

MARTIAL ARTS & MODERN MILITARY COMBAT



How many of us can deny not being fascinated by the stories, movies and other presentations of Military Combat?

As a Martial Artist, whether novice or experienced, you may have asked yourself the following question:

Why train for years to become an expert in unarmed combat when there are weapons currently available (from small arms to sophisticated military issue) that could easily cause injury or death with only minutes of training.

There are many reasons that may have triggered your interest to studying Martial Arts and probably two leading reasons may have been Self Defense and Fascination. Similarly, these were also two reasons that drove my interest to studying Martial Arts and to joining the Military.

In this month's article, I hope to present some stimulating perspectives into the similarities surrounding Martial Arts and Military Combat. Lets examine some of the Facts, the Myths and the Mysteries of Modern Military Combat.

Lets start from the Basics and look at the Definitions of some of these Terms,

The Definitions

Military – the affairs of war

Combat – the act of fighting

Martial – practiced in warlike

The similarity is astounding... but not surprising really.



Fact or Fiction

The Hero Factor

Movies such as "Commando" starring Arnold, although good entertainment, should pose the question: "can a Sole Man take on an Army of Men and become victorious?"

Such a question can probably only be answered by asking yourself another question. From a Martial Artist perspective, how many men can you take on in unarmed combat before you tire and are defeated? This would be a more realistic figure than portrayed in movies.

In Military statistics, it generally takes "3 soldiers to eliminate One". Therefore from the opposite perspective, if you solely eliminated 3 or more opponents, you are doing well and would probably become a military legend.

Mystery or Knowledge

Need to Know

The term "need to know" is used extensively in the Military and refers to information control or rationing. This control or rationing occurs to prevent information leakage on the presumption that knowledge is

power. The withholding of information is also a major contributor to the creation of mysteries surrounding military combat.

How much information of the military do you think is actually revealed to the public and civilians if there are restrictions already within the military?

Similarly, history shows that Martial Arts knowledge has always been shrouded in secrecy. Masters passed on skills and knowledge only to selected students or sometimes just a single disciple. Even to this day it would be fair to question how much the average student really knows?



Innovation

Secret Weapon!! Human beings are ingenious as they are the only species on earth that have a brain and therefore the ability to innovate. Is there such a thing as a Secret Weapon? Of course there is... a secret weapon may or may not be as dramatic as the media likes us to think.

A secret weapon could be simply concealing your hand behind your back. Now how would your opponent know what you have concealed behind your back? It could be as dramatic as a knife... a gun... a bottle... or as simple as a clenched fist.

Not all combat needs to be fought physically... sometimes a mental battle of wits is enough to maintain the peace.

The dawn of an innovative approach to the use of weapons no doubt occurred when the first primitive man picked up a stick to strike an opponent.

Tactics & Techniques

Ambush

An Ambush is a surprise plan of attack set up for a 100% kill rate. A deliberate plan will take into account all escape routes like Checkmate in a chess game. The chances of survival are almost non-existent as generally all instinctive "flight" scenarios are covered for the mapped out killing zone.

How then do you survive an Ambush situation?

Fight... the basic instinct in every living thing is the "Fight or Flight" reaction or response. This is the only chance of survival in an Ambush situation. The Military answer to counter-ambush tactics is to charge right into oncoming enemy fire. This tactic offers the hope that you may break through and pass into safety behind the enemy firing line.

Similarly, what happens when you corner an animal? Instinct takes over and it puts up the most ferocious fight ever in its determination to get past you. This is counter-ambush tactics in its basic form. Simple, yet effective. In martial arts principles, this similarity can be seen in techniques of simultaneous attack and defense or evading and striking.

Ambush Tactics have also been used recently in Martial Arts fight scenarios. An example of this is the early Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu tactics used against Stand Up Fighters. The Style employed the tactic of taking its Opponent to the ground. The deliberate plan takes the Stand up fighters by complete surprise (definition of Ambush). The ground becomes the killing zone as the opponent's retreating routes are eliminated and their defenses and weapons rendered ineffective from a prone position.

Stand up fighters were generally trained to react to aggressive movements of punches & kicks. Submission holds were subtle and passive and did not appear a serious threat to their survival until it was too late. This was very effective in the early period causing the popularity of BBJ because a deliberate plan of attack could work. However being innovative creatures, the effectiveness of the system has diminished with elimination of the surprise element. Stand Up Fighters are no longer baffled due to knowledge of these attacks.

These concepts are not new nor are the submissive techniques. Bruce Lee performed these movements 30 years ago in Movies such as "Enter the Dragon" against "Sammo" and "Game of Death" against "Kareem". The subtleness of these movements can be seen in parallel Chinese Martial Arts Systems that has been around for centuries. Similar concepts are noticeable in Tai Chi and Wing Chun.

Reaction to a Shot

Bang! What the..... What was? Too late..... you're hit.
What to do if you think you hear the sound of Gunfire coming towards you. The Military Drill to a shot is to hit the ground and immediately find cover. You would not remain standing... as you are presenting a Target. You would not ponder whether you were hit... a bullet travels faster than the speed of sound. You would feel the shock of the bullet before hearing the sound from its barrel if you were shot. You would hear the embedment or ricochet of the bullet before any Echo from the barrel if shots came into your vicinity. This would give an Indication of whether you are in a firing zone.



How to get to cover, or from cover to cover, to escape?
Become a Moving Target... rather than a still target.
Military Marksmanship is awarded to soldiers who can aim and hit a moving Target at 3 seconds. What this means is that you have about 3 seconds to escape an Aimed shot. This means getting to cover, or from cover to cover. The techniques for this is to run, dive, roll, crawl and change direction frequently, so that you are not predictable and therefore allow aiming to lock on. Automatic weapons... well generally no aiming required as these are designed to point and spray bullets out into the general area... so asap. Speed is an important issue here.

Where do Martial Arts fit in? Why train in unarmed combat? Why do Soldiers do Drill, keep fit, push their bodies to the limit... when all its takes is a little squeeze with the forefinger to pull a trigger.

It's about knowing yourself, understanding your body, knowing your weaknesses, improving your limitations and capitalizing on your strengths. It's tuning your reflexes, your reactions, your awareness and reprogramming your instincts. It's Knowledge about yourself, your enemy, the situation and surroundings. The more you educate yourself increases your chance of survival.

The basic traits for survival remain the same from whichever perspective. Military or Martial arts.

Concluding Views

Earlier in 2004, a US news footage baffled me with a man dodging bullets. The footage showed a disgruntled Client shooting all 6 bullets of his revolver at an unarmed Lawyer from close distance. The lawyer managed to escape with only minor injuries by effectively dodging from side to side behind a narrow tree. How could this occur?

"Basic Survival Instinct".

The underlying principles of Martial arts has for centuries been about survival. It is about how a Human Being defends itself from other Human Beings.

Quote

"Unless Human Beings have 3 Arms and 4 Legs, We will have a different Form of fighting"

Bruce Lee

This holds true except for the Fact that separates Humans from all other Species, the Human Brain, the ability to think, learn, analyze, memorize, and possess knowledge, as "Knowledge is Power". This ability to innovate allowed Man to create weapons to enhance any Physical shortcomings. Even to this day, this can be seen in Governments' research into the Arms Race in a struggle for Ultimate World Power.

My concluding views are its just about Human against Human after all, whether enhanced with a weapon or not. To the question of whether studying martial arts would be of use... Definitely, martial arts is not just unarmed combat... it is about knowing Yourself, knowing your Opponent, knowing Human Beings and as the saying goes... Knowledge is Power... the Power to Survive.

Until the next article, keep on the education and apply it to your training; you never know when that extra bit of knowledge could be vital to your survival.

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Biographical Information

Henry has almost 8 years service with the Australian Army Reserve serving from 1990 to 1997.
He served 2.5 years as an Infantry Soldier, 1.5 years as a Recruit Instructor and 4 years as a Signaler.
He discharged on the Rank of Corporal and received 3 military Qualifications whilst in service.
These were an Infantry Section Commander, an Explosives Medium Rigid Vehicle Driver and a Signals Detachment Commander.
He was awarded a Soldiers Medallion for Exemplary Service for 1994.
