti-war movement lacks any notion of strategic thinking, operational planning, or sense of sound tactics. So much energy is wasted because of this failure to centrally plan and organize. As a result, when the anti-war movement does get it right (and on occasion it does), the success is frittered away by a failure to have planned effective follow-up efforts, failure to have implemented any supporting operations, an inability to recognize opportunities as they emerge and a lack of resources to exploit such opportunities if in fact they were recognized to begin with. In short, the anti-war movement is little more than a walk-on squad of high school football players drawing plays in the sand, taking on the National Football League Super Bowl Champions.

In order to even have a chance of prevailing with the American people, the anti-war movement is going to need much more than just good ideals and values. It needs to start thinking like a warrior would, in full recognition that we as a nation are engaged in a life-or-death struggle of competing ideologies with those who promote war as an American value and virtue.

The anti-war movement needs to study the philosophies of those who have mastered the art of conflict, from Caesar to Napoleon, from Sun Tzu to Clausewitz. It needs to study the "enemy" learning to understand the pro-war movement as well

as it understands itself. It needs to comprehend the art of campaigning, of waging battles only when necessary, and having the ability to wage a struggle on several fronts simultaneously, synchronizing each struggle so that a synergy is created which maximizes whatever energy is being expended. The anti-war movement needs to understand the pro-war movement's center of gravity, and design measures to defeat this. It needs to grasp the pro-war movement's decision-making cycle, then undertake a comprehensive course of action that learns to pre-empt this cycle, getting 'inside' the pro-war system of making decisions, and thereby forcing the pro-war movement to react to the anti-war agenda, instead of vice versa.

There is an old adage in the military that “intelligence drives operations.” The anti-war movement needs to develop a centralized intelligence operation, not a spy organization, but rather a think-tank that produces sound analysis based upon fact that can be used to empower those who are waging the struggle against war. Far too often the anti-war movement dilutes its effectiveness by either being unable to produce facts during a debate, or when it does, producing facts that are inaccurate, incomplete, or both. The mainstream media treats the anti-war movement as a joke because many times that is exactly what the anti-war movement, through its lack of preparation and grasp of the facts, allows itself to become.

The anti-war movement lacks organization. There is no central leadership, or mechanism to effectively muster and control resources. The anti-war movement takes pride in its “democratic” composition, but in fact it operates as little more than controlled chaos, creating ample opportunity for the pro-war movement to effectively execute a “divide and conquer” strategy to minimize and nullify whatever good the anti-war movement achieves through its efforts. The anti-war movement would do well to take a page from the fire service and implement a version of the Incident Command System (ICS) that firefighters use when fighting complex fires involving the integration of several departments, organizations and jurisdictions. The anti-war movement needs to develop its own “ICS for the anti-war” that is universally applied throughout the movement, so that an anti-war effort in Seattle, Washington operates the same as an anti-war effort in New York City, and as such can be coordinated and controlled by an overall command staff operating from Denver, Colorado.

Complex problems, such as faced by the anti-war movement, require complex solutions, which in turn dictate a flexible control mechanism that can coordinate and synchronize every effort to achieve the desired result at a time and place of the anti-war movement's choosing, and then be prepared to follow up on successes as they occur and sustain the movement over an extended period of time. It is not enough to win a battle against the pro-war movement; the anti-war movement needs to win the war of ideologies. As such it must not only prepare to win a particular fight, but to exploit that victory, massing its forces against any developed weakness, and drive the pro-movement into the ground and off the American

political map once and for all.

I have indicated my willingness to apply my training and experience as a warrior in a manner which helps teach the principles of the art of war to those who call themselves part of the anti-war movement. There seems to be not only a need for this sort of training, but also a desire among the myriad of individuals and groups who comprise the anti-war movement for an overall coordinated strategic direction, operational planning, and tactical execution of agreed upon mission objectives. One can be certain that the pro-war movement is conducting itself in full accordance with these very same organizational principles and methodologies. And let there be no doubt: the pro-war movement in America is prevailing. In order to gain the upper hand politically, and actually position itself to stop not only those wars already being fought (Iraq), but also prevent those being planned (Iran), the anti-war movement will need to re-examine in totality the way it does business. I for one am ready to assist. However, in writing this essay, I am constantly reminded of the old saying, "You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make it drink." One can only hope that the anti-war movement is thirsty.

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