**CARL VON CLAUSEWITZ**

**ON WAR**

**CHAP 1-2**

**Book I—On the Nature of War**

**Chapter I**

**What is War?**

**1. *Introduction.***

WE propose to consider first the single elements of our subject, then each branch or part, and, last of all, the whole, in all its relations—therefore to advance from the simple to the complex. But 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.

**2. *Definition.***

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 number of duels which make up a war, we shall do so best by supposing to ourselves two wrestlers. Each strives by physical force to compel the other to submit to his will: his first object is to throw his adversary, and thus to render him incapable of further resistance.

*War therefore is an act of violence to compel our opponent to fulfil our will*.

Violence arms itself with the inventions of Art 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 (for there is no moral force without the conception of states and law), 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 be disarmed; and this is, correctly speaking, the real aim of hostilities in theory. It takes the place of the final object, and puts it aside in a manner as something not properly belonging to war.

**3. *Utmost use of force.***

Now, philanthropists may easily imagine there is a skilful method of disarming and overcoming an enemy without causing great bloodshed, and that this 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. By such means the former dictates the law to the latter, and both proceed to extremities, to which the only limitations are those imposed by the amount of counteracting force on each side.

This is the way in which the matter must be viewed; and it is to no purpose, and even acting against one's own interest, to turn away from the consideration of the real nature of the affair, because the coarseness of its elements excites repugnance.

If the wars of civilised people are less cruel and destructive than those of savages, the difference arises from the social condition both of states in themselves and in their relations to each other. Out of this social condition and its relations war arises, and by it war is subjected to conditions, is controlled and modified. But these things do not belong to war itself; they are only given conditions; and to introduce into the philosophy of war itself a principle of moderation would be an absurdity.

The fight between men consists really of two different elements, the hostile *feeling* and the hostile *view*. In our definition of war, we have chosen as its characteristic the latter of these elements, because it is the most general. It is impossible to conceive the passion of hatred of the wildest description, bordering on mere instinct, without combining with it the idea of a hostile intention. On the other hand, hostile intentions may often exist without being accompanied by any, or at all events, by any extreme hostility of feeling. Amongst savages views emanating from the feelings, amongst civilised nations those emanating from the understanding, have the predominance; but this difference is not inherent in a state of barbarism, and in a state of culture in themselves it arises from attendant circumstances, existing institutions, etc., and therefore is not to be found necessarily in all cases, although it prevails in the majority. In short, even the most civilised nations may burn with passionate hatred of each other.

We may see from this what a fallacy it would be to refer the war of a civilised nation entirely to an intelligent act on the part of the Government, and to imagine it as continually freeing itself more and more from all feeling of passion in such a way that at last the physical masses of combatants would no longer be required; in reality, their mere relations would suffice—a kind of algebraic action.

Theory was beginning to drift in this direction until the facts of the last war taught it better. If war is an *act* of force, it belongs necessarily also to the feelings. If it does not originate in the feelings, it re-acts more or less upon them, and this more or less depends not on the degree of civilisation, but upon the importance and duration of the interests involved.

Therefore, if we find civilised nations do not put their prisoners to death, do not devastate towns and countries, this is because their intelligence exercises greater influence on their mode of carrying on war, and has taught them more effectual means of applying force than these rude acts of mere instinct. The invention of gunpowder, the constant progress of improvements in the construction of firearms are sufficient proofs that the tendency to destroy the adversary which lies at the bottom of the conception of war, is in no way changed or modified through the progress of civilisation.

We therefore repeat our proposition, that war is an act of violence, which in its application knows no bounds; as one dictates the law to the other, there arises a sort of reciprocal action, which in the conception, must lead to an extreme. This is the first reciprocal action, and the first extreme with which we meet *(first reciprocal action)*.

**4.—*The aim is to disarm the enemy.***

We have already said that the aim of the action in war is to disarm the enemy, and we shall now show that this in theoretical conception at least is necessary.

If our opponent is to be made to comply with our will, we must place him in a situation which is more oppressive to him than the sacrifice which we demand; but the disadvantages of this position must naturally not be of a transitory nature, at least in appearance, otherwise the enemy, instead of yielding, will hold out, in the prospect of a change for the better. Every change in this position which is produced by a continuation of the war, should therefore be a change for the worse, at least, in idea. The worst position in which a belligerent can be placed is that of being completely disarmed. If, therefore, the enemy is to be reduced to submission by an act of war, he must either be positively disarmed or placed in such a position that he is threatened with it according to probability. From this it follows that the disarming or overthrow of the enemy, whichever we call it, must always be the aim of warfare. Now war is always the shock of two hostile bodies in collision, not the action of a living power upon an inanimate mass, because an absolute state of endurance would not be making war; therefore what we have just said as to the aim of action in war applies to both parties. Here then is another case of reciprocal action. As long as the enemy is not defeated, I have to apprehend that he may defeat me, then I shall be no longer my own master, but he will dictate the law to me as I did to him. This is the second reciprocal action and leads to a second extreme *(second reciprocal action)*.

**5.—*Utmost exertion of powers.***

If we desire to defeat the enemy, we must proportion our efforts to his powers of resistance. This is expressed by the product of two factors which cannot be separated, namely, *the sum of available means* and *the strength of the will*. The sum of the available means may be estimated in a measure, as it depends (although not entirely) upon numbers; but the strength of volition, is more difficult to determine, and can only be estimated to a certain extent by the strength of the motives. Granted we have obtained in this way an approximation to the strength of the power to be contended with, we can then take a review of our own means, and either increase them so as to obtain a preponderance, or in case we have not the resources to effect this, then do our best by increasing our means as far as possible. But the adversary does the same; therefore there is a new mutual enhancement, which in pure conception, must create a fresh effort towards an extreme. This is the third case of reciprocal action, and a third extreme with which we meet *(third reciprocal action)*.   
  
**6.—*Modification in the reality.***

Thus reasoning in the abstract, the mind cannot stop short of an extreme, because it has to deal with an extreme, with a conflict of forces left to themselves, and obeying no other but their own inner laws. If we should seek to deduce from the pure conception of war an absolute point for the aim which we shall propose and for the means which we shall apply, this constant reciprocal action would involve us in extremes, which would be nothing but a play of ideas produced by an almost invisible train of logical subtleties. If adhering closely to the absolute, we try to avoid all difficulties by a stroke of the pen, and insist with logical strictness that in every case the extreme must be the object, and the utmost effort must be exerted in that direction, such a stroke of the pen would be a mere paper law, not by any means adapted to the real world.

Even supposing this extreme tension of forces was an absolute which could easily be ascertained, still we must admit that the human mind would hardly submit itself to this kind of logical chimera. There would be in many cases an unnecessary waste of power, which would be in opposition to other principles of statecraft; an effort of will would be required disproportioned to the proposed object, and which therefore it would be impossible to realise, for the human will does not derive its impulse from logical subtleties.

But everything takes a different form when we pass from abstractions to reality. In the former everything must be subject to optimism, and we must imagine the one side as well as the other, striving after perfection and even attaining it. Will this ever take place in reality? It will if

1, War becomes a completely isolated act, which arises suddenly and is in no way connected with the previous history of the states;

2, If it is limited to a single solution, or to several simultaneous solutions;

3, If it contains within itself the solution perfect and complete, free from any reaction upon it, through a calculation beforehand of the political situation which will follow from it.

**7.—*War is never an isolated act.***

With regard to the first point, neither of the two opponents is an abstract person to the other, not even as regards that factor in the sum of resistance, which does not depend on objective things, viz., the will. This will is not an entirely unknown quantity; it indicates what it will be to-morrow by what it is to-day. War does not spring up quite suddenly, it does not spread to the full in a moment; each of the two opponents can, therefore, form an opinion of the other, in a great measure, from what he is and what he does; instead of judging of him according to what he, strictly speaking, should be or should do. But, now, man with his incomplete organisation is always below the line of absolute perfection, and thus these deficiencies, having an influence on both sides, become a modifying principle.

**8.—*It does not consist of a single instantaneous blow.***

The second point gives rise to the following considerations:—

If war ended in a single solution, or a number of simultaneous ones, then naturally all the preparations for the same would have a tendency to the extreme, for an omission could not in any way be repaired; the utmost, then, that the world of reality could furnish as a guide for us would be the preparations of the enemy, as far as they are known to us; all the rest would fall into the domain of the abstract. But if the result is made up from several successive acts, then naturally that which precedes with all its phases may be taken as a measure for that which will follow, and in this manner the world of reality here again takes the place of the abstract, and thus modifies the effort towards the extreme.

Yet every war would necessarily resolve itself into a single solution, or a sum of simultaneous results, if all the means required for the struggle were raised at once, or could be at once raised; for as one adverse result necessarily diminishes the means, then if all the means have been applied in the first, a second cannot properly be supposed. All hostile acts which might follow would belong essentially to the first, and form in reality only its duration.

But we have already seen that even in the preparation for war the real world steps into the place of mere abstract conception—a material standard into the place of the hypotheses of an extreme: that therefore in that way both parties, by the influence of the mutual reaction, remain below the line of extreme effort, and therefore all forces are not at once brought forward.

It lies also in the nature of these forces and their application, that they cannot all be brought into activity at the same time. These forces are *the armies actually on foot, the country*, with its superficial extent and its population, *and the allies*.

In point of fact the country, with its superficial area and the population, besides being the source of all military force, constitutes in itself an integral part of the efficient quantities in war, providing either the theatre of war or exercising a considerable influence on the same.

Now it is possible to bring all the moveable military forces of a country into operation at once, but not all fortresses, rivers, mountains, people, etc., in short not the whole country, unless it is so small that it may be completely embraced by the first act of the war. Further, the co-operation of allies does not depend on the will of the belligerents; and from the nature of the political relations of states to each other, this co-operation is frequently not afforded until after the war has commenced, or it may be increased to restore the balance of power.

That this part of the means of resistance, which cannot at once be brought into activity, in many cases is a much greater part of the whole than might at first be supposed, and that it often restores the balance of power, seriously affected by the great force of the first decision, will be more fully shown hereafter. Here it is sufficient to show that a complete concentration of all available means in a moment of time, is contradictory to the nature of war.

Now this, in itself, furnishes no ground for relaxing our efforts to accumulate strength to gain the first result, because an unfavourable issue is always a disadvantage to which no one would purposely expose himself, and also because the first decision, although not the only one, still will have the more influence on subsequent events, the greater it is itself.

But the possibility of gaining a later result causes men to take refuge in that expectation owing to the repugnance, in the human mind, to making excessive efforts; and therefore forces are not concentrated and measures are not taken for the first decision with that energy which would otherwise be used. Whatever one belligerent omits from weakness, becomes to the other a real objective ground for limiting his own efforts, and thus again, through this reciprocal action, extreme tendencies are brought down to efforts on a limited scale.

**9.—*The result in war is never absolute.***

Lastly, even the final decision of a whole war is not always to be regarded as absolute. The conquered state often sees in it only a passing evil, which may be repaired in after times by means of political combinations. How much this also must modify the degree of tension and the vigour of the efforts made is evident in itself.

**10.—*The probabilities of real life take the place***   
***of the conceptions of the extreme and the absolute.***

In this manner the whole act of war is removed from under the rigorous law of forces exerted to the utmost. If the extreme is no longer to be apprehended, and no longer to be sought for, it is left to the judgment to determine the limits for the efforts to be made in place of it; and this can only be done on the data furnished by the facts of the real world by the *laws of probability*. Once the belligerents are no longer mere conceptions but individual states and governments, once the war is no longer an ideal, but a definite substantial procedure, then the reality will furnish the data to compute the unknown quantities which are required to be found.

From the character, the measures, the situation of the adversary, and the relations with which he is surrounded, each side will draw conclusions by the law of probability as to the designs of the other, and act accordingly.

**11.—*The political object now reappears.***

Here, now, forces itself again into consideration a question which we had laid aside (see No. 2), that is, *the political object of the war*. The law of the extreme, the view to disarm the adversary, to overthrow him, has hitherto to a certain extent usurped the place of this end or object. Just as this law loses its force, the political object must again come forward. If the whole consideration is a calculation of probability based on definite persons and relations, then the political object, being the original motive, must be an essential factor in the product. The smaller the sacrifice we demand from our opponent, the smaller it may be expected will be the means of resistance which he will employ; but the smaller his are, the smaller will ours require to be. Further, the smaller our political object, the less value shall we set upon it, and the more easily shall we be induced to give it up altogether.

Thus, therefore, the political object, as the original motive of the war, will be the standard for determining both the aim of the military force, and also the amount of effort to be made. This it cannot be in itself; but it is so in relation to both the belligerent states, because we are concerned with realities, not with mere abstractions. One and the same political object may produce totally different effects upon different people, or even upon the same people at different times; we can, therefore, only admit the political object as the measure, by considering it in its effects upon those masses which it is to move, and consequently the nature of those masses also comes into consideration. It is easy to see that thus the result may be very different according as these masses are animated with a spirit which will infuse vigour into the action or otherwise. 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.

This applies to the efforts which the political object will call forth in the two states, and to the aim which the military action shall prescribe for itself. At times it may itself be that aim, as for example the conquest of a province. At other times, the political object itself is not suitable for the aim of military action; then such a one must be chosen as will be an equivalent for it, and stand in its place as regards the conclusion of peace. But, also, in this, due attention to the peculiar character of the states concerned is always supposed. There are circumstances in which the equivalent must be much greater than the political object in order to secure the latter. The political object will be so much the more the standard of aim and effort, and have more influence in itself, the more the masses are indifferent, the less that any mutual feeling of hostility prevails in the two states from other causes, and, therefore, there are cases where the political object almost alone will be decisive.

If the aim of the military action is an equivalent for the political object, that action will in general diminish as the political object diminishes, and that in a greater degree the more the political object dominates; and so is explained how, without any contradiction in itself, there may be wars of all degrees of importance and energy, from a war of extermination, down to the mere use of an army of observation. This, however, leads to a question of another kind which we have hereafter to develop and answer.

**12.— *A suspension in the action of war unexplained***   
***by anything said as yet.***

However insignificant the political claims mutually advanced, however weak the means put forth, however small the aim to which military action is directed, can this action be suspended even for a moment? This is a question which penetrates deeply into the nature of the subject.

Every transaction requires for its accomplishment a certain time which we call its duration. This may be longer or shorter, according as the person acting throws more or less despatch into his movements.

About this more or less we shall not trouble ourselves here. Each person acts in his own fashion; but the slow person does not protract the thing because he wishes to spend more time about it, but because, by his nature, he requires more time, and if he made more haste, would not do the thing so well. This time, therefore, depends on subjective causes, and belongs to the length, so-called, of the action.

If we allow now to every action in war this, its length, then we must assume, at first sight at least, that any expenditure of time beyond this length, that is, every suspension of hostile action appears an absurdity; with respect to this it must not be forgotten that we now speak not of the progress of one or other of the two opponents, but of the general progress of the whole action of the war.

**13.—*There is only one cause which can suspend the action,***   
***and this seems to be only possible on one side in any case.***

If two parties have armed themselves for strife, then a feeling of animosity must have moved them to it; as long now as they continue armed, that is do not come to terms of peace, this feeling must exist; and it can only be brought to a standstill by either side by one single motive alone, which is, *that he waits for a more favourable moment for action*. Now at first sight it appears that this motive can never exist except on one side, because it, *eo ipso*, must be prejudicial to the other. If the one has an interest in acting, then the other must have an interest in waiting.

A complete equilibrium of forces can never produce a suspension of action, for during this suspension he who has the positive object (that is the assailant) must continue progressing; for if we should imagine an equilibrium in this way, that he who has the positive object, therefore the strongest motive, can at the same time only command the lesser means, so that the equation is made up by the product of the motive and the power, then we must say, if no alteration in this condition of equilibrium is to be expected, the two parties must make peace; but if an alteration is to be expected, then it can only be favourable to one side, and therefore the other has a manifest interest to act without delay. We see that the conception of an equilibrium cannot explain a suspension of arms, but that it ends in the question of the *expectation of a more favourable moment*.

Let us suppose, therefore, that one of two states has a positive object, as, for instance, the conquest of one of the enemy's provinces—which is to be utilised in the settlement of peace. After this conquest his political object is accomplished, the necessity for action ceases, and for him a pause ensues. If the adversary is also contented with this solution he will make peace, if not he must act. Now, if we suppose that in four weeks he will be in a better condition to act, then he has sufficient grounds for putting off the time of action.

But from that moment the logical course for the enemy appears to be to act that he may not give the conquered party *the desired* time. Of course, in this mode of reasoning a complete insight into the state of circumstances on both sides, is supposed.

**14.—*Thus a continuance of action will ensue which***   
***will advance towards a climax.***

If this unbroken continuity of hostile operations really existed, the effect would be that everything would again be driven towards the extreme; for irrespective of the effect of such incessant activity in inflaming the feelings and infusing into the whole a greater degree of passion, a greater elementary force, there would also follow from this continuance of action, a stricter continuity, a closer connection between cause and effect, and thus every single action would become of more importance, and consequently more replete with danger.

But we know that the course of action in war has seldom or never this unbroken continuity, and that there have been many wars in which action occupied by far the smallest portion of time employed, the whole of the rest being consumed in inaction. It is impossible that this should be always an anomaly, and suspension of action in war must be possible, that is no contradiction in itself. We now proceed to show this, and how it is.

**15.—*Here, therefore, the principle of polarity is brought into requisition.***

As we have supposed the interests of one commander to be always antagonistic to those of the other, we have assumed a true *polarity*. We reserve a fuller explanation of this for another chapter, merely making the following observation on it at present.

The principle of polarity is only valid when it can be conceived in one and the same thing, where the positive and its opposite the negative, completely destroy each other. In a battle both sides strive to conquer; that is true polarity, for the victory of the one side destroys that of the other. But when we speak of two different things, which have a common relation external to themselves, then it is not the things but their relations which have the polarity.

**16.—*Attack and defence are things differing in kind and of***   
***unequal force. Polarity is, therefore, not applicable to them.***

If there was only one form of war, to wit the attack of the enemy, therefore no defence; or in other words, if the attack was distinguished from the defence merely by the positive motive, which the one has and the other has not, but the fight precisely one and the same: then in this sort of fight every advantage gained on the one side would be a corresponding disadvantage on the other, and true polarity would exist.

But action in war is divided into two forms, attack and defence, which, as we shall hereafter explain more particularly, are very different and of unequal strength. Polarity, therefore, lies in that to which both bear a relation, in the decision, but not in the attack or defence itself.

If the one commander wishes the solution put off, the other must wish to hasten it; but certainly only in the same form of combat. If it is A's interest not to attack his enemy at present but four weeks hence, then it is B's interest to be attacked, not four weeks hence, but at the present moment. This is the direct antagonism of interests, but it by no means follows that it would be for B's interest to attack A at once. That is plainly something totally different.

**17.—*The effect of Polarity is often destroyed by the superiority of the Defence***   
***over the Attack, and thus the suspension of action in war is explained.***

If the form of defence is stronger than that of offence, as we shall hereafter show, the question arises, Is the advantage of a deferred decision as great on the one side as the advantage of the defensive form on the other? If it is not, then it cannot by its counter-weight overbalance the latter, and thus influence the progress of the action of the war. We see, therefore, that the impulsive force existing in the polarity of interests may be lost in the difference between the strength of the offensive and defensive, and thereby become ineffectual.

If, therefore, that side for which the present is favourable is too weak to be able to dispense with the advantage of the defensive, he must put up with the unfavourable prospects which the future holds out; for it may still be better to fight a defensive battle in the unpromising future than to assume the offensive or make peace at present. Now, being convinced that the superiority of the defensive (rightly understood) is very great, and much greater than may appear at first sight, we conceive that the greater number of those periods of inaction which occur in war are thus explained without involving any contradiction. The weaker the motives to action are, the more will those motives be absorbed and neutralised by this difference between attack and defence, the more frequently, therefore, will action in warfare be stopped, as indeed experience teaches.

**18.—*A second ground consists in the imperfect knowledge of circumstances.***

But there is still another cause which may stop action in war, that is an incomplete view of the situation. Each commander can only fully know his own position; that of his opponent can only be known to him by reports, which are uncertain; he may, therefore, form a wrong judgment with respect to it upon data of this description, and, in consequence of that error, he may suppose that the initiative is properly with his adversary when it is really with himself. This want of perfect insight might certainly just as often occasion an untimely action as untimely inaction, and so it would in itself no more contribute to delay than to accelerate action in war. Still, it must always be regarded as one of the natural causes which may bring action in war to a standstill without involving a contradiction. But if we reflect how much more we are inclined and induced to estimate the power of our opponents too high than too low, because it lies in human nature to do so, we shall admit that our imperfect insight into facts in general must contribute very much to stop action in war, and to modify the principle of action.

The possibility of a standstill brings into the action of war a new modification, inasmuch as it dilutes that action with the element of Time, checks the influence or sense of danger in its course, and increases the means of reinstating a lost balance of force. The greater the tension of feelings from which the war springs, the greater, therefore, the energy with which it is carried on, so much the shorter will be the periods of inaction; on the other hand, the weaker the principle of warlike activity, the longer will be these periods: for powerful motives increase the force of the will, and this, as we know, is always a factor in the product of force.

**19.—*Frequent periods of inaction in war remove it further from the***   
***absolute, and make it still more a calculation of probabilities.***

But the slower the action proceeds in war, the more frequent and longer the periods of inaction, so much the more easily can an error be repaired; therefore so much the bolder a general will be in his calculations, so much the more readily will he keep them below the line of absolute, and build everything upon probabilities and conjecture. Thus, according as the course of the war is more or less slow, more or less time will be allowed for that which the nature of a concrete case particularly requires, calculation of probability based on given circumstances.

**20.—*It therefore now only wants the element of chance to make***   
***of it a game, and in that element it is least of all deficient.***

We see from the foregoing how much the objective nature of war makes it a calculation of probabilities; now there is only one single element still wanting to make it a game, and that element it certainly is not without: it is chance. There is no human affair which stands so constantly and so generally in close connection with chance as war. But along with chance, the accidental, and along with it good luck, occupy a great place in war.

**21.—*As war is a game through its objective nature,***   
***so also is it through its subjective.***

If we now take a look at the *subjective nature* of war, that is at those powers with which it is carried on, it will appear to us still more like a game. The element in which the operations of war are carried on is danger; but which of all the moral qualities is the first in danger? *Courage*. Now certainly courage is quite compatible with prudent calculation, but still they are things of quite a different kind, essentially different qualities of the mind; on the other hand, daring reliance on good fortune, boldness, rashness, are only expressions of courage, and all these propensities of the mind look for the fortuitous (or accidental), because it is their element.

We see therefore how from the commencement, the absolute, the mathematical as it is called, no where finds any sure basis in the calculations in the art of war; and that from the outset there is a play of possibilities, probabilities, good and bad luck, which spreads about with all the coarse and fine threads of its web, and makes war of all branches of human activity the most like a game of cards.

**22.—*How this accords best with the human mind in general.***

Although our intellect always feels itself urged towards clearness and certainty, still our mind often feels itself attracted by uncertainty. Instead of threading its way with the understanding along the narrow path of philosophical investigations and logical conclusions, in order almost unconscious of itself, to arrive in spaces where it feels itself a stranger, and where it seems to part from all well known objects, it prefers to remain with the imagination in the realms of chance and luck. Instead of living yonder on poor necessity, it revels here in the wealth of possibilities; animated thereby, courage then takes wings to itself, and daring and danger make the element into which it launches itself, as a fearless swimmer plunges into the stream.

Shall theory leave it here, and move on, self satisfied with absolute conclusions and rules? Then it is of no practical use. Theory must also take into account the human element; it must accord a place to courage, to boldness, even to rashness. The art of war has to deal with living and with moral forces; the consequence of which is that it can never attain the absolute and positive. There is therefore everywhere a margin for the accidental; and just as much in the greatest things as in the smallest. As there is room for this accidental on the one hand, so on the other there must be courage and self-reliance in proportion to the room left. If these qualities are forthcoming in a high degree, the margin left may likewise be great. Courage and self reliance are therefore principles quite essential to war; consequently theory must only set up such rules as allow ample scope for all degrees and varieties of these necessary and noblest of military virtues. In daring there may still be wisdom also, and prudence as well, only that they are estimated by a different standard of value.

**23.—*War is always a serious means for a serious object.***   
***Its more particular definition.***

Such is war; such the commander who conducts it; such the theory which rules it. But war is no pastime; no mere passion for venturing and winning; no work of a free enthusiasm; it is a serious means for a serious object. All that appearance which it wears from the varying hues of fortune, all that it assimilates into itself of the oscillations of passion, of courage, of imagination, of enthusiasm, are only particular properties of this means.

The war of a community—of whole nations and particularly of civilised nations—always starts from a political condition, and is called forth by a political motive. It is therefore a political act. Now if it was a perfect, unrestrained and absolute expression of force, as we had to deduce it from its mere conception, then the moment it is called forth by policy it would step into the place of policy, and as something quite independent of it would set it aside, and only follow its own laws, just as a mine at the moment of explosion cannot be guided into any other direction than that which has been given to it by preparatory arrangements. This is how the thing has really been viewed hitherto, whenever a want of harmony between policy and the conduct of a war has led to theoretical distinctions of the kind. But it is not so, and the idea is radically false. War in the real world, as we have already seen, is not an extreme thing which expends itself at one single discharge; it is the operation of powers which do not develop themselves completely in the same manner and in the same measure, but which at one time expand sufficiently to overcome the resistance opposed by inertia or friction, while at another they are too weak to produce an effect; it is therefore, in a certain measure, a pulsation of violent force more or less vehement, consequently making its discharges and exhausting its powers more or less quickly, in other words conducting more or less quickly to the aim, but always lasting long enough to admit of influence being exerted on it in its course, so as to give it this or that direction, in short to be subject to the will of a guiding intelligence. Now if we reflect that war has its root in a political object, then naturally this original motive which called it into existence should also continue the first and highest consideration in the conduct of it. Still the political object is no despotic lawgiver on that account; it must accommodate itself to the nature of the means, and through that is often completely changed, but it always remains that which has a prior right to consideration. Policy therefore is interwoven with the whole action of war, and must exercise a continuous influence upon it as far as the nature of the forces exploding in it will permit.   
  
**24.—*War is a mere continuation of policy by other means.***

We see, therefore, that war is not merely a political act, but also a real political instrument, a continuation of political commerce, a carrying out of the same by other means. All beyond this which is strictly peculiar to war relates merely to the peculiar nature of the means which it uses. That the tendencies and views of policy shall not be incompatible with these means, the art of war in general and the commander in each particular case may demand, and this claim is truly not a trifling one. But however powerfully this may react on political views in particular cases, still it must always be regarded as only a modification of them; for the political view is the object, war is the means, and the means must always include the object in our conception.

**25.—*Diversity in the nature of wars.***

The greater and more powerful the motives of a war, the more it affects the whole existence of a people, the more violent the excitement which precedes the war, by so much the nearer will the war approach to its abstract form, so much the more will it be directed to the destruction of the enemy, so much the nearer will the military and political ends coincide, so much the more purely military and less political the war appears to be; but the weaker the motives and the tensions, so much the less will the natural direction of the military element—that is, force—be coincident with the direction which the political element indicates; so much the more must therefore the war become diverted from its natural direction, the political object diverge from the aim of an ideal war, and the war appear to become political.

But that the reader may not form any false conceptions, we must here observe that, by this natural tendency of war, we only mean the philosophical, the strictly logical, and by no means the tendency of forces actually engaged in conflict, by which would be supposed to be included all the emotions and passions of the combatants. No doubt in some cases these also might be excited to such a degree as to be with difficulty restrained and confined to the political road; but in most cases such a contradiction will not arise, because, by the existence of such strenuous exertions a great plan in harmony therewith would be implied. If the plan is directed only upon a small object, then the impulses of feeling amongst the masses will be also so weak, that these masses will require to be stimulated rather than repressed.

**26.—*They may all be regarded as political acts.***

Returning now to the main subject, although it is true that in one kind of war the political element seems almost to disappear, whilst in another kind it occupies a very prominent place, we may still affirm that the one is as political as the other; for if we regard the state policy as the intelligence of the personified state, then amongst all the constellations in the political sky which it has to compute, those must be included which arise when the nature of its relations imposes the necessity of a great war. It is only if we understand by policy not a true appreciation of affairs in general, but the conventional conception of a cautious, subtle, also dishonest craftiness, averse from violence, that the latter kind of war may belong more to policy than the first.

**27.—*Influence of this view on the right understanding of***   
***military history, and on the foundations of theory.***

We see, therefore, in the first place, that under all circumstances war is to be regarded not as an independent thing, but as a political instrument; and it is only by taking this point of view that we can avoid finding ourselves in opposition to all military history. This is the only means of unlocking the great book and making it intelligible. Secondly, just this view shows us how wars must differ in character according to the nature of the motives and circumstances from which they proceed.

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 is, therefore, the first, the most comprehensive of all strategical questions. We shall enter into this more fully in treating of the plan of a war.

For the present we content ourselves with having brought the subject up to this point, and having thereby fixed the chief point of view from which war and its theory are to be studied.   
  
**28.—*Result for theory.***

War is, therefore, not only a true chameleon, because it changes its nature in some degree in each particular case, but it is also, as a whole, in relation to the predominant tendencies which are in it, 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 of the subordniate 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. The range which the display of courage and talents shall get in the realm of probabilities and of chance depends on the particular characteristics of the general and his army; but the political objects belong to the Government alone.

These three tendencies, which appear like so many different lawgivers, are deeply rooted in the nature of the subject, and at the same time variable in degree. A theory which would leave any one of them out of account, or set up any arbitrary relation between them, would immediately become involved in such a contradiction with the reality, that it might be regarded as destroyed at once by that alone.

The problem is, therefore, that theory shall keep itself poised in a manner between these three tendencies, as between three points of attraction.

The way in which alone this difficult problem can be solved we shall examine in the book on the "Theory of War." In every case the conception of war, as here defined, will be the first ray of light which shows us the true foundation of theory, and which first separates the great masses, and allows us to distinguish them from one another.

**Chapter II**

**Ends and Means in War**

HAVING in the foregoing chapter ascertained the complicated and variable nature of war, we shall now occupy ourselves in examining into the influence which this nature has upon the end and means in war.

If we ask first of all for the aim upon which the whole war is to be directed, in order that it may be the right means for the attainment of the political object, we shall find that it is just as variable as are the political object and the particular circumstances of the war.

If, in the next place, we keep once more to the pure conception of war, then we must say that its political object properly lies out of its province, for if war is an act of violence to compel the enemy to fulfil our will, then in every case all depends on our overthrowing the enemy, that is, disarming him, and on that alone. This object, developed from abstract conceptions, but which is also the one aimed at in a great many cases in reality, we shall, in the first place, examine in this reality.

In connection with the plan of a campaign we shall hereafter examine more closely into the meaning of disarming a nation, but here we must at once draw a distinction between three things, which as three general objects comprise everything else within them. They are the *military power, the country*, and *the will of the enemy*.

The *military power* must be destroyed, that is, reduced to such a state as not to be able to prosecute the war. This is the sense in which we wish to be understood hereafter, whenever we use the expression "destruction of the enemy's military power."

The *country* must be conquered, for out of the country a new military force may be formed.

But if even both these things are done, still the war, that is, the hostile feeling and action of hostile agencies, cannot be considered as at an end as long as the *will* of the enemy is not subdued also; that is, its Government and its allies forced into signing a peace, or the people into submission; for whilst we are in full occupation of the country the war may break out afresh, either in the interior or through assistance given by allies. No doubt this may also take place after a peace, but that shows nothing more than that every war does not carry in itself the elements for a complete decision and final settlement.

But even if this is the case, still with the conclusion of peace a number of sparks are always extinguished, which would have smouldered on quietly, and the excitement of the passions abates, because all those whose minds are disposed to peace, of which in all nations and under all circumstances, there is always a great number, turn themselves away completely from the road to resistance. Whatever may take place subsequently, we must always look upon the object as attained, and the business of war as ended, by a peace.

As protection of the country is that one of these objects to which the military force is destined, therefore the natural order is that first of all this force should be destroyed; then the country subdued; and through the effect of these two results, as well as the position we then hold, the enemy should be forced to make peace. Generally the destruction of the enemy's force is done by degrees, and in just the same measure the conquest of the country follows immediately. The two likewise usually react upon each other, because the loss of provinces occasions a diminution of military force. But this order is by no means necessary, and on that account it also does not always take place. The enemy's army, before it is sensibly weakened, may retreat to the opposite side of the country, or even quite out of the country. In this case, therefore, the greater part or the whole of the country is conquered.

But this object of war in the abstract, this final means of attaining the political object in which all others are combined, the *disarming the enemy*, is by no means general in reality, is not a condition necessary to peace, and therefore can in no wise be set up in theory as a law. There are innumerable instances of treaties in which peace has been settled before either party could be looked upon as disarmed; indeed, even before the balance had undergone any sensible alteration. Nay, further, if we look at the case in the concrete, then we must say that in a whole class of cases the idea of a complete defeat of the enemy would be a mere imaginative flight, especially if the enemy is considerably superior.

The reason why the object deduced from the conception of war is not adapted in general to real war, lies in the difference between the two, which is discussed in the preceding chapter. If it was as pure conception gives it, then a war between two states of very unequal military strength would appear an absurdity; therefore would be impossible. At most, the inequality between the physical forces might be such that it could be balanced by the moral forces, and that would not go far with our present social condition in Europe. Therefore, if we have seen wars take place between states of very unequal power, that has been the case because there is a wide difference between war in reality and its original conception.

There are two considerations, which as motives, may practically take the place of inability to continue the contest. The first is the improbability, the second is the excessive price of success.

According to what we have seen in the foregoing chapter, war must always set itself free from the strict law of logical necessity, and seek aid from the calculation of probabilities: and as this is so much the more the case, the more the war has a bias that way, from the circumstances out of which it has arisen—the smaller its motives are and the excitement it has raised—so it is also conceivable how out of this calculation of probabilities even motives to peace may arise. War does not therefore always require to be fought out until one party is overthrown; and we may suppose that, when the motives and passions are slight, a weak probability will suffice to move that side to which it is unfavourable to give way. Now, were the other side convinced of this beforehand, it is natural that he would strive for this probability only instead of first trying and making the detour of a total destruction of the enemy's army.

Still more general in its influence on the resolution to peace is the consideration of the expenditure of force already made, and further required. As war is no act of blind passion, but is dominated over by the political object, therefore the value of that object determines the measure of the sacrifices by which it is to be purchased. This will be the case, not only as regards extent, but also as regards duration. As soon, therefore, as the required outlay becomes so great that the political object is no longer equal in value, the object must be given up, and peace will be the result.

We see, therefore, that in wars where one cannot completely disarm the other, the motives to peace on both sides will rise or fall on each side according to the probability of future success and the required outlay. If these motives were equally strong on both sides, they would meet in the centre of their political difference. Where they are strong on one side, they might be weak on the other. If their amount is only sufficient, peace will follow, but naturally to the advantage of that side which has the weakest motive for its conclusion. We purposely pass over here the difference which the *positive* and *negative* character of the political end must necessarily produce practically; for although that is, as we shall hereafter show, of the highest importance, still we are obliged to keep here to a more general point of view, because the original political views in the course of the war change very much, and at last may become totally different, *just because they are determined by results and probable events*.

Now comes the question how to influence the probability of success. In the first place, naturally by the same means which we use when the object is the subjugation of the enemy, by the destruction of his military force and the conquest of his provinces; but these two means are not exactly of the same import here as they would be in reference to that object. If we attack the enemy's army, it is a very different thing whether we intend to follow up the first blow with a succession of others until the whole force is destroyed, or whether we mean to content ourselves with a victory to shake the enemy's feeling of security, to convince him of our superiority, and to instil into him a feeling of apprehension about the future. If this is our object, we only go so far in the destruction of his forces as is sufficient. In like manner the conquest of the enemy's provinces is quite a different measure if the object is not the destruction of the enemy's army. In the latter case, the destruction of the army is the real effectual action, and the taking of the provinces only a consequence of it; to take them before the army had been defeated would always be looked upon only as a necessary evil. On the other hand, if our views are not directed upon the complete destruction of the enemy's force, and if we are sure that the enemy does not seek but fears to bring matters to a bloody decision, the taking possession of a weak or defenceless province is an advantage in itself, and if this advantage is of sufficient importance to make the enemy apprehensive about the general result, then it may also be regarded as a shorter road to peace.

But now we come upon a peculiar means of influencing the probability of the result without destroying the enemy's army, namely, upon the expeditions which have a direct connection with political views. If there are any enterprises which are particularly likely to break up the enemy's alliances or make them inoperative, to gain new alliances for ourselves, to raise political powers in our own favour, etc., etc., then it is easy to conceive how much these may increase the probability of success, and become a shorter way towards our aim than the routing of the enemy's army.

The second question is how to act upon the enemy's expenditure in strength, that is, to raise the price of success.

The enemy's outlay in strength lies in the *wear and tear* of his forces, consequently in the *destruction* of them on our part, and in the *loss* of *provinces*, consequently the *conquest* of them by us.

Here again, on account of the various significations of these means, so likewise it will be found that neither of them will be identical in its signification, in all cases if the objects are different. The smallness in general of this difference must not cause us perplexity, for in reality the weakest motives, the finest shades of difference, often decide in favour of this or that method of applying force. Our only business here is to show that certain conditions being supposed, the possibility of attaining the aim in different ways is no contradiction, absurdity, nor even error.

Besides these two means there are three other peculiar ways of directly increasing the waste of the enemy's force. The first is *invasion*, that is *the occupation of the enemy's territory, not with a view to keeping it*, but in order to levy contributions there, or to devastate it. The immediate object is here neither the conquest of the enemy's territory nor the defeat of his armed force, but merely to *do him damage in a general way*. The second way is to select for the object of our enterprises those points at which we can do the enemy most harm. Nothing is easier to conceive than two different directions in which our force may be employed, the first of which is to be preferred if our object is to defeat the enemy's army, while the other is more advantageous if the defeat of the enemy is out of the question. According to the usual mode of speaking we should say that the first is more military, the other more political. But if we take our view from the highest point, both are equally military, and neither the one nor the other can be eligible unless it suits the circumstances of the case. The third, by far the most important, from the great number of cases which it embraces, is the *wearying out* the enemy. We choose this expression not only to explain our meaning in few words but because it represents the thing exactly, and is not so figurative as may at first appear. The idea of wearying out in a struggle amounts in reality to *a gradual exhaustion of the physical powers and of the will produced through the long continuance of exertion*.

Now if we want to overcome the enemy by the duration of the contest we must content ourselves with as small objects as possible, for it is in the nature of the thing that a great end requires a greater expenditure of force than a small one; but the smallest object that we can propose to ourselves is simple passive resistance, that is a combat without any positive view. In this way, therefore, our means attain their greatest relative value, and therefore the result is best secured. How far now can this negative mode of proceeding be carried? Plainly not to absolute passivity, for mere endurance would not be fighting: and the defensive is an activity by which so much of the enemy's power must be destroyed, that he must give up his object. That alone is what we aim at in each single act, and therein consists the negative nature of our object.

No doubt this negative object in its single act is not so effective as the positive object in the same direction would be, supposing it successful; but there is this difference in its favour, that it succeeds more easily than the positive, and therefore it holds out greater certainty of success; what is wanting in the efficacy of its single act, must be gained through time, that is, through the duration of the contest, and therefore this negative intention, which constitutes the principle of the pure defensive, is also the natural means of overcoming the enemy by the duration of the combat, that is of wearing him out.

Here lies the origin of that difference of *Offensive* and *Defensive*, the influence of which prevails over the whole province of war. We cannot at present pursue this subject further than to observe that from this negative intention are to be deduced all the advantages and all the stronger forms of combat which are on the side of the *Defensive*, and in which that philosophical-dynamic law which exists between the greatness and the certainty of success is realised. We shall resume the consideration of all this hereafter.

If then the negative purpose, that is the concentration of all the means into a state of pure resistance, affords a superiority in the contest, and if this advantage is sufficient to *balance* whatever superiority in numbers the adversary may have, then the mere *duration* of the contest will suffice gradually to bring the loss of force on the part of the adversary to a point at which the political object can no longer be an equivalent, a point at which, therefore, he must give up the contest. We see then that this class of means, the wearying out of the enemy, includes the great number of cases in which the weaker resists the stronger.

Frederick the Great during the Seven Years' War was never strong enough to overthrow the Austrian monarchy; and if he had tried to do so after the fashion of Charles the Twelfth, he would inevitably have had to succumb himself. But after his skilful application of the system of husbanding his resources had shown the powers allied against him, through a seven years' war, that the actual expenditure of strength far exceeded what they had at first anticipated, they made peace.

We see then that there are many ways to the aim in war; that the complete subjugation of the enemy is not essential in every case, that the destruction of the enemy's military force, the conquest of enemy's provinces, the mere occupation of them, the mere invasion of them—enterprises which are aimed directly at political objects—lastly a passive expectation of the enemy's blow, are all means which, each in itself, may be used to force the enemy's will just according as the peculiar circumstances of the case lead us to expect more from the one or the other. We could still add to these a whole category of shorter methods of gaining the end, which might be called arguments *ad hominem*. What branch of human affairs is there in which these sparks of individual spirit have not made their appearance, flying over all formal considerations? And least of all can they fail to appear in war, where the personal character of the combatants plays such an important part, both in the cabinet and in the field. We limit ourselves to pointing this out, as it would be pedantry to attempt to reduce such influences into classes. Including these, we may say that the number of possible ways of reaching the aim rises to infinity.

To avoid under-estimating these different short roads to the aim, either estimating them only as rare exceptions, or holding the difference which they cause in the conduct of war as insignificant, we must bear in mind the diversity of political objects which may cause a war,—measure at a glance the distance which there is between a death struggle for political existence, and a war which a forced or tottering alliance makes a matter of disagreeable duty. Between the two, gradations innumerable occur in reality. If we reject one of these gradations in theory, we might with equal right reject the whole, which would be tantamount to shutting the real world completely out of sight.

These are the circumstances in general connected with the aim which we have to pursue in war; let us now turn to the means.

There is only one single means, it is the *Fight*. However diversified this may be in form, however widely it may differ from a rough vent of hatred and animosity in a hand-to-hand encounter, whatever number of things may introduce themselves which are not actual fighting, still it is always implied in the conception of war, that all the effects manifested have their roots in the combat.

That this must also always be so in the greatest diversity and complication of the reality, is proved in a very simple manner. All that takes place in war takes place through armed forces, but where the forces of war, *i. e*., armed men are applied, there the idea of fighting must of necessity be at the foundation.

All, therefore, that relates to forces of war—all that is connected with their creation, maintenance, and application, belongs to military activity.

Creation and maintenance are obviously only the means, whilst application is the object.

The contest in war is not a contest of individual against individual, but an organised whole, consisting of manifold parts; in this great whole we may distinguish units of two kinds, the one determined by the subject, the other by the object. In an army the mass of combatants ranges itself always into an order of new units, which again form members of a higher order. The combat of each of these members forms, therefore, also a more or less distinct unit. Further, the motive of the fight; therefore its object forms its unit.

Now to each of these units which we distinguish in the contest, we attach the name of combat.

If the idea of combat lies at the foundation of every application of armed power, then also the application of armed force in general, is nothing more than the determining and arranging a certain number of combats.

Every activity in war, therefore, necessarily relates to the combat either directly or indirectly. The soldier is levied, clothed, armed, exercised, he sleeps, eats, drinks and marches, all *merely to fight at the right time and place*.

If, therefore, all the threads of military activity terminate in the combat, we shall grasp them all when we settle the order of the combats. Only from this order and its execution proceed the effects; never directly from the conditions preceding them. Now, in the combat all the action is directed to the *destruction* of the enemy, or rather of *his fighting powers*, for this lies in the conception of combat. The destruction of the enemy's fighting power is, therefore, always the means to attain the object of the combat.

This object may likewise be the mere destruction of the enemy's armed force; but that is not by any means necessary, and it may be something quite different. Whenever, for instance, as we have shown, the defeat of the enemy is not the only means to attain the political object, whenever there are other objects which may be pursued, as the aim in a war, then it follows of itself that such other objects may become the object of particular acts of warfare, and, therefore, also the object of combats.

But even those combats which, as subordinate acts, are in the strict sense devoted to the destruction of the enemy's fighting force, need not have that destruction itself as their first object.

If we think of the manifold parts of a great armed force, of the number of circumstances which come into activity when it is employed, then it is clear that the combat of such a force must also require a manifold organisation, a subordinating of parts and formation. There may and must naturally arise for particular parts a number of objects which are not themselves the destruction of the enemy's armed force, and which, while they certainly contribute to increase that destruction, do so only in an indirect manner. If a battalion is ordered to drive the enemy from a rising ground, or a bridge, &c., then properly the occupation of any such locality is the real object, the destruction of the enemy's armed force, which takes place, only the means or secondary matter. If the enemy can be driven away merely by a demonstration, the object is attained all the same; but this hill or bridge is, in point of fact, only required as a means of increasing the gross amount of loss inflicted on the enemy's armed force. If this is the case on the field of battle, much more must it be so on the whole theatre of war, where not only one army is opposed to another, but one State, one nation, one whole country to another. Here the number of possible relations, and consequently possible combinations, is much greater, the diversity of measures increased, and by the gradation of objects each subordinate to another, the first means employed is further apart from the ultimate object.

It is, therefore, for many reasons possible that the object of a combat is not the destruction of the enemy's force, that is, of the force opposed to us, but that this only appears as a means. But in all such cases it is no longer a question of complete destruction, for the combat is here nothing else but a measure of strength—has in itself no value except only that of the present result, that is, of its decision.

But a measuring of strength may be effected in cases where the opposing sides are very unequal by a mere comparative estimate. In such cases no fighting will take place, and the weaker will immediately give way.

If the object of a combat is not always the destruction of the enemy's forces therein engaged—and if its object can often be attained as well without the combat taking place at all, by merely making a resolve to fight, and by the circumstances to which that gives rise—then that explains how a whole campaign may be carried on with great activity without the actual combat playing any notable part in it.

That this may be so, military history proves by a hundred examples. How many of those cases had a bloodless decision which can be justified, that is, without involving a contradiction; and whether some of the celebrities who rose out of them would stand criticism we shall leave undecided, for all we have to do with the matter is to show the possibility of such a course of events in war.

We have only one means in war—the battle; but this means, by the infinite variety of ways in which it may be applied, leads us into all the different ways which the multiplicity of objects allows of, so that we seem to have gained nothing; but that is not the case, for from this unity of means proceeds a thread which assists the study of the subject, as it runs through the whole web of military activity, and holds it together.

But we have considered the destruction of the enemy's force as one of the objects which may be pursued in war, and left undecided what importance should be given to it amongst other objects. In certain cases it will depend on circumstances, and as a general question we have left its value undetermined. We are once more brought back upon it, and we shall be able to get an insight into the value which must necessarily be accorded to it.

The combat is the single activity in war; in the combat the destruction of the enemy opposed to us is the means to the end; it is so even when the combat does not actually take place, because in that case there lies at the root of the decision the supposition at all events that this destruction is to be regarded as beyond doubt. It follows, therefore, that the destruction of the enemy's military force is the foundation-stone of all action in war, the great support of all combinations, which rest upon it like the arch on its abutments. All action, therefore, takes place on the supposition that if the solution by force of arms which lies at its foundation should be realised, it will be a favourable one. The decision by arms is, for all operations in war, great and small, what cash payment is in bill transactions. However remote from each other these relations, however seldom the realisation may take place, still it can never entirely fail to occur.

If the decision by arms lies at the foundation of all combinations, then it follows that the enemy can defeat each of them by gaining a successful decision with arms, not merely if it is that one on which our combination directly depends, but also by any other, if it is only important enough for every important decision by arms—that is, destruction of the enemy's forces reacts upon all preceding it, because, like a liquid element, they bring themselves to a level.

Thus, the destruction of the enemy's armed force appears, therefore, always as the superior and more effectual means, to which all others must give way.

But certainly it is only when there is a supposed equality in all other conditions that we can ascribe to the destruction of the enemy's armed force a greater efficacy. It would, therefore, be a great mistake to draw from it the conclusion that a blind dash must always gain the victory over skill and caution. An unskilful attack would lead to the destruction of our own and not of the enemy's force, and therefore is not what is here meant. The superior efficacy belongs not to the *means* but to the *end*, and we are only comparing the effect of one realised aim with the other.

If we speak of the destruction of the enemy's armed force, we must expressly point out that nothing obliges us to confine this idea to the mere physical force; on the contrary, the moral is necessarily implied as well, because both in fact are interwoven with each other even in the most minute details, and, therefore, cannot be separated. But it is just in connection with the inevitable effect which has been referred to, of a great act of destruction (a great victory) upon all other decisions by arms, that this moral element is most fluid, if we may use that expression, and, therefore, distributes itself the most easily through all the parts.

Against the far superior worth which the destruction of the enemy's armed force has over all other means, stands the expense and risk of this means, and it is only to avoid these that any other means are taken.

That this means must be costly stands to reason, for the waste of our own military forces must, *ceteris paribus*, always be greater the more our aim is directed upon the destruction of the enemy's.

But the danger of this means lies in this, that just the greater efficacy which we seek recoils on ourselves, and therefore has worse consequences in case we fail of success.

Other methods are, therefore, less costly when they succeed, less dangerous when they fail; but in this is necessarily lodged the condition that they are only opposed to similar ones, that is, that the enemy acts on the same principle; for if the enemy should choose the way of a great decision by arms, *our means must on that account be changed against our will, in order to correspond with his*. Then all depends on the issue of the act of destruction; but of course it is evident that, *ceteris paribus*, in this act we must be at a disadvantage in all respects because our views and our means had been directed in part upon other objects, which is not the case with the enemy. Two different objects of which one is not part of the other exclude each other; and, therefore, a force which may be applicable for the one, may not serve for the other. If, therefore, one of two belligerents is determined to take the way of the great decision by arms, then he has also a high probability of success, as soon as he is certain his opponent will not take that way, but follows a different object; and every one who sets before himself any such other aim only does so in a reasonable manner, provided he acts on the supposition that his adversary has as little intention as he has of resorting to the great decision by arms.

But what we have here said of another direction of views and forces relates only to other *positive objects*, which we may propose to ourselves in war besides the destruction of the enemy's force, not by any means to the pure defensive, which may be adopted with a view thereby to exhaust the enemy's forces. In the pure defensive, the positive object is wanting, and, therefore, while on the defensive, our forces cannot at the same time be directed on other objects; they can only be employed to defeat the intentions of the enemy.

We have now to consider the opposite of the destruction of the enemy's armed force, that is to say, the preservation of our own. These two efforts always go together, as they mutually act and re-act on each other; they are integral parts of one and the same view, and we have only to ascertain what effect is produced when one or the other has the predominance. The endeavour to destroy the enemy's force has a positive object and leads to positive results, of which the final aim is the conquest of the enemy. The preservation of our own forces has a negative object, leads therefore to the defeat of the enemy's intentions, that is to pure resistance, of which the final aim can be nothing more than to prolong the duration of the contest, so that the enemy shall exhaust himself in it.

The effort with a positive object calls into existence the act of destruction; the effort with the negative object awaits it.

How far this state of expectation should and may be carried we shall enter into more particularly in the theory of attack and defence, at the origin of which we again find ourselves. Here we shall content ourselves with saying that the awaiting must be no absolute endurance, and that in the action bound up with it the destruction of the enemy's armed force engaged in this conflict may be the aim just as well as anything else. It would, therefore, be a great error in the fundamental idea to suppose that the consequence of the negative course is that we are precluded from choosing the destruction of the enemy's military force as our object, and must prefer a bloodless solution. The advantage which the negative effort gives may certainly lead to that, but only at the risk of its not being the most advisable method, as that question is dependent on totally different conditions, resting not with ourselves but with our opponents. This other bloodless way cannot, therefore, be looked upon at all as the natural means of satisfying our great anxiety to spare our forces; on the contrary, when circumstances are not favourable to that way, it would be the means of completely ruining them. Very many Generals have fallen into this error, and been ruined by it. The only necessary effect resulting from the superiority of the negative effort is the delay of the decision, so that the party acting takes refuge in that way, as it were, in the expectation of the decisive moment. The consequence of that is generally *the postponement of the action* as much as possible in time and also in space, in so far as space is in connection with it. If the moment has arrived in which this can no longer be done without ruinous disadvantage, then the advantage of the negative must be considered as exhausted, and then comes forward unchanged the effort for the destruction of the enemy's force, which was kept back by a counterpoise, but never discarded.

We have seen, therefore, in the foregoing reflections, that there are many ways to the aim, that is, to the attainment of the political object; but that the only means is the combat, and that consequently everything is subject to a supreme law: which is the *decision by arms*; that where this is really demanded by one, it is a redress which cannot be refused by the other; that, therefore, a belligerent who takes any other way must make sure that his opponent will not take this means of redress, or his cause may be lost in that supreme court; that, therefore, in short, the destruction of the enemy's armed force amongst all the objects which can be pursued in war appears always as that one which overrules all.

What may be achieved by combinations of another kind in war we shall only learn in the sequel, and naturally only by degrees. We content ourselves here with acknowledging in general their possibility, as something pointing to the difference between the reality and the conception, and to the influence of particular circumstances. But we could not avoid showing at once that the *bloody solution of the crisis*, the effort for the destruction of the enemy's force, is the firstborn son of war. If when political objects are unimportant, motives weak, the excitement of forces small, a cautious commander tries in all kinds of ways, without great crises and bloody solutions, to twist himself skilfully into a peace through the characteristic weaknesses of his enemy in the field and in the Cabinet, we have no right to find fault with him, if the premises on which he acts are well founded and justified by success; still we must require him to remember that he only travels on forbidden tracks, where the God of War may surprise him; that he ought always to keep his eye on the enemy, in order that he may not have to defend himself with a dress rapier if the enemy takes up a sharp sword.

The consequences of the nature of war, how end and means act in it, how in the modifications of reality it deviates sometimes more sometimes less from its strict original conception, plays backwards and forwards, yet always remains under that strict conception as under a supreme law: all this we must retain in idea, and bear constantly in mind in the consideration of each of the succeeding subjects, if we would rightly comprehend their true relations and proper importance, and not become involved incessantly in the most glaring contradictions with the reality, and at last with our own selves.