

Warden's five rings | overview and analysis



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Warden's Five Rings theory is a model developed by Col. John Warden. It was first applied in a real war setting in the 1991 Gulf war incorporated in the "Operational Thunder" offensive strategy. It was the key theory that defined Operational Thunder strategy as it was known for American Air Power in defeating Iraq air force. The concept of the five ring model revolves around five major areas of interest that must be attacked and weakened sufficiently before enemy forces can be (Warden, 1995).

The five various levels are like rings of areas of influence that revolve around the core area which is leadership. The areas of influence as defined in the model have various intrinsic importances from each other and present unique values for an enemy to attack. In this model the notion advanced is that a military incursion in an enemy environment should start outwards (Warden, 1995). The idea is to peel the various layers that revolve around the core which is the leadership until eventually the enemy is left vulnerable and captured. Once leadership is captured then the enemy has fallen and is captured.

The Leadership at the centre of the model refers to the top organ of the enemy. The other areas are field military, infrastructure, population and system essentials. Field military force is the outer level that the enemy has put in place. It is the first level that must be overcome which is the enemy army. The second outer level is the civilian population of the enemy state; this too must be subdued and controlled. After population the target shifts to infrastructure that will derail efficient function of the enemy further. Second last level from the core is the system essential which refers to all the sectors

that support and drive the overall enemy state such as economy (Warden, 1995).

The five rings system theory is considered one of the most brilliant military theories advanced so far. Its importance is in its ability to inform a systematic approach that is coordinated to subdue an enemy. In this regard it can be used to compile a list of specific military target. Choice of important enemy targets are identified using a predefined framework and does not depend on speculation of the relative advantages presented by each (Warden, 1995). This is because by defining the levels of influence the associated sectors and areas can be clearly identified as well. And more importantly the military strategists are able to use a system formula to map out important enemy to targets (Warden, 1995).

The Cuban missile crisis is a historical moment and one of those few instances that the five ring model could not be applied as tactical military strategy among the Russians or the Cubans. The nature in which Cuban missile crisis unfolded was bound to involve the United States forces and more than one country, both Russia and Cuba (Allison, Graham and Zelikow, 1999). The situation was even tense since both countries were contemplating use of nuclear weapons which was at the heart of the Cuban missile crisis.

Indeed any way military offensive that would have involved Russian and United States would have been like the crash of the titans. The situation was triggered by the United States satellite evidence that Russia was actively deploying nuclear capability technology and installing it in Cuba backyard in

secrecy (Allison et al, 1999). Earlier on United States had increased its military presence in Europe in what Russia could have interpreted to be a threat to its existence. However diplomacy and huge degree of restraining prevailed that averted the nuclear missile crisis at the time.

What is clear though is that even The 5 ring model would not have been able to be applied at a military offensive where nuclear weapon was the choice of weapons. Indeed the military brains that had advance the systematic process presented in the 5 ring model had never contemplated even once the idea that nuclear missile would ever be used in modern world military solutions, despite the vast numbers of nuclear stockpiles that America and Russia have. This is because the five ring model subdivides any military offensive to five distinct stages (Allison et al, 1999).

But it's a fact that use of even a single nuclear missile is enough to subdue an enemy state beyond measure. Moreover, causing an impact across all the five levels of any country to be paralyzed. Indeed it is the reason why at the height of the crisis the United States omitted a preemptive attack on Cuba due to the remote chances that a single missile might survive the attack which then Cuba would certainly use on them. Besides all this, it would have meant that United States wage war against two hostile countries at the same time which would have limited their precision to respond. It is therefore unlikely that the 5 ring model would have been used in Cuban crisis.

However in Vietnam War the five ring model could be applied to guide military offensive. In Vietnam War the United States was fighting in support of South Vietnam against North Vietnam. But the U. S was disadvantaged in

a position of weakness due to the huge Northern Vietnamese army comparable to South Vietnamese army. In addition the South Vietnam communist allies were powerful and provided important military support to the offensive. The U. S therefore resorted to the 5 ring model against their military offensive in Vietnam which was instrumental in their success during the war Vietnam.

The gulf war that occurred in the 1991 is another example where the 5 ring model was successfully used in subduing the Iraq forces and the subsequent victory in the region. Soon after Iraq invaded Kuwait the United Nations recommended military solution. This saw a coalition force put together which applied combination of firepower and ground troops that advanced in Iraq. This military advance targeted Iraq sectors that had significance value to the country which after their capture led to the ceasefire. Use of the 5 ring model approach in the war enabled the Iraq vital economic sector destruction through sustained firepower (Bard and Mitchell, 2009).

Gulf war is one of the wars that saw a lot of allies; especially those affiliated to the U. S participate in the Iraq attack. In deciding to intervene for Kuwait the reasons for United States were vested in its own interest. One Kuwait was a major oil exporter to the U. S, therefore U. S feared that war would destabilize the region and cause scarcity of oil in the region. Secondly U. S had allies in the region specifically Saudi Arabia that now felt threatened by the expanding influence of Iraq which it felt that it needed to be curtailed. Lastly it was important that Iraq don't get to control a huge stake of the oil reserve in the region or indeed be a force of influence in the gulf peninsula, which would have happened had it occupied Kuwait.

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In the aftermath of the war the cost of the military offensive was mainly paid by the Saudi Arabia to a total of \$40 billion of the total \$60billion that the war had cost. There was minimal American casualties 295 deaths due to the range of coalition forces that participated. In summary the gulf war provided the United States forces with a military experience in the region and was a successful venture. That America continues to cash on presently in more than one way.

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