



THE REALITY OF WAR

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A COMPANION TO CLAUSEWITZ

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EDITOR'S PREFACE

Great books, the masterpieces of the special branch of knowledge with which they deal, are often very big books; and busy men, who have not unlimited time for reading, find it helpful to have some one who will give them a general summary of a famous writer's teaching, and point out the most important passages in which the author himself embodies the very essence of his argument.

This is what Major Murray has done for the most important work on war that was ever written. He does not give a mere dry summary of its contents. He sets forth, in language so plain that even the civilian reader or the youngest

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soldier can read it with interest, the essence of the teaching of Clausewitz, and he embodies in his book the most striking passages of the original work. He adds to each section of his subject some useful criticisms, and at the end of the book he sums up the effect of recent changes on the practice of war.

The book is a popular manual of the realities of war, which should be read not only by soldiers, but by every one who takes an intelligent interest in the great events of our time.

As to the practical value of the writings of Clausewitz, it may be well to quote here the words of Mr. Spenser Wilkinson, the Professor of Military History at Oxford, from his introduction to the original edition of Major Murray's work:

"Clausewitz was a Prussian officer who first saw fighting as a boy in 1793,

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and whose experience of war lasted until 1815, when the great war ended. He was then thirty-five and spent the next fifteen years in trying to clear his mind on the subject of war, which he did by writing a number of military histories and a systematic treatise 'On War.' At the age of fifty he tied his manuscripts into a parcel, hoping to work at them again on the conclusion of the duties for which he was ordered from home. A little more than a year later he died at Breslau of cholera, and the papers, to which he had never put the finishing touch, were afterwards published by his widow.

"Part of the value of his work is due to the exceptional opportunities which he enjoyed. When the war of 1806 began he had long been the personal adjutant of one of the Prussian princes, and an intimate friend of Scharnhorst, who was

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probably the greatest of Napoleon's contemporaries. In the period of reorganization which followed the Peace of Tilsit he made the acquaintance of Gneisenau, and of almost all the officers who made their mark in the subsequent wars of liberation. During the years of preparation he was Scharnhorst's assistant, first in the Ministry of War and then on the General Staff. During the campaign of 1812 he served with the Russian army as a staff officer. Thus his experience during the four years of the Wars of Liberation was that of one who was continually behind the scenes, always in touch with the Governments and Generals, and therefore better able than any one not so favourably placed to see everything in its proper perspective, and to follow

and appreciate the considerations which directed the decisions both of statesmen and of the commanders of armies. His

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personal character was of the finest mould, and his writings have the sincerity, the absence of which makes it so difficult to rely upon those of Napoleon.

"The ultimate test of the value of books is time. When Clausewitz died, the two books on war which were thought the best were those of the Archduke Charles of Austria and General Jomini. To-day the book of Clausewitz, 'On War,' easily holds the first place. It is the least technical of all the great books on war; from beginning to end it is nothing but common sense applied to the subject, but for that reason it is the hardest to digest, because common sense or a man's natural instinctive judgment on any subject is exceedingly hard to analyse and put into words. An exceptionally gifted man can go through this process, but few can follow it for any length of time without a distinct effort.

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"Almost every good institution has arisen out of the effort to provide a remedy for some evil, but in the imperfection of human nature nearly every institution brings with it fresh evils, which in their turn have to be counteracted. The modern spirit, with its hatred of nepotism and its belief in knowledge, has grafted the examination system upon every form of education from the lowest to the highest. The British army shares in the benefits and in the disadvantages of the system, of which, in the case of an officer, the danger to be guarded against is that it tends to accustom a man to rely rather on his memory than his intelligence, and to lean more on other people's thinking than on his own. Clausewitz aimed at producing the very opposite result. He does not offer specific solutions of the various problems of war lest officers, in moments when their business

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is to decide and to act, should be trying to recall his precepts instead of using their eyes and their wits. His purpose rather is to enable them to understand what war is. He believed that if a man had accustomed himself to think of war as it really is, had got to know the different elements which go to make it up, and to distinguish those that are important from those that are comparative trifles, he would be more likely to know of himself what to do in a given situation, and would be much less likely to confuse himself by trying to remember what some general, long since dead, did on some occasion in which after all the position was by no means the same as that in which he finds himself."

What is said here of the soldier actually engaged in war, is true also even of the onlooker who takes a patriotic interest

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in the progress of a war in which his country is involved. Unless he has a clear idea of the real character of modern war, and the principles on which success or failure depend, he will be utterly unable to grasp the significance of the events of which he reads each day. And it is of real importance that in time of war every citizen should judge soundly the course of events, for opinion influences action, and public opinion is made up of the ideas of the units who compose the public. In this connection it is well to bear in mind a point that is often overlooked, a point on which Clausewitz

insists in a singularly convincing passage — namely, the fact that one of the main objects of a nation waging war is to force the enemy's population into a state of mind favourable to submission. This fact is sufficient proof of the importance of public opinion

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being well informed not only as to the course of events, but also as to the principles that give to these events their real significance.

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CHAPTER I

THE LIFE OF CLAUSEWITZ

In an endeavour, such as the present, to interest the British public in even the greatest military writer, the first necessity is to show that he was not a mere theorist or bookworm. The wide and varied experience which the British officer gradually gains in so many different parts of the world shows up the weak points of most theories, and produces a certain distrust of them. Also a distrust of theory is

undoubtedly one of our national characteristics. Hence, in order to appeal to the British officer or civilian, a writer must be a practical soldier.

Such was General Clausewitz: a practical soldier of very great experience in

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the long series of wars 1793 to 1815, and one present throughout that most awful of all campaigns, Napoleon's Russian campaign in 1812.

"General Karl von Clausewitz was born near Magdeburg in 1780, and entered the Prussian army as Fahnenjunker in 1792. He served in the campaigns of 1793-1794 on the Rhine. In 1801 he entered the military school at Berlin as an officer, and remained there till 1803. He here attracted the notice of Scharnhorst. In the campaign of 1806 he served as aide-de-camp to Prince Augustus of Prussia, was present at the battle of Jena, and saw that awful retreat which ended a fortnight later in the surrender at Prentzlau. Being wounded and captured, he was sent into France as a prisoner till the end of the war." "On his return (in November, 1807) he was placed on General Scharnhorst's staff,

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and employed on the work then going on for the reorganization of the Prussian army. In 1812 Clausewitz entered the Russian service, was employed on the general staff, and was thus able to gain much experience in the most gigantic of all the struggles of his time." "In the spring campaign of 1813 (battles of Lutzen, Bautzen, etc.), he, as a Russian officer, was attached to Blucher's staff; during the winter campaign he found employment as chief-of-the-staff to Count Walmoden, who fought against Davoust on the Lower Elbe, and the splendid action of the Goerde was entirely the result of his able dispositions. In 1815 he again entered the Prussian service, and was chief-of-the-staff to the III. Army Corps (Thielman), which at Ligny formed the left of the line of battle, and at Wavre covered the rear of Blucher's army." "In addition to this, we may

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say, considerable practical training (note, enormous and varied indeed compared to any obtainable in the present day), he also possessed a comprehensive and thorough knowledge of military history, and also an uncommonly clear perception of general history" (Von Caemmerer). After the Peace he was employed in a command on the Rhine. In 1818 he became major-general, and was made Director of the Military School at Berlin. Here he remained for some years. This was the chief period of his writings. As General von Caemmerer, in his "Development of Strategical Science," puts it: "This practical and experienced, and at the same time highly cultured soldier, feels now, in peaceful repose, as he himself confesses, the urgent need to develop and systematize the whole world of thought which occupies him, yet also resolves to keep secret till his death the

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fruit of his researches, in order that his soul, which is thirsting for *Truth*, may be safely and finally spared all temptations from subordinate considerations."

In 1830 he was appointed Director of Artillery at Breslau, and, having no more time for writing, sealed up and put away his papers, unfinished as they were. In the same year he was appointed chief-of-the-staff to Field-Marshal Gneisenau's army. In the winter of that year war with France was considered imminent, and Clausewitz had

prospects of acting as chief of the general staff of the Commander-in-Chief Gneisenau. He then drew up two plans for war with France, which bear the stamp of that practical knowledge of war and adaptation of means to ends which distinguish his writings.

In the same year the war scare passed away, the army of Gneisenau was disbanded,
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and Clausewitz returned to Breslau, where after a few days he was seized with cholera, and died in November, 1831, aged only 51.

His works were published after his death by his widow.

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CHAPTER II

THE INFLUENCE OF CLAUSEWITZ ON MODERN POLICY AND WAR

From the day of their publication until now the influence of the writings of Clausewitz has been steadily growing, till to-day it is impossible to over-estimate the extent of that influence upon modern military and political thought, especially in Germany. As General von Caemmerer, in his "Development of Strategical Science," says: "Karl von Clausewitz, the pupil and friend of Scharnhorst and the confidant of Gneisenau, is in Germany generally recognized as the most prominent theorist on war, as the real philosopher on war, to whom our famous

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victors on the more modern battlefields owe their spiritual training."

Field-Marshal Moltke was "his most distinguished pupil," and adapted the teaching of Clausewitz to the conditions of to-day.

General von der Goltz, in the introduction to his great work, "The Nation in Arms," thus describes the veneration which he inspires: "A military writer who, after Clausewitz, writes upon the subject of war, runs the risk of being likened to a poet who, after Goethe, attempts a *Faust*, or, after Shakespeare, a *Hamlet*. Everything important that can be told about the nature of war can be found stereotyped in the works which that great military genius has left behind him. Although Clausewitz has himself described his book as being something as yet incomplete, this remark of his must be taken to mean that he, too, was

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subject to the fate of all aspiring spirits, and was forced to feel that all he attained lay far beneath his ideal. For us, who knew not what that ideal was, his labours are a complete work. I have, accordingly, not attempted to write anything new, or of universal applicability about the science of warfare, but have limited myself to turning my attention to the military operations of our own day." One can hardly imagine a stronger tribute of admiration.

And, as Moltke was Clausewitz's most distinguished pupil, so also are all those trained in the school of Moltke pupils of Clausewitz, including the most eminent of modern German military writers, such as General von Blume, in his "Strategy"; Von der Goltz, in his "Nation in Arms" and "The Conduct of War," who trained the Turkish General Staff for the campaign of 1897 against Greece and the battle of Pharsalia, etc.; General von

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Boguslawski; General von Verdy du Vernois, the father of the study of Applied Tactics; General von Schlichting, in his "Tactical and Strategical Principles of the Present"; General Meckel, who trained the Japanese Staff, etc., etc.

We all remember the telegram sent to General Meckel by Marshal Oyama after the battle of Liao-yang: "We hope you are proud of your pupils."

Some time ago, when asked to give a lecture at Aldershot to the officers of the 2nd Division on Clausewitz, it struck me that it would be very interesting, anxious as we all were then to know the causes of the wonderful Japanese efficiency and success, if I could obtain a pronouncement from General Meckel how far he had been influenced in his teaching by Clausewitz. My friend Herr von Donat did me the favour to write to General von Caemmerer and ask him if he could procure

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me such a pronouncement which I might publish. General Meckel, whose death both Japan and Germany have since had to mourn, most kindly consented, and I esteem it a great honour to be allowed to quote part of his letter. He said: "I, like every other German officer, have, consciously or unconsciously, instructed in the spirit of Clausewitz. Clausewitz is the *founder* of that theory of war which resulted from the Napoleonic. I maintain that *every one* who nowadays either makes or teaches war in a modern sense, bases himself upon Clausewitz, even if he is not conscious of it." This opinion of General Meckel, to whose training of the Japanese General Staff the success of the Japanese armies must be largely attributed, is most interesting. It is not possible to give a stronger or more up-to-date example of the magnitude of the influence of Clausewitz.

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In this connection I should like to make a short quotation from "The War in the Far East," by the *Times* military correspondent. In his short but suggestive chapter on "Clausewitz in Manchuria" he says: "But as all save one of the great battles in Manchuria have been waged by the Japanese in close accordance with the spirit and almost the letter of Clausewitz's doctrine, and as the same battles have been fought by the Russians in absolute disregard of them (though his works had been translated into Russian by General Dragomiroff long before the war), it is certainly worth showing how reading and reflection may profit one army, and how the neglect of this respectable practice may ruin another." "Clausewitz in Manchuria"! That brings us up to date. It is a far cry for his influence to have reached, and triumphed.

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Reflections

Clausewitz wrote his book expressly for statesmen as well as soldiers. We may be sure, therefore, that the influence of Clausewitz on the Continent has penetrated the realm of policy little less widely than the realm of war. From this thought arise many reflections. It will be sufficient here to suggest one. I would suggest that we should regard every foreign statesman, especially in Germany, as, consciously or unconsciously, a disciple of Clausewitz. That is to say, we should regard him as a man who, underneath everything else, underneath the most pacific assurances for the present, considers war an unalterable part of policy. He will regard war as part

of the ordinary intercourse of nations, and occasional warlike struggles as inevitable as commercial struggles. He will consider

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war also as an instrument of policy, which he himself may have to use, and to be studied accordingly. He will consider it not as a thing merely for speeches, but for practical use in furthering or defending the interests of his State. He will regard war as the means by which some day his nation shall impose its will upon another nation. He will be prepared to wait and wait, to make "every imaginable preparation," and finally to let loose war in its most absolute and ruthless character, war carried out with the utmost means, the utmost energy, and the utmost effort of a whole nation-in-arms, determined to achieve its political object and compel submission to its will by force.

To talk to such a man of "the evils of war," or of "the burden of armaments"; or to propose to him "disarmament" or "reduction of armed forces," and so

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forth can only appear to him as the result of "imperfect knowledge." He will not say so, but he will think so, and act accordingly. To the partially instructed opponent of such a man one can only say, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

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CHAPTER III

THE WRITINGS OF CLAUSEWITZ

The writings of Clausewitz are contained in nine volumes, published after his death in 1831, but his fame rests chiefly on his three volumes "On War," which have been translated by Colonel J. J. Graham (the last edition edited by Colonel F. N. Maude, and published by Messrs. Kegan Paul, London). Clausewitz calls them "a collection of materials," "a mass of conceptions not brought into form," and states that he intended to revise, and throw the whole into more complete shape.

We must lament that he did not live to complete his revision. But, on the

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other hand, it is perhaps possible that this unfinished state is really an advantage, for it leaves us free to apply his great maxims and principles and mode of thought to the ever-varying conditions of the present and future, unhampered by too complete a crystallization of his ideas written before more modern conditions of railways, telegraphs, and rapid long-ranging arms of precision, etc., arose. It is perhaps this unfinished state which renders Clausewitz so essentially in touch with, and a part of, the onward movement and evolution of military thought. For his great aim was "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth," without preconception or favour, as far as he could go — essentially "a realist" of war — and what better aim can we set before ourselves?

As Sir Arthur Helps has so well put it in his "Friends in Council," every man

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needs a sort of central stem for his reading and culture. I wish here to say why I think that Clausewitz is admirably adapted to form such a main stem in the military culture of British officers.

In the first place there is a lofty sort of tone about his writings which one gradually realizes as one reads them, and which I will not attempt to describe further than by saying that they stamp themselves as the writings of a gentleman of fine character. In the second place it is a book which "any fellow" can read, for there is nothing to "put one off," nothing abstruse or mathematical or formal, no formulæ or lines and angles and technical terms, such as in other writers, Jomini, Hamley, etc. Clausewitz is free from all such pedantries, which for my part, and I dare say for the part of many others, often "put one off" a book, and made

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one instinctively feel that there was something wrong, something unpractical about it, which rendered it hardly worth the sacrifice of time involved in its study. There is in Clausewitz nothing of that kind at all. All those lines and angles and formulæ he dismisses in a few pages as of little practical importance.

In the third place Clausewitz only goes in for experience and the practical facts of war. As he somewhat poetically puts it, "The flowers of Speculation require to be cut down low near the ground of Experience, their proper soil."¹ He is the great apostle of human nature and character as being everything in war. "All war supposes human weakness, and against that it is directed."² I believe that the British officer will find himself in sympathy with the great thinker on war, who asserts that

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*"Of all military virtues Energy in the conduct of Operations has always conduced most to glory and success of arms."*³

In the fourth place, to the practical mind will appeal his denunciation of all elaborate plans, because *Time* is required for all elaborate combinations, and Time is just the one thing that an active enemy will not give us, — and his consequent deduction that all plans must be of the simplest possible form. His famous sentence, "*In war all things are simple, but the simple are difficult*,"⁴ gives the key to his writings, for to *overcome those simple yet great difficulties he regards as the art of war*, which can only be done by the military virtues of perseverance, energy, and boldness.

In the fifth place he does not want men to be bookworms, for he says:

"Theory is nothing but rational reflection

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*upon all the situations in which we can be placed in war."*⁵ And we can all reflect, without reading too many books. Also he says: "Much reading of history is not required for the above object. The knowledge of a few separate battles, *in their details*, is more useful than a general knowledge of several campaigns. On this account it is more useful to read detailed narratives and journals than regular works of history."⁶ He wants history in detail, not a general smattering and a loose application thereof, which fault he strongly denounces. And he expressly states that the history of the very latest war is the most useful. All of which is very practical, and in accord with what we feel to be true.

As he pictures war, "*the struggle between the spiritual and moral forces on*

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both sides is the centre of all,"⁷ and to this aspect of the subject he gives much more attention than Jomini and most of Jomini's disciples. He has freed us once for all from all formalism. The formation of character, careful, practical, detailed study, and

thorough preparation in peace, the simplest plans carried out with the utmost perseverance, resolution, energy, and boldness in war — these are the practical fruits of his teaching.

Therefore, I say again, that I do not think that the British officer could possibly find a more interesting or a better guide for the main stem of his reading than Clausewitz, nor any one that will appeal to his practical instincts of what is *True* half so well. I do not believe that he could possibly do better than with Clausewitz as main stem, and a detailed study of the latest campaigns

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and modern technicalities as the up-to-date addition required to transform knowledge into action. I trust that every reader of Clausewitz will agree with me in this.

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CHAPTER IV THE THEORY AND THE PRACTICE OF WAR

"Moltke, the most gifted pupil of Clausewitz," "Moltke, who knew Clausewitz's book well, and often liked to describe him as the theoretical instructor." As Chaucer would say, "What needeth wordes more?"

Clausewitz has treated practically every chief branch of strategy and tactics (except, of course, the present-day developments of railways, telegraphs, quick-firing guns, smokeless powder, universal service armies, etc.). The whole of his bulky work "On War" is full of interesting and sometimes eloquent and almost poetical passages, of concentrated, pregnant, and far-reaching thoughts on every

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subject. Through all these it is, of course, impossible to follow him in any introduction. One can really do no more than urge all to read Clausewitz for themselves, to go to the fountain-head, to the master-work itself. In the short space to which I have restricted myself, I propose, therefore, to concentrate on a few of his leading ideas, reluctantly leaving out many others which are really almost just as good.

Theory and Practice

One of the things for which we are most deeply indebted to Clausewitz is that he has shown us clearly the proper place of theory in relation to practice. "It should educate the mind of the future leader in war, or, rather, guide him in his *self-instruction*, but *not* accompany him on to the battlefield; just as a sensible tutor forms and enlightens the

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opening mind of a youth without therefore keeping him in leading-strings all his life."⁸ Again, "In real action most men are guided by the tact of judgment, which hits the object more or less accurately, according as they possess more or less genius. This is the way in which all great generals have acted, and therein partly lay their greatness and their genius, in that they always hit upon what was right by this tact. Thus also it will always be in *action*, and so far this tact is amply sufficient. But when it is a question not of acting one's self, but of convincing others *in consultation*, then all depends upon clear conceptions and demonstrations and the inherent relations;

and so little progress has been made in this respect that most deliberations are merely a contention of words, resting on no firm basis, and ending

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either in every one retaining his own opinion, or in a compromise from mutual considerations of respect, a middle course really without any value. Clear ideas on these matters are not, therefore, wholly useless."9

How true this is any one will admit who reflects for a moment upon the great diversity of opinions on almost every subject held in our army, just because of this want of a central theory common to all. In the domain of tactics it is evident that this holds good even as in strategy, for a common central theory of war will produce a more or less common way of looking at things, from which results more or less common action towards the attainment of the common object.

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Rejection of Set and Geometrical Theories

"It should educate the mind of the future leader in war" is what Clausewitz demands from a useful theory; but he most expressly and unreservedly rejects every attempt at a method "by which definite plans for wars or campaigns are to be given out all ready made as if from a machine."10 He mocks at Bülow's including at first in the one term "base" all sorts of things, like the supply of the army, its reinforcements and equipments, the security of its communications with the home country, and lastly the security of its line of retreat, and then fixing the extent of the base, and finally fixing an angle for the extent of that base: "And all this was done merely to obtain a pure geometrical result utterly useless" (Von Caemmerer).

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For the same reason Jomini's principle of the Inner Line does not satisfy him, owing to its mere geometrical nature, although he right willingly acknowledges "that it rests on a sound foundation, on the truth that the combat is the only effectual means in war" (Von Caemmerer). All such attempts at theory seem to him therefore perfectly useless, "because they strive to work with fixed quantities, while in war everything is *uncertain*, and all considerations must reckon with all kinds of variable quantities; because they only consider *material* objects, while every action in war is saturated with *moral* forces and effects; lastly, because they deal only with the action of *one* party, while war is a constant reciprocal effect of *both* parties" (Von Caemmerer).

"Pity the warrior," says Clausewitz, "who is contented to crawl about in this

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beggardom of rules." "Pity the theory which sets itself in opposition to the mind"11 (note, the moral forces).

A Theory to be Practically Useful

Clausewitz insists that a useful theory cannot be more than a thorough knowledge of military history and "reflection upon all the situations in which we can be placed in war." "What genius does must be just the best of all rules, and theory cannot do better than to show just how and why it is so." "It is an analytical investigation of the subject which leads to exact knowledge: and if brought to bear on the results of experience, which in our case would be military history, to a *thorough* familiarity with it. If theory investigates the subjects which constitute war; if it separates

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more distinctly that which at first sight seems amalgamated; if it explains fully the properties of the means; if it shows their probable effects; if it makes evident the nature of objects; *if it brings to bear all over the field of war the light of essentially critical investigation*, — then it has fulfilled the chief duties of its province. It becomes then a guide to him who wishes to make himself acquainted with war from books; it lights up the whole road for him, facilitates his progress, educates his judgment, and shields him from error."¹²

Knowledge must be Thorough

This Clausewitz considers most important. He says that "Knowledge of the conduct of war ... *must pass completely into the mind*, and almost cease to be

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something objective." For in war "The moral reaction, the ever-changing form of things makes it necessary for the chief actor to carry *in himself* the whole mental apparatus of his knowledge, in order that anywhere and at every pulse-beat he may be capable of giving the requisite decision *from himself*. Knowledge must, by this complete assimilation with his own mind and life, be converted into real power."

So much for Clausewitz, therefore, as the greatest yet the simplest and least theoretical of theorists on war. Mark well his comforting dictum that "Theory is nothing but rational reflection upon all the situations in which we can be placed in war." That is a task which we have all more or less attempted. Therefore we are all more or less theorists. The only question is that of comparative

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"thoroughness" in our reflections. And it is essentially this "thoroughness" in investigation and reflection towards which Clausewitz helps us. Like every other habit, the *habit* of military reflection gradually grows with use; till, fortified and strengthened by detailed knowledge, it gradually becomes Power.

Reflections

The theory of war is simple, and there is no reason why any man who chooses to take the trouble to read and reflect carefully on one or two of the acknowledged best books thereon, should not attain to a fair knowledge thereof. He may with reasonable trouble attain to such knowledge of the theory of war as will enable him to follow with intelligent appreciation the discussions of experienced soldier or soldiers. Such knowledge as

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will prevent his misunderstanding the experienced soldier's argument from pure ignorance, and such knowledge as will enable him to understand the military reasons put forward and the military object proposed. To the opinion of such a man all respect will be due. Thus, and thus only.

It is indeed the plain duty of all who aspire to rule either thus to qualify themselves to understand, or else to abstain from interference with, the military interests of the State.

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CHAPTER V

THE MAGNITUDE OF THE EFFORT REQUIRED IN A MODERN NATIONAL WAR

This point is here illustrated with more detail from Clausewitz than may seem necessary to some, because it is precisely the point regarding modern war which is least understood in this country.

"The complete overthrow of the enemy is the natural end of the art of war." "As this idea must apply to both the belligerent parties, it must follow, that there can be no suspension in the military act, and peace cannot take place until one or other of the parties concerned is completely overthrown." This is what Clausewitz means by Absolute War, that

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is war carried to its absolute and logical conclusion with the utmost force, the utmost effort and the utmost energy. He then proceeds to show that war, owing "to all the natural inertia and friction of its parts, the whole of the inconsistency, the vagueness and hesitation (or timidity) of the human mind," usually takes a weaker or less absolute form according to circumstances. "All this, theory must admit, but it is its duty to give the foremost place to the absolute form of war, and to use that form as a general point of direction." He then proceeds to show that war finally took its absolute form under Napoleon. To-day we may say that war takes its absolute form in the modern great national war, which is waged by each belligerent with the whole concentrated physical and mental power of the nation-in-arms.

This requires to be gone into a little

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more in detail, for it is a most important point.

Clausewitz in Book VIII. approaches this part of his subject by an historical survey of war from the time of the Roman Empire to that of Napoleon. He shows how as the feudal system gradually merged into the later monarchical States of Europe, armies gradually became less and less national, more and more mercenary. Omitting this, we arrive at the seventeenth century. He says: "The end of the seventeenth century, the time of Louis XIV., is to be regarded as the point in history at which the standing military power, such as it existed in the eighteenth century, reached its zenith. That military force was based on enlistment and money. States had organized themselves into complete unities; and the governments, by commuting the personal services of their subjects into money

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payments, had concentrated their whole power in their treasuries. Through the rapid strides in social improvements, and a more enlightened system of government, this power had become very great in comparison with what it had been. France appeared in the field with a standing army of a couple of hundred thousand men, and the other Powers in proportion."

Armies were supported out of the Treasury, which the sovereign regarded partly as his privy purse, at least as a resource belonging to the Government, and not to the people. Relations with other States, except with respect to a few commercial subjects, mostly concerned only the interests of the Treasury or of the Government, not those of the people; at least ideas tended everywhere in that way. The Cabinets therefore looked upon themselves as the owners and administrators of large estates, which they were

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continually seeking to increase, without the tenants on those estates being particularly interested in this improvement.

The people, therefore, who in the Tartar invasions were everything in war, who in the old republics and in the Middle Ages were of great consequence, were in the eighteenth century absolutely nothing directly.

In this manner, in proportion as the Government separated itself more from the people, and regarded itself as the State, war became more and more exclusively a business of the Government, which it carried on by means of the money in its coffers and the idle vagabonds it could pick up in its own and neighbouring countries. The army was a State property, very expensive, and not to be lightly risked in battle. "In its signification war was only diplomacy somewhat intensified, a more vigorous

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way of negotiating, in which battles and sieges were substituted for diplomatic notes."

"Plundering and devastating the enemy's country were no longer in accordance with the spirit of the age." "They were justly looked upon as unnecessary barbarity."

"War, therefore, confined itself more and more, both as regards means and ends, to the army itself. The army, with its fortresses and some prepared positions, constituted a State in a State, within which the element of war slowly consumed itself. All Europe rejoiced at its taking this direction, and held it to be the necessary consequence of the spirit of progress."

So think many in this country to-day. They are only a hundred years behind the times.

"The plan of a war on the part of the State assuming the offensive in those

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times consisted generally in the conquest of one or other of the enemy's provinces; the plan of the defender was to prevent this. The plan of campaign was to take one or other of the enemy's fortresses, or to prevent one of our own being taken; it was only when a battle became unavoidable for this purpose that it was sought for and fought. Whoever fought a battle without this unavoidable necessity, from mere innate desire of gaining a victory, was reckoned a general with too much daring."

For armies were too precious to be lightly risked. "Winter quarters, in which the mutual relations of the two parties almost entirely ceased, formed a distinct limit to the activity which was considered to belong to one campaign." "As long as war was universally conducted in this manner, all was considered to be in the most regular order." "Thus there was eminence and perfection of

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every kind, and even Field-Marshal Daun, to whom it was chiefly owing that Frederick the Great completely attained his object, and Maria Theresa completely failed in hers, notwithstanding that could still pass for a great general."

Beyond this stage of military thought, many in this country have not yet advanced.

"Thus matters stood when the French Revolution broke out; Austria and Prussia tried their diplomatic art of war; this very soon proved insufficient. Whilst, according to the usual way of seeing things, all hopes were placed on a very limited

military force in 1793, such a force as no one had any conception of made its appearance. War had suddenly become again an affair of the people, and that of a people numbering thirty millions, every one of whom regarded

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himself as a citizen of the State." *"By this participation of the people in the war, instead of a cabinet and an army, a whole nation with its natural weight came into the scale. Henceforth the means available — the efforts which might be called forth — had no longer any definite limits; the energy with which the war itself might be conducted had no longer any counterpoise, and consequently the danger to the adversary had risen to the extreme."*

If only our politicians could learn this old lesson of the French Revolution! For many, too many, of them appear to derive their ideas of war to-day from some dim reminiscent recollections of school histories of the wars in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

To continue: "After all this was perfected by the hand of Bonaparte, this military power based on the strength of

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the whole nation, marched over Europe, smashing everything in pieces so surely and certainly, that where it only encountered the old-fashioned armies the result was not doubtful for a moment.

"A reaction, however, awoke in due time. In Spain the war became of itself an affair of the people." In Austria. In Russia. "In Germany Prussia rose up the first, made the war a national cause, and without either money or credit, and with a population reduced one-half, took the field with an army twice as strong as in 1806. The rest of Germany followed the example of Prussia sooner or later." "Thus it was that Germany and Russia, in the years 1813 and 1814, appeared against France with about a million of men."

"Under these circumstances the energy thrown into the conduct of war was quite different." "In eight months the

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theatre of war was removed from the Oder to the Seine. Proud Paris had to bow its head for the first time; and the redoubtable Bonaparte lay fettered on the ground."

"Therefore, since the time of Bonaparte, war, through being, first on one side, then again on the other, an affair of the whole nation, has assumed quite a new nature, or rather it has approached much nearer to its real nature, to its absolute perfection.

The means then called forth had no visible limit, the limit losing itself in the energy and enthusiasm of the Government and its subjects. By the extent of the means, and the wide field of possible results, as well as by the powerful excitement of feeling which prevailed, energy in the conduct of war was immensely increased; the object of its action was the downfall of the foe; and not until the enemy lay powerless

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on the ground was it supposed to be possible to stop, or to come to any understanding with regard to the mutual objects of the contest.

"Thus, therefore the element of war, freed from all conventional restrictions, broke loose with all its natural force. The cause was the participation of the people in this great affair of State, and this participation arose partly from the effects of the French

Revolution on the internal affairs of other countries, partly from the threatening attitude of the French towards all nations.

"Now, whether this will be the case always in future, whether all wars hereafter in Europe will be carried on with the whole power of the States, and, consequently, *will only take place on account of great interests closely affecting the people*, would be a difficult point to settle. But every one will agree with us

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that, at least, *Whenever great interests are in dispute*, mutual hostility will discharge itself in the same manner as it has done in our times."

Reflections

This is so true, that every war since the days of Clausewitz has made its truth more apparent. Since he wrote, the participation of the people in war has become, not a revolutionary fact, but an organized fact, an ordinary fact in the everyday life of nations. To-day every State except Great Britain, securely based on the system of the universal training of its sons to arms, stands ready to defend its interests with the whole concentrated power, physical, intellectual, and material, of its whole manhood. Consequently, European war, as Clausewitz foresaw, "will only take place on

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account of great interests closely affecting the people." The character of such war will be absolute, the object of its action will be the downfall of the foe, and not till the foe (be it Great Britain or not) lies powerless on the ground will it be supposed possible to stop. In the prosecution of such a national war the means available, the energy and the effort called forth, will be without limits. Such must be the conflicts of nations-in-arms.

Yet, even now, so many years after Clausewitz wrote, in the hope, as he himself stated, "to iron out many creases in the heads of strategists and statesmen," the great transformation in the character of modern war, due to the participation of the people therein, has not yet been adequately realized by many men in this country *who ought to know*. It is earnestly to be hoped that they will endeavour to adjust their minds, as regards war, to

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the fact that we are living, not in the eighteenth century, but in the twentieth, and that they will consider that war has once for all become an affair of the people, that our opponents will be a people-in-arms, using the uttermost means of their whole manhood to crush us, and that disaster can only be prevented by a like utmost effort on our part, by an effort regardless of everything except self-preservation.

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CHAPTER VI PUBLIC OPINION IN WAR

"War belongs, not to the province of arts and sciences, but to the province of social life. It is a conflict of great interests which is settled by bloodshed, and only in that respect is it different from others. It would be better, instead of comparing it with any art, to liken it to trade, which is also a conflict of human interests and activities; and it is still more like state policy, which again, on its part, may be looked upon as a

kind of trade on a great scale. Besides, state policy is the womb in which war is developed, in which its outlines lie hidden

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in a rudimentary state, like the qualities of living creatures in their germs."13 These conflicts of interest can bring about gradually such a state of feeling that "even the most civilized nations may burn with passionate hatred of each other." It is an unpleasant fact for the philosopher, for the social reformer, to contemplate, but history repeats and repeats the lesson. Still more, "It is quite possible for such a state of feeling to exist between two States that a very trifling political motive for war may produce an effect quite disproportionate — in fact, a perfect explosion." "War is a wonderful trinity, composed of the original violence of its elements — hatred and animosity — which may be looked upon as blind instinct; of the play of probabilities and chance, which make it a free activity of the soul; and

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of the subordinate nature of a political instrument, by which it belongs purely to the reason.

"The first of these three phases concerns more the people; the second, more the general and his army; the third more the Government. *The passions which break forth in war must already have a latent existence in the peoples.*

"These three tendencies are deeply rooted in the nature of the subject. A theory which would leave any one of them out of account would immediately become involved in such a contradiction with the reality, that it might be regarded as destroyed at once by that alone."14

Clausewitz is the great thinker, the great realist, the great philosopher of war. His aim was, free from all bias, to get at *the truth of things*. His view of war as a social act, as part of the

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intercourse of nations, so that occasional warlike struggles can no more be avoided than occasional commercial struggles, is a view which requires to be most carefully pondered over by every statesman. It is based upon the essential fundamental characteristics of human nature, which do not alter. It is not to be lightly set aside by declamation about the blessings of peace, the evils of war, the burden of armaments, and such-like sophistries. To submit without a struggle to injustice or to the destruction of one's vital interests is not in passionate human nature. Nor will it ever be in the nature of a virile people. It is indeed to be most sincerely hoped that *arbitration* will be resorted to more and more as a means of peacefully settling all non-vital causes of dispute. But arbitration has its limits. For *no great nation will ever submit to arbitration any interest that it regards as*

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absolutely vital. The view of war, therefore, as a social act, as part of the intercourse of nations, with all that it implies, appears to be the only one which a statesman, however much he may regret the fact, can take. It has, therefore, been brought forward here at once, as it underlies the whole subject and is essential to all clear thought thereon.

So much for the influence of Public Opinion in producing war. Now for its influence in and during war.

"There are three principal objects in carrying on war," says Clausewitz.

"(a) To conquer and destroy the enemy's armed force.

"(b) To get possession of the material elements of aggression, and of the other sources of existence of the hostile army.

"(c) *To gain Public Opinion.*¹⁵

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"To attain the first of these objects, the chief operation must be directed against the enemy's principal army, for it must be beaten before we can follow up the other two objects with success.

"In order to seize the material forces, operations are directed against those points at which those resources are chiefly concentrated: principal towns, magazines, great fortresses. On the road to these the enemy's principal force, or a considerable part of his army, will be encountered.

"Public Opinion is ultimately gained by great victories, and by the possession of the enemy's capital."¹⁶

This almost prophetic (as it was in his day) recognition by Clausewitz of the vast importance of gaining Public Opinion

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as one of the three great aims in war, is fundamental. It is just one of those instances of his rare insight into the principles and development of modern national war which make his book of such great and enduring value to us. For since his day Europe has become organized into great industrial nations, democracy and popular passion have become more and more a force to be reckoned with, and the gaining and preserving of Public Opinion in war has become more and more important. It has, in fact, become the statesman's chief business during a great modern national war. It has become necessary for him to study intently war in its relation to industry, and to the industrial millions over whom he presides, or over whom he may preside.

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Reflections

(1) In the time of Clausewitz we in Britain were a nation of 18,000,000, practically self-supporting, and governed by an aristocracy. To-day we are a crowded nation of 43,000,000 dependent upon over-sea sources for three-fourths of our food, for our raw materials, for our trade, for our staying power, *and* we are governed by a democracy. In a modern democratic State it will only be possible to carry on the most just and unavoidable war so long as the hardships brought on the democracy by the war do not become intolerable. To prevent these hardships from thus becoming intolerable to the people, to Public Opinion, will be the task of the modern statesman during war, and this can only be done by wise prevision and timely preparation. *It requires the internal organization of the Industrial State for war.*

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It appears to the *writer* that internal organization can be subdivided as follows: —
I. An adequate gold reserve.

II. The protection of our ships carrying raw material, food, and exports during their passage on the high seas from the places of origin to the consumers: (A) by the few available cruisers which could be spared from the fighting fleets, assisted by a

thoroughly well thought out and prepared scheme of national indemnity (*vide* Blue Book thereon); (B) by insuring the distribution to the consumers of food and raw material, after it has arrived in the country, by preparing a thorough organization which would deal with the blocking of any of the principal ports of arrival, and by guarding the vulnerable points of our internal lines of communications to and from the shipping centres.

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III. Organization of Poor Law system to bring immediate relief by selling at peace price food to those unable to pay war prices owing to (A) normal poverty (7,000,000 to 8,000,000 souls), (B) out-of-works, due to effect of war on trade.

Work and wages the State *must* guarantee during modern war, and before the State *can* guarantee these, it is absolutely necessary that it should satisfy itself that the above preparations are actually *in being*. This pre-supposes a more earnest study of the industrial effects of a great national war than has yet been given to the subject by our political leaders. For in the warfare of the present and future the importance of gaining and preserving Public Opinion, as pointed out by Clausewitz, cannot be over-estimated. It is as fundamentally important *to safeguard our own Public Opinion as it is to attack, weaken, and*

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gain over that of the enemy. This has not yet passed the stage of thought. But good thoughts are no better than good dreams unless they be put into action. We are waiting for the statesman to DO it. There is no great difficulty.

(2) In arousing the national spirit to the requisite height of patriotic self-denial and self-sacrifice, in elevating, preserving, and safe-guarding Public Opinion during a great national struggle, much may be hoped for from the patriotism of our Press. Only in fairness to those whose patriotism is self-originating and spontaneous, it must be made compulsory upon ALL, so that no journal may suffer loss of circulation or pecuniary injury thereby.

(3) There lies a practical task immediately to the hand of our statesmen if they will seriously set themselves to the task of improving the *moral* of our

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nation by reforming our education *curriculum*, on the leading principle that the moral is to the physical as three to one in life, and that therefore character-building must be its chief aim. Then they will do much towards strengthening us for war, towards carrying out Clausewitz's idea of the gaining and preserving of our Public Opinion in War.

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CHAPTER VII

THE NATURE OF WAR

"It is necessary for us to commence with a glance at the nature of the whole, because it is particularly necessary that, in the consideration of any of the parts, the whole should be kept constantly in view. We shall not enter into any of the abstruse definitions of war used by Publicists. We shall keep to the element of the thing itself, to a duel. War is nothing but a duel on an extensive scale. If we would conceive as a unit the countless numbers of duels which make up a war, we shall do so best by

supposing two wrestlers. Each strives by physical force to throw his adversary, and thus

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to render him incapable of further resistance.

"Violence arms itself with the inventions of arts and science in order to contend against violence. Self-imposed restrictions, almost imperceptible, and *hardly worth mentioning*, termed *usages of International Law*, accompany it without essentially impairing its power.

"Violence, that is to say physical force, is therefore *the Means*; the compulsory submission of the enemy to our will is the ultimate *object*. In order to attain this object fully the enemy must first be disarmed: and this is, correctly speaking, the real aim of hostilities in theory."¹⁷

Now, "philanthropists may easily imagine that there is a skilful method of disarming and overcoming an adversary without causing great bloodshed, and that this

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is the proper tendency of the art of war. However plausible this may appear, *still it is an error which must be extirpated*, for in such dangerous things as war *the errors which proceed from a spirit of benevolence are just the worst*. As the use of physical power to the utmost extent by no means excludes the co-operation of the intelligence, it follows that *he who uses force unsparingly without reference to the quantity of bloodshed, MUST obtain a superiority if his adversary does not act likewise*." "To introduce into the philosophy of war itself a principle of moderation would be an absurdity." "We therefore repeat our proposition, that *War is an act of violence which in its application knows no bounds*."

The Political Nature of War

In endeavouring briefly to describe Clausewitz's method of looking at war,

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one is continually confronted by the difficulty of selecting a few leading ideas out of so many profound thoughts and pregnant passages. However, a selection must be made.

I assign the first place to his conception of war as a part of policy, because that is fundamentally necessary to understand his practical way of looking at things. This point of view is as necessary for the strategist as for the statesman, indeed for every man who would understand the nature of war. For otherwise it is impossible to understand the military conduct of many campaigns and battles, in which the political outweighed the military influence, and led to action incomprehensible almost from a purely military point of view. History is full of such examples.

Clausewitz clearly lays down: "*War is only a continuation of State policy*

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by other means. This point of view being adhered to will introduce much more unity into the consideration of the subject, and things will be more easily disentangled from each other."¹⁸ "It is only thus that we can obtain a clear conception of war, for the political view is the *object*, war is the *means*, and the means must always include the object in our conception." "Each (nation or government) strives by physical force to compel the other to submit to its will."¹⁹

Owing to the great importance of this point of view, so little understood in this country, I have devoted the next chapter to it alone, so as to bring out Clausewitz's view more in detail. We can, therefore, pass on for the present.

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The Culminating Point of Victory

Secondly, I select his doctrine of the culminating point of victory, because that is essential in order to understand his division of all wars into two classes, according to how far the attack is likely to be able to extend into the hostile country before reaching its culminating point, where reaction may set in.²⁰

"The conqueror in a war is not always in a condition to subdue his adversary completely. Often, in fact almost *universally, there is a culminating point of victory*. Experience shows this sufficiently."²¹ As the attack or invasion progresses it becomes weaker even from its successes, from sieges or corps left to observe fortified places, from the troops required to guard the territory gained, and the lengthening line of

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communications, from the fact that we are removing further from our resource while the enemy is falling back upon and drawing nearer to his, from the danger of other States joining in to prevent the utter destruction of the defeated nation, from the rousing of the whole nation in extremity to save themselves by a people's war, from the slackening of effort in the victorious army itself, etc., etc. Leoben, Friedland, Austerlitz, Moscow, are instances of such a culminating point, and probably in the late Russo-Japanese war Harbin would have proved so, too, if peace had not intervened.

Clausewitz continues: "It is necessary to know how far it (our preponderance) will reach, in order not to go beyond that point and, instead of fresh advantage, reap disaster." He defines it as "*The point at which the offensive changes into the defensive,*" and says, "to

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overstep this point is more than simply a useless expenditure of power yielding no further results, it is a *destructive* step which causes reaction, and the reaction is, according to all experience, productive of most disproportionate effects."²² The reader will find it an interesting exercise to search for this culminating point of victory in historical campaigns, and mark the result where it has been overstepped and where it has not been overstepped.

The Two Classes of Wars

From this consideration of the culminating point of victory follow the two classes into which Clausewitz divides all wars.

"The two kinds of war are, first, those in which the object is the complete *overthrow of the enemy*, whether it be that

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we aim at his destruction politically, or merely at disarming him and forcing him to conclude peace on our terms; and, *next*, those in which our aim is merely to make some conquests on the frontiers of his country, either for the purpose of retaining them permanently, or of turning them to account as matters for exchange in the settlement of Peace."²³

All wars, therefore, are wars for the complete destruction of the enemy, i.e. "unlimited object," or wars with a "limited object." In the plan of a war it is necessary to settle which it is to be in accordance with our powers and resources of attack compared with the enemy's resources for defence, and where our culminating point of victory is likely to be, on this side of the enemy's capital or beyond it. If the former — then the plan should be one with a "limited
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object," such as the Crimea, Manchuria, etc.; if the latter — then the plan should aim at the enemy's total destruction, such as most of Napoleon's campaigns, or the Allies in 1813, 1814, 1815, or as 1866, or 1870. As Clausewitz says: "*Now, the first, the grandest, and most decisive act of judgment which the statesman and general exercises, is rightly to understand in this respect the war in which he engages, not to take it for something or to wish to make of it something which, by the nature of its relations, it is impossible for it to be. This, therefore, is the first and most comprehensive of all strategical questions.*"²⁴

In Clausewitz's two plans for war with France in 1831,²⁵ this difference is plain. In the first plan, he considered Prussia, Austria, the German Confederation, and Great Britain united as allies

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against France, — and with this great superiority of numbers he plans an attack by two armies, each of 300,000 men, one marching on Paris from Belgium, one on Orleans from the Upper Rhine. In the second plan the political conditions had meanwhile changed; Austria and Great Britain were doubtful, and Clausewitz held it accordingly dubious if Prussia and the German Confederation alone could appear before Paris in sufficient strength to guarantee victory in a decisive battle, and with which it would be permissible to venture even beyond Paris. So he proposed to limit the object to the conquest of Belgium, and to attack the French vigorously the moment they entered that country.

Which strict limitation of the object within the means available to attain it is characteristic of Clausewitz's practical way of looking at things. In each plan,
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however, a vigorous offensive aiming at a decisive victory was to be adopted.

Preparation for War

The third place, in respect to its present-day importance, I assign to Clausewitz's clear statement that —

"If we have clearly understood the result of our reflections, then the activities belonging to war divide themselves into two principal classes, into such as are only *preparations for war* and into *the war itself*. This distinction must also be made in theory."

Nothing could be more clearly stated than this, or place in greater honour peace preparations. Like his doctrine of the importance of gaining public opinion in war, it is one of those almost prophetic utterances which make Clausewitz

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the germ of modern military evolution.

Clausewitz, unlike Jomini who did not, foresaw to a certain extent (probably owing to his employment in organizing the new Prussian short-service army after 1806)

the nation-in-arms of the present day. And, since his time, the greater the forces which have to be prepared, the greater has become the value of preparation for war. It has been continually growing, till to-day it has obtained such overwhelming importance that one may almost say that a modern war is practically (or nearly so) decided *before* war breaks out, according to which nation has made the greatest and most thorough peace preparations.

Clausewitz elsewhere speaks of "every imaginable preparation." We may nowadays almost go so far as to say that preparation is war, and that that nation

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which is beaten in preparation is already beaten BEFORE the war breaks out. A failure to understand this fact is a fundamental error at the root of the idea of war as held by civilians, for many of them think that speeches are a substitute for preparations.

It is plain that these three ideas of Clausewitz regarding the nature of war, its political nature, the distinction between wars with an unlimited object and a limited object, and preparations in peace-time, are as much matters for the statesman as for the soldier, and require study and reflection on the part of the former as much as on the part of the latter.

Friction in War

I place friction here before the more detailed consideration of actual war, of

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war in itself, because it is that which distinguishes war on paper from real war, the statesman's and soldier's part from the part of the soldier only, and is therefore to be fitly treated midway between the two.

Friction in war is one of Clausewitz's most characteristic ideas. He always looks at everything from that point of view, and as friction and the fog of war, and their influence on human nature will always be the chief characteristic of real war as distinguished from theoretical war or war on paper, it is chiefly this habit or mode of thought which makes his writings of such great and permanent value. It is also a habit which we ought sedulously to cultivate in ourselves.

*"In war everything is very simple, but the simplest thing is difficult,"*²⁶ runs his

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famous saying. Why is the simplest thing difficult? Because of the friction of war. And how can that friction be minimized? Only by force of character, and the military virtues of discipline, perseverance, resolution, energy, and boldness. Hence the great emphasis which he always and everywhere lays upon character and these military virtues as the deciding factors in war.

"Friction is the only conception which in a general way corresponds to that which distinguishes real war from war on paper," he says. Each individual of the army "keeps up his own friction in all directions." "The danger which war brings with it, the bodily exertions which it requires, augment this evil so much that they may be regarded as the greatest causes of it."²⁷ *"This enormous friction is everywhere brought into contact with*

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chance, and thus facts take place upon which it was impossible to calculate, their chief origin being chance. As an instance of one such chance take the weather. Here

the fog prevents the enemy from being discovered in time, — a battery from firing, or a report from reaching the general. The rain (mud) prevents a battalion from arriving, — or the cavalry from charging effectively, because it had stuck fast in the heavy ground." And so on. Consider for examples the foggy mornings of Jena or Austerlitz, of Eylau, the Katzbach, Grosbeeren, Dennewitz, Pultusk, Dresden, Sadowa; or the mud of Poland, the snow of Russia, or, latest, the mud of Manchuria. "*Activity in war is movement in a resistant medium.*" "*The knowledge of friction is a chief part of that so often talked of experience in war, which is required in a good general.*" "It is

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therefore this friction which makes that which appears easy in war so difficult in reality."²⁸ In considering any situation in war we must therefore always add to the known circumstances — friction.

War Itself

In Clausewitz's way of looking at war itself I assign at once the first place to his doctrine, "*The destruction of the enemy's military force is the leading principle of war, and for the whole chapter of positive action the direct way to the aim.*"²⁹ This dictum, repeated in many different forms, underlies his whole conception of war. All the old theoretical ideas about threatening by manœuvring, conquering by manœuvring, forcing the enemy to retreat by manœuvring, and so forth, in which his predecessors entangled

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strategy, and from which even the Archduke Charles and Jomini had not completely freed themselves, he brushes aside by "our assertion is that ONLY great tactical results can lead to great strategical results."³⁰ Thus he leads and concentrates our thoughts in strategy on the central idea of victory in battle, and frees us once for all from the obscuring veil of lines and angles and geometrical forms by which other writers have hidden that truth. "Philanthropists may easily imagine that there is a skilful method of overcoming and disarming an adversary without causing great bloodshed, and that this is the proper tendency of the art of war. However plausible this may appear, *it is an error which must be extirpated*, for, in such dangerous things as war, *the errors which spring from a spirit of benevolence are just the worst.*"³¹

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For "he who uses force unsparingly without reference to the quantity of bloodshed, *must* obtain the superiority if his adversary does not act likewise." And the "worst of all errors in wars" is still the idea of war too commonly held by civilians in this country, as witness the outcries which greeted every loss during the South African war, which shows how much Clausewitz is needed as a tonic to brace their minds to the reality.

"War is an act of violence which in its application knows NO bounds." "Let us not hear of generals who conquer without bloodshed; if a bloody slaughter be a horrible sight, then that is a ground for paying more respect to war (for avoiding unnecessary war), but not for making the sword we wear blunt and blunter by degrees from feelings of humanity, till some one steps in with a sword that is

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sharp, and lops off the arm from our body."

Simple Plans

The second place I assign to his doctrine of *the simplest plans*, because time is required for the completion of complicated evolutions, but "a bold, courageous, resolute enemy will not let us have *time* for wide-reaching skilful combination."³² "By this it appears to us that the advantage of simple and direct results over those that are complicated is conclusively shown."

"We must not lift the arm too far for the room given to strike," or the opponent will get his thrust in first.

"Whenever this is the case, we must ourselves choose the shorter." "Therefore, far from making it our aim to gain upon the enemy by complicated plans,

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we must always rather endeavour to be beforehand with him by the simplest and shortest."

Strategic Lines

The salient and re-entrant frontiers, the subtle distinctions between the numerous kinds of strategic lines, and lines of operation, and lines of manoeuvre, etc., etc., etc., which in Jomini and his predecessors and followers play so great, so pedantic, and so confusing a part, — for these Clausewitz has little respect. In his chapter on "The Geometrical Element,"³³ he says, "We therefore do not hesitate to regard it as an established truth that *in strategy more depends upon the number and magnitude of the victorious battles than on the form of the great lines by which they are connected.*"³⁴ Of course

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he does not altogether leave out such considerations, but the above sentence shows how he regards them as only of minor importance. He therefore frees us from a great deal of pedantry, and takes us back to the heart of things.

Friction

has been already dealt with, so no more need be said here, except about its components.

Danger

"An ordinary character never attains to complete coolness" in danger. "Danger in war belongs to its friction, and a correct idea of it is necessary for truth of perception, and therefore it is brought under notice here."³⁵

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Bodily Exertion

Clausewitz says that bodily exertion and fatigue in war "put fetters on the action of the mind, and wear out in secret the powers of the soul." "Like danger, they belong to the fundamental causes of friction."³⁶

To one who, like Clausewitz, had seen the retreat from Moscow, the awful passage of the Beresina, and the battle of the nations round Leipzig, bodily exertion could not be overlooked. Had he not seen bodily exertion and hardship break up the Grand Army into a small horde of stragglers, and destroy the army of Kutusoff in almost an equal measure, in 1812, as well as practically ruin the spirit, and largely break up the great army of Napoleon in 1813?

As for the effects of bodily exertion on

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the mind, purpose, and resolution of the general, compare Benningsen at Eylau after thirty-six hours in the saddle, or Napoleon at Dresden, by which he lost all the results of his victory.

Information in War

"*The foundation of all our ideas and actions,*" but "in a few words, *most reports are false.*" "When in the thick of war itself one report follows hard upon the heels of another, it is fortunate if these reports in contradicting each other show a certain balance of probability." In another passage, in order to illustrate this perpetual uncertainty under which all decisions in war have to be made, he compares two opposing commanders to two men fighting in a dark room and groping uncertainly for one another.

"These things which as elements meet

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together in the atmosphere of war and make it a *resistant medium for every activity*, we have designated danger, bodily exertion, information, and friction."³⁷ He never loses sight of this; it pervades everything he writes.

The Moral and Physical

"And therefore the most of the subjects which we shall go through in this book are composed *half of physical, half of moral causes and effects*, and we might say that the physical are almost no more than the wooden handle, whilst the moral are the noble metal, the real bright polished weapon."³⁸ Pages might be filled with extracts showing his opinion that the moral is everything in war, but the reader is already convinced of that. Compare Napoleon's in war, "The moral

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is to the physical as three to one." Clausewitz regards all military questions from this point. His psychological attitude is what chiefly characterizes Clausewitz from all writers who came before him, and which makes his deductions so realistic, so interesting and so valuable for all who come after him.

Tension and Rest in War

In order not to weary the reader I will bring this chapter to a conclusion with one or two extracts relating to "tension and rest; the suspension of the act in warfare." This is explanatory of those frequent halts which take place in a campaign, which appear at first sight contradictory to the absolute theory of war. These halts are due to many causes, such as preparations, exhaustion, uncertainty, irresolution, friction, waiting for reinforcements, etc.

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In this connection one must remember that war is "a chain of battles all strung together, one of which always brings on another." But they seldom follow each other immediately; there is usually a certain pause between. As soon as one battle is gained, strategy makes new combinations in accordance with the altered circumstances to win the next. Whilst these new combinations are being developed, or perhaps considered, there may be a greater or less suspension of the act, a longer or shorter halt in the forward movement. Then another spring forward. Clausewitz has a great many interesting things to say on this subject.³⁹

"If there is a suspension of the act in war, that is to say, if neither party for the moment wills anything positive, there is *rest*, and for the moment equilibrium.... As soon as ever one of the

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parties proposes to himself a new positive object, and commences active steps towards it, even if it is only by preparations, and as soon as the enemy opposes this, there is *tension* of the powers; this lasts until the decision takes place.... This decision, the foundation of which lies always in the battle-combinations which are made on each side, ... is followed by a movement in one or other direction."

"It may so happen that both parties, at one and the same time, not only feel themselves too weak to attack, but are so in reality."

"Wild as is the nature of war it still wears the claims of human weakness, and the contradiction we see here, that man seeks and creates dangers which he fears at the same time, will astonish no one."

"If we cast a glance at military history in general, there we find so much the opposite of an incessant advance towards

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the aim, that *standing still* and *doing nothing* is quite plainly the *normal condition* of an army in the midst of war, *acting the exception*. This must almost raise a doubt as to the correctness of our conception. But if military history has this effect by the great body of its events, so also the latest series of wars redeem the view. The war of the French Revolution shows only too plainly its reality, and only proves too plainly its necessity. In that war, and especially in the campaigns of Bonaparte, the conduct of war attained to that unlimited degree of energy which we have represented as the natural law of the element. This degree is therefore possible, and if it is possible then it is necessary."

Reflections

(1) "Hardly worth mentioning"! So that is how Clausewitz regards International

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Law, Clausewitz to whom in Germany "our most famous victors on the more modern battlefields owe their spiritual training," and on whom "everybody who to-day either makes or teaches modern war bases himself, even if he is not conscious of it."

And we must regard nearly every foreign statesman as, consciously or unconsciously, a disciple of Clausewitz. It is, therefore, high time that we should cease to pin our faith on International Law, or think that it can in any way protect us, if we neglect strongly to protect ourselves. Power and expediency are the only rules that the practical politicians of foreign countries recognize, and the only question they ask themselves is, "Have we got sufficient power to do this," and if so, "Is it expedient to do it?"

(2) Treaties, too, what reliance can we place upon them for any length of time?

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None whatever. For treaties are only considered binding as long as the interests of *both* contracting parties remain the same. Directly circumstances change, and they change constantly, the most solemn treaties are torn up, as Russia tore up the Treaty of Paris, or as Austria tore up the Treaty of Berlin. All history is full of torn-up treaties. And as it has been so it will be. The European waste-paper basket is the

place to which all treaties eventually find their way, and a thing which can any day be thrown into a waste-paper basket is, indeed, a poor thing on which to hang our national safety. Only in ourselves can we trust. Therefore no treaties at present existing should be allowed in any way to alter or lessen our preparations to enable us to fight *alone* when necessary.

(3) It cannot be too often repeated, or too much insisted on, that the success
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or failure of a State policy is dependent upon the amount of armed force behind it. For upon the amount of armed force behind a policy depends the greater or less amount of resistance, of friction, which that policy will meet with on the part of other nations. The prestige of a nation depends upon the general belief in its strength. The less its prestige, the more it will be checked and foiled by its rivals, till at last perhaps it is goaded into a war which would have been prevented if its prestige, or armed force, had been greater. On the other hand, the greater its prestige, its armed force, the more reasonable and inclined to a fair compromise are its rivals found. So that the greater the prestige, the armed force, of our nation is, the more likely is it that all our negotiations will be settled by peaceful compromise, and the longer we shall enjoy peace.

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Therefore, under this consideration, those who would reduce our national forces are deeply mistaken, for such action would imperil our prestige, imperil our negotiations, imperil our peace, and perhaps lead eventually to a war that we might otherwise have avoided. Therefore no such deeply mistaken economy for us. A few hundred thousand pounds saved would be dear economy indeed if it led, as well it might, to the payment before many years of a War Indemnity of £800,000,000 or so. Better the evils we know than the far greater evils we know not of.

(4) Surprise in war is what we have to fear. There are two sorts of national surprise that we must consider. These are (A) the *surprise by actual hostilities* taking place before the actual declaration of war, such as the Japanese surprise and practical destruction of the fighting force

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of the Russian fleet at Port Arthur; (B) the *surprise by superior preparation*, silently carried out till all is ready for a decisive blow, whilst we are not ready for equally efficient defence, and then a declaration of war before we have time to get properly ready, as the surprise in this sense of France by Germany in 1870.

(A) Every successful example is always copied, and usually on a larger scale. We may be quite certain that our rivals have taken to heart the lesson of Port Arthur. It is possible that our next war will open with a similar night attack on our fleet, either just before, or simultaneously with the declaration of war. If it is successful, or even partially successful, it may produce the most grave results, as in the Russo-Japanese War. It *may* render possible a naval action with almost equal forces, in which our opponents

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might be victorious. The invasion of this country on a gigantic scale by 300,000 men or more would then follow as a certainty. This is not a probability, but a possibility which requires to be kept in our view.

(B) *The surprise by superior preparation*, as I term it, for want of a better name, is a danger to which we are peculiarly liable. As Lord Salisbury said, "The British constitution is a bad fighting machine," and it is made an infinitely worse fighting machine by the lack of interest which our politicians appear to take in all that appertains to war. Hence they are always liable to oppose, as excessive, preparations which are in reality the minimum consistent with national safety. Consequently our preparations for war, controlled as they are by those who have no special knowledge of war, are always apt to be insufficient,

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as were those of France in 1870. In former days this did not perhaps so very much matter, although it resulted in the unnecessary loss of hundreds of thousands of British lives and hundreds of millions of British treasure. But still we were able, at this somewhat excessive price, to "muddle through," owing to the heroic efforts of our soldiers and sailors to make bricks without straw and retrieve the mistakes of our policy. For our opponents then conducted war in such a slow way as to give us time to repair *after* the outbreak of war our lack of preparation *before* it. But opposed to a modern nation-in-arms, guided by statesmen and led by generals brought up in the school of Napoleon, Clausewitz, and Moltke — all will be different. In such a war the national forces brought into play are so immense that it is only possible to do so efficaciously if everything has

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been most carefully prepared and organized beforehand. It is not *possible* to improvise such organization of national force *after* the war has begun, for there cannot be sufficient time. If our rival makes adequate preparation before the war to bring to bear in that war the *whole* of its national force, material, moral, and physical, while we only prepare to bring to bear a *small portion* thereof, then there will be no time afterwards for us to repair our negligence. The war will be conducted with the utmost energy, and the aim will be to utilize to the utmost the superiority obtained by superior preparation, so as to make the decision as rapid as possible before we have time to recover from the effects of our surprise. That is the danger we have to fear, and to keep ever in mind.

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CHAPTER VIII WAR AS POLICY

"War," says Clausewitz, "is only a continuation of State policy by other means." The first question that at once arises in the mind is what is meant by Policy. We may safely lay down that State policy is the defence and furtherance of the interests of the nation as a whole amidst the play of the conflicting tendencies towards rest and towards acquisition, and that its instruments are the pen and the sword. There can, of course, be any degree of consistency or fickleness, of strength or weakness, of success or failure, in the policy of a State.

Clausewitz expressly stated that he

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hoped "to iron out many creases in the heads of strategists and statesmen," such, for instance, as the idea that it is possible to consider either policy or war as independent of the other.

It is only possible to obtain a proper conception of policy if we regard it as continuous both in peace and war, using sometimes peace negotiations, sometimes war negotiations, as circumstances require, to attain the political object.

War is only a part of policy, a continuance of the previous negotiations; but the instrument is now the sword and not the pen. As Clausewitz says, "*In one word, the art of war, in its highest point of view, is policy; but no doubt a policy which fights battles instead of writing notes.*" War is merely a means whereby a nation attempts to impose its will upon another nation in order to attain a political object. This

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object is settled by policy, which also orders the war, determines what sort of war it is to be, with what means and resources and expenditure it is to be waged, when its object has been attained, and when it is to cease. In fact, policy prepares, leads up to, orders, supports, guides, and stops the war. As Clausewitz said, "*All the leading outlines of a war are always determined by the Cabinet — that is, by a political, not a military functionary.*"

Unity of thought is only to be obtained by "the conception that war is only a part of political intercourse, therefore by no means an independent thing in itself." "And how can we conceive it to be otherwise? Does the cessation of diplomatic notes stop the political relations between different nations and governments? Is not war merely another kind of writing and language for political

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thoughts?" "Accordingly war can never be separated from political intercourse; and if, in the consideration of the matter, this is done in any way, all the threads of the different relations are, to a certain extent, broken, and we have before us a senseless thing without an object."

"If war belongs to policy, it will naturally take its character from policy. If the policy is grand and powerful, so will also be the war, and this may be carried to the point at which war attains to its absolute form." "Only through this kind of view war recovers unity; only by it can we see *all* wars of *one* kind, and it is only through it that the judgment can obtain the true and perfect basis and point of view from which *great plans* may be traced out and determined upon."

"There is upon the whole nothing

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more important in life than to find out the *right* point of view from which things should be looked at and judged of, and then to keep to that point; for we can only apprehend the mass of events in their unity from *one* standpoint; and it is only the keeping to one point of view that guards us from inconsistency." "We can only look at policy here as the representative of the interests generally of the whole community," and "*wars are in reality only the expressions or manifestations of policy itself.*"

To the student of history this unity of conception is equally necessary, for it supplies the key to many a military puzzle. Without it we can never understand, for instance, Napoleon's conduct in 1812, 1813, 1814; nor without it can we see the compelling

reason of many battles, apparently fought against military judgment, such, for instance, as

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Borodino, Leipzig, Sedan, etc. We have to remember that these and many other battles, as, for instance, Ladysmith, were fought from a political, not a military, motive. It is a well-known fact that the strategist frequently has to alter and adapt his plans so as to suit overmastering political necessity. Yet many people have failed to draw therefrom the generalization of Clausewitz that "war is only a continuation of State policy by other means." But having got it now, let us hold fast to it, with all its consequences.

Some Knowledge of War necessary for Statesmen

"From this point of view there is no longer in the nature of things a necessary conflict between the political and military interests, and where it appears it is therefore to be regarded as *imperfect knowledge*

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only. That policy makes demands upon the war which it cannot respond to, would be contrary to the supposition that *it knows the instrument it is going to use*, therefore contrary to a natural and *indispensable supposition*."

"None of the principal plans which are required for a war can be made without an insight into the political relations; and in reality when people speak, as they often do, of the prejudicial influence of policy on the conduct of a war, they say in reality something very different to what they intend. It is not this influence, but the policy itself which should be found fault with. If policy is right, if it succeeds in hitting the object, then it can only act on the war also with advantage; and if this influence of policy causes a divergence from the object, the cause is to be looked for in a mistaken policy.

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"It is only when policy promises itself a wrong effect from certain military means and measures, an effect opposed to their nature, that it can exercise a prejudicial effect on war by the course it prescribes. Just as a person in a language with which he is not conversant sometimes says what he does not intend, *so policy, when intending right, may often order things which do not tally with its own views*.

"This has happened times without end, and it shows that a certain knowledge of the nature of war is essential to the management of political intercourse."

The War Minister

"Before going further we must guard ourselves against a false interpretation of which this is very susceptible. We do not mean to say that this acquaintance

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with the nature of war is the *principal* qualification for a war minister. Elevation, superiority of mind, strength of character, these are the principal qualifications which he must possess; a knowledge of war may be supplied in one way or another."

Policy and the means to carry out that Policy must Harmonize

"If war is to harmonize entirely with the political views, and policy to accommodate itself to the means available for war, there is only one alternative to be recommended when the statesman and soldier are not combined in one person (note, as William of Orange, Frederick the Great, or Napoleon), which is to make the

chief commander an *ex-officio* member of the Cabinet, that he may take part in its councils and decisions on important occasions."

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"The influence of any military man except the general-in-chief in the Cabinet is extremely dangerous; it very seldom leads to able, vigorous action."

Reflections

We shall conclude this chapter with a few reflections on the preceding dicta of Clausewitz, with which it is hoped that the reader will agree.

Firstly, then, it is clearly apparent that war is subordinate to policy, is an instrument of policy, is a part of policy, just as much as diplomatic negotiations are a part of policy.

Secondly, a statesman, however good at peaceful administration he may be, who is ignorant of war is, therefore, ignorant of one part of his profession; that part which deals with the preparing, ordering, guiding, and controlling of war.

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As Clausewitz says, "it is an *indispensable supposition* that policy knows the instrument it is going to use." It is a mistake to suppose, when diplomatic relations between two States cease, and war breaks out, that therefore the political negotiations cease, for they do not, but are merely continued in another form — in the form of war. The statesman still retains control, and uses the military events as they occur to attain his object. He is still responsible for the success of the warlike, as well as of the peaceful, policy of the nation.

Thirdly, it is a disputed point how far the influence of policy is theoretically allowable during the course of actual operations, i.e. after the war has actually begun. Moltke's opinion was that policy should only act at the beginning and at the end of a war, and should keep clear during the actual operations. Clausewitz,

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however, holds that the two are so intimately related that the political influence cannot be lost sight of even during actual operations. Between two such authorities we may well hesitate to give a definite opinion, and must seek for the middle way. Undoubtedly, in history policy often has really affected the actual operations, as in 1812, 1813, 1814, 1864, Macmahon's march to Sedan, or Bismarck's interference to hurry on the siege of Paris in 1870, or Ladysmith in the Boer War, and in many other cases. That, we must admit. We must also admit that its interference frequently produces a weakening effect on the operations. Clausewitz says that that only occurs when the policy itself is wrong. Perhaps. But the safest middle way rule appears to be this, that policy should be dominant at the beginning and end of a war, but during actual

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operations the statesman should exercise the greatest possible restraint, and avoid all interference, except when demanded by *overwhelming political necessity*.

Fourthly, a politician is bound to study war. He is bound to study war as well as diplomacy, his two instruments. If he only studies how to use one of his two instruments, he will be a poor statesman indeed. It is plain that he **MUST** study war, so that he may not try to use an instrument of which he knows nothing. It is not meant, of course, that a politician should study all the details of naval and military

matters, but only that he should study the general principles of war, and the means, resources, and forces required to attain the political object of war, through the submission of the enemy.

Fifthly, in order that the object and

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the means of policy may harmonize, it is necessary that the one to whom the national interests are entrusted should study the principles of war, so that *he may keep his policy proportionate to the means of enforcing it*. That is to say, he must not propose or commit the nation to a policy which is likely to be strongly opposed by another Power, unless he has from careful study and enquiry made certain that he has sufficient armed force at his disposal, in case the opposing nation suddenly challenges his policy and declares war. He should not even consider a policy without *at the same time* considering with his military and naval advisers the nation's means of enforcing that policy if challenged to do so. He must not think of embarking upon a war, or of provoking another nation to do so, till he has carefully provided sufficient armed force to give a

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reasonable prospect, if not a certainty, of success. Otherwise, Sixthly, as our next contest will be with a nation-in-arms, as the war will be in its character absolute, as its object will be the downfall of the foe, as not until the foe (whether it be Great Britain or not) lies powerless upon the ground will it be supposed possible to stop, as we shall have to contend against the utmost means, the utmost energy, the utmost efforts of a whole people-in-arms, — these points deserve the most serious consideration of every politician who aspires to guide the destinies of the Anglo-Saxon Race.

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CHAPTER IX STRATEGY

Clausewitz defines strategy as "*the use of the battle to gain the object of the war.*" War is "a chain of battles all strung together, one of which always brings on another."⁴⁰ The great thing in strategy is to win these battles one after the other till the enemy submits. "*The best strategy is always to be very strong, first, generally; secondly, at the decisive point.*"⁴¹

"In such an aspect we grant that the superiority of numbers is the most important factor in the result of a battle, only it must be sufficiently great to be a counterpoise to all the other co-operating

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circumstances. The direct result of all this is that the *greatest possible number of troops should be brought into action at the decisive point.*⁴² Whether the troops thus brought up are sufficient or not, we have then done in this respect all that our means allowed. This is *the first great principle of strategy*, as well suited for Greeks or Persians, or for Englishmen, or Mahrattas, as for French or Germans."

It sounds so simple, and yet how many times has it not been done. How many generals have been ruined in consequence!

Superiority in Numbers What is Required for Strategic Certainty

Clausewitz says, "It is a fact that we may search modern military history in vain for a battle (except Leuthen or

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Rosbach) in which an army has beaten another double its own strength, an occurrence by no means uncommon in former times. Bonaparte, the greatest general of modern days, in all his great victorious battles, with one exception, that of Dresden 1813, had managed to assemble an army superior in numbers, or at least very little inferior, to that of his opponent, and when it was impossible for him to do so, as at Leipzig, Brienne, Laon, Waterloo, he was beaten."⁴³ "From this we may infer, in the present state of Europe, that it is very difficult for the most talented general to gain a victory over an enemy double his strength. Now, if we see that double numbers are such a weight in the scale against even the greatest generals, we may be sure that in ordinary cases, in small as well as in great combats, an important superiority

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of numbers, but which need not be over *two to one*, will be sufficient to *ensure the victory*, however disadvantageous other circumstances may be."⁴⁴

The double superiority of numbers at the decisive point is, therefore, the ideal of strategy. "*The superiority of numbers is, therefore, to be regarded as the fundamental idea, always to be aimed at, before all, and as far as possible.*" If strategy has done this, then it has done its utmost duty. It is then for the tactician to make the most of this superiority thus provided by strategy, and win the victory. Strategy then repeats the operation with new combinations suited to the altered circumstances to win the next battle, and so on, till the hostile armed force is destroyed.

This *superiority of numbers* in battle as the *first principle of strategy* we require,

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on all occasions in season and out of season, to repeat and repeat. At present we have not the numbers we shall want. We must get them. Otherwise we are bound to be inferior in numbers, and "the best strategy" will be possible for our enemies and impossible for us. This rests with our statesmen.

The Decisive Point

If the double superiority, or as near the double as possible, at the decisive point is the ideal of strategy ... what is the decisive point?

Here we owe another debt to Clausewitz. Jomini, even after Napoleon, confuses us with three different sorts of decisive points in a theatre of war, but Clausewitz clears the air by asserting only *one*.

"But whatever may be the central

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point of the enemy's power against which we are to direct our ultimate operations, *still the conquest and destruction of his army is the surest commencement and, in all cases, the most essential.*"⁴⁵

Here we have it in a nutshell; wherever the enemy's main force is THERE is the decisive point, against which we must concentrate ALL our forces.

"There are," said Napoleon, "many good generals in Europe, but they see too many things at one time. *As for me, I see only one thing, the enemy's chief army, and I concentrate all my efforts to destroy it.*"

The Simultaneous Use of all the Forces

"The rule," says Clausewitz, "which we have been endeavouring to set forth is, therefore, that all the forces which

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are available and destined for a strategic object should be *simultaneously* applied to it. And this application will be all the more complete the more everything is compressed into one act and one moment."⁴⁶ This he calls "*the law of the simultaneous employment of the forces in strategy.*"⁴⁷ "In strategy we can never employ too many forces."⁴⁸ "What can be looked upon in tactics as an excess of force must be regarded in strategy as a means of giving expansion to success." "*No troops should be kept back as a strategic reserve,*" but every available man hurried up to the first battlefield, fresh levies being meanwhile formed in rear. As an instance of what not to do, Prussia, in 1806, kept back 45,000 men in Brandenburg and East Prussia; they might, if present at Jena,

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have turned defeat into victory, but they were useless afterwards.⁴⁹ A fault so often made may be made again.

Concentration

"It is impossible to be too strong at the decisive point," said Napoleon. To concentrate every available man and gun at the decisive point so as to attain superiority there, is not an easy thing, for the enemy will be making a similar attempt. "The calculation of time and space appears the most essential thing to this end. But the calculation of time and space, though it lies universally at the foundation of strategy, and is to a certain extent its daily bread, is still neither the most difficult nor the most decisive one." "Much more frequently the relative superiority, that is the skilful assemblage of superior forces at the

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decisive point, has its foundation in the right appreciation of those points, in the judicious distribution which by that means has been given to the forces from the very first, and in *the resolution to sacrifice the unimportant to the advantage of the important.* In this respect Frederick the Great and Bonaparte are especially characteristic."⁵⁰

"There is no simpler and more imperative rule for strategy than *to keep all the forces concentrated. No portion to be separated from the main body unless called away by some urgent necessity.* On this maxim we stand firm, and look upon it as a fact to be depended upon."⁵¹

"*The concentration of the whole force* (i.e. within supporting distance) *should be the rule, and every separation or division is an exception which must be*

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justified."⁵² Of course, this does not mean that all the troops are to be kept concentrated in one mass upon one road, but within supporting distance, for he expressly states, "*It is sufficient now if the concentration takes place during the course of the action.*"⁵³ This doctrine, qualified by the last sentence, makes Clausewitz the germ of modern military thought, for the last sentence leaves room for all the modern developments of new roads, railways, telegraphs, wire and wireless, and so forth.

Therefore in war, according to Clausewitz, concentration, concentration, concentration, and *every division or detachment is an evil which can only be justified by urgent necessity*. Here again we find a simple truth, which, however, the history of all wars shows us to be very difficult to carry out. Hence the value

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of keeping such an imperative maxim always in our minds.

The First Pitched Battle

"The more a general takes the field in the true spirit of war, as well as of every other contest, that he must and *will* conquer, the more will he strive to throw every weight into the scale in the first battle, and hope and strive to win everything by it.

Napoleon hardly ever entered upon a war without thinking of conquering his enemy at once in the first battle."⁵⁴

"At the very outset of war we must direct all our efforts to gain the first battle, because an unfavourable issue is always a disadvantage to which no one would willingly expose himself, and also because the first decision, though not the only one, still will have the more influence

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on subsequent events the greater it is in itself."⁵⁵

"The law of the simultaneous use of the forces in strategy lets the principal result (which need not be the final one) take place almost always at the commencement of the great act."⁵⁵ A great victory thus won at the outset will upset all the enemy's plan of campaign and allow us to carry out our own. The first pitched battle is, therefore, the crisis of the rival strategies, and towards its favourable decision all our preparations, all our forces, and all our energies should be directed. This is a point that civilians seem to find hard to grasp. Witness all our history, with inadequate forces at the beginning of every war, as even in the latest of our wars — that in South Africa. It is a point which our statesmen should very seriously consider.

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The difficulty of concentrating superior numbers for the first battle is that the enemy will be, or should be, of the same opinion, and will be making equal efforts to win the first battle. So, then, the crisis will be all the more acute, the battle greater, and the result greater.

*"We would not avoid showing at once that the bloody solution of the crisis, the effort for the destruction of the enemy's main force, is the first-born son of war."*⁵⁶

Till this is done, the first great victory gained, strategy should think of nothing else. Then, and only then, a further combination in accordance with the altered circumstances to win the next.

"For we maintain that, with few exceptions, *the victory at the decisive point will carry with it the decision on all minor points*"⁵⁷ over the whole theatre

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of war. Therefore nothing else matters for long, and to victory in the first great battle "everything else must be sacrificed." For concentration can only be obtained by sacrifice.

Pursuit

"Once the great victory is gained, the next question is not about rest, not about taking breath, not about re-organizing, etc., but only of pursuit, of fresh blows wherever necessary, of the capture of the enemy's capital, of the attack of the armies of his allies, or whatever else appears as a rallying point for the enemy."⁵⁸ Clausewitz points out that this is very difficult, and that to compel his exhausted troops vigorously to pursue till nightfall requires GREAT force of WILL on the
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part of the equally exhausted commander. We need only remember that Napoleon himself at the supreme crisis of his fate, being physically tired, failed to pursue the allies after his victory at Dresden, 1813, whereby he lost all the fruits of his victory, and indeed his last chance of ultimate success.

Summary of Strategic Principles

Leaving out, for the sake of shortness, the rest of his strategical thoughts, I hasten to conclude this sketch with a glance at Clausewitz's admirable summary⁵⁹ of strategic principles: —

"The first and most important maxim which we can set before ourselves is to employ ALL the forces which we can make available with the UTMOST ENERGY. Even if the result is tolerably certain in itself,
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it is extremely unwise not to make it perfectly certain.

"The second principle is to concentrate our forces as much as possible at the point where the DECISIVE blow is to be struck. The success at that point will compensate for all defeats at secondary points.

"The third principle is not to lose time. Rapidity and surprise are the most powerful elements of victory.

"Lastly, the fourth principle is to FOLLOW UP THE SUCCESS we gain with the UTMOST ENERGY. The pursuit of the enemy when defeated is the only means of gathering up the fruits of victory.

"The first of these principles is the foundation of all the others. If we have followed the first principle, we can venture any length with regard to the three others without risking our all. It gives the means of continually creating new forces behind us, and with new forces every
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disaster may be repaired. In this, and not in going forward with timid steps, lies that prudence which may be called wise."

These great principles are everything in war, and "due regard being paid to these principles, the form (i.e. the geometrical element) in which the operations are carried on is in the end of little consequence."

"Therefore I am perfectly convinced that whoever calls forth all his powers to appear incessantly with new masses, whoever adopts every imaginable means of preparation, whoever concentrates his force at the decisive point, whoever thus armed pursues a great object with resolution and energy, has done all that can be done in a general way for the strategical conduct of the war, and that, unless he is altogether unfortunate in battle, will undoubtedly be victorious in the same
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measure that his adversary has fallen short of this exertion and energy."

Reflections

When we have got these great simple leading principles of strategy firmly into our heads, the next question is how to make use of our knowledge. For principles are no use unless we apply them. On consideration it appears that there are three ways in which we can all apply these principles with advantage.

I. It will prove a very interesting and strengthening mental exercise to apply these few leading principles to every campaign we read about, to search for indications of their application in the strategy of each belligerent, how far each commander succeeded, and how far failed to carry them out in their entirety, and where, when, and why he succeeded or

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failed, and the results of doing or not doing so. Also to search for the interaction of the political motive of the war on the military operations, and to see how far the belligerent statesmen gained or failed to gain their political object, according to the comparative degree of preparation they had made for it, and the magnitude of effort which they made or did not make to support it with the whole means of the nation, material, moral and physical. Also to see how far the national spirit was aroused or not, and the causes thereof, and to note the greater or less energy, resolution and boldness which was consequently infused into the war. Also to note how the thorough application of these great simple principles of strategy shortens the war and thereby reduces its cost (1866 to 1870), and how the neglect of them by statesmen, despite their fortitude afterwards,

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lengthens a war and adds to its cost enormously (South Africa, etc.). Used thus, these principles give us a theoretically correct ground for criticism.

II. These principles also give us a theoretically correct ground for anticipating what the action of our opponents in any future war will be, the measure of the forces they will bring to bear, how they will direct those forces, and the amount of energy, resolution, and boldness with which they will use them against us. It is an axiom always to assume that the enemy will do the best and wisest thing, and to prepare accordingly.

III. These principles also give us a theoretically correct ground for our own counter-preparations. We require to take the most dangerous war which is probable or possible, and make every imaginable preparation to carry out these principles therein.

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In such a case how are we going to render it possible for our generals to win, and thus save the nation from the irreparable consequences and the huge war indemnity of £800,000,000 or so, which would follow defeat? How are we going to do it? How are we going to render it possible for our generals to employ the best strategy? The ideal of strategy, always to be aimed at, is the double superiority of numbers. How are we going to give our generals that? If we cannot do that, how are we going to give them even any superiority *at all*, so that they may be able to carry out the first principle of strategy? How? Or are we going to make *NO adequate preparations* for these three eventualities, and when one of them suddenly comes ask our generals to

save us from the fate we have brought upon ourselves, by performing the impossible? It is in this way

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that a statesman should use these few great simple principles of strategy in order to attain his political object and safeguard the interests of the nation.

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CHAPTER X

THE EXECUTION OF STRATEGY

Now, as Clausewitz teaches it, the theory of war is easy enough to understand. There is no reason — one might almost say no excuse — why every one, soldier or statesman, should not know it fairly well. The great leading principles of strategy are few and simple. There is no reason why every one, soldier and statesman, should not understand and know these few simple principles thoroughly, and have them at his finger ends ready to apply them to the consideration of any military question, past, present, or future. So far all is easy. But when it is a question of carrying out in actual

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war this easy theory, these simple strategical principles, then it is QUITE a different matter, then it is a matter of the very greatest difficulty. This is a difference which the mind always finds very hard to grasp, as witness the denunciations with which any failure in execution by a general, no matter how great the real difficulties with which he had to contend, is nearly always greeted. Observers rarely make allowances for these difficulties, very largely probably because they do not understand them. The present chapter is devoted to these difficulties of execution in war.

The Genius for War

In Clausewitz's great chapter on "the genius for war"⁶⁰ he sets forth the difficulties which confront a general, the

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character and genius, the driving and animating force, required to overcome the friction of war. It is impossible to abstract it adequately; I can only advise all to read it for themselves. But I will endeavour to give an idea of it.

After discussing the various sorts of courage required by a general, physical before danger and moral before responsibility, the strength of body and mind, the personal pride, the patriotism, the enthusiasm, etc., he comes to the unexpected.

"War," he says, "*is the province of uncertainty. Three-fourths of those things upon which action in war must be calculated are hidden more or less in the clouds of great uncertainty.* Here, then, above all other, a fine and penetrating mind is called for, to grope out the truth by the tact of its judgment." Mark this point, that three-fourths of

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the things that we as critics AFTER the event know, when all information of the situation has been collected and published, were unknown to the general who had to decide, or only dimly guessed at from a number of contradictory reports.

"From this uncertainty of all intelligence and suppositions, *this continual interposition of chance.*" "Now, if he is to get safely through *this perpetual conflict*

with the unexpected, two qualities are indispensable; in the first place *an understanding which, even in the midst of this intense obscurity, is not without some traces of inner light*, which lead to the truth, and then *the courage to follow this faint light*. The first is expressed by the French phrase *coup d'œil*; the second is resolution."

"Resolution is an *act of courage in face of responsibility*." "The forerunner
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of resolution is an act of the mind making plain the necessity of venturing and thus influencing the will. This quite peculiar direction of the mind, which conquers every other fear in man by the fear of wavering or doubting, is what makes up resolution in strong minds."

The vital importance of firmness and resolution, so strongly urged by Clausewitz, will be apparent to all if we reflect how even the strongest characters have been ruined by a temporary fit of vacillation in war. Compare, for instance, York v. Wartenburg's masterly exposition of Napoleon's ruinous, suicidal vacillation in 1813 at Dresden.

Also there is required "*the power of listening to reason in the midst of the most intense excitement*, in the storm of the most violent passions."

"But to keep to the result of by-gone reflections in opposition to the stream
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of opinions and phenomena which the present brings with it, is just THE difficulty."

"Here nothing else can help us but an imperative maxim which, independent of reflection, at once controls it: that maxim is, *in all doubtful cases to adhere to the first opinion and not to give it up till a clear conviction forces us to do so*."

"But as soon as difficulties arise, and that must always happen when great results are at stake, then the machine, the army itself, begins to offer a sort of passive resistance, and to overcome this the commander must have great force of will."

Driving power, such as Napoleon's. And also "the heart-rending sight of the bloody sacrifice, which the commander has to contend with in himself."

"These are the weights which the courage and intelligent faculties of the
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commander have to contend with and OVERCOME, if he is to make his name illustrious." If he is to prevent the downfall of his country.

Reflections

(1) In connection with these difficulties I would like to put forward a suggestion as to criticism of a general's action in war, which though not exactly Clausewitz's, is a corollary from Clausewitz. It is this. In reading a war with the clearness and after-knowledge of history nearly all defeats are easily seen to be due to the non-observance of one or other of the few leading principles of strategy referred to in the previous chapter. But we must assume that the defeated general was *familiar* with that principle, and that his *will* was to carry it out. What, then, were the difficulties,

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the friction, which, on any particular day or days, overcame his will and made him sacrifice the principle? This is where most critics fail us. Here seems the matter to search for. And could a stronger resolution have enabled him to overcome those

difficulties, that friction? And if so, how and by what means? But we must first discover the difficulties and uncertainties of the particular day when his will gave way. Take the Manchurian campaign as an instance. If we could only have a military history of the campaign of 1870 or that of Manchuria, written in the form of a series of "appreciations of the situation," so that we know nothing but what the general knew at the time as we read, and if the true state of affairs could be withheld from us till the end, this, I think, would be very instructive and helpful. It would be a more difficult way of

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writing a military history, but I think that the extra trouble would be repaid by the extra value. So at least it appears.

(2) If we reflect upon the enormous difficulties, so strikingly brought out by Clausewitz, which *our* generals have to contend with and *overcome* in actual war, it should surely teach us to curb our criticism. It should surely also make us resolve in future to try to aid them as far as is in our power at home, and not thoughtlessly to increase their already stupendous burdens. In the past we at home have much to accuse ourselves of, much to regret. In the past often have we added to the difficulties of our generals, often have we greatly weakened their chances, and increased those of their opponents, often have we, unintentionally, through ignorance cast a weight into the scale against our country.

(3) The ignorance of the public regarding

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the conduct of war constitutes for us a very serious national danger. If this ignorance were less pronounced, if our statesmen understood the vast importance of information to the enemy, and the equal importance to our generals that this information the enemy should NOT obtain, then the public craving for information regarding every detail of what occurs in the field, and the demand for the wide publication thereof, would certainly be repressed. Nothing occurs in any of our campaigns which is not immediately made known; reports of actions with the fullest details as to the troops engaged, and the casualties that have befallen them, appear in the columns of the Press within a few hours of their occurrence. *Any efforts, therefore, of our generals in the field to maintain secrecy as to strength, intentions, and movements are deliberately, though probably unintentionally,*

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counteracted by their own countrymen. This is due to pure ignorance of war, no doubt, but the effect of this ignorance is as bad as if it were due to evil intention. In fairness, however, we must admit that, in the past, the immense value of reticence has not been fully appreciated by some of our soldiers themselves, and it were well if, in the future, more attention were directed to the importance of secrecy.

The results of such almost criminal stupidity may not be apparent when we are fighting with a savage foe, but if we ever have, as we undoubtedly some day shall have, the misfortune to find ourselves engaged with a civilized Power, we may be certain that not only will the operations be indefinitely prolonged, *and their cost enormously increased,* but their successful issue will be for us highly problematical.

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In this connection it must be remembered that every Great Power has secret agents in every country, including Great Britain, and that it will be easy for such a secret agent to telegraph in cypher or in some agreed code to an agent in a neutral State all war information published here, who will telegraph it on at once to the hostile general, who will thus get, within a very short time of its publication in London, perhaps just exactly the information he requires to clear up the strategical or tactical situation for him, and enable him to defeat the combinations of our generals. As a case in point, take Macmahon's march on Sedan to relieve Metz in 1870, where secrecy was absolutely necessary for success, but which became known to the Germans by the English newspapers. — Result, Sedan.

That this cannot be allowed is plain.

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It is believed that the patriotism of our Press will welcome any necessary measure to this end if it is made compulsory upon ALL.61

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CHAPTER XI TACTICS

Some will probably feel inclined to ask what Clausewitz, who wrote more than eighty years ago, can possibly have to say about tactics which can be valuable in the twentieth century.

It was said by Napoleon that tactics change every ten years, according, of course, to the progress of technicalities, etc. Weapons indeed change, but there is one thing that never changes, and that is human nature. The most important thing in tactics, the man behind the gun, never alters; in his heart and feelings, his strength and weakness, he is always much the same.

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Therefore, Clausewitz's tactical deductions, founded on the immense and varied data supplied by the desperate and long-continued fighting of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars, permeated as they are by his all-pervading psychological or moral view, can never lose their value to us.

It is true, no doubt, that our rifles of to-day can be used with effect at a distance ten times as great as the old smooth bores of Clausewitz's day, our shrapnel five times as far as his cannon, and that cover and ground play a far more important part now than then, and so on. All these things, of course, considerably modify the tactics of Clausewitz. Not so much, however, as some text-books would lead us to suppose, which always seem to assume clear ground and clear weather. For, after all, how many combats are fought on ground where there

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is a very restricted field of fire (*vide* Herbert's "Defence of Plevna," etc.), or at night? How many battles are fought during rain, or snow, or mist, or fog, which destroys all long range? Compare the tremendous fighting with "bullets, bayonets, swords, hand-grenades, and even fists," of Nogi's attempt to cut the Russian line of retreat at Mukden, with the hand-to-hand fighting of Eylau, Friedland, Borodino, or with the desperate efforts of the French in 1812 to open their line of retreat through Maro-Jaroslawitz, where all day the masses of troops fought hand-to-hand in the streets,

"the town was taken and retaken seven times, and the rival nations fought with the bayonet in the midst of the burning houses" (Alison).

When it comes to push of pike, as in all great decisions between equally resolute adversaries it is bound to do, the difference

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between the fighting of Clausewitz's day and ours is but small. The most recent instances of all, the hand-to-hand fighting in Manchuria, take us back to the Napoleonic struggles.

Therefore, despite the eighty years that have intervened, the writings of Clausewitz are still valuable from a tactical point of view, always considering of course the difference in weapons, because of the human heart in battle.

His ideas on tactics have largely filtered through his German pupils into our textbooks, minus the psychological or moral note, so that it is not necessary to go at length into the subject, or give a number of extracts. It would be wearisome. I will, however, give a few passages at haphazard as illustrations.

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Flank Attacks

The endeavour to gain the enemy's line of retreat, and protect our own, on which so much learned erudition has been spent by various writers, he regards as a NATURAL instinct, which will ALWAYS produce itself both in generals and subalterns.

"From this arises, in the whole conduct of war, and especially in great and small combats, a PERFECT INSTINCT, which is the security of our own line of retreat and the seizure of the enemy's; this follows from the conception of victory, which, as we have seen, is something beyond mere slaughter. In this effort we see, therefore, the FIRST immediate purpose in the combat, and one which is quite universal. No combat is *imaginable* in which this effort, either in its double or single form, is not to go hand

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in hand with the plain and simple stroke of force. Even the smallest troop will not throw itself upon the enemy without thinking of its line of retreat, and in most cases it will have an eye upon that of the enemy."⁶² "This is a great *natural law* of the combat," "and so becomes the pivot upon which ALL strategical and tactical manœuvres turn."

Reserves — Destructive and Decisive Act

The combat he regards as settled by whoever has the preponderance of moral force at the end; that is, in fresh or only partly used up troops.

The combat itself he divides into a destructive and a decisive act. During the long destructive act, or period of fire preparation, the troops engaged gradually wear each other out, and gradually

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almost cease to count as factors in the decision. "After a fire combat of some hours' duration, in which a body of troops has suffered severe losses — for instance, a quarter or one-third of its numbers — the *débris* may for the time be looked upon as a heap of cinders. For the men are physically exhausted; they have spent their ammunition; many have left the field with the wounded, though not themselves

wounded (compare, for instance, Eylau and the 1870 battles); the rest think they have done their part for the day, and if they get beyond the sphere of danger, do not willingly return to it. The feeling of courage with which they originally started has had the edge taken off, the longing for the fight is satisfied, the original organization is partly destroyed, and the formations broken up."

"So that the amount of moral force lost may be estimated by the amount of
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the Reserves used up, almost as with a foot rule."63

This goes on till, "In all probability, only the untouched reserve and some troops which, though they have been in action, have suffered very little, are in reality to be regarded as serviceable, and the remainder (perhaps four-sixths) may be looked upon for the present as a "caput mortuum."

Therefore the art of the commander he regards as "economy of force" during the destructive period; that is, to employ as few troops as possible, by taking advantage of ground, cover, etc., "to use a smaller number of men in the combat with firearms than the enemy employs," so that a smaller proportionate number of his own are reduced to a "heap of cinders" and more are left, more moral force, for the decision.

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"Hundreds of times," he says, "a line of fire has maintained its own against one twice its strength" (e.g. the Boers).

To do this and yet obtain a good fire-effect demands very skilful handling of the troops, both on the part of the chief and subordinate leaders.

With the preponderance thus obtained the commander at last starts the decision.

"Towards the close of a battle the line of retreat is always regarded with increased jealousy, therefore a threat against that line is always a potent means of bringing on the decision (Liao-yang, Mukden). On that account, when circumstances permit, the plan of battle will be aimed at that point from the very first." Or, "If this wear and tear and exhaustion of the forces has reached a certain pitch, then a rapid advance in concentrated masses on one side against the line of battle of the other" (i.e. the Napoleonic

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breaking the centre, of recent years thought almost hopeless, but revived in Manchuria with success, in the case of Nodzu breaking the centre at Mukden).

From what precedes it is evident that, as in the preparatory acts, the utmost economy of forces must prevail, so in the decisive act to win the mastery through *numbers* must be the ruling idea.

Just as in the preparatory acts endurance, firmness and coolness are the first qualities, so in the decisive act boldness and fiery spirit must predominate.

"The difference between these two acts will never be completely lost as respects the whole."

"This is the way in which our view is to be understood; then, on the one hand, it will not come short of the reality, and on the other it will direct the attention of the leader of a combat (be it great or small, partial or general)

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to giving each of the two acts of activity its due share, so that there may be neither precipitation nor negligence.

"*Precipitation* there will be if space and time are not allowed for the destructive act. *Negligence* in general there will be if a complete decision does not take place, either from want of moral courage or from a wrong view of the situation."64

Duration of the Combat

"Even the resistance of an ordinary division of 8,000 or 10,000 men of all arms, even if opposed to an enemy considerably superior in numbers, will last several hours, if the advantages of country are not too preponderating. And if the enemy is only a little or not at all superior in numbers, the combat will last half a day. A corps of three or four divisions

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will prolong it to double that time; an army of 80,000 or 100,000 men to three or four times." "These calculations are the result of experience."65

As General von Caemmerer points out, if these calculations were adhered to in present-day German manœuvres, as they are now in all war games, tactical exercises, and staff rides, the dangerous dualism of their training, the difference between theory and manœuvre practice, would cease.

Attack and Defence

I have left to the last the consideration of three or four disputed points in Clausewitz. In considering these I shall quote a good deal from General von Caemmerer's "Development of Strategical Science," as in such matters it is best to

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quote the most recent authors of established reputation.

The most important of these, and the most disputed, is Clausewitz's famous dictum that "the defensive is the stronger form of making war." "The defence is the stronger form of war with a negative object; the attack is the weaker form with a positive object."66

General von Caemmerer says, "It is strange, we Germans look upon Clausewitz as indisputably the deepest and acutest thinker upon the subject of war; the beneficial effect of his intellectual labours is universally recognized and highly appreciated; but the more or less keen opposition against this sentence never ceases. And yet that sentence can as little be cut out of his work 'On War' as the heart out of a man. Our most distinguished and prominent military

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writers are here at variance with Clausewitz.

"Now, of course, I do not here propose to go into such a controversy. I only wish to point out that Clausewitz, in saying this, only meant the defensive-offensive, the form in which he always regards it, both strategically and technically, in oft-repeated explanations all through his works. For instance —

"It is a FIRST maxim NEVER to remain perfectly passive, but to fall upon the enemy in front and flank, even when he is in the act of making an attack upon us."67

And again —

"A *swift and vigorous assumption of the offensive — the flashing sword of vengeance — is the most brilliant point in the defensive.* He who does not at once think of it at the right moment, or rather he who does not from the first include

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this transition in his idea of the defensive, will never understand its superiority as a form of war."68 Von Caemmerer comments thus: "And this conception of the defence by Clausewitz has become part and parcel of our army — everywhere, strategically and tactically, he who has been forced into a defensive attitude at once thinks how he can arrange a counter-attack. I am thus unable to see how the way in which Clausewitz has contrasted Attack and Defence could in any way paralyse the spirit of enterprise." Von Caemmerer also justly remarks that, as Clausewitz always insisted both in strategy and tactics, neither Attack nor Defence is pure, but oscillates between the two forms; and as the Attack is frequently temporarily reduced to defend itself, and also as no nation can be sure of never being invaded by a superior

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coalition, it is most desirable to encourage a belief in the strength of the Defence, if properly used. In this I think that Wellington would probably have agreed. Certainly Austerlitz and Waterloo were examples of battles such as Clausewitz preferred. Still, one must admit that Clausewitz's chapter on "The Relations of the Offensive and Defensive to each other in Tactics," Book VII. Chapter 2, is the least convincing chapter of his work.

Strategically, the argument is stronger. It always seems to me that we must remember that Clausewitz had taken part in the defensive-offensive in its strongest, most absolute and unlimited form, on the greatest possible scale — the Moscow campaign and the ruin (consummated before a single flake of snow fell) of the Grand Army. If he had lived to complete the revision of his works, it

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always seems to me that he would have made his theory undeniable by stating that the defensive is the strongest form of war, *if unlimited by space*. What, for instance, would have happened if the Japanese had tried to march through Siberia on to St. Petersburg?

But, after all, which of the two is absolutely the stronger form of war, attack or defence, is merely a theoretical abstraction, for, practically, the choice is always settled for us by the pressing necessity of circumstances. And, in this connection, let us always bear in mind Clausewitz's dictum: "A swift and vigorous assumption of the offensive — the flashing sword of vengeance — is the most brilliant point in the defensive."

The Inner Line

A second disputed point is Clausewitz's alleged preference, as a rule, for the

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Inner Line in strategy. But it is necessary to remember that that was only due to the conditions of his time, before railways and telegraphs, when it was difficult to communicate between columns acting on concentric lines. And he is not in any way wedded to the Inner Line, like Jomini, but *only* when circumstances are favourable. He has many sentences from which we may infer that, had he lived in railway and telegraph days, his strategy, like Moltke's, his most distinguished pupil, would have aimed at envelopment as a rule. For to bring up troops rapidly by several railways necessitates a broad strategic front, and Clausewitz especially lays down rapidity as his second great principle, and says —

"If the concentration of the forces would occasion detours and loss of time, and the danger of advancing by separate lines is not too great, then the same may

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be justifiable on these grounds; for *to effect an unnecessary concentration of the forces* would be contrary to the second principle we have laid down (i.e. 'to act as swiftly as possible')."69 Also: "Such separation into several columns as is absolutely necessary must be made use of for the disposition of the tactical attack in the enveloping form, *for that form is natural to the attack, and must not be disregarded without good reason.*"70 Also: "*It is sufficient now if the concentration takes place during the action.*" So that while the conditions of his time led Clausewitz to prefer close concentration and the Inner Line, like Napoleon, yet his reflections led him to propound the germ of the strategy of Moltke. Substitute for Clausewitz's close concentration this: "As close concentration, the combined movements regulated by telegraph,

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as is compatible with the utmost use of the railways and the greatest rapidity" (as he would certainly have said), and we arrive at Moltke's strategy.

Frontal Attacks

A third disputed point is his belief in the superior tactical efficiency, under favourable circumstances, of the Napoleonic method of breaking the enemy's line in the centre. Breaking the line by a frontal attack was, of course, much easier in Clausewitz's Napoleonic day than it is with the long-ranging arms of our day, and it is only natural that Clausewitz in his writings should give it the full tactical importance which it then deserved. His book would not be true to the tactical conditions of his day had he not done so, with Rivoli, Austerlitz, Salamanca, Eckmuhl, etc., before his

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mind. But it seems hardly correct to accuse him of over-partiality to frontal attacks, for he has examined both frontal and enveloping attacks most fairly, giving to each their relative advantages and disadvantages, and concluding: "The envelopment may lead directly to the *destruction* of the enemy's army, if it is made with very superior numbers and succeeds. If it leads to victory the early results are *in every case* greater than by breaking the enemy's line. Breaking the enemy's line can only lead indirectly to the destruction of the enemy's army, and its effects are hardly shown so much on the first day, but rather strategically afterwards,"71 by forcing apart on different lines of retreat the separated fragments of the beaten army.

"The breaking through the hostile army by massing our principal force

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against one point, *supposes an excessive length of front on the part of the enemy*; for in this form of attack the difficulty of occupying the remainder of the enemy's force with few troops is greater, because the enemy's forces nearer to the principal point of attack can easily join in opposing it. Now in an attack upon the centre there are such forces on both sides of the attack; in an attack upon a flank, only on one side. The consequence of this is that such a central attack may easily end in a very disadvantageous form of combat, *through a convergent counter-attack.*" Which is exactly our modern difficulty. "The choice between these two forms of attack must

therefore be made according to the existing conditions of the moment. Length of front, the nature and direction of the line of retreat, the military qualities of the enemy's troops, and the characteristics of their general,

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lastly the ground must determine the choice."

Speaking generally he regards the *concentric* enveloping form of tactical attack aiming at the enemy's line of retreat as the most efficacious and natural. "On the field of battle itself ... the enveloping form must always be considered the most effectual."⁷² And the *eccentric* or frontal counter-attack at the extended enveloping attack as the most efficacious and natural form of the defence, such as Napoleon's counter-attacks at Austerlitz or Dresden, or Wellington's at Salamanca. "And we think that one means is at least as good as the other."⁷³

Now I think that these extracts sufficiently defend Clausewitz from the imputation of too great a belief in frontal attacks, and considering the frequent

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success of such Napoleonic attacks in his day, he gives a very fair summing up of the relative advantages and disadvantages thereof, and indeed such as might be written in the present day. Indeed the quite abnormal conditions of the Boer war produced such a feeling against frontal attacks, and so much loose talk of their being extinct, that it is very useful to turn to Clausewitz for a reminder that breaking the centre, whenever the condition he postulates, namely *over-extension of front* on the enemy's part, is present, will always remain one of the two great forms of decisive attack open to a commander.

And as in our day the forces are so enormous that to reach the hostile flank becomes more difficult, and the extension of front becomes so gigantic (a front of several armies on a line of forty to seventy miles perhaps), it is well to consider

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whether breaking the enemy's centre will not again offer the most advantageous form for the final decisive act, coupled of course, as Clausewitz says it ALWAYS MUST be, with a strong flank attack. And in these gigantic battles of the future, such as Liao-yang and Mukden, which we must consider typical of the future, battles which must take several days, during which the troops in the first line become utterly exhausted and used up, — a decisive attack on the centre can well be imagined after the hostile reserves have been decoyed away over a day's march by a strong flank attack. As, for example, Nogi's flank attack round Mukden followed by Nodzu's decisive breaking the centre and capture of Mukden itself.

So that far from thinking Clausewitz's remarks about frontal attacks and breaking the line to be obsolete, it rather

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appears from the great Russo-Japanese battles that they are worthy of close study in view of the future.

Tactical versus Strategic Envelopment

A fourth disputed point is the preference of Clausewitz, owing to his insistence on the greatest concentration possible with proper regard for the circumstances, for the tactical envelopment arranged on or near the field to strategic envelopment

with divided forces arranged beforehand. In this matter I will again quote General v. Caemmerer, who disagrees with him, and says: "Clausewitz proclaims the oblique front as the most effective strategic form of attack, ... that is to say, when the whole army with one united front falls upon the strategic *flank* of the enemy, and, if victorious,

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cuts him from his line of retreat. But where such a situation cannot be brought about, where our advance has brought us before the strategic *front* of the enemy, then he sees in the tactical envelopment, in the formation of an offensive flank, the proper means of effectively preparing to push the enemy from his line of retreat, and he distinctly explains that tactical envelopment need not at all be the *consequence* of strategical envelopment, and need not at all be prepared long beforehand by a corresponding advance of divided forces."

Clausewitz says, "The consequence of this is that battles fought with enveloping lines, or even with an oblique front, which should properly result from an advantageous relation of the lines of communication, are commonly the result of a moral and physical preponderance."74

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Also "he should therefore only advance with his columns on such a width of front as will admit of their all coming into action together." "Such separation into several columns should be made use of for the disposition of the tactical attack in the enveloping form" (i.e. by troops within a day's march of each other). "But it must be only of a tactical nature, for a strategic envelopment, when a great blow is to be struck, is a complete waste of power."

General v. Caemmerer comments: "He is thus of opinion that the lateral movement of part of the army against the flank of the enemy could without any difficulty still be carried out as initiated by the plan of battle; and in order to understand this idea we must again bear in mind the difference between the fire-effect of then and now. In those days a comparatively short movement made it

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still possible for a considerable portion of the army to gain the defenders' flank; to-day a lengthy and troublesome operation would be necessary for the same object, and its successful execution would only be counted upon if the defender remained entirely passive, and would neither think of a counter-stroke nor of a corresponding movement of his forces to the threatened flank."

Without going into this controversy I will, however, quote the excellent reason given by Clausewitz for his preference for tactical as opposed to strategical envelopment: "One peculiarity of the offensive battle is the uncertainty, in most cases, as to the position (note, and strength) of the enemy; it is a complete groping about amongst things that are unknown (Austerlitz, Wagram, Hohenlinden, Jena, Katzbach). The more this is the case the more concentration of forces becomes

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paramount, and turning a flank to be preferred to surrounding."75

It is also well to recollect how many famous generals had been ruined in Clausewitz's experience through over-extension or dispersion of their forces. The crushing defeats of Napoleon's marshals in the winter of 1813, Macdonald at the

Katzbach, Oudinot at Gros Beeren, Ney at Dennewitz, which neutralized Napoleon's great victory at Dresden and began his ruin, were all chiefly owing to this cause. And the weather may, again, have as great influence in shortening resistance and allowing troops to be overwhelmed before the too-distant reinforcements arrive, as it had in those battles. If the weather then prevented the old muskets going off, and enabled the attack to rush the defence, so now a fog, rain, mist, or
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snow, by restricting the field of view and fire, may produce the same results. When one thinks of the number of great battles fought in such weather, as they may well be again, one sees an additional reason for carefully considering Clausewitz's warning. Far from relegating his preference for the tactical as opposed to the strategical envelopment to the region of the obsolete, because of our improved armament, it seems right to give it full weight as a corrective to a perceivable tendency to elevate strategical envelopment (after Königgrätz) into a formula for victory. If in the past many great generals have been ruined by over-extension, so may they be again. Against this tendency Clausewitz will for ever lift his voice. Also it remains to be considered, with the huge armies of to-day and the future, such armies as at Liao-yang and Mukden,
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such armies as may possibly one day join issue in Afghanistan, whether strategical envelopment will be practicable, or whether tactical envelopment, such as General Kuroki's tactical enveloping movement on Yentai, and the Russian line of retreat at Liao-yang, or General Nogi's tactical enveloping dash northward on Hsinminting and the railway at Mukden, will not be preferable. Perhaps, as a compromise, one might call such a movement strategical-tactical, and so avoid the dispute by jugglery of words.

I have not attempted to do more than roughly indicate that the solution of these four disputed tactical questions in Clausewitz is to be sought in a study of the latest campaign, as he would have said himself; that is, the campaign in Manchuria. For, as the *Times* correspondent in the XLVth Chapter, "Clausewitz
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in Manchuria," of his book "The War in the Far East," observes, "It will be abundantly clear to any one who has followed the great battles in Manchuria that the spirit of Clausewitz has presided over Japanese victories and wept over Russian defeats."

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CHAPTER XII

CHANGES SINCE THE DAYS OF CLAUSEWITZ

In reading Clausewitz it is, first, the great principles of the nature of war founded on human nature, which alter not; and, secondly, it is his spirit and practical way of looking at things that we want to assimilate and apply to THE PROBLEMS OF TO-DAY, to which end it is necessary to read him always with the changed conditions of to-day in our minds, and think what he would have said under the circumstances. These changes are chiefly: —

- (1) The improved net-work of roads.

- (2) Railways.
- (3) Telegraphs, wire and wireless.
- (4) Improved arms.214
- (5) Aviation
- (6) Universal service armies.

The Improved Net-work of Roads

The improved net-work of roads in Europe (not, of course, in Manchuria, or in Afghanistan where we have to consider our future strategy, but in Europe), as General v. Caemmerer puts it, "now offers to the movements of armies everywhere a whole series of useful roads where formerly one or two only were available," easier gradients, good bridges instead of unreliable ones, etc. So that the march-discipline of that day when concentrated for battle, artillery and train *on* the roads, infantry and cavalry *by the side* of the roads, has disappeared. Such close concentration is therefore now not possible, as we move all arms *on* the road,

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and an army corps with train, or two without, is the most that we can now calculate on bringing into action in one day on one road.

Railways

"Railways have, above all, completely altered the term 'base,'" remarks V. Caemmerer. "Railways carry in a few days men, horses, vehicles, and materials of all kinds from the remotest district to any desired point of our country, and nobody would any longer think of accumulating enormous supplies of all kinds at certain fortified points on his own frontier with the object of basing himself on those points. One does not base one's self any longer on a distinct district which is specially prepared for that object, but upon the whole country, which has become one single magazine,

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with separate store-rooms. So the term 'base' has now to be considered in this light."

It is only when operating in savage or semi-savage countries, where there are no railways, that the old idea of a base applies.

As we penetrate deeper and further from our own country into the enemy's, and as a small raiding party can demolish the railway line so as to stop all traffic for days or weeks, it becomes far more necessary than it ever was in Clausewitz's day to guard our communications. And armies become more and more sensitive to any attack upon their communications.

Also "such a line cannot easily be changed, and consequently those celebrated changes of the line of communication in an enemy's country which Napoleon himself, on some occasion, declared to be the ablest manœuvre in

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the art of war, could scarcely be carried out any more" (V. Caemmerer).

Also concentration by means of several railways demands a broad strategic front, which produces that separation of corps or armies which prepares the way for strategical envelopment, and so on.

General von der Goltz, in his "Conduct of War," says: "The more recent treatises on the conduct of war on a large scale are principally taken up with the mobilization

and strategical concentration of armies, a department of strategy which only began to play an important part in modern times. It is the result of a dense net-work of railways in Western Europe which has rendered it possible to mass large bodies of troops in a surprisingly brief time. Each Power tries to outdo its neighbours in this respect, ... which gives an opportunity to the strategical specialist to show off
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his brilliant qualities.... Consequently it is now frequently assumed that the whole conduct of war is comprised in this one section of it." This over-estimate is of course an error, which, however, requires to be pointed out.

Telegraphs

The telegraph has very greatly reduced the danger of separation. The great advantage of the inner line in the day of Napoleon and of Clausewitz was that separated forces could only communicate by mounted messengers, so if the enemy got between them they could not communicate at all, nor act in concert. This the telegraph has completely altered, for as the field telegraph can now be laid as quickly as an army can advance, the most widely separated bodies of troops can every day arrange combined operations

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by telegraph through, if necessary, a point one hundred or four hundred miles in rear. So that to-day the chief advantage of the inner line has gone, while its chief disadvantage, the possibility of being surrounded, remains.

Maps

We now possess complete detailed Ordnance maps of every country in Europe, kept up to date by the latest alterations, whereas in the days of Clausewitz maps were of the very roughest character, and quite unreliable in comparison.

Improved Arms

Smokeless powder, quick-firing and long-ranging artillery and rifles, the infantry field of effective fire being ten times, the artillery five times what it was in Clausewitz's time, have all to be

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borne in mind when reading the tactical part of his writings. In consequence, also, cover and the tactical use of ground are of far greater importance now than then, etc., etc., etc.

Aviation

The recent wonderful developments in aviation will obviously almost revolutionize "Information in War." To what extent, it is as yet impossible to say. Each year will teach us more.

The Nation-in-Arms

The nation-in-arms as the common foundation of all armies (except our own), brought up by railways, vastly increases the numbers in a modern battle from what they were in Clausewitz's day. Compare Austerlitz, Dresden, Leipzig and Waterloo, with Liao-yang and Mukden.

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It should be so with us also, for as General von der Goltz says in "The Conduct of War": "The BEST military organization is that which renders available ALL the intellectual and material resources of the country in event of war. *A State is not*

justified in trying to defend itself with only a portion of its strength, when the existence of the whole is at stake."

In Great Britain the difference which the introduction of this nation-in-arms principle has made in our military strength compared with that of our future opponents, a difference relatively FAR GREATER AGAINST US than it was in Napoleon's and Clausewitz's day, is as yet hardly realized by the people, or by our statesmen. People forget the wastage of war, and the necessity for a constant flow of troops to repair that wastage. As Von der Goltz puts it: "It is characteristic

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of the strategical offensive that the foremost body of troops of an army, the portion which fights the battles, amounts to only a comparatively small fraction, frequently only *a quarter or even one-eighth*, of the total fighting strength employed, whilst the fate of the whole army throughout depends upon the success or failure of this fraction. *Attacking armies melt away like snow in the spring.*" To condense his remarks: "In spite of the most admirable discipline, the Prussian Guard Corps lost 5000 to 6000 men in the marches between the attack on St. Privat and the battle of Sedan." "Napoleon crossed the Niemen in 1812 with 442,000 men, but reached Moscow only three months later with only 95,000." In the spring of 1810, the French crossed the Pyrenees with 400,000 men, but still Marshal Massena in the end only brought 45,000 men up to the lines of

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Torres Vedras, near Lisbon, where the decision lay. Again, in 1829, the Russians put 160,000 men in the field, but had barely 20,000 left when, at Adrianople, a skilfully concluded peace saved them before their weakness became apparent and a reaction set in. In 1878 the Russians led 460,000 across the Danube, but they only brought 100,000 men — of whom only 43,000 were effective, the rest being sick — to the gates of Constantinople. In 1870 the Germans crossed the French frontier with 372,000 men, but after only a six weeks' campaign brought but 171,000 men to Paris. And so on. The result of it all is simple — that a people which is not based on the modern principle of the nation-in-arms cannot for long rival or contend with one that is, for it can neither put an equal (still less a superior) army into the field at the outset (*vide* Clausewitz's first

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principle), nor even maintain in the field the *inferior* army it does place there, because it cannot send the ever-required fresh supplies of trained troops. Sooner or later this must tell. Sooner or later a situation must arise in which the nation based on the obsolete voluntary system *must* go down before a nation based on the nation-in-arms principle. Circumstances change with time, and, as wise Lord Bacon said long ago, "He that will not adopt new remedies must expect new evils." May we adopt the remedy before we experience the evil!

The Moral and Spiritual Forces in War

But though these changed conditions must, of course, *modify* Clausewitz's details in many important particulars, still (to complete our circle and leave off where we started) I repeat that, as

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human nature never changes, and as the moral is to the physical as three to one in war, Clausewitz, as the great realistic and practical philosopher on the actual nature of war, as *the chief exponent of the moral and spiritual forces in war*, will ever remain invaluable in the study of war.

Consider what unsurpassed opportunities he had for observing and reflecting on the influence of enthusiasm and passion, of resolution and boldness, of vacillation and weakness, of coolness and caution, of endurance and hardship, of patriotism and freedom, of ambition and of glory — on war, either by his own experience or by conversation with other equally experienced soldiers, during that long period of almost endless wars between 1793 and 1815.

The fervour and enthusiasm and boundless energy of the Revolution, which
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drove the French forward, smashing everything before them, at the beginning; the ambition, military glory, plunder and greed, which animated them later on; the patriotism, religious and loyal devotion, and stern endurance, which nerved the Russian hosts then as now; that awful Moscow winter campaign, when human nature rose to its highest and sank to its lowest, when the extremes of heroic endurance and selfish callousness were visible side by side; the magnificent uprising of the spirit of liberty and freedom from intolerable oppression in Germany, which gave to the Prussian recruits and Landwehr the same driving force that revolutionary enthusiasm had formerly given to the French; the passing, therefore, in 1813 of the moral superiority, the greater driving force, from the French to the allies. Clausewitz saw all this; he conversed
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intimately with such men as Scharnhorst and Gneisenau, who saw and guided it, too. All his friends had seen it also. No wonder, then, that such an unexampled series of warlike phenomena deeply impressed his reflective mind with the supreme importance of the moral and spiritual factors in war.

His opportunities for long-continued observation of warlike phenomena were far greater than those of any writer since his day, and it is to be hoped they will remain so. For we have no desire to see another series of wars such as the Napoleonic. It is fortunate for us that there was then such a man as Clausewitz to sum up for us so simply and so clearly the accumulated experiences of those long, long years of carnage and devastation.