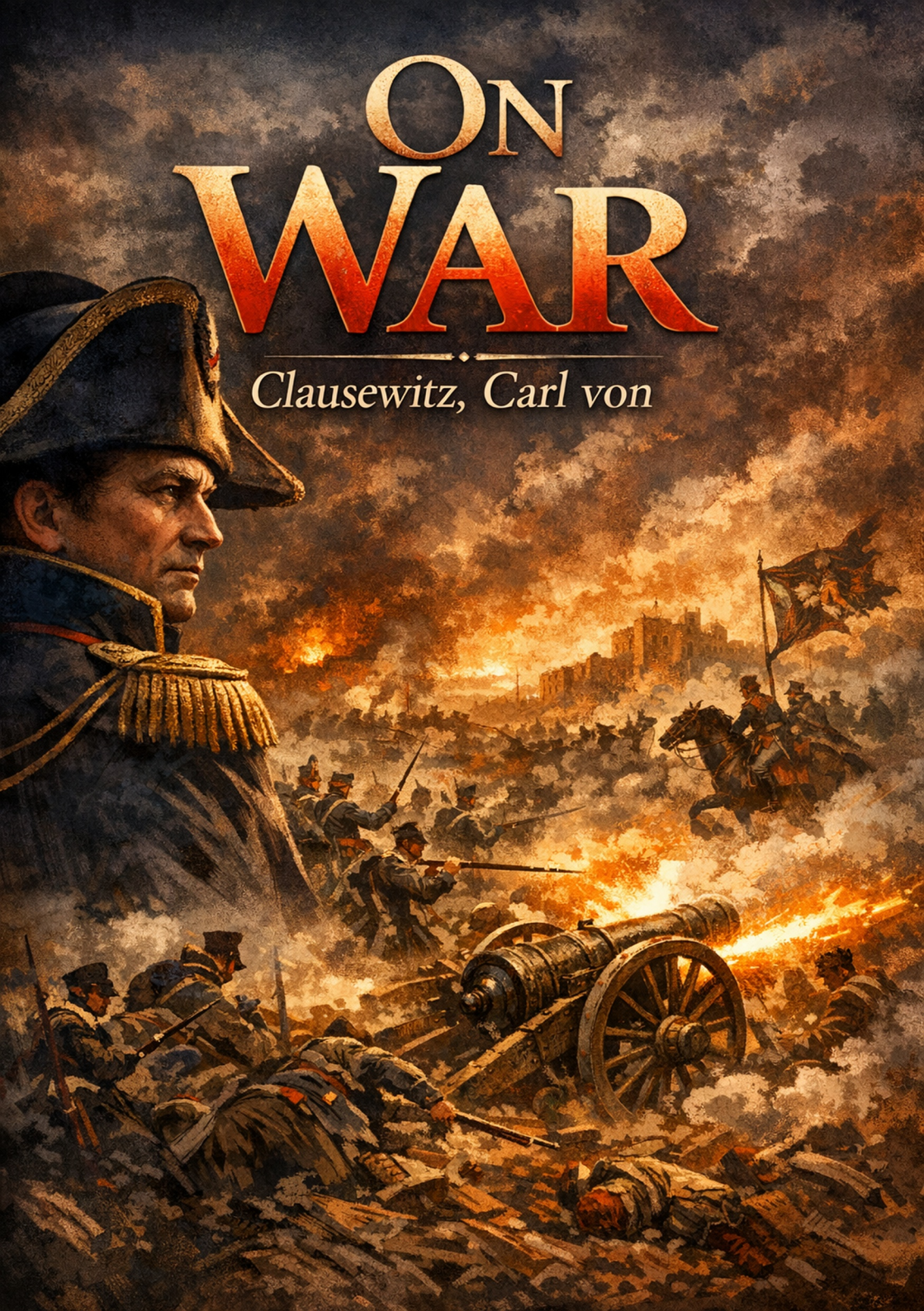
On War

Clausewitz, Carl von



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Chapter 1

The Germans explain their new national colors—black, red, and white—with the saying, “Durch Nacht und Blut zur licht.” (“Through night and blood to light”). No book yet written gives a thoughtful reader a clearer sense of what the red stripe in their flag represents than Clausewitz’s profound and philosophical analysis of “War.”

It presents “War,” stripped of all ornament, as the use of force to achieve a political goal, limited by no law except expediency. In doing so, it provides the key to understanding German political aims—past, present, and future—a key that every student of modern Europe absolutely needs. Step by step, every event since Waterloo follows with logical consistency from Napoleon’s teachings, first set down some twenty years later by this remarkable thinker.

What Darwin did for biology in general, Clausewitz had done for the life history of nations nearly half a century earlier. Both showed the operation of the same law: “the survival of the fittest”—with “fittest,” as Huxley pointed out long ago, not necessarily meaning the ethically “best.” Neither thinker concerned himself with the ethics of the struggle he examined so thoroughly. To both, this condition appeared neither moral nor immoral, any more than famine, disease, or other natural phenomena are moral or immoral. Instead, they saw it as the expression of a force built into all living organisms, a force that can be mastered only by understanding its nature. In that spirit, the nations of the Continent, taught by harsh lessons such as Königgrätz and Sedan, accepted this teaching one by one. As a

result, Europe today is an armed camp. Peace is preserved by a balance of forces, and it will last only as long as that balance remains.

Whether this balance is, in itself, a good or desirable thing can be debated. I discussed it at length in my "War and the World's Life"; but I would suggest that, for humanity as it now exists, no one would see a return to an age of warfare as a change for the better. Meanwhile, with each passing year, the forces now held in balance are changing in size. The pressure of populations that must be fed is increasing, and sooner or later an explosion along the line of least resistance is inevitable.

As I understand the lessons of the recent Hague Conference, no responsible government on the Continent is eager to make itself that line of least resistance. They know only too well what war would mean. And we alone, completely unaware of the direction of Europe's dominant thinking, are tearing down the dam that could at any moment let a flood of invasion pour in upon us.

No responsible man in Europe, and perhaps least of all in Germany, thanks us for this voluntary destruction of our defences. Everyone of real importance would far rather live out his days in peace than take on the burden of responsibility that war would bring. But they understand that the gradual spread of the principles taught by Clausewitz has created a state of molecular tension in the minds of the nations they govern, like the "critical temperature of water heated above boiling-point under pressure," which could at any moment produce an explosion they would be powerless to control.

The situation is exactly like that of an ordinary steam boiler, sending so many pounds of steam to its engines as long as its shell can hold the pressure. But let a break appear in that shell, releasing the boiling water from all restraint, and in an instant the whole mass turns to vapour, unleashing a force that no human work can resist.

No one can predict the full consequences of defeat. The only way to prevent them is to make sure of victory. And, following Clausewitz's principles again, victory can be assured only by creating in peacetime an organization capable of bringing every available man, horse, and gun—or ship and gun, if the war is at sea—to the decisive field of action as quickly as possible and with the greatest possible force. This, in turn, leads to the final doctrine formulated by Von der Goltz in defense of the action taken by the late President Kruger in 1899:

"A statesman who knows his instrument is ready, sees that war is inevitable, and still hesitates to strike first is guilty of a crime against his country."

Our efforts to secure a lasting peace by making our national defenses efficient while keeping costs down have come to nothing because this chain of cause and effect is completely unknown to our Members of Parliament, who are elected by popular vote.

This view of Clausewitz's influence on contemporary thought in Continental Europe may seem exaggerated to anyone who has not become familiar with M. Gustav de Bon's explanation of the laws that govern how crowds are formed and how they behave. I do not mean to suggest for a moment that Clausewitz has

been carefully studied and fully understood in any army, not even the Prussian one. But his work has been the ultimate foundation on which every drill regulation in Europe, except our own, has been built. Through the constant repetition of his basic ideas, half the male population of every Continental nation has been exposed to them for two or three years of their lives. That has tuned their minds to respond in harmony with his teachings. And those who understand and value this fact properly need only strike the right chords to call forth a response strong enough to overwhelm any other moral appeal that could be made by those who have not organized their forces in advance.

The Socialists' recent setback in Germany illustrates my point. The country's Socialist leaders were far behind its responsible rulers in understanding how to manage crowds. The rulers had already made plans, as early as 1893, to keep Socialist propaganda from spreading beyond certain useful limits. As long as the Socialists threatened only capital, the Government did not interfere much, because it understood perfectly well that the employer's unchecked power was not ultimately good for the State. The standard of comfort could not be allowed to fall too low if men were to remain willing to die for their country. But the moment the Socialists began to seriously disrupt Army discipline, the order went out, and they suffered heavy losses at the polls.

If this power of prearranged reaction to acquired ideas can be successfully stirred up in a matter of purely internal concern, where the "obvious interest" of the great majority of the population so clearly favors the Socialist, then it is clear how much greater its force will be when directed against an external

enemy. In that case, the “obvious interest” of the people is, by the nature of the situation, just as clearly on the side of the Government. Any statesman who failed to reckon with the force of the “resultant thought wave” of a crowd of some seven million men, all trained to answer their ruler’s call, would be guilty of treachery as serious as that of a man who failed to strike when he knew the Army was ready to act at once.

As already noted, the present condition in which all European armies are more or less ready for war at short notice is due to the spread of Clausewitz’s ideas. Since these forces are organized on the same model, this “more or less” of readiness exists in exact proportion to the sense of duty that drives each army. Where the spirit of duty and self-sacrifice is weak, the troops are unprepared and ineffective. Where, as in Prussia, these qualities have become instinctive through a century of training, the troops are truly ready in every detail. They could be thrown against any neighboring state with such speed that the very first clash might be enough to secure ultimate success—a success that would be far less certain if the enemy, whoever it might be, were given time to put its affairs in order.

An example will make this clearer. In 1887, Germany stood on the brink of war with France and Russia. At that moment, its superior efficiency—the result of this inborn sense of duty, surely one of humanity’s highest qualities—was so great that it was more than likely that fewer than six weeks would have been enough to bring France to its knees. In fact, after the first two weeks, Germany could have begun moving troops from the Rhine to the Niemen; and the same situation could arise again. But if France and Russia had been given even ten days’

warning, the German plan would have been completely undone. France alone might then have demanded every effort Germany could make to defeat her.

Yet some politicians in England are so deeply ignorant of the German interpretation of the lessons of Napoleon that they expect that nation to give up the enormous advantage it has built through a whole century of self-sacrifice and practical patriotism. They would have it surrender that advantage by appealing to a Court of Arbitration, and by accepting the further delays that would come from going through the medieval formalities of recalling ambassadors and exchanging ultimatums.

Most of our present-day politicians made their money in business—"a form of human competition greatly resembling war," to paraphrase Clausewitz. When they were caught up in that kind of competition, did they send their rivals formal notice of their plans to outmaneuver them in commerce? Did Mr. Carnegie, the high priest of peace at any price, when he built up the Steel Trust, inform his competitors when and how he intended to deliver the blows that one by one made him master of millions? Surely the directors of a great nation may regard the interests of their shareholders—that is, the people they govern—as serious enough not to be put at risk by deliberately giving up the overwhelming advantage of readiness that generations of self-devotion, patriotism, and prudent foresight have won for them?

On the purely military side of this work, recent research by the French General Staff into records and documents from the

Napoleonic era has shown clearly that Clausewitz never fully understood the central principle of the Great Emperor's strategic method. Even so, it is agreed that he completely grasped the spirit that gave that method its force. And despite the changes in how it has been applied—changes brought about by advances in every area of national activity, not just by technical improvements in weapons—that spirit still remains the decisive factor in the whole question. If anything, modern technology has made it even more important. With equal weapons on both sides, the basic form of battle must always remain the same. But better systems for sending orders and intelligence have given commanders a speed and reliability of coordination that make the control of large masses of troops far more certain than it was in the past.

It is true that men now kill each other at greater distances, but killing is a constant element in every battle. The real difference between past and present is this: because range has increased so enormously—the defining feature of modern weapons—it is now possible to concentrate, by surprise, on any chosen point, a destructive force twenty times greater than anything imaginable in the days of Waterloo. In Napoleon's time, this concentration of killing power—which in his hands appeared as the great case-shot attack—depended almost entirely on the shape and condition of the ground, which might or might not be favorable. Today, such a concentration of firepower is almost independent of the terrain altogether.

So at Waterloo, Napoleon had to wait until the ground was firm enough for his guns to move quickly across it. Today, every gun he had available—and five times that number, if he had

possessed them—could have opened fire on any point in the British position he chose as soon as there was enough light to see.

Or, to take a more recent example, the battle of St. Privat-Gravelotte on August 18, 1870: there, the Germans were able to mass batteries of two hundred guns or more on both wings. Because of the shape of the slopes on the French position, it would have been practically impossible to carry out the old-style case-shot attack at all. Today, by contrast, there would be no difficulty in bringing the fire of two thousand guns onto any point in the position, and shifting that fire up and down the line like water from a fire-engine hose, if the situation required such concentration.

But these changes in method do not alter the truth of the picture of war that Clausewitz presents, a view with which every soldier, and above all every commander, should be thoroughly imbued.

Death, wounds, suffering, and privation remain the same, whatever weapons are used, and their effect on the deepest nature of man is the same now as it was in the struggles of a century ago. It is this effect that the great commander must understand and prepare himself to control. And the task grows ever greater as, fortunately for humanity, opportunities to gain such experience become rarer.

In the end, and with every advance in science, the outcome depends more and more on the character of the leader and on his power to resist “the sensuous impressions of the battlefield.” Finally, for those who wish to prepare themselves

beforehand for such responsibility, I know of no more stirring counsel than that given by Krishna to Arjuna long ago, when Arjuna trembled before the terrible responsibility of leading his army against the hosts of the Pandav's:

This life within all living things, my Prince, Lies beyond all harm. Do not grieve, then, For that which cannot suffer. Do your part! Remember your name, and do not tremble. Nothing better can come to a warrior's soul Than a lawful war. Happy the warrior To whom the joy of battle comes.... . . . But if you shrink from This honorable field—a Kshittriya— If, knowing your duty and your task, you let Duty and task pass by—that will be sin! And those yet to come will speak of your disgrace From age to age. But disgrace is worse For men of noble blood to bear than death! . . . . . Therefore arise, thou Son of Kunti! Brace Your arm for conflict; steel your heart to meet, As things alike to you, pleasure or pain, Profit or ruin, victory or defeat. With that spirit, gird yourself to the fight, for so You shall not sin!

COL. F. N. MAUDE, C.B., formerly of the R.E.

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

It may naturally seem surprising that a woman should write the preface to a work on a subject like this. My friends need no explanation; but by simply stating how this came about, I hope to free myself from any appearance of presumption in the eyes of those who do not know me.

The work introduced by these lines occupied almost all of the last twelve years of the life of my deeply beloved husband, who was taken from me and from his country far too soon. Finishing it was his strongest wish. Yet he did not intend for it to be published during his lifetime; and when I tried to persuade him to change his mind, he would often reply, half in jest, though perhaps also with some foreboding of an early death, “You shall publish it.” In those happy days, those words often brought me to tears, though I was far from giving them any serious meaning. Now, however, my friends believe they place me under a duty to introduce the posthumous work of my beloved husband with a few prefatory words of my own. Opinions may differ on that point, but I am sure there can be no misunderstanding the feeling that has led me to overcome the timidity that makes any such public appearance, even in a secondary role, so difficult for a woman.

It will naturally be understood that I cannot possibly regard myself as the true editor of a work so far beyond my abilities. I stand beside it only as a loving companion as it enters the world. Yet I may rightly claim even that place, because I was

allowed a similar one while it was being formed and carried forward. Those who knew our happy marriage, and know how completely we shared everything with one another—not only joy and sorrow, but every occupation and every interest of daily life—will understand that my beloved husband could not have been engaged in a work of this kind without my knowing it. No one, therefore, is better able than I am to bear witness to the zeal and love with which he worked on it, to the hopes he connected with it, and to the way and the time in which it was written. From early youth, his richly gifted mind had longed for light and truth. Though his talents were many and varied, he directed his thoughts chiefly to the science of war, to which the duties of his profession called him, and which is so important to the welfare of States. Scharnhorst was the first to guide him onto the right path, and his later appointment in 1810 as Instructor at the General War School, together with the honour bestowed on him at the same time of giving military instruction to H.R.H. the Crown Prince, helped to give his studies that direction and led him to put into writing the conclusions he reached. A paper with which he concluded the instruction of H.R.H. the Crown Prince contains the seed of his later works. But it was in 1816, at Coblentz, that he first devoted himself again to scholarly labour and to gathering the results that his rich experience during those four eventful years had brought to maturity. At first he wrote down his views in short essays, only loosely connected with one another. The following passage, undated and found among his papers, seems to belong to those early days.

“In the principles set down here, I believe the main elements that make up what is called Strategy are touched on. I regarded them only as materials, and had only just reached the point of beginning to shape them into a whole.”

“These materials were gathered without any fixed plan from the start. At first, I meant simply to set down the results of my reflections on the most important points in brief, exact, compact statements, without much concern for system or strict connection. I had in mind the way Montesquieu handled his subject. I thought that short, pointed chapters, which I originally intended to call grains, would engage thoughtful readers not only through what they contained, but also through what could be developed from them. So I was imagining readers who were already familiar with the subject. But my own nature, which always drives me toward fuller development and system, eventually asserted itself here as well. For a time I managed to limit myself to drawing out only the most important results from the essays I wrote on different subjects in order to reach clarity and conviction in my own mind, and to compress their spirit into a small space. But in the end my natural tendency completely took over: I developed whatever I could, and so I naturally came to assume a reader who was not yet familiar with the subject.”

“The further I progressed with the work, and the more I gave myself over to the spirit of inquiry, the more I was led toward system; and so, one chapter after another was added.”

“My final aim has now been to go through the whole work once again, to support much of the earlier treatises with further explanation, and perhaps to condense many of the later

analyses into results, so as to shape the whole into something moderate—a small octavo volume. But even in doing this, I wanted to avoid everything commonplace, everything obvious, everything that has been said a hundred times and is generally accepted. My ambition was to write a book that would not be forgotten after two or three years, and that anyone interested in the subject would, at the very least, pick up more than once."

In Coblenz, where his duties kept him very busy, he could devote only occasional hours to his private studies. Not until 1818, after he was appointed Director of the General War Academy in Berlin, did he have the time to develop his work more fully and strengthen it with material drawn from the history of modern wars. That free time also helped him accept his new role, which in other respects did not satisfy him. Under the Academy's existing organization, the scientific part of the course was not under the Director's control, but was managed by a Board of Studies. Although he was entirely free from petty vanity and from every form of restless, self-centered ambition, he still deeply wanted to be genuinely useful and not leave idle the abilities with which God had endowed him. In active life, he was not in a position where this desire could be fulfilled, and he had little hope of ever reaching such a position. He therefore directed all his energies toward the field of scholarship, and the good he hoped to begin through his work became the purpose of his life. The fact that he nevertheless grew even more determined not to let the work appear until after his death is the clearest proof that no shallow desire for praise or distinction, and no trace of selfish ambition, was mixed with this noble aim of achieving great and lasting usefulness.

He continued working diligently in this way until the spring of 1830, when he was appointed to the artillery. His energies were then drawn into action in a very different sphere, and with such intensity, that he was forced, at least for the time being, to give up all literary work. He then put his papers in order, sealed the separate packets, labeled them, and took a sorrowful leave of the work he loved so much. In August of that same year he was sent to Breslau as Chief of the Second Artillery District, but in December he was recalled to Berlin and appointed Chief of the Staff to Field-Marshal Count Gneisenau for the duration of his command. In March 1831 he accompanied his revered commander to Posen. When he returned from there to Breslau in November, after the melancholy event that had occurred, he hoped to resume his work and perhaps complete it during the winter. The Almighty willed otherwise. He returned to Breslau on 7 November; on the 16th he was no more; and the packets he had sealed with his own hand were not opened until after his death.

The papers left behind are the ones now published in these volumes, exactly as they were found, without a single word added or removed. Even so, a great deal still had to be done before publication, especially arranging them and consulting others about them. For that help, I am deeply indebted to several true friends, especially Major O'Etzel, who kindly took on the correction of the press as well as the preparation of the maps that accompany the historical sections of the work. I must also mention my dearly loved brother, who supported me in the time of my misfortune and has also done much for me in connection with these papers. Among other things, by carefully

examining and arranging them, he found the beginning of the revision that my dear husband wrote in the year 1827 and refers to in the Notice annexed below as a work he intended to undertake. This revision has been inserted in the place meant for it in the first book, though it goes no further.

There are many other friends whom I might thank for their advice, and for the sympathy and friendship they have shown me. But if I do not name them all, I am sure they will not doubt my sincere gratitude. It is all the deeper because I am firmly convinced that all they have done was not only for my sake, but also for the friend whom God has called away from them so soon.

If I was greatly blessed to be the wife of such a man for one-and-twenty years, I am still blessed, despite my irreparable loss, by the treasure of my memories and my hopes, by the rich legacy of sympathy and friendship that I owe to the beloved departed, and by the uplifting feeling I have in seeing his rare worth so widely and honourably acknowledged.

The trust placed in me by a Royal Couple is a new blessing for which I must thank the Almighty, since it gives me an honourable occupation to which I now devote myself. May this work be blessed, and may the dear little Prince now entrusted to my care one day read this book and be inspired by it to deeds like those of his glorious ancestors.

Written at the Marble Palace, Potsdam, 30 June 1832.

MARIE VON CLAUSEWITZ, born Countess Brühl,
Oberhofmeisterinn to H.R.H. the Princess William.

NOTICE

I regard the first six books, for which a clean copy has now been prepared, as still little more than raw material that remains largely unshaped and still needs another full revision. In that revision, the two kinds of war will be kept more clearly and consistently in view throughout. That will give every idea a clearer meaning, a more exact direction, and a closer practical application. The two kinds of war are, first, those in which the aim is the overthrow of the enemy, whether we seek his destruction in a political sense or simply mean to disarm him and compel him to make peace on our terms; and second, those in which our aim is only to seize some territory on the frontiers of his country, either to keep it permanently or to use it as a bargaining point in a peace settlement. There will certainly still be transitions from one kind to the other, but the fundamentally different character of these two tendencies must be made visible everywhere, and incompatible things must be clearly separated from one another.

Along with establishing this real difference between kinds of war, we must also establish another point of view that is practically necessary: war is only a continuation of state policy by other means. If this principle is followed throughout, it will bring much greater unity to the whole subject, and the various elements will be easier to sort out. Although the main application of this idea does not begin until the eighth book, it must be fully developed in the first book and must also guide the revision of the first six books throughout. With such a revision, the first six books will be cleared of much useless

material, many gaps and breaks will be repaired, and much that is now general and vague will be turned into clear concepts and definite forms.

The seventh book, on attack, for whose various chapters drafts have already been prepared, should be regarded as a counterpart to the sixth. It must now be completed at once, in accordance with the clearer points of view mentioned above, so that it will need no further revision and may instead serve as a model for revising the first six books.

For the eighth book—on the plan of a war, that is, the organization of war as a whole in general—I have outlined several chapters. But they should not be taken as finished material. They are only a rough path cut through the mass of ideas, meant to help identify the most important points. They have served that purpose, and once I finish the seventh book, I intend to move directly to developing the eighth. There, the two points of view mentioned above will be stated more firmly, which will simplify everything and at the same time give it more life and spirit. In this book, I hope to smooth out many confusions in the minds of strategists and statesmen, and at least to show the true aim of action and the real point that must be considered in war.

Once I have made my ideas fully clear by completing this eighth book, and have properly established the main features of war, it will be easier for me to carry the spirit of these ideas into the first six books and make those same features visible throughout them. I will therefore postpone revising the first six books until then.

If the work is interrupted by my death, then what remains can only be called a mass of ideas not yet shaped into final form. Because of that, it will be open to endless misunderstanding and will no doubt provoke a good deal of crude criticism. In matters like this, anyone who picks up a pen tends to think that whatever comes into his head is worth saying and printing, and just as undeniable as the fact that twice two make four. If such a person took the trouble, as I have done, to think about the subject for years and compare his ideas with military history, he would certainly be more cautious in his criticism.

Even so, despite its unfinished form, I believe that an impartial reader who genuinely seeks truth and conviction will properly value, in the first six books, the results of several years of reflection and careful study of war. Perhaps he will also find in them some guiding ideas that may bring about a revolution in the theory of war.

Berlin, 10 July, 1827.

In addition to this notice, the following unfinished memorandum was found among the papers he left behind, and it appears to be of very recent date:

The manuscript on the conduct of the Grande Guerre, which will be found after my death, can in its current form be regarded only as a collection of materials meant to form a theory of war. I am still not satisfied with most of it, and the sixth book should be seen as no more than an essay. I would have thoroughly reworked it and taken a different approach.

But I believe the guiding principles running through these materials are sound. They are the result of wide-ranging reflection, always grounded in reality and always informed by what I have learned through experience and through my association with distinguished soldiers.

The seventh book is to deal with attack, though its topics have been put together hastily. The eighth is to address the plan for a war, in which I would have examined war more particularly in its political and human aspects.

The first chapter of the first book is the only part I consider complete. It will at least show the method I intended to follow in treating the subject as a whole.

The theory of the Grande Guerre, or strategy, as it is called, is surrounded by exceptional difficulties. We may say that very few people have clear ideas about its separate subjects—that is, ideas carried through to their full logical conclusions. In actual practice, most people are guided simply by a kind of intuitive judgment that reaches the goal with more or less accuracy, depending on how much genius they possess.

This is how all great generals have acted, and part of their greatness and genius lay in the fact that this intuition consistently led them to what was right. The same will always be true in action, and for that purpose such intuition is entirely sufficient. But when the issue is not acting oneself, but persuading others in a council, everything depends on clear ideas and on showing the underlying relationships. So little

progress has been made in this respect that most debates are nothing more than arguments over words. They rest on no solid foundation and end either with everyone holding to his own opinion, or with a compromise reached out of mutual politeness—a middle course that is really worthless.() *

Clear thinking on these matters is therefore far from useless. Besides, the human mind naturally tends toward clarity and always wants to remain consistent with the necessary order of things.

Because building a philosophical theory of the Art of War is so difficult, and because so many attempts have failed, most people have concluded that such a theory is impossible. They believe this is because war deals with things that no fixed rule can fully contain. We too would accept that view and abandon any attempt at a theory, if it were not for the fact that many principles are obvious enough without much difficulty. For example: the defensive form, with a negative aim, is the stronger form, while attack, with a positive aim, is the weaker; great results carry smaller ones with them; strategic effects may therefore be traced to certain centres of gravity; a demonstration is a weaker use of force than a real attack, and so there must be some special reason for choosing it; victory does not consist merely in winning on the battlefield, but in destroying the enemy's armed forces physically and morally, which in general can only be achieved by pursuit after the battle has been won; successes are always greatest at the point where victory has been gained, and so shifting from one line

* Herr Clausewitz evidently had in mind the endless consultations at the headquarters of the Bohemian Army during the Leipsic Campaign of 1813.

and objective to another can only be seen as a necessary evil; a turning movement is justified only by superiority in numbers in general, or by the advantage of our lines of communication and retreat over those of the enemy; flank positions are justifiable only on similar grounds; and every attack grows weaker as it advances.

THE AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION

Today, it hardly needs explaining that what makes something scientific does not lie only, or even mainly, in system and fully finished theoretical structures. You will not find a visible system on the surface of this treatise. Instead of a completed theoretical edifice, it offers only the materials.

The scientific element here lies in trying to examine the nature of military phenomena and show how they are connected to the nature of the things they are made of. The philosophical argument is never avoided. But when it becomes too thin and abstract, the author prefers to stop and return to the corresponding lessons of experience. Just as many plants bear fruit only when they do not grow too high, so in the practical arts the leaves and flowers of theory must not be allowed to spread too far. They must stay close to experience, which is their proper soil.

It would clearly be a mistake to try to discover the shape of an ear of corn by analyzing the chemical elements of a single grain, when we can simply go into the field and see the ripe ears for ourselves. Investigation and observation, philosophy and experience, must neither look down on nor shut out one another; each gives the other a rightful place. Accordingly, the propositions in this book, with their inner structure of necessity, are supported either by experience or by the concept of war

itself as external points of support, so they do not stand without foundations.() *

It may not be impossible to write a systematic theory of war that is full of energy and substance, but the ones we have had up to now have been almost the exact opposite. Quite apart from their unscientific spirit, their effort to achieve coherence and a complete system makes them overflow with commonplaces, truisms, and every kind of empty chatter. If we want a vivid picture of what they are like, we need only read Lichtenberg's extract from a set of fire regulations.

If a house catches fire, the first thing we must do is protect the right side of the house that stands to the left of the fire and, conversely, the left side of the house that stands to the right of it. Suppose, for example, we protected the left side of the house on the left. Then the right side of that house would lie to the right of the left side. Since the fire is also to the right of that side—and of the right side, because we are assuming the house stands to the left of the fire—the right side is therefore closer to the fire than the left. So the right side of the house might catch fire if it were not protected before the flames reached the protected left side. As a result, something unprotected might burn, and burn sooner than something else would, even if that too were unprotected. Therefore we must leave the latter alone and protect the former. To fix this in the mind, we need only remember: if the house stands to the right of the fire, protect its

* That this is not true of the works of many military writers, especially those who have tried to treat war itself in a scientific way, can be seen in many examples. In their reasoning, the arguments for and against each other cancel one another out so completely that not even a trace remains—unlike the two lions, where at least the tails were left.

left side; if the house stands to the left of the fire, protect its right side.

So as not to alarm the intelligent reader with such commonplaces, or spoil the little value they may have by watering them down, the author has chosen to present his impressions and convictions in small ingots of pure metal. They are the result of many years of reflection on war, of his contact with able men, and of extensive personal experience. That is how the chapters of this book came to be, though they may seem only loosely connected. It is hoped, however, that they will not be found lacking in logical unity. Perhaps before long a greater mind will appear and, instead of offering these separate grains, will present the whole as a single casting of pure metal without dross.

BRIEF MEMOIR OF GENERAL CLAUSEWITZ (BY THE TRANSLATOR)

The author of the work translated here, General Carl von Clausewitz, was born at Burg, near Magdeburg, in 1780, and entered the Prussian Army as a Fahnenjunker (that is, an ensign) in 1792. He served in the Rhine campaigns of 1793–94, and afterward seems to have spent some time studying the scientific side of his profession. In 1801 he entered the Military School in Berlin, where he remained until 1803. During his time there, he came to the attention of General Scharnhorst, who was then head of the institution. The support of this distinguished officer had a profound effect on Clausewitz's later career, and his writings show that he continued throughout his life to hold Scharnhorst in the highest regard. In the campaign of 1806, he served as aide-de-camp to Prince Augustus of Prussia. After being wounded and taken prisoner, he was sent to France and remained there until the war ended. When he returned, he was assigned to General Scharnhorst's staff and took part in the work then underway to reorganize the army. Around the same time, he was also chosen to serve as military instructor to the late King of Prussia, then Crown Prince. In 1812, Clausewitz entered Russian service along with several other Prussian officers, and his first post was as aide-de-camp to General Phul. Later, while serving with Wittgenstein's army, he helped negotiate the famous Convention of Tauroggen with York. He left an interesting account of his role in that affair in his work on the "Russian Campaign." There he states that, in order

to bring the correspondence that had been carried on with York to a conclusion one way or the other, he was sent to York's headquarters with two letters. One was from General d'Auvray, chief of staff of Wittgenstein's army, to General Diebitsch, explaining the arrangements made to cut off York's corps from Macdonald. This was necessary to give York a plausible excuse for breaking with the French. The other was an intercepted letter from Macdonald to the Duke of Bassano. Speaking of the first letter, the author says, "it would not have had weight with a man like York, but for a military justification, if the Prussian Court should require one as against the French, it was important."

The second letter was at least likely to stir up in General York's mind all the bitterness he felt—feelings that may, over the previous few days, have been softened somewhat by his awareness of how he himself had behaved toward the writer.

As the Author entered General York's room, the General called out, "Stay away from me. I want nothing more to do with you. Your d——d Cossacks have let a letter from Macdonald get through, and it brings me orders to march on Piktrepohnen so that we can join forces there. There is no longer any doubt. Your troops are not coming up; you are too weak. I must march, and I must withdraw from any further negotiation, which may cost me my head." The Author said he would not oppose any of this, but asked for a candle, since he had letters to show the General. When the General still seemed to hesitate, the Author added, "Surely your Excellency will not put me in the awkward position of leaving without carrying out my commission." The General ordered candles and called in Colonel von Roeder, his

chief of staff, from the antechamber. The letters were read. After a brief pause, the General said, “Clausewitz, you are a Prussian. Do you believe General d’Auvray’s letter is genuine, and that Wittgenstein’s troops will really be at the places he named on the 31st?” The Author replied, “Based on what I know of General d’Auvray and the other men at Wittgenstein’s headquarters, I can vouch for the sincerity of this letter. But I certainly cannot guarantee that the movements he describes can be carried out exactly as he states, for your Excellency knows that in war we often fall short of the line we have marked out for ourselves.” The General was silent for a few minutes, thinking deeply. Then he held out his hand to the Author and said, “You have won me over. Tell General Diebitsch that we must meet early tomorrow at the mill of Poschenen, and that I am now firmly resolved to separate myself from the French and their cause.” The hour was set for 8 A.M. Once that was arranged, the General added, “But I will not do this by halves. I will get you Massenbach as well.” He called in an officer from Massenbach’s cavalry who had just come from them. Then, pacing up and down the room, and very much like Schiller’s Wallenstein, he asked, “What do your regiments say?” The officer responded enthusiastically to the idea of being rid of the French alliance and said that every man in those troops felt the same way.

“You young men may talk, but my older head is trembling on my shoulders,” the General replied.() *

* “Campaign in Russia in 1812,” translated from the German of General Von Clausewitz (by Lord Ellesmere).

After the Russian campaign ended, Clausewitz remained in Russian service. Until the Armistice in 1813, he was assigned as a Russian staff officer to Blücher's headquarters.

In 1814, he became Chief of Staff to General Walmoden's Russo-German Corps, which was part of the Army of the North under Bernadotte. His name appears often and with distinction in accounts of that campaign, especially in connection with the affair of Goehrde.

Clausewitz returned to Prussian service in 1815 and served as Chief of Staff to Thielman's corps, which fought Grouchy at Wavre on 18 June.

After the Peace, he was given a command on the Rhine. In 1818, he became a Major-General and was appointed Director of the Military School where he had earlier been educated.

In 1830, he was appointed Inspector of Artillery at Breslau. Soon afterward, however, he was named Chief of Staff to the Army of Observation under Marshal Gneisenau on the Polish frontier.

The most recent accounts of his life and service are probably found in the memoirs of General Brandt. Because Brandt served on the staff of Gneisenau's army, he dealt with Clausewitz daily in official matters and also often met him at Marshal Gneisenau's table in Posen.

Among other anecdotes, General Brandt tells of an occasion when the conversation at the Marshal's table turned to a sermon preached by a priest that included some striking absurdities. A discussion followed about whether the Bishop should be held responsible for what the priest had said. This led to the broader

subject of theology, and General Brandt, speaking of himself, says: "I expressed the view that theology should be regarded only as a historical process, as a moment in the gradual development of the human race. This drew attacks on me from every side, but especially from Clausewitz, who ought to have been on my side, since he had been a follower and pupil of Kiesewetter, who had instructed him in the philosophy of Kant, though certainly in a diluted form—I might even say in homœopathic doses." The anecdote is of interest mainly because the mention of Kiesewetter points to a circumstance in Clausewitz's life that may have helped shape the habits of thought that distinguish his writings.

"The way General Clausewitz judged situations," says General Brandt, "how he drew conclusions from movements and marches, calculated marching times, and identified the points where decisions would be made, was extremely interesting. Fate unfortunately denied him the chance to show his abilities in high command, but I am firmly convinced that he would have distinguished himself greatly as a strategist. As a commander on the battlefield, however, he would not have been quite as much in his proper place; from a manque d'habitude du commandement, he lacked the art d'enlever les troupes."

After the Prussian Army of Observation was dissolved, Clausewitz returned to Breslau. A few days after arriving, he was struck by cholera, whose infection he must have brought with him from the army on the Polish frontier. He died in November 1831.

His writings fill nine volumes, published after his death, but his reputation rests chiefly on the three volumes that make up his treatise on “War.” In this attempt to translate that part of Clausewitz’s works into English, the translator is aware of many shortcomings. Even so, he hopes at least to make this celebrated treatise better known in England, since he believes that, so far as it concerns the interests of this country, it has lost none of the importance it had when it was first published.

J. J. GRAHAM (Col.)

BOOK I. ON THE NATURE OF WAR

CHAPTER I. WHAT IS WAR?

1. INTRODUCTION.

We will begin by looking at the individual elements of our subject, then at each branch or part, and finally at the whole in all its relationships. In other words, we will move from the simple to the complex. But we must first take a brief look at the nature of the whole, because when examining any part, it is especially important to keep its relation to the whole constantly in view.

2. DEFINITION.

We will not get into the abstract definitions of war used by legal and political theorists. Instead, we will focus on the thing itself: a duel. War is simply a duel on a much larger scale. If we want to picture the countless duels that together make up a war as a single whole, the best image is two wrestlers. Each tries to use physical force to make the other submit to his will. Each aims to throw his opponent and make him incapable of further resistance.

War, then, is an act of violence meant to force our opponent to do our will.

Violence equips itself with the inventions of art and science in order to fight violence. It is accompanied by self-imposed limits—so slight they are barely noticeable and hardly worth mentioning—known as the usages of international law, but these do not fundamentally reduce its power. Violence, in other words physical force, is therefore the means (for there is no moral force apart from the idea of states and law); the enemy's forced submission to our will is the ultimate end. To achieve that end completely, the enemy must be disarmed. Disarmament therefore becomes, in theory, the immediate aim of hostilities. It takes the place of the final aim and sets it aside as something we can leave out of our calculations.

3. THE UTMOST USE OF FORCE.

Philanthropists may easily imagine that there is a skillful way to disarm and defeat an enemy without much bloodshed, and that this is the true direction of the art of war. However convincing that may seem, it is a mistake that must be rooted out. In matters as dangerous as war, errors that come from benevolence are the worst of all. Since using physical force to its fullest extent does not in any way rule out the use of intelligence, it follows that the side that uses force without restraint, regardless of the bloodshed involved, will gain the advantage if its opponent acts with less energy. The first side then sets the terms for the second, and both are driven toward extremes, limited only by the amount of opposing force each can bring to bear.

This is how the matter must be understood. There is no point—and it is even against one's own interest—in turning away from the true nature of the issue simply because its horrifying elements provoke disgust.

If the wars of civilised peoples are less cruel and destructive than those of savages, the difference comes from the social condition of states, both in themselves and in their relations with one another. War grows out of that social condition and those relations, and they impose limits on it, control it, and alter it. But these things are not part of war itself; they are only the conditions under which it occurs. To build a principle of moderation into the philosophy of war itself would therefore be absurd.

Two motives lead men to war: instinctive hostility and hostile intention. In our definition of war, we have chosen the second of these as its defining feature, because it is the more general one. It is impossible to imagine even the wildest hatred, bordering on mere instinct, without also including the idea of a hostile intention. On the other hand, hostile intentions can often exist without any accompanying hostility of feeling, or at least without any extreme hostility. Among savages, views that arise from feeling predominate; among civilised nations, those that arise from the understanding do. But this difference comes from surrounding circumstances, existing institutions, and the like, and so it is not necessarily present in every case, even though it appears in most. In short, even the most civilised nations may burn with passionate hatred for one another.

From this we can see how mistaken it would be to treat the war of a civilised nation as nothing more than an intelligent act by its government, and to imagine that it could gradually free itself more and more from all passion, until the physical masses of combatants were no longer needed. On that view, their mere relations would be enough—a kind of algebraic action.

Theory had begun to move in this direction, until the events of the last War() showed it otherwise. If war is an act of force, then it necessarily belongs to the realm of feeling as well. Even if it does not begin in feeling, it still affects feeling to a greater or lesser degree. How strongly it does so depends not on the level of civilisation, but on the importance and duration of the interests at stake. *

So when we see that civilised nations do not kill their prisoners or lay waste to towns and whole countries, it is because intelligence has a greater influence on how they wage war. It has taught them more effective ways to use force than these crude acts of raw instinct. The invention of gunpowder, and the steady advances in the design of firearms, are enough to show that the drive to destroy the enemy, which lies at the heart of the idea of war, has in no way been altered or softened by the progress of civilisation.

We therefore repeat our proposition: war is an act of violence carried to its furthest limits. Since each side imposes its own law on the other, a kind of reciprocal action arises that, in logic, must drive both toward an extreme. This is the first reciprocal action, and the first extreme that confronts us (first reciprocal

* Clausewitz is referring here to the “Wars of Liberation,” 1813, 14, 15.

action).

4. THE AIM IS TO DISARM THE ENEMY.

We have already said that the aim of all action in war is to disarm the enemy, and we will now show that this is, at least in theory, indispensable.

5. UTMOST EXERTION OF POWERS.

If we want to defeat the enemy, we must match our efforts to his ability to resist. That ability depends on two inseparable factors: the total means available and the strength of the will. The total means can be estimated to some extent, since they depend partly—though not entirely—on numbers. The strength of the will is harder to judge, and can only be estimated roughly from the strength of the motives behind it. Once we have formed an approximate idea of the power we must face, we can measure our own means against it. We can either increase them enough to gain the advantage or, if we lack the resources to do that, push them as far as possible. But the enemy does the same. That creates a new mutual escalation which, in pure theory, drives both sides toward another extreme. This is the third case of reciprocal action, and the third extreme we encounter.

6. MODIFICATION IN THE REALITY.

Even if this extreme tension of forces were an absolute that could be easily determined, we would still have to admit that the human mind would hardly submit to such a logical fantasy. In many cases, it would lead to an unnecessary waste of power, which would conflict with other principles of statecraft. It would also demand an effort of will out of proportion to the object in view, and so it could not actually be carried out, because human will is not driven by logical refinements.

But everything changes when we move from abstraction to reality. In theory, everything is governed by ideal assumptions, and we imagine both sides striving for perfection and even reaching it. Will that ever happen in real life? It will if,

(1) War is a completely isolated act, arising suddenly and having no connection at all with the previous history of the states involved.

(2) It is confined to a single decision, or to several simultaneous decisions.

(3) It contains within itself a complete and perfect solution, untouched by any later reaction arising from a prior calculation of the political situation that will follow from it.

7. WAR IS NEVER AN ISOLATED ACT.

On the first point, neither side is just an abstract idea to the other. That is true even of the part of resistance that does not depend on objective conditions—namely, the will. Will is not completely unknown; what it is today gives some indication of what it will be tomorrow. War does not appear all at once, nor does it reach full intensity in a single moment. Each side can therefore judge the other largely by what it is and what it does, rather than by what, in a strict sense, it ought to be or ought to do. But human beings, with their imperfect nature, always fall short of absolute perfection. These shortcomings affect both sides, and so they become a factor that modifies the whole situation.

8. WAR DOES NOT CONSIST OF A SINGLE INSTANTANEOUS BLOW.

The second point leads to the following considerations:

If war ended in a single decisive outcome, or in several outcomes occurring at the same time, then all preparations for it would naturally be pushed to the utmost extreme. Any omission could never be corrected afterward. In that case, the only guidance the real world could offer would be whatever we knew of the enemy’s preparations; everything else would belong to the realm of abstraction. But if the result is produced through several successive acts, then what comes first, with all its stages, can serve as a measure for what follows. In that way, the real world again takes the place of the abstract and

moderates the drive toward extremes.

Still, every war would necessarily come down to a single outcome, or to a set of simultaneous outcomes, if all the means needed for the struggle were brought forward at once, or even could be. For since one unfavorable result necessarily reduces the available means, if all those means have already been used in the first act, then a second act cannot really be assumed. Any hostile actions that followed would essentially belong to the first act and would, in reality, amount only to its continuation.

But we have already seen that even in preparing for war, the real world takes the place of pure abstraction. A material standard replaces the assumptions of an extreme case. As a result, both sides, through their mutual interaction, remain below the level of maximum effort, and so they do not bring all their forces forward at once.

This also follows from the nature of these forces and from the way they are used: they cannot all be put into action at the same time. These forces are the armies actually in the field, the country, with its physical extent and population, and the allies.

In fact, the country itself—its area and its population—not only supplies all military strength, but also forms an essential part of the effective forces in war, either by providing the theatre of war or by strongly influencing it.

A country can, of course, put all its mobile military forces into action at once. But it cannot do the same with all its fortresses, rivers, mountains, people, and so on—in short, with the whole country—unless the country is so small that the opening act of the war can fully encompass it. The cooperation of allies,

moreover, does not depend solely on the will of the belligerents. Because of the political relations between states, that cooperation is often not available until after the war has begun, or it may grow later in order to restore the balance of power.

This part of the means of resistance, which cannot be brought into action immediately, is in many cases much larger than it might first appear. It often restores the balance of power after that balance has been seriously disturbed by the great force of the first decision. We will show this more fully later. For now, it is enough to note that the complete concentration of all available means at a single moment is contrary to the nature of war.

Still, this by itself gives us no reason to ease our efforts to gather strength for the first result. An unfavorable outcome is always a disadvantage, and no one would deliberately expose himself to it. And although the first decision is not the only one, it will shape later events all the more strongly the greater it is.

But the possibility of achieving a result later leads people to fall back on that expectation, because the human mind resists making extreme efforts. As a result, forces are not concentrated and measures are not taken for the first decision with the energy that would otherwise be applied. Whatever one side leaves undone out of weakness gives the other side a real reason to limit its own efforts as well. In this way, through their mutual interaction, extreme tendencies are reduced to efforts on a more limited scale.

9. THE RESULT IN WAR IS NEVER ABSOLUTE.

Lastly, even the final decision of an entire war should not always be seen as absolute. The defeated State often sees it only as a temporary misfortune, one that may be remedied later through political combinations. It is obvious how much this must lessen the tension and weaken the force of the efforts made.

10. THE PROBABILITIES OF REAL LIFE TAKE THE PLACE OF THE CONCEPTIONS OF THE EXTREME AND THE ABSOLUTE.

In this way, the whole act of war is removed from the strict rule that force must be used to the utmost. If the extreme is no longer feared and no longer pursued, then judgment must decide the limits of the effort to be made in its place. That can be done only from the facts of the real world, through the laws of probability. Once the belligerents are no longer mere abstractions but actual States and Governments, and once war is no longer an ideal idea but a definite, concrete process, reality will provide the data needed to calculate the unknown factors that must be determined.

From the character, measures, and situation of the adversary, and from the relations surrounding him, each side will draw conclusions, according to the law of probability, about the designs of the other and act accordingly.

11. THE POLITICAL OBJECT NOW REAPPEARS.

Here the question we had set aside comes back again for consideration (see No. 2): the political object of the war. Up to this point, the logic of extremes—the idea of disarming and overthrowing the enemy—has, to some extent, taken the place of that object. But as that logic loses force, the political purpose must come forward again. If the whole matter is a calculation of probability based on specific people and relationships, then the political object, as the original motive, must be an essential part of the result. The smaller the sacrifice we demand from our opponent, the less resistance we can expect him to offer; but the less he prepares, the less preparation we will need as well. And the smaller our political object, the less value we will place on it, and the more readily we may be persuaded to give it up altogether.

The political object, then, as the original motive of the war, sets the standard for determining both the aim of the military force and the amount of effort to be made. It cannot do this in the abstract, but it can in relation to the two belligerent States, because we are dealing with realities, not mere abstractions. The very same political object may have completely different effects on different peoples, or even on the same people at different times. We can therefore accept the political object as a measure only by considering its effects on the masses it is meant to move; and so the nature of those masses must also be taken into account. It is easy to see that the result may vary greatly depending on whether those masses are filled with a spirit that gives energy to action or not. It is entirely possible for

relations between two States to be such that a very slight political motive for war may produce an effect wildly out of proportion to its cause—in fact, a full explosion.

This applies both to the effort the political objective will demand from the two states and to the goal military action sets for itself. Sometimes that political objective can itself be the military goal—for example, the conquest of a province. At other times, the political objective is not suitable as a direct military aim. In that case, some other objective must be chosen that serves as its equivalent and can take its place in the peace settlement. Even then, careful attention must always be paid to the particular character of the states involved. In some circumstances, the equivalent must be much greater than the political objective in order to secure it. The more indifferent the population is, and the less hostility exists between the two states for other reasons, the more the political objective becomes the standard that determines both aim and effort, and the more influence it has in itself. There are therefore cases in which the political objective alone is almost decisive.

If the aim of military action is only an equivalent for the political objective, then military action will generally decline as the political objective declines—and all the more so when the political objective is the dominant factor. This explains how, without any contradiction, wars can exist at every level of importance and intensity, from a war of extermination down to the mere use of an army of observation. This, however, leads to a different question, which we will later examine and answer.

12. A PAUSE IN THE ACTION OF WAR NOT YET EXPLAINED BY ANYTHING SAID SO FAR.

No matter how slight the political claims each side puts forward, how weak the means employed, or how limited the military objective, can military action be suspended even for a moment? This question reaches deeply into the nature of war.

Every undertaking requires a certain amount of time to be carried out; we call this its duration. It may be longer or shorter depending on whether the person acting moves with greater or lesser speed.

We need not concern ourselves much with this here. Each person acts in his own way. But a slow person does not draw out an action because he wants to spend more time on it; he does so because his nature requires more time, and if he hurried, he would not do it as well. This amount of time therefore depends on subjective causes, and belongs to what is called the duration of the action.

If we now grant every action in war this kind of duration, then at first glance we must assume that any use of time beyond it—that is, any pause in hostile action—looks absurd. But we must not forget that we are speaking here not of the progress of one or the other opponent, but of the overall course of the war as a whole.

13. THERE IS ONLY ONE CAUSE THAT CAN SUSPEND ACTION, AND IN ANY GIVEN CASE THIS SEEMS POSSIBLE ONLY ON ONE SIDE.

If two sides have armed themselves for conflict, some feeling of hostility must have driven them to it. As long as they remain armed—that is, as long as they have not made peace—that feeling must still exist. It can be brought to a standstill by either side for only one reason: he is waiting for a more favorable moment to act. At first glance, however, this motive seems as if it could never exist on both sides, but only on one, because it must by its very nature work against the other. If one side has an interest in acting, the other must have an interest in waiting.

A complete balance of forces can never by itself produce a suspension of action, because during such a pause the side with the positive object—that is, the attacker—must still continue to advance. For if we imagine a balance in this way: that the side with the positive object, and therefore the stronger motive, at the same time has only the lesser means, so that the equality is created by the combined effect of motive and power, then we must say this: if no change in that balance is to be expected, the two sides must make peace. But if a change is expected, it can only favor one side, and therefore the other has an obvious interest in acting without delay. So we see that the idea of equilibrium cannot explain a suspension of arms; it leads instead to the question of EXPECTING A MORE FAVOURABLE MOMENT.

Let us suppose, then, that one of the two states has a definite aim—for example, to conquer one of the enemy's provinces and use it as leverage in the peace settlement. Once that province has been taken, its political objective has been achieved. The need for further action ends, and a pause follows. If the opponent is also satisfied with that outcome, peace will be made. If not, the opponent must act. Now suppose that in four weeks he will be in a better position to do so. In that case, he has good reason to delay action until then.

But from that point on, the enemy's logical course would seem to be to act at once, so as not to give the conquered side the time it wants. Of course, this line of reasoning assumes complete knowledge of the situation on both sides.

14. THIS WOULD LEAD TO CONTINUED ACTION, MOVING TOWARD A CLIMAX.

If this uninterrupted sequence of hostile operations really existed, everything would once again be pushed toward the extreme. Quite apart from the way such constant activity would inflame emotions and fill the whole struggle with greater passion and elemental force, the continued action would also create a tighter chain of cause and effect. Each individual action would matter more, and would therefore carry greater danger.

But we know that war has rarely, if ever, followed such an unbroken course of action. In many wars, actual operations have taken up only a small part of the total time, while the rest has been spent in inactivity. This cannot always be an anomaly. Pauses in action must therefore be possible in war; there is no

contradiction in that. We will now explain how this can be so.

15. HERE, THEN, THE PRINCIPLE OF POLARITY COMES INTO PLAY.

Since we have assumed that the interests of one commander are always opposed to those of the other, we have assumed a true polarity. We will give a fuller explanation of this in another chapter. For now, we will only make the following observation about it.

The principle of polarity applies only when it can be understood within one and the same thing, where the positive and the negative completely cancel each other out. In battle, both sides are trying to win; that is true polarity, because one side's victory destroys the other's. But when we are speaking of two different things that share some external relationship, then the polarity belongs not to the things themselves but to their relationship.

16. ATTACK AND DEFENCE DIFFER IN KIND AND ARE NOT EQUALLY STRONG. POLARITY THEREFORE DOES NOT APPLY TO THEM.

If war had only one form—namely, attacking the enemy, with no such thing as defence—or, in other words, if attack differed from defence only in the positive aim that one has and the other does not, while the methods of both were exactly the same, then every advantage gained by one side would be a matching disadvantage to the other. In that case, true polarity would exist.

But action in war takes two forms, attack and defence, and, as we shall explain more fully later, they are very different and not equally strong. Polarity therefore belongs to what both are related to—the decision—but not to attack or defence in themselves.

If one commander wants the outcome delayed, the other must want to speed it up, but only through the same form of action. If it is in A's interest not to attack his enemy now but four weeks from now, then it is in B's interest to be attacked now, not four weeks from now. That is a direct conflict of interests. But it does not at all follow that it would be in B's interest to attack A immediately. That is clearly a completely different matter.

17. THE EFFECT OF POLARITY IS OFTEN CANCELLED BY THE SUPERIOR STRENGTH OF DEFENCE OVER ATTACK, AND THIS EXPLAINS THE SUSPENSION OF ACTION IN WAR.

If, as we will show later, defense is a stronger form than offense, then a question follows: is the advantage of delaying a decision on one side as great as the advantage of taking the defensive on the other? If it is not, then it cannot outweigh that advantage and shape the course of war. So we can see that the driving force created by opposing interests may be lost because of the difference in strength between offense and defense, and may therefore become ineffective.

If, then, the side for which the present moment is favorable is still too weak to give up the advantage of the defensive, it must accept the unfavorable prospects the future may bring. It may still be better to fight a defensive battle later, even under discouraging conditions, than to go on the offensive or make peace now. Since we are convinced that the superiority of the defensive form ()—properly understood—is very great, and much greater than it may seem at first, we believe this explains most of the periods of inactivity that occur in war without any contradiction. The weaker the motives for action, the more they will be absorbed and canceled out by the difference between attack and defense. As a result, military action will stop more often, just as experience shows. *

18 A SECOND GROUND CONSISTS IN THE IMPERFECT KNOWLEDGE OF CIRCUMSTANCES.

But there is another reason action in war may come to a halt: an incomplete understanding of the situation. Each commander can know his own position fully, but he can know the enemy's position only through reports, and those reports are uncertain. As a result, he may judge the situation wrongly on the basis of such information. Because of that mistake, he may assume that the power to take the initiative belongs to his opponent when in fact it belongs to himself. This lack of perfect knowledge could, of course, just as easily lead to action at the wrong moment as to inaction at the wrong moment. By itself, then, it contributes no more to delay than to hasten action in war. Even so, it must

* It should be remembered that all this was written several years before the introduction of long-range weapons.

always be counted among the natural causes that can bring action in war to a standstill without any contradiction. But if we consider how much more likely we are to overestimate an opponent's strength than to underestimate it, since human nature tends that way, we must admit that our imperfect grasp of the facts generally does a great deal to delay action in war and to shape how principles are applied while we are deciding how to act.

The possibility of a standstill introduces a new element into the conduct of war, because it mixes the action with the element of time. It weakens the effect, or the feeling, of danger as events unfold, and it increases the chances of restoring a lost balance of force. The stronger the emotions that give rise to a war, the greater the energy with which it is fought, and the shorter the periods of inaction will be. On the other hand, the weaker the impulse toward warlike action, the longer those periods will last. Strong motives increase the force of the will, and that, as we know, is always one factor in the total force produced.

19. FREQUENT PERIODS OF INACTION IN WAR MOVE IT FURTHER FROM THE ABSOLUTE AND MAKE IT EVEN MORE A MATTER OF CALCULATING PROBABILITIES.

But the more slowly action unfolds in war, the more often and the longer it pauses. That makes mistakes easier to correct. As a result, a general can be bolder in his calculations. He will be more willing to stay short of the absolute and base everything on probabilities and conjectures. So, depending on whether the course of the war is faster or slower, there will be more or less

time for what each particular situation especially requires: estimating probabilities from the circumstances at hand.

20. THEREFORE, ONLY THE ELEMENT OF CHANCE IS NEEDED TO MAKE WAR A GAME, AND WAR IS LEAST OF ALL LACKING IN THAT ELEMENT.

From what has already been said, we can see how much the objective nature of war turns it into a matter of calculating probabilities. Only one element is still needed to make it a game, and war certainly does not lack that element: chance. No human activity is so constantly and so broadly bound up with chance as war. Along with chance, accident—and with it good fortune—plays a major part in war.

21. WAR IS A GAME BOTH OBJECTIVELY AND SUBJECTIVELY.

If we now look at the subjective nature of war—that is, the conditions under which it is fought—it appears even more like a game. First of all, war is carried on in an atmosphere of danger. And what moral quality comes first in danger? Courage. Courage can certainly exist alongside prudent calculation, but the two are fundamentally different qualities of mind. By contrast, confidence in luck, boldness, and rashness are simply forms of courage. All these tendencies of mind are drawn toward the fortuitous, or accidental, because that is their natural element.

We see, then, that from the very beginning the absolute—the so-called mathematical—finds no firm foundation anywhere in the calculations of the art of war. From the outset, there is a play of possibilities, probabilities, and good and bad luck. It runs through war in every coarse and fine strand of its web, and makes war, of all human activities, the one most like a game of chance.

22. WHY THIS FITS BEST WITH THE HUMAN MIND IN GENERAL.

Although our intellect is always driven toward clarity and certainty, the mind is often drawn to uncertainty instead. Rather than following reason down the narrow path of philosophical inquiry and logical conclusion—only to arrive, almost without noticing, in places that feel unfamiliar and cut off from everything well known—it prefers to stay with the imagination in the realm of chance and luck. Instead of subsisting there on bare necessity, it delights here in the abundance of possibilities. Stirred by that abundance, courage spreads its wings, and daring and danger become the very element into which it throws itself, like a fearless swimmer diving into a stream.

Should theory simply leave matters there and move on, content with absolute conclusions and fixed rules? If so, it is of no practical use. Theory must also reckon with the human element. It must make room for courage, boldness, and even rashness. The Art of War deals with living forces and moral forces, and for that reason it can never reach the absolute and the certain. So there is always a margin for chance, in great matters no less than in small ones. And where chance has room on one side,

courage and self-reliance must exist on the other in equal measure. If those qualities are present in a high degree, the margin left to chance may also be large. Courage and self-reliance are therefore essential principles of war. Theory, accordingly, should establish only those rules that leave ample scope for every degree and kind of these necessary and noblest military virtues. Even in daring there may still be wisdom and prudence; they are simply judged by a different standard.

23. WAR IS ALWAYS A SERIOUS MEANS FOR A SERIOUS OBJECT. ITS MORE PARTICULAR DEFINITION.

Such is war; such is the Commander who conducts it; such is the theory that governs it. But war is not a pastime. It is not merely a passion for risk and victory, nor the work of unrestrained enthusiasm. It is a serious means directed toward a serious object. Everything in its appearance that comes from the shifting colors of fortune, everything it absorbs from the fluctuations of passion, courage, imagination, and enthusiasm, is only a particular quality of that means.

War between communities—between whole nations, and especially between civilised nations—always begins from a political situation and is driven by a political purpose. It is therefore a political act. If war were a perfect, unchecked, absolute release of force, as we might infer from the pure concept alone, then the moment policy brought it into being, war would take policy's place. It would cast policy aside as something independent and follow only its own laws, just as a mine, once it explodes, cannot be directed anywhere except

along the path prepared for it beforehand. That is how war has often been understood, especially whenever a lack of harmony between policy and the conduct of war has led theorists to make distinctions of this kind. But that view is wrong at its root. Real war, as we have already seen, is not an extreme event that spends itself in a single blow. It is the action of forces that do not all develop fully, in the same way, or to the same degree. Sometimes they grow strong enough to overcome the resistance created by inertia or friction; at other times they are too weak to have much effect. War is therefore, to some extent, a series of pulses of violent force, more or less intense. Its blows are delivered and its strength is exhausted more or less quickly. In other words, it reaches its goal more quickly or more slowly, but it always lasts long enough for influence to be exerted on it as it unfolds, so that it can be directed one way or another. In short, it remains subject to the will of a guiding intelligence. If we remember that war has its roots in a political objective, then naturally the original motive that called it into existence should remain the first and highest consideration in how it is conducted. Still, the political objective is not an absolute ruler. It must adapt itself to the nature of the means. And although changes in those means may require changes in the political objective, that objective still keeps its prior claim to consideration. Policy, therefore, is woven into the whole course of war and must continue to influence it, so far as the nature of the forces it has unleashed allows.

24. WAR IS SIMPLY THE CONTINUATION OF POLICY BY OTHER MEANS.

So we can see that war is not just a political act. It is also a real political instrument: a continuation of political dealings, carried on by other means. Everything that belongs specifically to war goes back only to the particular nature of the means it uses. The art of war in general, and the commander in each individual case, may insist that political aims and policies must not conflict with those means, and that is no small demand. But however strongly this may affect political decisions in particular cases, it must still be seen only as a modification of them. The political aim is the end; war is the means. And in our thinking, the means must always include the end.

25. DIFFERENCES IN THE NATURE OF WARS.

The greater and stronger the motives for a war, the more deeply it affects the whole life of a people. The more intense the excitement that comes before the war, the more closely the war approaches its abstract form. The more it will be aimed at destroying the enemy. The more nearly the military and political goals will coincide. And the more the war will seem purely military and less political. But the weaker the motives and tensions, the less the natural direction of the military element—that is, force—will match the direction indicated by the political element. The war must then be drawn away from its natural course. The political objective will move further from the aim of an ideal war. And the war will appear to become more political.

But to keep the reader from misunderstanding us, we must add that by this natural tendency of war we mean only a philosophical, strictly logical tendency. We do not mean the tendency of the forces actually engaged in conflict, which would include all the emotions and passions of the combatants. In some cases, no doubt, these feelings might be stirred so strongly that they could hardly be restrained and kept within the political course. But in most cases, this kind of contradiction will not arise, because such intense exertions would imply a major plan in keeping with them. If the plan is aimed only at a limited object, then the feelings of the masses will also be weak, and those masses will need to be roused rather than held back.

26. THEY CAN ALL BE SEEN AS POLITICAL ACTS.

Returning now to the main subject: although in one kind of war the political element may seem almost to vanish, while in another it stands out very clearly, we can still say that both are equally political. If we think of state policy as the mind of the state personified, then among all the patterns in the political sky that it must calculate, we must also include those that arise when the nature of its relations makes a major war necessary. Only if we use the word policy to mean not a true understanding of affairs as a whole, but the conventional idea of a cautious, subtle, and even dishonest cunning that shrinks from violence, can we say that the latter kind of war belongs more to policy than the former.

27. HOW THIS VIEW HELPS US UNDERSTAND MILITARY HISTORY CORRECTLY, AND SHAPES THE FOUNDATIONS OF THEORY.

We see, then, first of all, that war must always be regarded not as something independent, but as a political instrument. Only from this point of view can we avoid putting ourselves at odds with the whole record of military history. It is the only key that opens that great book and makes it understandable. Second, this view shows us why wars must differ in character according to the motives and circumstances from which they arise.

The first, greatest, and most decisive act of judgment that the statesman and the general must make is to understand correctly the kind of war on which they are embarking. They must not mistake it for something it is not, or try to turn it into something that the nature of its circumstances will not allow it to be. This, therefore, is the first and broadest of all strategic questions. We will examine it more fully when we discuss the plan of a war.

For now, it is enough that we have brought the discussion to this point and, in doing so, established the main point of view from which war and the theory of war must be studied.

28. RESULT FOR THEORY.

War, then, is not only chameleon-like, changing its color to some extent in each particular case; taken as a whole, it is also a remarkable trinity shaped by the dominant tendencies within it: the original violence of its elements—hatred and hostility—which can be seen as blind instinct; the play of

probability and chance, which makes it a free activity of the spirit; and its subordinate character as a political instrument, by which it belongs purely to reason.

The first of these three aspects concerns the people most; the second concerns the General and his Army most; the third concerns the Government most. The passions that erupt in war must already exist, at least in latent form, among the people. How far courage and talent can show themselves in the realm of probability and chance depends on the particular character of the General and his Army. But political aims belong to the Government alone.

These three tendencies, which seem like three different lawgivers, are deeply rooted in the nature of war, yet they also vary in degree. Any theory that leaves one of them out, or imposes some arbitrary relationship among them, would immediately fall into such conflict with reality that this alone would be enough to destroy it.

The problem, then, is for theory to keep its balance among these three tendencies, as if between three points of attraction.

We will examine how this difficult problem can be solved in the book on the “Theory of War.” In every case, the concept of war as defined here will be the first ray of light that shows us the true foundation of theory. It is what first separates the great masses and lets us distinguish them from one another.

CHAPTER II. Ends and Means in War

Having established in the previous chapter the complex and changing nature of war, we will now examine how that nature influences the ends and means of war.

If we first ask what the whole effort of war should be aimed at so that it is enough to achieve the political goal, we find that the answer varies just as much as the political goal itself and the particular circumstances of the war.

Next, if we return to the pure concept of war, we must say that the political goal, strictly speaking, lies outside it. If war is an act of violence meant to force the enemy to do our will, then everything depends on defeating the enemy—that is, disarming him—and on that alone. This aim arises from an abstract idea, but in many real cases it is also the actual aim. We will first examine it as it appears in reality.

Later, when discussing the plan of a campaign, we will look more closely at what it means to disarm a nation. But here we must immediately distinguish among three things which, as three general objectives, include everything else within them: the military power, the country, and the will of the enemy.

The military power must be destroyed; that is, it must be reduced to a condition in which it can no longer continue the war. This is the sense in which we will use the phrase “destruction of the enemy’s military power” from here on.

The country must be conquered, because a new military force can be raised from it.

But even when both of these things have been done, the war—that is, the hostile feeling and action of hostile forces—cannot be considered over as long as the enemy's will has not also been subdued. In other words, its government and its allies must be forced to sign a peace, or the people must be brought into submission. For even while we fully occupy the country, the war may break out again, either within the country itself or through help from allies. No doubt this may also happen after a peace has been signed, but that shows only that not every war contains within itself the elements of a complete decision and final settlement.

But even if that is so, the making of peace still puts out many sparks that might otherwise have kept quietly smouldering. The passions stirred up by war begin to cool, because all those inclined toward peace—and in every nation, under all circumstances, there are always many such people—turn away completely from the path of resistance. Whatever happens afterward, once peace is concluded we must regard the objective as achieved and the business of war as over.

Since the main purpose of military force is to defend the country, the natural sequence is this: first the enemy's armed force is destroyed, then the country is subdued, and through these two results—together with the position we then occupy—the enemy is compelled to make peace. In general, the destruction of the enemy's force happens gradually, and the conquest of the country follows step by step in the same

proportion. The two usually affect each other as well, because the loss of provinces reduces military strength. But this sequence is by no means necessary, and so it does not always occur. Before the enemy's army has been noticeably weakened, it may retreat to the far side of the country, or even leave it altogether. In that case, most or even all of the country is conquered.

But this abstract aim of war—this ultimate means of achieving the political objective, in which all other aims are contained—the disarming of the enemy, is rarely achieved in practice and is not a necessary condition for peace. It therefore cannot be treated in theory as a fixed law. There are countless examples of treaties in which peace was settled before either side could be considered disarmed, indeed even before the balance of power had changed in any noticeable way. More than that, if we look at actual cases, we must say that in a whole class of them, the idea of completely defeating the enemy would be pure fantasy, especially when the enemy is much stronger.

The reason the goal implied by the concept of war usually does not fit real war lies in the difference between the two, discussed in the previous chapter. If war were exactly as pure theory describes it, then a war between two states with very unequal military strength would seem absurd, and therefore impossible. At most, the gap in physical force might be offset by moral force, but under the social conditions of modern Europe that could only go so far. So when we have seen wars between states of very unequal power, it is because real war differs greatly from its original concept.

Two considerations can, in practice, take the place of an inability to continue the struggle. The first is the improbability of success; the second is the excessive cost of it.

As we saw in the previous chapter, war cannot always remain bound by strict logical necessity; it must also rely on calculations of probability. This is even more true when the war naturally tends in that direction because of the circumstances from which it arose—when its motives are weaker and the passions it has stirred are less intense. In such cases, calculations of probability can themselves produce motives for peace. War, therefore, does not always have to continue until one side is completely overthrown. We may assume that when motives and passions are slight, even a small probability may be enough to make the side for whom it is unfavorable give way. And if the other side recognized this in advance, it would naturally aim only to create that probability, instead of first wasting time and effort trying to destroy the enemy's army completely.

Even more generally influential in bringing about a decision for peace is the consideration of the force already spent and the further force still required. Since war is not an act of blind passion but is governed by its political purpose, the value of that purpose determines how great a sacrifice should be made to obtain it. This applies not only to the scale of the sacrifice but also to its duration. Therefore, as soon as the required cost becomes so great that the political objective is no longer worth it, that objective must be abandoned, and peace will follow.

We can see, then, that in wars where neither side can completely disarm the other, each side's willingness to make peace rises or falls according to its chances of future success and the cost required to continue. If these motives were equally strong on both sides, they would meet halfway between their political differences. When they are strong on one side, they may be weak on the other. If they are just strong enough, peace will follow, but naturally on terms that favor the side with the weaker motive for making peace. We are deliberately setting aside here the practical difference created by the positive and negative character of the political aim. As we will show later, that difference is extremely important. Still, we must keep to a more general point of view here, because the original political aims often change greatly during the course of a war, and may in the end become completely different, precisely because they are shaped by results and probable events.

The next question is how to improve the chances of success. First, we do it by the same basic means we use when the goal is to subdue the enemy: destroying his military forces and conquering his provinces. But here those two means do not carry quite the same weight as they do when total subjugation is the aim. If we attack the enemy's army, there is a great difference between planning to follow the first blow with a series of others until the whole force is destroyed, and being satisfied with a single victory that shakes the enemy's sense of security, proves our superiority, and fills him with anxiety about what may come next. If that is our purpose, we destroy only as much of his force as is necessary. The same is true of conquering the enemy's provinces. It means something quite

different when the goal is not the destruction of the enemy's army. If the army is to be destroyed, that is the decisive action, and taking provinces is only a result of it. To seize them before the army has been defeated would always be seen as no more than a necessary evil. But if we are not aiming at the complete destruction of the enemy's forces, and if we are confident that the enemy does not want, but rather fears, a bloody decision, then occupying a weak or undefended province is an advantage in itself. And if that advantage is important enough to make the enemy anxious about the overall outcome, it may also be a shorter path to peace.

But there is also a special way to influence the chances of success without destroying the enemy's army: operations directly connected with political aims. If there are undertakings especially likely to break up the enemy's alliances, render them useless, win new allies for us, or bring political powers over to our side, then it is easy to see how greatly these can increase the likelihood of success. They may become a shorter road to our objective than defeating the enemy's forces in battle.

The second question is how to affect the enemy's expenditure of strength—that is, how to raise the cost of success.

The enemy's expenditure of strength shows up in the wear and tear on his forces, and therefore in our destruction of them, and in the loss of provinces, and therefore in our conquest of them.

Here again, because these means can have different meanings, neither of them will mean exactly the same thing in every case when the objectives differ. The fact that these differences are often small should not confuse us. In reality, the weakest

motives and the finest distinctions often decide in favor of one method of using force rather than another. Our only task here is to show that, if certain conditions are assumed, there is nothing contradictory, absurd, or even mistaken in the possibility of reaching our purpose in different ways.

Besides these two means, there are three other distinct ways of directly increasing the enemy's loss of strength. The first is invasion, that is, occupying the enemy's territory not in order to keep it, but to extract contributions from it or to devastate it.

The immediate aim here is neither to conquer the enemy's territory nor to defeat his armed forces, but simply to harm him in a general way. The second method is to choose as the object of our operations those points where we can hurt the enemy most. It is easy to imagine two different directions in which our force might be used. The first is preferable if our aim is to defeat the enemy's army, while the second is more advantageous if defeating the enemy is out of the question. In the usual way of speaking, we would say that the first is mainly military and the second more political. But if we look at the matter from the highest point of view, both are equally military, and neither can be chosen unless it fits the circumstances of the case. The third method, and by far the most important because of the great number of cases it includes, is the wearing out of the enemy. We use this expression not only because it explains our meaning in a few words, but because it describes the thing exactly and is less figurative than it may first seem. In practice, the idea of wearing out in a struggle means the gradual exhaustion of physical strength and of the will through prolonged effort.

If we want to defeat the enemy by outlasting him, we must limit our aims as much as possible. By its very nature, a larger goal demands a greater use of force than a smaller one. The smallest goal we can set ourselves is simple passive resistance—that is, fighting without any positive objective. In that case, our means have the greatest relative value, and the result is therefore most secure. But how far can this negative approach be carried? Clearly, not to complete passivity, because mere endurance is not fighting. Defense is still an active effort: enough of the enemy's strength must be destroyed that he is forced to abandon his aim. That is all we seek in each individual action, and that is what makes our objective negative in character.

Of course, this negative aim in any single action is not as effective as a positive aim in the same direction would be, if that positive aim succeeded. But it has one advantage: it is easier to achieve than the positive aim, and so it offers a greater certainty of success. What it lacks in the effectiveness of any one action must be made up for over time—that is, through the length of the struggle. For that reason, this negative intention, which is the principle of pure defense, is also the natural way to overcome the enemy through the duration of the fight—in other words, by wearing him down.

This is where the distinction between Offensive and Defensive begins, a distinction whose influence extends across the whole field of war. For now, we can go no further than to note that all the advantages and stronger forms of combat on the side of the Defensive are derived from this negative intention. It is in them that the philosophical and dynamic law connecting the scale of success with the certainty of success is realized. We will return

to this subject later.

So if a negative aim—that is, concentrating all available means on pure resistance—gives one side an advantage in the struggle, and if that advantage is enough to offset whatever superiority in numbers the enemy may have, then the contest can be decided simply by lasting longer. Over time, the enemy's loss of strength will gradually reach the point where the political objective is no longer worth the cost. At that point, he must abandon the struggle. So we can see that this method—the wearing down of the enemy—covers many cases in which the weaker side resists the stronger.

During the Seven Years' War, Frederick the Great was never strong enough to destroy the Austrian monarchy. If he had tried to do so in the manner of Charles XII, he would inevitably have been ruined himself. But by skillfully conserving his resources, he showed the powers allied against him, over the course of seven years of war, that the real cost in strength was far greater than they had originally expected. As a result, they made peace.

We can see, then, that there are many ways to achieve one's aim in war. Completely subduing the enemy is not necessary in every case. Destroying the enemy's military forces, conquering the enemy's provinces, simply occupying them, merely invading them—operations aimed directly at political objectives—and finally, passively waiting for the enemy's attack, are all means that can be used to compel the enemy's will, depending on which course the particular circumstances suggest will be most effective. We could also add a whole category of shorter ways of reaching the goal, which might be called ad hominem

arguments. In what area of human affairs have these flashes of individual spirit not appeared, overcoming all formal considerations? And nowhere are they less likely to be absent than in war, where the personal character of the opponents matters so much, both in the cabinet and on the battlefield. We will only point this out, since trying to sort such influences into fixed categories would be pedantic. If we include them, we may say that the number of possible ways of reaching the objective is infinite.

To avoid underestimating these different shorter paths to a war's objective—whether by treating them as rare exceptions or by assuming they make little difference to how war is conducted—we must keep in mind how varied the political aims behind a war can be. We must recognize, at a glance, the distance between a fight for political survival and a war that a strained or unstable alliance turns into an unwelcome obligation. In practice, there are countless degrees between those two extremes. If we reject any one of those degrees in theory, we could just as well reject them all, which would amount to shutting the real world entirely out of view.

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

There is only one means: fighting. However varied its forms may be, however different it may look from a crude outburst of hatred in hand-to-hand combat, and however many elements may appear that are not actual fighting, the concept of war still always implies that all its effects are rooted in combat.

That this must always be true, despite the great variety and complexity of reality, can be shown very simply. Everything that happens in war happens through armed forces, and wherever the forces of war—that is, armed men—are employed, the idea of fighting must necessarily lie at the foundation.

Everything related to the forces of war—everything connected with their creation, maintenance, and use—therefore belongs to military activity.

Creation and maintenance are plainly only the means, while use is the end.

The struggle in war is not a contest between one individual and another, but an organized whole made up of many parts. Within this larger whole, we can distinguish two kinds of units: one defined by the subject, the other by the object. In an army, the mass of combatants is always arranged into an order of smaller units, which in turn become parts of a higher order. The combat of each of these parts therefore also forms a more or less distinct unit. In addition, the motive of the fight—and therefore its object—forms its own unit.

Now, we give the name combat to each of the units we distinguish within the struggle.

If the idea of combat is the basis of every use of armed power, then the use of armed force in general is simply the decision and arrangement of a certain number of combats.

Every activity in war, therefore, necessarily relates to combat, either directly or indirectly. The soldier is recruited, clothed, armed, trained, sleeps, eats, drinks, and marches for one

reason only: to fight at the right time and place.

If, then, all the threads of military activity lead to combat, we can understand them all once we determine the order of the combats. Effects come only from that order and from carrying it out, never directly from the conditions that come before it. In combat, all action is directed toward destroying the enemy, or rather his fighting power, because that is part of the very idea of combat. The destruction of the enemy's fighting power is therefore always the means of achieving the object of the combat.

That object may simply be the destruction of the enemy's armed force, but that is by no means necessary; it may be something quite different. Whenever, as we have shown, defeating the enemy is not the only way to achieve the political object, and whenever other aims may be pursued in war, it follows naturally that such aims 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 strictly devoted to destroying the enemy's fighting force do not necessarily have that destruction itself as their primary object.

If we consider the many parts of a large armed force, and the number of factors that come into play when it is used, it is clear that fighting with such a force also requires a complex organization, with parts arranged in ranks and formations. Naturally, particular units may be given objectives that are not, in themselves, the destruction of the enemy's armed force. These objectives still help increase that destruction, but only indirectly. If a battalion is ordered to drive the enemy from a hill

or a bridge, for example, then the immediate objective is really to occupy that position. The destruction of the enemy's force is only the means, or a secondary matter. If the enemy can be driven off by a mere demonstration, the objective is still achieved. But in reality, that hill or bridge is wanted only as a means of increasing the total loss inflicted on the enemy's armed force. If this is true on the battlefield, it is even more true across the whole theatre of war, where it is not simply one army facing another, but one State, one Nation, one whole country against another. Here the number of possible relationships, and therefore of possible combinations, is far greater. The variety of measures increases, and because objectives are arranged in levels, each subordinate to another, the first means employed stand farther from the ultimate objective.

For many reasons, then, it is possible that the objective of a combat is not the destruction of the enemy's force—that is, the force directly opposed to us—but that such destruction appears only as a means. But in all such cases, complete destruction is no longer the issue, because the combat is then nothing more than a test of strength. It has no value in itself except for its immediate result—that is, its decision.

But a test of strength can also be carried out, when the two sides are very unequal, by simple comparison alone. In such cases, no fighting will take place, and the weaker side will give way at once.

If the aim of a battle is not always to destroy the enemy forces involved—and if that aim can often be achieved without any battle at all, simply through the decision to fight and the

circumstances that decision creates—then it becomes clear how an entire campaign can be conducted with great energy while actual fighting plays no major part in it.

Military history offers a hundred examples showing that this can happen. We will not try to decide how many of those cases can truly be justified without contradiction, or whether some of the famous reputations built on them would survive close criticism. Our only purpose here is to show that this kind of course of events is possible in war.

In war, we have only one means—the battle. But because that means can be used in endlessly varied ways, it opens into all the different courses allowed by the many possible objectives, so that at first it may seem we have gained nothing by reducing everything to a single means. But that is not so. From this unity of means comes a guiding thread that helps us study the subject, because it runs through the whole fabric of military activity and holds it together.

But we have treated the destruction of the enemy's forces as only one of the aims that may be pursued in war, and we have not yet decided what relative importance it should have among other aims. In particular cases, that will depend on circumstances, and as a general question we have left its value unsettled. Now we are brought back to it once again, and we will be able to see more clearly the importance that must necessarily be assigned to it.

Combat is the one essential activity in war. In combat, destroying the enemy force facing us is the means to the end. This remains true even when no actual fighting occurs, because

the decision still rests on the assumption that such destruction would be certain if it came to battle. It follows that the destruction of the enemy's military force is the foundation of all action in war, the main support for every plan, just as an arch rests on its abutments. Every action in war therefore proceeds on the assumption that, if the use of armed force on which it is based were actually carried through, the result would be favorable. For every operation in war, large or small, decision by arms is what cash payment is in transactions based on bills. However distant the connection may seem, and however rarely actual payment may be demanded, the possibility can never be entirely absent.

If decision by arms underlies all plans, then the enemy can overturn any one of them by winning a victory in the field. This is true not only in the particular engagement on which our plan directly depends, but also in any other battle, provided it is important enough. Every major decision by arms—that is, every destruction of the enemy's forces—affects all that came before it, because such results, like a liquid, tend to level themselves out.

So the destruction of the enemy's armed forces always appears as the stronger and more effective means, to which all others must give way.

But we can assign greater effectiveness to the destruction of the enemy's armed forces only when all other conditions are assumed equal. It would therefore be a serious mistake to conclude that a reckless charge must always defeat skill and caution. An unskilled attack would destroy our own forces

rather than the enemy's, and that is not what is meant here. The greater effectiveness belongs not to the means but to the end, and we are comparing only the results of one achieved purpose with those of another.

When we speak of destroying the enemy's armed forces, we should make it clear that this does not mean physical force alone. Moral force is necessarily part of it as well, because the two are bound together in reality, even in the smallest details, and cannot be separated. It is especially in relation to the unavoidable effect of a great act of destruction—a great victory—on all other military decisions that this moral element is most changeable, if we may put it that way, and therefore spreads most easily through every part.

Set against the much greater value of destroying the enemy's armed forces, compared with all other means, are the cost and risk involved in using that means; and it is only to avoid these that we turn to any other methods. It is obvious that these must also be costly, for the loss of our own military strength must, ceteris paribus, always be greater the more directly our aim is the destruction of the enemy's power.

The danger is this: the greater effectiveness we seek can rebound against us, and if we fail, the consequences are therefore worse.

Other methods are therefore less costly when they work and less dangerous when they fail. But that advantage depends on one condition: they can only be used against similar methods, that is, when the enemy is acting on the same principle. If the enemy chooses instead to seek a major decision by force of

arms, then we are compelled, against our will, to change our own approach to match his. In that case, everything depends on the outcome of the destructive clash. And it is obvious that, ceteris paribus, we would then be at a disadvantage in every respect, because our aims and resources had been directed in part toward other objects, while the enemy's had not. Two different objectives, of which one does not include the other, exclude each other. So a force that is suitable for one may not be suitable for the other. Therefore, if one of two belligerents is resolved to seek a major decision by arms, he has a strong chance of success as soon as he is sure that his opponent will not take that course but is pursuing a different object. And anyone who sets himself some other aim does so reasonably only if he assumes that his adversary is just as unwilling as he is to resort to a major decision by arms.

But what we have said here about directing aims and forces in another way applies only to other positive objects that we may set before ourselves in war, besides the destruction of the enemy's forces. It does not apply at all to pure defense, which may be adopted in order to wear down the enemy's strength. In pure defense, there is no positive object. Therefore, while we are on the defensive, our forces cannot at the same time be directed toward other aims; they can only be used to defeat the enemy's intentions.

We now need to consider the opposite of destroying the enemy's armed forces: preserving our own. These two efforts always go together, because each affects the other. They are inseparable parts of the same overall view, and we only need to determine what happens when one or the other takes priority.

The effort to destroy the enemy's forces has a positive aim and produces positive results, with the final goal being the conquest of the enemy. Preserving our own forces has a negative aim, and so it works by frustrating the enemy's intentions. In other words, it amounts to pure resistance, whose ultimate purpose can only be to extend the struggle until the enemy wears himself out in it.

An effort with a positive aim brings about the act of destruction; an effort with a negative aim waits for it.

We will look more closely at how far this state of expectation can and should be carried when we discuss the theory of attack and defense, where we will come back to this point. For now, it is enough to say that waiting must not mean complete passivity. In the action connected with it, destroying the enemy force engaged in the conflict may still be the objective, just as much as any other. It would therefore be a serious mistake to think that a negative course of action prevents us from choosing the destruction of the enemy's military force as our aim, and forces us instead to prefer a bloodless solution. The advantage gained by a negative effort may sometimes point in that direction, but adopting it carries the risk that it may not be the wisest course. That depends on entirely different conditions, determined not by us but by our opponent. So this bloodless alternative cannot be regarded as the natural way to satisfy our strong desire to spare our own forces. On the contrary, when circumstances are unfavorable, it can become the very means of completely ruining them. Many generals have fallen into this error and been destroyed by it. The only necessary effect of the superiority of the negative effort is to delay the decision. The acting side, in a

sense, takes refuge in it while waiting for the decisive moment. As a result, action is generally postponed as long as possible in time, and also in space, so far as space is connected with it. But once the moment arrives when this can no longer be done without disastrous disadvantage, then the advantage of the negative approach must be considered exhausted. At that point, the effort to destroy the enemy's force comes forward unchanged. It had been held back by a counterweight, but it had never been abandoned.

So, from the reflections above, we can see that there are many ways to pursue the goal—that is, to achieve the political objective—but only one means: combat. Everything is therefore subject to one supreme law: decision by arms. When one side truly demands this, the other cannot refuse that form of redress. So a belligerent who chooses any other path must be sure the opponent will not resort to this means of redress, or the whole cause may be lost in that highest court. For that reason, among all the aims that may be pursued in war, the destruction of the enemy's armed forces always appears as the one that outweighs all the rest.

What can be achieved in war by other kinds of combinations we will learn only later, and naturally only step by step. For now, it is enough to acknowledge in general that such possibilities exist, and that they point to the gap between reality and theory, as well as to the influence of particular circumstances. But we could not avoid showing at once that the bloody resolution of the crisis—the effort to destroy the enemy's forces—is war's first impulse. If political objectives are minor, motives are weak, and the commitment of forces is limited, a cautious commander

may try in every possible way, without major crises or bloody resolutions, to maneuver skillfully toward peace by exploiting the characteristic weaknesses of his enemy, both in the field and in the cabinet. We have no right to criticize him if the assumptions behind his actions are sound and success proves him right. Still, we must insist that he remember he is traveling on dangerous ground, where the God of War may catch him by surprise. He must always keep his eyes on the enemy, so that he is not forced to defend himself with a dress rapier when the enemy has drawn a sharp sword.

We must keep in view the consequences that arise from the nature of war: how ends and means interact within it; how, in real life, war departs at times more and at times less from its pure original concept; and how it swings back and forth while still remaining subject to that concept as to a supreme law. We must hold all this constantly in mind as we consider each of the subjects that follow, if we want to understand their true connections and proper importance, and avoid falling again and again into the most obvious contradictions with reality—and in the end, with ourselves.

CHAPTER III. The Genius for War

Every profession, if it is to be pursued successfully, demands particular qualities of mind and character. When these qualities are of a very high order and show themselves in exceptional achievements, we call the mind that possesses them genius.

We know perfectly well that this word is used in many different senses, varying widely in both scope and meaning, and that for many of those senses it is very hard to define exactly what genius is. But since we are not claiming to write as philosophers or grammarians, we may stay with the meaning common in ordinary language and understand “genius” to mean a very high mental capacity for certain kinds of work.

We want to pause for a moment over this power and distinction of the mind in order to justify the term and explain the idea more clearly. But we are not concerned here with the kind of genius that earns its name through some extraordinary talent—genius in the strictest sense—for that is a concept with no clear boundaries. Our task is to consider every general tendency of mind and character that bears on the business of war. Taken together, these tendencies may be regarded as the essence of military genius. We say “general,” because military genius does not consist in a single quality related to war—such as courage—while other qualities of mind and character are absent or directed in ways useless for war. Rather, it is a harmonious combination of powers, in which one or another may stand out, but none may work against the rest.

If every soldier had to possess at least some degree of military genius, our armies would be very weak. Military genius depends on a particular cast of mind, and that can only appear rarely in a people whose mental abilities are called on and trained in many different directions. The fewer occupations a nation pursues, and the more warfare dominates its life, the more common military genius will be. But this affects only how widespread it is, not how great it is. Its level depends on the country's overall intellectual culture. If we look at a wild, warlike people, we find a martial spirit in individuals far more often than among a civilised people. In the former, almost every warrior has it; in the latter, whole masses are driven by necessity, not by inclination. Yet among uncivilised peoples we never find a truly great general, and only very rarely what we can properly call a military genius, because that requires a development of the mind that cannot exist in an uncivilised state. Of course, a civilised people may also have a warlike character and military development; and the more general this is, the more often military spirit will appear in individuals within its armies. When that is joined to a higher level of civilisation, it produces the most brilliant military achievements, as the Romans and the French have shown. The greatest names in these nations, and in all others famous in war, belong properly to periods of higher culture.

From this we can see how large a part the intellectual powers play in superior military genius. We will now examine this more closely.

War belongs to the realm of danger, and so courage, above all else, is the first quality of a warrior.

There are two kinds of courage. First, there is physical courage, or courage in the face of personal danger. Second, there is moral courage, or courage in the face of responsibility, whether before the judgment of external authority or before the inner authority of conscience. Here we are speaking only of the first kind.

Courage in the face of personal danger, again, takes two forms. First, it can be a kind of indifference to danger, whether it comes from a person's natural constitution, contempt for death, or long habit. In any of these cases, it should be seen as a lasting trait.

Second, courage can arise from positive motives such as personal pride, patriotism, or enthusiasm of any kind. In that case, courage is less a steady condition than a sudden impulse.

We can imagine that these two kinds work in different ways. The first is more reliable, because it has become second nature and never deserts a man; the second often carries him further. The first contains more steadiness, the second more daring. The first leaves judgment cooler; the second sometimes heightens its power, but often confuses it. Together, the two make up the highest form of courage.

War belongs to the realm of physical effort and suffering. To avoid being completely overwhelmed by them, a person needs a certain strength of body and mind which, whether natural or acquired, makes him less sensitive to them. With these qualities, guided simply by sound understanding, a man is at once fit for war; and these are the qualities so commonly found among wild and half-civilised tribes. But if we look at the further demands

war makes, we find that the powers of the mind become more important. War is the realm of uncertainty: three-fourths of the things on which action in war must be based are hidden, more or less, in thick uncertainty. Here, above all, a keen and penetrating mind is needed to discover the truth through the tact of its judgment.

An average mind may sometimes arrive at this truth by accident; at other times, exceptional courage may make up for the lack of such judgment. But in most cases, the overall result will always reveal the weakness of the understanding.

War is the realm of chance. In no other area of human activity must so much room be left for this intruder, because nowhere else are we in such constant contact with it on every side. It increases the uncertainty of every situation and throws the course of events into disorder.

Because all information and assumptions are uncertain, and because chance keeps interfering, anyone acting in war constantly finds that reality differs from what was expected. That is bound to affect plans, or at least the assumptions behind them. If the effect is so great that the original plan becomes completely useless, then a new plan must usually replace it. But in the moment, the necessary facts are often missing. Events demand an immediate decision, leaving no time to gather new information, and often not even enough time for careful thought.

More often, though, it happens that correcting one assumption, and learning about chance events that have occurred, is not enough to destroy our plans entirely. It is only enough to create hesitation. We know more about the situation, but instead of

becoming less uncertain, we become more uncertain. The reason is that we do not gain all our experience at once; we gain it little by little. So our decisions are constantly being challenged by new experience, and the mind, if we may put it that way, must always remain “under arms.”

To come safely through this constant clash with the unexpected, two qualities are essential. First, a mind that, even in deep uncertainty, still has some inner light to guide it toward the truth. Second, the courage to follow that faint light. The French express the first quality with the phrase coup d’œil. The second is resolution. Because battle was originally the main focus in war, and because time and space matter so much in it—especially when cavalry, with its need for quick decisions, was the leading arm—the idea of making a fast and accurate decision was first tied to judging those two elements. To describe that ability, people adopted a term that in fact refers only to correct judgment by the eye. Many teachers of the art of war therefore gave this narrow meaning as the definition of coup d’œil. But it is clear that the term soon came to include all sound decisions made in the moment of action—for example, identifying the right point of attack, and so on. So in coup d’œil, it is not only the physical eye that is meant, but more often the mind’s eye. Naturally, both the term and the quality itself belong most clearly in tactics. Still, strategy also requires it, because quick decisions are often necessary there as well. If we remove the overly figurative and narrow sense that the expression has acquired, it simply means the rapid recognition of a truth that an ordinary mind either does not see at all or sees only after long study and reflection.

Resolution is an act of courage in a particular case; when it becomes a lasting trait, it is a habit of mind. But here we do not mean courage in the face of physical danger. We mean courage in the face of responsibility, and therefore, to some extent, in the face of moral danger. This has often been called courage d'esprit, because it arises from the understanding. Even so, it is not, for that reason, an act of the understanding; it is an act of feeling. Intelligence alone is not courage. We often see very clever people who completely lack resolution. The mind must therefore first stir up the feeling of courage and then be guided and sustained by it, because in sudden moments of crisis a person is influenced more by feeling than by thought.

We have said that resolution is what frees a person from the torment of doubt and the dangers of delay when there are not enough clear reasons to guide a decision. Because language is often used carelessly, the word is frequently applied to nothing more than a tendency toward risk-taking, courage, boldness, or recklessness. But when a person does have sufficient motives—whether objective or subjective, true or false—we have no right to call his action resolution. If we do, we are putting ourselves in his place and adding doubts to the situation that he himself did not feel.

In such cases, the issue is simply one of strength or weakness. We are not pedantic enough to argue over this minor misuse of language; our point is only to clear away mistaken objections.

This kind of resolution, which overcomes doubt, can be produced only by the intellect, and indeed by a particular tendency within it. We maintain that even the combination of

superior understanding and the necessary feelings is not enough, by itself, to create resolution. Some people can grasp the most difficult problems with great sharpness and are not afraid of responsibility, yet in moments of difficulty they still cannot make up their minds. Their courage and their insight work separately; they do not support each other, and so they do not produce resolution. What comes before resolution is an act of the mind that recognizes the need to take a risk and thereby moves the will. This very particular direction of the mind, which overcomes every other fear by making a person fear hesitation and doubt even more, is what creates resolution in strong minds. For that reason, in our view, people of little intelligence can never truly be resolute. They may act without hesitation in confusing situations, but they do so without reflection. And of course, when a man acts without reflection, he cannot be divided against himself by doubt. Such action may sometimes lead to the right result, but, as we have said before, it is the average result that shows the presence of military genius. If this claim seems strange to anyone because he knows many a resolute hussar officer who is no deep thinker, we must remind him that we are speaking here of a particular direction of the mind, not of great powers of thought.

We believe, then, that resolution depends on a particular cast of mind. It belongs more to a strong, steady intellect than to a brilliant one. To support this view of where resolution comes from, we may add that many men have shown the greatest firmness in a lower rank, only to lose it in a higher position. In the lower rank, they are compelled to decide. In the higher, they also see the dangers of a wrong decision. Surrounded by

unfamiliar things, their understanding loses its former strength. They grow more timid the more clearly they see the danger of the indecision into which they have fallen, especially if they were once used to acting at once on impulse.

After coup d'œil and resolution, we naturally come to the related quality of presence of mind. In a realm of surprises like war, it plays a major part, for it is really nothing more than a great victory over the unexpected. We admire presence of mind in a sharp reply to something said without warning, just as we admire it in a quick resource in sudden danger. The reply or the expedient does not need to be extraordinary in itself, so long as it fits the moment. What would seem ordinary, and therefore make little impression on us, if it came from careful reflection, can make a striking and pleasing impression when it appears as an instant act of the mind. The phrase "presence of mind" very aptly describes the readiness and speed with which the mind comes to the rescue.

Whether this noble quality should be attributed more to a person's mental character or to the calm balance of his feelings depends on the particular case, though neither can be entirely absent. A pointed repartee suggests quick wit more than anything else. A ready resource in sudden danger points more especially to a well-balanced mind.

If we look broadly at the four elements that make up the atmosphere in which war operates—danger, physical exertion, uncertainty, and chance—it is easy to see that a great strength of mind and intellect is needed to move safely and successfully through such hostile conditions. Depending on the

circumstances, military writers and historians describe this quality as energy, firmness, steadfastness, strength of mind, or strength of character. All these expressions of a heroic nature can be seen as different forms of the same power of will, shaped by circumstance. But although they are closely connected, they are not exactly the same, and it is useful here to distinguish a little more carefully between the ways the mind acts in relation to them.

First, to make the idea clear, we must note that the pressure, burden, or resistance—whatever we choose to call it—that reveals this inner strength in a general comes only to a very small extent from the enemy's activity, resistance, or action in any direct sense. The enemy's activity affects the general directly, first of all, only in relation to his own person, not in his role as commander. If the enemy resists for four hours instead of two, then the commander is personally in danger for four hours instead of two. But this is clearly a factor that matters less the higher the commander's rank. For a commander-in-chief, it is nothing.

Second, the enemy's resistance does affect the commander directly through the loss of resources caused by prolonged resistance, and through the responsibility attached to that loss. His will is first tested and called into action by these anxious concerns. Even so, we maintain that this is far from the heaviest burden he must bear, because in this case he has only himself to deal with. All the other effects of the enemy's resistance fall directly on the troops under his command, and through them they react back on him.

As long as his troops are confident and fight with zeal and spirit, the commander rarely needs to show exceptional determination to pursue his goal. But as soon as difficulties appear—and that always happens when great results are at stake—events no longer carry themselves forward like a well-oiled machine. The machine itself begins to resist, and overcoming that resistance demands great strength of will from the commander. By this resistance, we do not mean only disobedience or complaints, though those are common enough in particular individuals. It is the broader sense that all physical and moral strength is breaking down. It is the heartbreaking sight of bloody sacrifice, which the commander must struggle with first in himself and then in all those who, directly or indirectly, pass on to him their impressions, feelings, anxieties, and wishes. As one person after another becomes exhausted and can no longer be stirred or sustained by an effort of his own will, the full inertia of the whole body gradually settles on the commander's will. By the spark in his own breast, by the light of his spirit, he must rekindle in others the spark of purpose and the light of hope. Only to the extent that he can do this does he remain above the masses and continue to lead them. Whenever that influence fails, and his own spirit is no longer strong enough to revive the spirit of everyone else, the masses drag him down with them and sink into the lower realm of animal nature, which recoils from danger and knows no shame. These are the burdens that the courage and intelligence of a military commander must overcome if he is to make his name illustrious. They grow with the size of the masses, and so, if his powers are to remain equal to the burden, they must rise in proportion to the height of his position.

Energy in action shows the strength of the motive that drives it, whether that motive comes from reasoned conviction or from impulse. But when great force is displayed, the latter can hardly ever be absent.

Of all the noble feelings that fill the human heart amid the intense turmoil of battle, none, we must admit, are as strong and enduring as the soul's desire for honor and renown. German treats this feeling unfairly, diminishing it through the poor associations of the words Ehrgeiz (greed for honor) and Ruhmsucht (craving for glory). No doubt, it is especially in war that the misuse of these proud ambitions can bring the most terrible outrages upon humanity. But in their origin, they surely belong among the noblest feelings in human nature. In war, they are the life-giving force that gives spirit to its enormous body. Other feelings may be more widespread in their influence, and many of them—such as love of country, fanaticism, revenge, and enthusiasm of every kind—may seem higher. Even so, the desire for honor and renown remains indispensable. Those other feelings may stir the masses more generally and often more powerfully, but they do not give the leader the desire to aim beyond others, which is essential if he is to distinguish himself in his role. They do not, as the thirst for honor does, make military action especially the leader's own work, something he tries to use to the greatest advantage—where he plows with labor, sows with care, so that he may reap abundantly. It is these aspirations in commanders, from the highest to the lowest—this energy, this spirit of rivalry, these incentives—that chiefly animate armies and make them successful. And as for what most concerns the one at the top,

we ask: has there ever been a great commander without a love of honor, or can such a person even be imagined?

Firmness means the will's resistance to the force of a single blow; staunchness means its resistance to a continuing series of blows. The two are closely related, and one is often used in place of the other. Still, there is an important difference between them that cannot be overlooked. Firmness against one powerful impression may arise simply from the strength of a feeling. Staunchness, however, depends more on the understanding, because the longer an action lasts, the more it involves steady and deliberate thought. It is partly from this that staunchness draws its strength.

If we now turn to strength of mind or soul, the first question is: what do we mean by it?

Clearly, it does not mean intense displays of feeling or passions that are easily stirred up; that would go against the ordinary use of language. It means the ability to listen to reason even in the height of excitement, in the midst of the fiercest passions. Does this ability depend on strength of intellect alone? We think not. The fact that some men of the highest intelligence cannot control themselves does not by itself settle the question, since one might argue that what is needed is not a wide-ranging mind but a forceful one. Still, we believe we come closer to the truth if we suppose that the power to submit oneself to the rule of understanding, even in moments of the most violent emotional excitement—that power we call self-command—has its roots in the heart itself. In fact, it is another feeling that, in strong minds, counterbalances the passions that have been stirred up without

destroying them. Only through this balance is the rule of understanding made secure. This counterweight is nothing other than a sense of human dignity—that noblest pride, that deep desire of the soul always to act as a being endowed with understanding and reason. We may therefore say that a strong mind is one that does not lose its balance even under the most violent excitement.

If we look at the different ways human character varies in matters of feeling, we find first those who are not easily stirred and are called phlegmatic or indolent.

Second, there are those who are very excitable, but whose feelings still never go beyond certain limits, and who are therefore described as full of feeling, yet sober-minded.

Third, there are those who are very easily aroused, whose feelings flare up quickly and violently like gunpowder, but do not last.

Fourth and lastly, there are those who are not moved by slight causes and generally cannot be stirred suddenly, but only little by little. Yet their feelings grow very powerful and last much longer. These are people with strong passions, deep and hidden.

This difference in character probably lies near the boundary of the physical forces that drive the human organism, and belongs to that mixed realm we call the nervous system, which seems partly material and partly spiritual. With the limited philosophy at our disposal, we will not go further into this mysterious subject. But it is important to pause for a moment and consider how these different temperaments affect action in war, and how

much strength of mind we can expect from each of them.

Indolent men are not easily disturbed or shaken from their calm, but we cannot confidently call that strength of mind when it comes from a complete lack of any display of energy.

At the same time, we must admit that such men have a certain special fitness for war because of their steady composure. They often lack the positive drive to act, the impulse that produces energy and activity, but they are also unlikely to throw things into confusion.

The distinctive trait of the second class is that they are easily stirred to action by trivial causes, but in great matters they are easily overwhelmed. Men of this kind show great energy when helping one unfortunate person, but when faced with the suffering of an entire nation, they tend to sink into despair rather than rise to action.

Such people are not lacking in either activity or composure in war. But they will never achieve anything great unless a powerful intellect supplies the motive force, and a strong, independent mind is very rarely joined to this kind of character.

Highly excitable, easily inflamed feelings are not, by themselves, well suited to practical life, and so they are not especially suited to war. They do have the advantage of strong impulses, but those cannot sustain them for long. Still, if a man's excitability takes the form of courage or a sense of honor, he may often be very useful in lower positions in war, because the actions controlled by commanders at those levels are usually shorter in duration. In such cases, one bold decision, one surge of the soul's forces, will often be enough. A brave attack, a

stirring hurrah, is the work of a few moments, while a brave struggle on the battlefield is the work of a day, and a campaign the work of a year.

Because their feelings move so quickly, men of this kind find it especially hard to keep their minds balanced. As a result, they often lose their heads, and in war that is the worst side of their character. But experience does not support the claim that highly excitable people can never remain steady—that they are incapable of doing so even in moments of extreme agitation. Why should they not possess self-respect? As a rule, they are men of noble character. The feeling is rarely absent in them, but it often comes too late to have any effect. After an outburst, they suffer most from a sense of inner humiliation. If, through education, self-examination, and life experience, they have learned how to guard against themselves, so that in moments of intense excitement they become aware in time of the force within them that can hold them back, then even such men may possess great strength of mind.

Lastly, there are those who are hard to stir, but for that very reason are capable of very deep feeling. They stand in the same relation to the previous type as red-hot metal does to flame. With their Titanic strength, they are best suited to push aside the enormous masses that may figuratively represent the difficulties surrounding command in war. Their feelings work like the movement of a great weight: slower, but more irresistible.

Although such men are less likely than the previous type to be suddenly overtaken by their feelings and swept away, only to

feel ashamed afterward, experience would still not justify believing that they can never lose their composure or be overcome by blind passion. On the contrary, that will always happen whenever the noble pride of self-control is absent, or whenever it is not strong enough. We see examples of this most often among men of noble nature in savage nations, where a low level of mental cultivation always encourages the rule of the passions. But even among the most civilised classes in civilised States, life is full of such examples—men carried away by the violence of their passions, like the poacher of old chained to the stag in the forest.

So we say again: a strong mind is not simply one that feels intense emotion. It is one that can stay calm even in the midst of the strongest excitement, so that, despite the storm within, perception and judgment remain perfectly free to act—like a compass needle on a ship tossed by a storm.

By strength of character, or simply character, we mean steadiness in conviction, whether those convictions come from our own thinking or from the views of others, and whether they take the form of principles, opinions, sudden inspirations, or any other products of the understanding. But this kind of firmness cannot appear if the views themselves keep changing. Such change does not have to come from outside influences; it may arise from the constant activity of a person’s own mind, and in that case it shows a natural instability of mind. Clearly, we would not say that a man has character if he changes his views from moment to moment, no matter how much the reasons for those changes come from within himself. So only those men can be said to have this quality whose convictions remain highly

consistent—either because those convictions are deeply rooted and clear in themselves, and therefore not easily altered; or because, as with indolent men, there is too little mental activity, and therefore too little reason to change; or finally because a deliberate act of the will, guided by a commanding maxim of the understanding, resists any change of opinion up to a certain point.

In war, the mind is exposed to many strong impressions, and all knowledge and science are uncertain. Because of this, more things arise to pull a man away from the path he has chosen, and to make him doubt himself and others, than in any other human activity.

The terrible sight of danger and suffering easily lets emotion overpower judgment. In the haze that surrounds everything, it is hard to see clearly and deeply, so a change of opinion is easier to understand and easier to forgive. In every situation, we act only on conjecture or on our best guesses at the truth. That is why differences of opinion are nowhere greater than in war, and why the stream of impressions pushing against our own convictions never stops. Even the most composed mind can hardly resist them, because these impressions are powerful by nature and always work on the feelings at the same time.

When insight is clear and deep, it produces only general principles and broad views of action from a higher standpoint. In each particular case, the judgment immediately under consideration lies, so to speak, anchored to those principles. But the real difficulty is holding to the results of earlier reflection against the flood of opinions and appearances that the present

moment brings. There is often a wide gap between the particular case and the principle, and it cannot always be crossed by a visible chain of reasoning. In that gap, some confidence in oneself is necessary, and some skepticism is useful. In such moments, nothing may help except a firm rule that governs thought at once, without waiting for further reflection: in all doubtful cases, hold to the first opinion, and do not abandon it unless a clear conviction compels you to do so. We must believe firmly in the higher authority of well-tested maxims, and under the dazzling influence of passing events, not forget that those events are of lesser value. By giving first convictions this preference in doubtful cases, and by holding to them, our actions gain the stability and consistency that make up what is called character.

It is easy to see how essential a well-balanced mind is to strength of character. That is why people with strong minds generally also have a great deal of character.

Strength of character leads us to a false form of it—OBSTINACY.

In actual cases, it is often very difficult to say where one ends and the other begins. But as an idea, the difference between them does not seem hard to define.

Obstinacy is not a fault of the intellect. We use the word to mean resisting what we know, in our better judgment, to be right, and it would make no sense to blame the intellect for that, since the intellect is the faculty that judges. Obstinacy is a fault of the feelings or the heart. This rigidity of will, this impatience with contradiction, arises only from a particular kind of egotism

that values, above every other pleasure, the pleasure of ruling both oneself and others by one's own mind alone. We might call it a kind of vanity, if it were not clearly something more. Vanity is content with appearances; obstinacy depends on possessing the reality.

We may say, then, that strength of character turns into obstinacy whenever resistance to opposing opinions comes not from stronger convictions or trust in a sound principle, but simply from a spirit of opposition. As we have already admitted, this definition may be of little practical help. Still, it does prevent us from treating obstinacy as nothing more than strength of character carried to a higher degree, when it is really something essentially different. It is certainly close to strength of character and related to it, but so far from being merely a more intense form of it that many very obstinate men, for lack of understanding, have very little strength of character at all.

Having examined, among the high qualities of a great military commander, those in which heart and mind work together, we now come to a particular aspect of military activity that may be the most distinctive, if not the most important. It calls only on the powers of the mind, without regard to the forces of feeling. This is the connection between war and country, or ground.

This connection is, first of all, a permanent condition of war, because it is impossible to imagine our organized armies carrying out any operation except within some definite space. Second, it is of the greatest importance, because it modifies, and at times completely changes, the action of all forces. Third, while on the one hand it may concern the smallest features of a

locality, on the other it may extend over immense regions.

This is what gives war its distinctive character in relation to land and terrain. If we think about other human activities connected with these things—horticulture, agriculture, house-building, hydraulic engineering, mining, hunting, and forestry—they all take place within fairly limited areas that can be examined accurately in a short time. But in war, a commander must carry out his task across a space too large to take in at a glance, too vast for even the greatest energy to explore completely, and, because conditions are constantly changing, one he can rarely come to know thoroughly. The enemy is usually in much the same position. Even so, the difficulty remains a difficulty, though both sides share it, and the commander who overcomes it through talent and experience gains a major advantage. Besides, this supposed equality of difficulty is only an abstract idea and is seldom true in any particular case, since one of the two opponents—usually the defender—generally knows the ground far better than the attacker.

This unusual difficulty has to be overcome by a particular natural mental ability, known by the somewhat too narrow term Ortsinn, or sense of locality. It is the ability to quickly form an accurate geometric sense of a stretch of country, and therefore to know exactly where one is in it at any moment. This is clearly an act of imagination. The impression is no doubt formed partly through the physical eye and partly through the mind, which supplies what is missing with ideas drawn from knowledge and experience, and builds a whole out of the fragments the eye can see. But for that whole to appear clearly to the understanding, to become a picture, a mentally drawn map, for that picture to

remain fixed, and for its details never again to fall apart—all this can only be done by the mental power we call imagination. If some great poet or painter feels offended that we ask such a task of his goddess, or shrugs at the idea that a keen gamekeeper must necessarily have strong imagination, we readily admit that we are speaking here only of imagination in a limited sense, of its use in a truly humble role. Still, slight as this role may be, it must be the work of that natural gift; for if the gift is missing, it is hard to picture things clearly in their full visible completeness. We freely admit that a good memory is a great help. But whether memory in this case should be treated as an independent mental faculty, or whether it is simply this same power of imagination fixing such things more firmly in the memory, we leave undecided, since in many ways it seems difficult to think of these two powers as entirely separate.

That practice and mental sharpness have a great deal to do with it cannot be denied. Puysegur, the celebrated Quartermaster-General of the famous Luxemburg, used to say that at first he had very little confidence in himself in this matter, because whenever he had to fetch the parole from a distance, he always lost his way.

It is only natural that the scope for using this talent grows with rank. A hussar or rifleman leading a patrol must know the roads and side paths thoroughly, and for that, a few landmarks and a limited power of observation may be enough. But the commander of an army must know the broader geographical character of a province or a country. He must keep clearly in mind the direction of roads, rivers, and hills, while still retaining the more specific "sense of locality" (Ortsinn). Information of all

kinds—maps, books, memoirs, and, for details, the help of his Staff—can certainly assist him. Even so, it remains true that if he personally has the talent to form a clear and rapid mental picture of a country, it gives his actions greater ease and confidence, saves him from a certain mental helplessness, and makes him less dependent on others.

If this talent is to be credited to imagination, then it is almost the only service military activity asks from that wayward goddess, whose influence in other respects is more harmful than helpful.

We believe we have now reviewed the qualities of mind and spirit that military activity demands from human nature. At every point, intellect appears as an essential supporting force. From this, we can understand why the business of war, though so plain and simple in its effects, can never be carried out with outstanding success by people who do not possess outstanding powers of understanding.

Once we have reached this view, we no longer need to treat such an obvious idea as turning an enemy's position—something that has been done a thousand times—or a hundred similar ideas, as if they were the result of some great effort of genius.

People naturally tend to see the plain, honest soldier as the complete opposite of a thoughtful man full of ideas and invention, or of the brilliant figure shaped by every refinement of education. There is some truth in that contrast. But it does not mean that a soldier's effectiveness rests on courage alone, or that no special mental energy or ability is needed to make someone what is truly called a soldier. We must repeat that

nothing is more common than to see men lose their confidence and force when they are raised to a position they do not feel equal to. But we must also remind our readers that we are speaking of exceptional service—of the kind that brings renown in a particular field of action. Every rank of command in war therefore has its own level of ability required for fame and honour.

There is a vast distance between a General—that is, a man directing an entire war or a theatre of war—and his second in command. The reason is simple: the latter serves more directly under higher authority and closer supervision, and is therefore confined to a narrower sphere of independent judgment. That is why common opinion sees room for great talent only in the highest positions, and assumes that ordinary ability is enough for everything below them. It is also why people are inclined to see a subordinate General, grown old in service and reduced by constant routine to a marked poverty of mind, as a man of declining intellect, and, while still respecting his bravery, to laugh at his simplicity. Our purpose is not to win a better fate for these brave men—that would add nothing to their effectiveness, and little to their happiness. We only want to describe things as they are, and to expose the mistake of thinking that a mere daredevil without intellect can ever distinguish himself in war.

When we think about the exceptional abilities needed for people to stand out, even in lower-ranking roles, it follows that we should think highly of those who earn distinction as second in command of an army. Their character may seem simpler than that of a scholar of many subjects, a capable man of business, or a statesman, but that should not mislead us about the higher

quality of their intellectual work. Sometimes men carry the reputation they earned in a subordinate post into a higher one without truly deserving it there. If they are not given much to do, and so are not often exposed to the risk of revealing their weaknesses, people do not judge very precisely how much fame they actually deserve. As a result, such men often lead others to underestimate the qualities needed to excel in certain positions.

At every level, from the lowest upward, distinguished service in war requires a particular kind of genius. But history and posterity usually reserve the title of genius for those who have shone at the highest level, as Commanders-in-Chief. The reason is simple: at that level, the demands on judgment and on intellectual power in general are far greater.

To bring an entire war, or its major operations, which we call campaigns, to a successful conclusion, a leader must have a deep understanding of state policy in its highest relations. At that point, the conduct of war and the policy of the state become one, and the general becomes a statesman as well.

We do not call Charles XII a great genius, because he could not make the power of his sword serve a higher judgment and philosophy—he could not use it to reach a truly great end. We do not give that title to Henry IV of France either, because he did not live long enough to settle the relations among different states through his military activity and to work in that higher sphere where noble feelings and a chivalrous nature matter less in defeating the enemy than in overcoming internal division.

So the reader can understand everything a General must grasp and judge correctly at a glance, we refer back to the first chapter. We say that the General becomes a statesman, but he must still remain a General. On one side, he must consider all the State's relationships and interests; on the other, he must know exactly what he can accomplish with the means at his disposal.

Because war involves many different circumstances with no clear boundaries, a great number of factors have to be considered. Most of them can only be judged in terms of probability. Therefore, if the commander of an army does not bring to them a mind with an intuitive grasp of the truth, confusion in ideas and judgment is inevitable, and his decision-making will lose its way. In this sense, Buonaparte was right when he said that many of the questions a General must decide would pose mathematical problems worthy of Newton or Euler.

What is required here from the highest powers of the mind is a sense of unity and a judgment broad enough to give the mind an extraordinary power of vision. Within its range, it quiets and dismisses a thousand vague notions that an ordinary intellect could only uncover with great effort and would wear itself out trying to sort through. But even this higher activity of mind, this flash of genius, would still not enter history if it were not supported by the qualities of temperament and character we have already discussed.

Truth by itself is only a weak motive for action in human beings, and that is why there is always a great difference between

knowing and doing, between science and art. A man receives his strongest impulse to act through his feelings, and his greatest support, if we may put it that way, through those powers of heart and mind we have described as resolution, firmness, perseverance, and strength of character.

If, however, this elevated state of heart and mind in the General did not show itself in the overall effects it produced, and could only be accepted on trust or faith, then it would rarely become part of history.

What we usually learn about the course of events in war is very simple, and much of it looks the same from one case to another. From a bare account of events, no one can see the difficulties that had to be overcome. Only from time to time—through the memoirs of generals or people close to them, or through a special historical investigation focused on one particular incident—does some part of the many strands that make up the whole picture come to light. The reflections, doubts, and inner struggles that come before great actions are deliberately hidden because they touch on political interests, or they are lost by chance because they were treated as mere scaffolding to be removed once the building was finished.

If, in conclusion, and without trying to define the higher powers of the mind too precisely, we accept the distinction that ordinary language makes among intellectual abilities, and ask what kind of mind comes closest to military genius, then both the subject itself and experience give the same answer. In war, we would rather trust the welfare of our women and children, the honor and safety of our fatherland, to minds that are penetrating

rather than inventive, broad rather than narrowly specialized, and cool rather than fiery.

CHAPTER IV. Danger in War

Before we have really learned what danger is, we usually imagine it in a way that attracts us more than it repels us. In the rush of enthusiasm, who thinks about bullets and falling men when charging the enemy? To hurl oneself, blinded for a moment by excitement, against cold death, not knowing whether it will spare us or someone else—and to do so with the golden gate of victory so near, with the rich prize for which ambition longs almost within reach—can that seem difficult? It will not be difficult, and it will seem even less so. But such moments, which are not, as people suppose, the work of a single heartbeat, but are more like a doctor’s draught that must be taken watered down and weakened by time—such moments, we say, are rare.

Let us go with the novice to the battlefield. As we draw near, the thunder of the cannon grows louder and clearer, and soon the screaming of shot catches the inexperienced listener’s attention. Balls begin striking the ground near us, in front and behind. We hurry to the hill where the General stands with his large staff. Here cannon balls hit close by and shells burst so often that the grim reality of war breaks through the young soldier’s imagined picture of it. Suddenly, someone we know falls—a shell bursts in the crowd and sets off instinctive movements—and we begin to feel that we are no longer fully calm or composed; even the bravest man is at least somewhat shaken. Now we move one step farther into the battle, raging before us like a scene on a stage, and reach the nearest General of Division. Here one shot follows another, and the

noise of our own guns adds to the confusion. From the General of Division we go on to the Brigadier. He, a man of recognized courage, keeps carefully behind a rise in the ground, a house, or a tree—a clear sign that the danger is increasing. Grape-shot rattles on the roofs of houses and across the fields; cannon balls scream overhead and tear through the air in every direction, and soon the musket balls begin to whistle constantly. One step farther, toward the troops—to that solid infantry which for hours has held firm under this heavy fire—and the air is full of hissing balls, announcing how near they are with a short, sharp sound as they pass within an inch of the ear, the head, or the breast.

On top of all this, compassion fills the living heart with pity when it sees the wounded and the fallen. A young soldier cannot pass through these different layers of danger without realizing that reason does not work here in the same element as it does in calm reflection, and that its light is bent differently than in abstract thought. In fact, a man must be quite exceptional if, under such impressions for the first time, he does not lose the ability to make immediate decisions. It is true that habit soon dulls these impressions; within half an hour, we begin to grow more or less indifferent to everything happening around us. But an ordinary person never reaches complete calm or the mind’s natural spring and flexibility. So here again we see that ordinary qualities are not enough—and this becomes even more true the wider the sphere of action to be filled. Ardent courage, stoic courage, natural bravery, great ambition, or long familiarity with danger—there must be a great deal of all this if the effects produced in this resistant medium are not to fall far below what,

in the student’s room, might seem only an ordinary standard.

Danger is part of the friction of war; to understand its influence correctly is necessary for clear perception, and that is why it must be considered here.

CHAPTER V. Bodily Exertion in War

If no one were allowed to give an opinion on the events of war unless he did so while numbed by cold, collapsing from heat and thirst, or worn down by hunger and exhaustion, we would certainly have fewer judgments that were objectively correct; but they would at least be subjectively correct. That is, they would accurately express the true relation between the person making the judgment and the thing judged. We can see this in the subdued, modest, even dispirited and despondent way eyewitnesses speak about the results of unfortunate events—especially when they were personally involved. In our view, this is a measure of the influence bodily fatigue has, and of the allowance that should be made for it in matters of judgment.

Among the many things in war that cannot be measured by any fixed standard, physical effort deserves special notice. As long as none of it is wasted, it contributes to every other force, and no one can say exactly how far it can be pushed. What is striking, however, is that just as only a strong arm lets an archer draw the bowstring to its full stretch, only a powerful guiding spirit in war can bring out the full strength hidden in the troops. It is one thing when an army, after great disasters and surrounded by danger, collapses like a fallen wall and can save itself only through the utmost physical exertion. It is something very different when a victorious army, carried forward by pride alone, is led wherever its commander wills. The same effort that in the first case might only stir our pity must in the second win

our admiration, because it is far harder to maintain.

Here the inexperienced observer begins to see one of those forces that, as if in the dark, shackle the mind's activity and quietly wear down the powers of the soul.

Although the issue here is strictly the extreme effort a commander requires from his army, or a leader from his followers—and therefore the spirit needed to demand it and the skill needed to obtain it—we must not overlook the personal physical strain borne by generals and by the commander in chief. Since we have carried our analysis of war carefully to this point, we must also take account of the small amount that still remains.

We have spoken here of physical effort mainly because, like danger, it belongs among the basic causes of friction, and because its uncertain extent makes it like an elastic body, whose friction is famously hard to calculate.

To keep this kind of thinking from being misused—this way of looking at things that makes war seem even harder than it already is—human nature has given our judgment a guide in our feelings. Just as a person gains nothing by dwelling on his own weaknesses when he has been insulted and mistreated, but may rightly do so after he has beaten back the insult or fully avenged it, so no commander or army can lessen the effect of a shameful defeat by describing the danger, suffering, and effort involved—things that would greatly add to the glory of a victory. So our feelings, which are really a higher form of judgment, prevent us from doing what might otherwise seem a fair and reasonable thing to do.

CHAPTER VI. Information in War

By “information” we mean all the knowledge we have about the enemy and his country. In other words, it is the basis of all our ideas and actions. If we look at the nature of this foundation—how unreliable it is, how constantly it changes—we quickly see how dangerous a structure war is, and how easily it can collapse and bury us in its ruins. True, every book repeats the rule that we should trust only certain information and always remain suspicious. But that is poor comfort from books, the kind of empty advice system-builders and compilers fall back on when they have nothing better to offer.

A large share of the information gathered in war is contradictory. An even larger share is false, and most of it is uncertain. An officer therefore needs the ability to tell one thing from another, and that comes only from knowing people and circumstances and from having sound judgment. Probability must be his guide. This is no small problem even when making the first plans in a room, outside the actual field of war. In the midst of war itself, it becomes far greater, when one report comes fast after another. Then it is fortunate if the reports contradict one another in a way that reveals some balance of probability and prompts closer examination. It is far worse for the inexperienced commander when chance does not help him in this way, and instead one report supports another, confirms it, enlarges it, and completes the picture with fresh details, until urgent necessity forces a decision that is soon shown to be foolish, because all those reports were lies, exaggerations,

mistakes, and the like. In short, most reports are false, and human timidity multiplies lies and distortions. As a rule, people are more ready to believe bad news than good. Everyone tends to exaggerate the bad to some degree, and although the alarms spread in this way, like waves at sea, eventually die down, they also rise again without any clear cause. Trusting firmly in his own better judgment, the commander must stand like a rock against which the sea breaks in vain. That role is not easy. Anyone who is not naturally confident, or who has not been trained by experience in war and matured in judgment, should make it a rule to push against his own instincts by leaning away from fear and toward hope; only in that way will he keep his balance. This difficulty of seeing things as they really are is one of the greatest sources of friction in war. It makes everything look different from what was expected. The impression made by the senses is stronger than the conclusions reached by careful reflection. This goes so far that no important undertaking has ever been carried out without the commander having to overcome fresh doubts in himself at the very moment he begins to act. Ordinary men who follow the advice of others therefore usually become uncertain when they arrive on the scene. They think the circumstances are different from what they expected, and that impression grows stronger because they once again give way to the opinions of others. But even the man who made his own plans will often think he was wrong when he sees things with his own eyes. Only firm confidence in himself can make him resist the apparent pressure of the moment. In the end, his first conviction will prove correct, once the foreground scenery that fate has pushed onto the stage of war, with all its terrifying features, is drawn aside and the

horizon widens. This is one of the great gaps that separate conception from execution.

CHAPTER VII. Friction in War

As long as we have no personal experience of war, we cannot grasp where the difficulties lie that people talk about so much, or what the genius and exceptional mental powers required in a general actually have to do. Everything seems simple. Every necessary branch of knowledge seems straightforward. Every combination seems insignificant. Compared with them, even the easiest problem in higher mathematics appears to have a certain scientific dignity. But once we have seen war, all this becomes clear. Even then, however, it is extremely hard to explain what causes this change, or to identify that invisible yet fully effective factor.

Everything in war is very simple, but even the simplest thing is difficult. These difficulties pile up and create a kind of friction that no one who has not seen war can fully imagine. Suppose a traveler expects, toward evening, to finish the last two stages of his day's journey—four or five leagues—using post-horses on the main road. It seems like nothing. But he reaches the second-to-last station and finds no horses, or only poor ones. Then he faces hilly country and bad roads. It is a dark night, and after a great deal of trouble he is relieved just to reach the next station, where he finds miserable accommodations. War is like that. Because of countless small circumstances, which cannot really be described on paper, things disappoint us and we fall short of the goal. A powerful iron will can overcome this friction. It crushes the obstacles, though it may also damage the machine itself. We will often encounter this result. Like an obelisk toward which the main streets of a town converge, the

strong will of a proud spirit stands out at the center of the art of war, commanding everything around it.

Friction is the only idea that, in a general sense, captures what separates real war from war on paper. The military machine—the army and everything connected to it—looks simple enough, and for that reason seems easy to direct. But consider what it is actually made of: no part of it is a single solid piece. It is made up entirely of individuals, and each one creates friction in every direction. In theory, everything sounds straightforward: the battalion commander is responsible for carrying out the order he receives; the battalion, held together by discipline, seems like a single unit; and its commander, being a man of recognized zeal, ought to make the whole thing move as smoothly as a beam turning on an iron pin. But in reality it does not work that way, and the exaggeration and falseness of that view appear at once in war. A battalion always remains a collection of men, and if chance has it, even the least important among them can cause delay or disorder. The danger that comes with war, and the physical strain it demands, increase this problem so greatly that they must be counted among its main causes.

This immense friction is not concentrated at a few points, as it is in mechanics. It is everywhere, and everywhere it comes into contact with chance. As a result, incidents occur that no one could have calculated, because chance is their main source. Take the weather as one example. In one case, fog keeps the enemy from being seen in time, prevents a battery from firing at the right moment, or stops a report from reaching the general. In another, rain keeps a battalion from arriving when it should,

because instead of marching for three hours it may have to march for eight. It can also keep the cavalry from charging effectively because it is bogged down in heavy ground.

These are only a few small examples, offered to make the point clear so the reader can follow the author, for whole volumes could be written about these difficulties. To avoid that, and still give a clear sense of the countless small obstacles that must be faced in war, we could continue piling up examples—if we were not concerned with becoming tedious. But readers who have already understood us will allow us to add a few more.

Action in war means moving through a medium that resists you. Just as a person standing in water cannot easily and steadily perform even the simplest, most natural movement—walking—so in war, with ordinary abilities, one cannot maintain even an average level of performance. That is why a sound theorist is like a swimming instructor who teaches on dry land the movements needed in the water. To people who forget about the water, those movements may look awkward and ridiculous. This is also why theorists who have never gone into the water themselves, or who cannot draw general principles from their experience, are impractical and even absurd: they teach only what everyone already knows—how to walk.

Every war is full of specific facts, yet each one is also like an uncharted sea, full of hidden rocks the general may suspect are there but has never actually seen, and around which he must navigate in the dark. If a headwind rises as well—that is, if some major accidental event turns against him—then the highest skill,

presence of mind, and energy are needed, even though to people watching from a distance everything seems to unfold with perfect ease. Understanding this friction is a central part of what people so often mean by experience in war, which a good general must have. Of course, the best general is not the one who sees friction as largest in every case or is most intimidated by it; that includes the many over-anxious generals found among experienced officers. But a general must recognize it so that he can overcome it when possible, and so that he does not expect a level of precision in results that this very friction makes impossible. Nor can it ever be learned from theory alone; and even if it could, something would still be missing: the practiced judgment called tact. That quality is even more necessary in a field crowded with countless small and varied details than in great, decisive situations, where a person's own judgment can be helped by consulting others. Just as a socially experienced person, through habitual tact, speaks, acts, and moves in whatever way the moment requires, so an officer experienced in war will, in both great matters and small, at every pulse of war, decide and act as the occasion demands. Through experience and practice, he comes to sense immediately that a certain course will not do. As a result, he will not easily put himself in a compromised position—something that, when it happens often in war, undermines confidence at its foundation and becomes extremely dangerous.

It is this friction, then—or what we are calling friction here—that makes what seems easy in war so difficult in reality. As we go on, we will return to this subject often, and it will become clear that, besides experience and a strong will, many other rare

qualities of mind are needed to make a man a consummate general.

CHAPTER VIII. Concluding Remarks, Book I

The factors that come together in the atmosphere of war and make it a resistant medium for every kind of action are what we have called danger, physical exertion, information, and friction. Because of the obstacles they create, we can group them all under the single idea of general friction. Is there, then, any kind of oil that can reduce this friction? There is only one, and it is not always available whenever a commander or an army wants it: an army's habituation to war.

Habit strengthens the body for great exertion, the mind in great danger, and the judgment against misleading first impressions. It generally produces a valuable caution at every level, from the hussar and rifleman up to the general of division, and that makes the commander in chief's task easier.

Just as the human eye in a dark room widens its pupil, takes in the little light available, gradually begins to make out objects, and in the end sees them clearly, so it is in war for the experienced soldier. The novice, by contrast, encounters nothing but total darkness.

No general can give his army familiarity with war all at once, and training camps in peacetime are only a weak substitute for it. They are weak compared with real experience in war, though not weak when compared with other armies whose training is limited to routine mechanical drills. For that reason, it is far more important than inexperienced people suppose to organize peacetime exercises so that they include some of these sources

of friction, allowing the judgment, caution, and even resolve of subordinate leaders to be tested. It is immensely important that a soldier, whether high or low in rank, should not meet in war for the first time things that leave him astonished and confused. If he has encountered them even once before, he is already half familiar with them. This applies even to physical fatigue. Such hardships should be practiced less to accustom the body than to prepare the mind. In war, a young soldier is very likely to see unusual fatigue as the result of faults, mistakes, and confusion in the conduct of the whole army, and as a result he becomes troubled and discouraged. That would not happen if peacetime exercises had prepared him for it in advance.

Another less wide-ranging but still very important way to build familiarity with war in peacetime is to bring into service officers from foreign armies who have seen combat. Peace rarely exists across all of Europe, and never in every part of the world. So a state that has been at peace for a long time should always try to obtain some officers who have served well in different theaters of war, or send some of its own officers there, so that they can learn war through experience.

However small the number of officers of this kind may seem compared with the whole body, their influence is still clearly felt.() Their experience, the direction of their talent, and the mark of their character shape both their subordinates and their fellow officers. And even if they cannot be given high command, they can still always be valued as men familiar with

the ground, who can be consulted on many particular occasions. *

* The War of 1870 provides a striking example. Von Moltke and von Goeben, to mention only two among many, had both gained service in this way: the former in Turkey and Syria, the latter in Spain.—EDITOR.

BOOK II. ON THE THEORY OF WAR

CHAPTER I. Branches of the Art of War

In the most literal sense, war is fighting, because fighting alone is the effective principle within the many activities that, in a broader sense, are called war. But fighting is a test of the moral and physical forces, carried out through the latter. That the moral element cannot be left out is obvious, because the state of mind has always had the most decisive influence on the forces used in war.

The need to fight quickly led people to develop special inventions that would give them an advantage. As a result, the way fighting is carried on has changed greatly. But however it is conducted, its basic nature remains the same, and fighting is what makes war what it is.

From the beginning, inventions have taken the form of weapons and equipment for individual fighters. These must be supplied, and people must learn how to use them, before war begins. They are shaped by the kind of fighting they are meant for and are therefore governed by it. But the activity involved in creating and handling these tools is clearly different from the fight itself. It is preparation for combat, not the conduct of combat. This is obvious because even simple wrestling counts as fighting, though it requires no arming or equipment.

Fighting has determined everything connected with arms and equipment, and those, in turn, have changed the way fighting is carried out. There is, therefore, a mutual influence between the two.

Even so, the fight itself remains a completely distinct activity, especially because it takes place in a completely distinct element: danger.

So if there is any case in which we need to draw a line between two different activities, it is here. To see how important this is, we need only remember how often outstanding skill in one field has proved to be nothing but useless pedantry in the other.

It is also not at all hard to separate these two activities in thought if we regard fighting forces, fully armed and equipped, as a given means whose effective use requires nothing more than an understanding of their general effects.

The Art of War, therefore, in its proper sense, is the art of using the given means in fighting, and we can give it no better name than the “Conduct of War.” In a broader sense, however, all activities that exist for the sake of war belong to the Art of War. This includes the whole creation of troops: raising them, arming them, equipping them, and training them.

To build a sound theory, it is essential to keep these two activities separate. It is easy to see why: if every act of war must begin with preparing military forces, and if it assumes forces already organized as a basic condition of waging war, then that theory will apply only in the limited cases where the available force happens to fit exactly. If, instead, we want a theory that fits most cases and is not completely useless in any

case, it must be based on the means most commonly used, and, in regard to those means, only on the actual results that arise from them.

The conduct of war, then, is the shaping and directing of fighting. If fighting were a single act, there would be no need to divide it further. But fighting is made up of a greater or smaller number of separate acts, each complete in itself, which we call combats, as we showed in the first chapter of the first book. These become new units. From this come two quite different activities: first, shaping and directing these individual combats in themselves; and second, combining them with one another in view of the war's ultimate object. The first is called tactics; the second, strategy.

This division between tactics and strategy is now almost universally used, and most people know reasonably well under which heading to place any particular fact, even if they do not clearly understand the basis of the classification. But when such divisions are followed so consistently in practice, they must rest on something deep. We have looked for that foundation, and we could say that it is simply the usage of the majority that has led us to it. On the other hand, we regard the arbitrary and artificial definitions of these ideas proposed by some writers as out of step with the general use of the terms.

According to our classification, then, tactics is the theory of the use of military forces in combat. Strategy is the theory of the use of combats for the object of the war.

We can explain more clearly what we mean by a single or independent combat, and the conditions that define it, only

when we examine combat itself. For now, it is enough to say this: in relation to space—that is, to combats happening at the same time—the unit extends as far as personal command extends. In relation to time—that is, to combats following one another in close succession—it extends until the crisis that occurs in every combat has completely passed.

Doubtful cases may arise—for example, cases in which several combats might also be treated as a single combat—but that does not invalidate the distinction we have adopted. The same difficulty appears in every attempt to distinguish real things that shade gradually into one another. So there may certainly be actions in war that, without any change in point of view, can be counted either as strategic or as tactical. Examples include very extended positions resembling a chain of posts, or preparations for crossing a river at several points.

Our classification applies only to the use of military force. But war also includes a number of activities that support it while still remaining quite different from it—sometimes closely connected, sometimes less so. All of these activities concern the maintenance of military force. Just as the creation and training of that force come before its use, its maintenance is always a necessary condition of using it. Strictly speaking, however, all such activities should be regarded only as preparations for fighting. They are certainly nothing more than activities very close to action, so close that, in importance, they alternate with the use of the forces throughout the hostile act. We therefore have the right to exclude them, along with other preparatory activities, from the Art of War in its narrower sense, from the conduct of war properly so called. In fact, we are required to do

so if we want to follow the first principle of all theory: eliminating heterogeneous elements. Who would include in the actual “conduct of war” the whole range of supply and administration simply because it constantly interacts with the use of the troops, even though it is essentially different from it?

In the third chapter of our first book, we said that battle or combat is the only activity that has a direct effect, and that all other activities, because they ultimately lead to it, are contained within it. What we meant was that combat gives all those other activities their purpose, and that each of them, according to its own particular laws, must aim toward that end. We must now look at this more closely.

The matters that make up activities outside combat are of different kinds.

One group belongs, in one sense, to combat itself and is identical with it, while in another sense it serves to preserve the military force. The other group belongs purely to support and sustenance, and only affects combat indirectly, through the results it produces. The matters that, in one respect, belong to fighting itself are marches, camps, and cantonments, because they all involve different situations of troops, and wherever troops are involved, the possibility of combat must always be present.

The other matters, which belong only to maintenance, are subsistence, care of the sick, and the supply and repair of arms and equipment.

Marches are closely bound up with the use of troops. Marching during combat, usually called manoeuvring, does not necessarily involve the use of weapons, but it is so necessarily connected with fighting that it forms an essential part of what we call combat. A march outside combat, by contrast, is simply the carrying out of a strategic measure. The strategic plan determines when, where, and with what forces a battle is to be fought, and the march is the only means of putting that plan into effect.

A march outside combat is therefore an instrument of strategy, but it is not for that reason a matter of strategy alone. Since the armed force carrying it out may be drawn into combat at any moment, the way it is executed is governed by tactical rules as well as strategic ones. If we assign a column its route along one side of a river or one branch of a mountain, that is a strategic measure, because it expresses the intention to fight on that particular side of the hill or river rather than the other, if combat becomes necessary during the march.

But if a column, instead of following the road through a valley, marches along the parallel ridgeline, or if for ease of movement it splits into several columns, then those are tactical arrangements, because they concern how we intend to use the troops in the expected battle.

The specific order of march is always closely connected to readiness for battle, and is therefore tactical in nature, because it is simply the first or preliminary deployment for the engagement that may occur.

The march is the means by which strategy distributes its active elements, namely combats. But those combats often become visible only through their results, not through the details of how they actually unfolded. So in theory, the instrument has often been mistaken for the effective principle itself. That is why we hear people speak of a decisive, skillful march, when they are really referring to the combinations in battle to which those marches led. This substitution of ideas is too natural, and brevity of expression too useful, to require changing it. Still, it is only a compressed chain of thought, and we must never forget its full meaning if we want to avoid error.

We fall into this kind of error when we assign strategic combinations a power independent of tactical results. We read about marches and maneuvers being combined, the objective being achieved, and at the same time not a word being said about combat. From this, people conclude that in war there are ways to defeat an enemy without fighting. We cannot show how far-reaching this error is until later.

But although a march can be regarded, in an absolute sense, as an integral part of combat, it still includes certain aspects that do not belong to combat and are therefore neither tactical nor strategic. These include all arrangements concerned only with accommodating the troops, or with building bridges, roads, and the like. These are merely conditions. In many circumstances they are very closely connected with operations, and may almost become inseparable from the troops themselves, as when a bridge is built in the presence of the enemy. But in themselves they are always activities whose theory does not belong to the theory of the conduct of war.

Camps—meaning any concentrated deployment of troops, and therefore a battle formation, as distinct from cantonments or quarters—are places of rest and recovery. But they are also the strategic selection of a battlefield at a chosen spot. The way a camp is laid out establishes the basic lines of the battle, the starting point of every defensive engagement. Camps therefore belong essentially to both strategy and tactics.

Cantonments serve in place of camps when the troops need better rest and recovery. Like camps, they are a matter of strategy in terms of their position and extent, and a matter of tactics in terms of their internal arrangement, with readiness for battle in view.

Of course, occupying camps and cantonments usually serves another purpose besides restoring the troops—for example, covering a district or holding a position. But it may also serve only that first purpose. We remind our readers that strategy can pursue a wide variety of aims, because anything that offers an advantage may become the object of combat, and preserving the instrument by which war is carried on must very often become the aim of its partial combinations.

If, in such a case, strategy serves only to preserve the troops, that does not place it outside the sphere of strategy. We are still dealing with the use of military force, because every disposition of that force at any point in the theatre of war is such a use.

But when maintaining troops in camp or quarters requires activities that are not an employment of armed force—such as building huts, pitching tents, or providing food and sanitary services in camps or quarters—those activities belong to neither

strategy nor tactics.

Even entrenchments, whose location and preparation clearly form part of the order of battle and therefore belong to tactics, do not fall within the theory of the conduct of war so far as the actual work of building them is concerned. The knowledge and skill needed for that work are, in fact, qualities inherent in the nature of an organized army; the theory of combat assumes them.

Among the matters involved in simply maintaining an armed force, where none of the elements are directly part of combat, feeding the troops comes first, because it has to be done almost every day for every soldier. For that reason, it runs through military action at the strategic level—we say at the strategic level because, during a battle, the troops' food supply will rarely affect the plan, though that is certainly possible. So the task of supplying the troops interacts mainly with strategy, and it is very common for the main strategic features of a campaign or a war to be shaped with that supply in mind. But however frequent or important these supply considerations may be, feeding the troops remains an activity entirely separate from employing the troops, and it affects that employment only through its results.

The other branches of administration we have mentioned are much less closely connected to the actual use of the troops. Caring for the sick and wounded, important as it is for the well-being of an army, directly affects only a small part of the individuals who make it up, and so it influences the use of the rest only weakly and indirectly. Replacing weapons and

equipment—except where, through the organization of the forces, it forms a continuous activity built into them—happens only from time to time, and therefore only rarely affects strategic plans.

Still, we must be careful not to make a mistake here. In some cases, these matters can truly be decisive. It is easy to imagine the distance of hospitals and munitions depots being the sole reason for very important strategic decisions. We do not mean to deny that or to downplay it. But at the moment we are dealing not with the specific facts of a particular case, but with abstract theory. Our point, then, is that this kind of influence is too uncommon to give the theory of medical arrangements and the supply of munitions and weapons such importance in the theory of conducting war that it would be worth including, within that theory, a discussion of the different methods and systems those subjects may offer, in the same way that this is certainly necessary when it comes to feeding troops.

If we have understood the results of our reflection clearly, then the activities connected with war fall into two main categories: those that are only preparations for war, and war itself. Theory must therefore make the same distinction.

The knowledge and practical skill involved in preparing for war are concerned with raising, training, and maintaining all military forces. We need not decide what general label to give these matters, but they plainly include artillery, fortification, what are called elementary tactics, the entire organization and administration of the different armed services, and everything of that kind. The theory of war itself, by contrast, deals with

using these prepared means to achieve the object of the war. From the first category it needs only the results—that is, knowledge of the main properties of the means being used. This is what we call the Art of War in a narrower sense, or the Theory of the Conduct of War, or the Theory of the Employment of Armed Forces; for our purposes, all these terms mean the same thing.

The present theory will therefore treat combat as the real contest. Marches, camps, and cantonments will be treated as circumstances more or less connected with it. The subsistence of the troops will be considered only as one of these given circumstances, and only in terms of its results, not as an activity that belongs to combat itself.

Viewed in this narrower sense, the Art of War divides again into tactics and strategy. Tactics deals with the form of the individual engagement; strategy deals with its use. Both are connected with marches, camps, and cantonments only through their relation to combat, and these circumstances are tactical or strategic depending on whether they concern the form of the battle or its significance.

No doubt many readers will think this careful distinction between tactics and strategy is unnecessary, since the two are so closely connected and the distinction has no direct effect on the actual conduct of war. We readily admit that it would be pedantic to expect a theoretical distinction to produce direct effects on the battlefield.

The first task of any theory is to sort out concepts and ideas that have been mixed together and confused. Only when we

have a clear understanding of terms and concepts can we hope to move forward clearly and easily, and be sure that writer and reader are seeing things from the same point of view. Tactics and strategy are two activities that constantly overlap in time and space, yet they are fundamentally different. The internal principles of each, and the way they relate to one another, cannot be understood until we first form a clear idea of the nature of each one.

Anyone to whom all this seems unimportant must either reject theory altogether, or else has not yet been troubled by the confused and tangled ideas that rest on no fixed point of view and lead to no satisfying result. These ideas are sometimes tedious, sometimes fanciful, and sometimes lost in vague generalities. Yet they are the kind of things we are often forced to hear and read about the conduct of war, because the spirit of scientific inquiry has so far been directed very little toward these subjects.

CHAPTER II. On the Theory of War

1. THE FIRST IDEA OF THE "ART OF WAR" WAS SIMPLY THE PREPARATION OF THE ARMED FORCES.

In earlier times, the term "Art of War," or "Science of War," meant nothing more than the whole body of knowledge and skill concerned with material things. It covered the design, manufacture, and use of weapons; the building of fortifications and entrenchments; the organization of an army; and the mechanics of its movements. All these branches of knowledge and skill had one purpose: to create an armed force ready for use in war. But all this dealt only with material things and with a one-sided kind of activity. In fact, it was simply a progression from simpler tasks to a more refined kind of mechanical art. Its relation to war itself was much like the relation between the craft of the swordsmith and the art of actually using the sword. The use, in moments of danger and under constant interaction with an opponent, of the particular powers of mind and spirit directed toward a given purpose had not yet even been raised as a subject.

2. TRUE WAR FIRST APPEARS IN THE ART OF SIEGES.

In siege warfare, we first see some real direction of combat—some use of the mind to guide the material forces under its control. But this usually went only so far before it took shape again in new physical forms such as approaches, trenches, counter-approaches, batteries, and the like. Each step taken by the higher faculties showed itself in some concrete result of that kind. Thought served mainly as the thread on which these material devices were arranged in order. Since the intellect could hardly express itself in this kind of war except through such means, almost everything that needed to be done was done in that way.

3. THEN TACTICS TRIED TO MOVE IN THE SAME DIRECTION.

Later, tactics tried to give the mechanical arrangement of its parts the character of a general system, built on the particular qualities of the instrument. This system did indeed lead to the battlefield, but instead of opening the way for the free activity of the mind, it produced an army like an automaton. Bound by rigid formations and orders of battle, and able to move only at the word of command, it was meant to carry out its actions like a piece of clockwork.

4. THE REAL CONDUCT OF WAR APPEARED ONLY OCCASIONALLY AND IN DISGUISE.

The conduct of war in the proper sense—that is, the use of prepared means adapted to particular needs—was not regarded as a fit subject for theory. It was thought to be something that should be left entirely to natural talent. Gradually, as war moved beyond the hand-to-hand fighting of the Middle Ages into a more regular and systematic form, scattered reflections on this subject also began to force themselves on people's minds. But they appeared mostly only by chance, in memoirs and narratives, and to some extent in disguise.

5. REFLECTIONS ON MILITARY EVENTS CREATED THE NEED FOR A THEORY.

As people reflected more and more on war, and as its history took on an increasingly critical character, the urgent need arose for the support of fixed principles and rules. These were needed so that, in the disputes that naturally grew out of military events, this war of opinions could be brought to some common point. This swirl of views, revolving around no central point and following no clear laws, could only be deeply unsatisfying to the human mind.

6. ATTEMPTS TO ESTABLISH A POSITIVE THEORY.

There was, therefore, an effort to establish maxims, rules, and even complete systems for the conduct of war. The aim was to create something definite and positive, without considering the endless difficulties involved in directing war in that way. As we have shown, the conduct of war has no fixed limits in any direction, while every system, by its nature, draws boundaries and imposes a closed structure. The result is a fundamental conflict between such theory and actual practice.

7. LIMITATION TO MATERIAL OBJECTS.

Writers on theory quickly felt how difficult the subject was, and decided they were justified in escaping that difficulty by directing their maxims and systems only toward material things and one-sided activity. Their goal was to reach results that were as certain and definite as those found in the science of preparing for war, and so they chose to consider only what could be calculated.

8. SUPERIORITY OF NUMBERS.

Since superiority in numbers is a material condition, it was selected from among all the factors that produce victory because it could be brought under mathematical laws through combinations of time and space. It was thought possible to ignore all other circumstances by assuming they were equal on both sides and therefore cancelled each other out. That would

have been reasonable if the purpose had simply been to gain a preliminary understanding of this one factor and its relations. But to turn it into a permanent rule, to treat superiority of numbers as the only law, and to see the whole secret of the Art of War in the formula of bringing superior masses to a certain point at a certain time—this was a limitation that reality itself overruled.

9. VICTUALLING OF TROOPS.

One theoretical school also tried to systematise another material element by making the subsistence of troops, according to a previously established organisation of the army, the supreme guide in the higher conduct of war. In this way they certainly arrived at definite figures, but those figures rested on a series of arbitrary calculations and therefore could not withstand the test of practical use.

10. BASE.

One clever writer tried to gather a whole range of things under a single idea: the BASE. Into that one concept he packed many different elements, including some that even involved intangible forces. His list included supplying the troops, keeping their numbers and equipment up to strength, securing communications with the home country, and finally ensuring a safe line of retreat if one became necessary. First, he proposed replacing all these different considerations with the single idea of a base. Then he reduced the base itself to its length or extent. Finally, he reduced that again to the angle the army

formed with this base. All of this was done to produce a neat geometrical result that was completely useless. That outcome was inevitable. Every one of these substitutions distorted the truth and left out part of what the original idea contained. The concept of a base is genuinely necessary in strategy, and recognizing it was an important achievement. But using it in the way we have described is wholly unacceptable. It could only lead to partial conclusions, and in fact it drove these theorists toward a view that runs against common sense: the belief that an enveloping form of attack has a decisive effect.

11. INTERIOR LINES.

In reaction to this mistaken approach, another geometrical principle was raised to supreme importance: the so-called interior lines. Although this principle rests on a solid foundation—namely, the truth that combat is the only effective means in war—it is still, precisely because of its purely geometrical character, just another example of one-sided theory that can never dominate in the real world.

12. ALL THESE ATTEMPTS ARE OPEN TO OBJECTION.

All these attempts at theory should be regarded as progress toward truth only in their analytical aspect. But in their synthetic aspect—that is, in the precepts and rules they offer—they are entirely useless.

They aim at fixed quantities, but in war everything is uncertain, and calculation always has to deal with changing quantities.

They focus attention only on material forces, even though all military action is shaped throughout by intelligent forces and their effects.

They pay attention to action on only one side, even though war is a constant process of mutual action, with effects on both sides.

13. AS A RULE THEY LEAVE NO ROOM FOR GENIUS.

Everything this wretched philosophy of narrow, one-sided views could not reach was pushed outside the bounds of science and left to genius, which rises above rules.

Pity the soldier who is satisfied to crawl around in this poverty of rules—rules too poor for genius, which can rise above them and perhaps even laugh at them. Whatever genius does must be the best rule of all, and theory can do no better than explain how and why that is so.

Pity the theory that sets itself against the mind. No amount of humility can fix that contradiction, and the more humble it becomes, the sooner ridicule and contempt will drive it out of real life.

14. THE DIFFICULTY OF THEORY AS SOON AS MORAL FORCES COME INTO PLAY.

Any theory becomes infinitely more difficult the moment it enters the realm of moral forces. Architecture and painting know exactly what they are doing as long as they deal only with material things; no one disputes mechanical or optical construction. But as soon as moral forces begin to operate, as soon as they produce impressions and feelings, the whole system of rules breaks down into vague ideas.

Medicine deals mainly with bodily phenomena. It works with the animal organism, which is constantly changing and is never exactly the same from one moment to the next. That already makes practice very difficult and puts the physician's judgment above his science. But how much harder does it become when a moral effect is added, and how much more highly must we value the physician of the mind?

15. MORAL FORCES MUST NOT BE LEFT OUT OF WAR.

But in war, action is never directed only against matter; it is always directed at the same time against the intelligent force that gives that matter life, and it is impossible to separate the two.

But these intelligent forces are visible only to the inner eye, and that inner vision differs from person to person, and often even in the same person at different times.

Since danger is the common element in which everything moves in war, judgment is shaped above all by courage—by a sense of one's own strength. To some extent, it acts like a lens through which everything is seen before it reaches the mind.

And yet there can be no doubt that experience gives these things a certain objective value.

Everyone knows the moral effect of a surprise attack, or of being attacked on the flank or from the rear. Everyone thinks less of an enemy's courage the moment he turns his back, and takes far greater risks in pursuit than when being pursued. Everyone judges the enemy's General by his supposed abilities, his age, and his experience, and acts accordingly. Everyone takes a close look at the spirit and temper of both his own troops and the enemy's. Experience has firmly established all these and similar effects in the realm of human feeling. They happen again and again, and so we are justified in treating them as real forces of their kind. What use would any theory be if it left them out?

Experience is, of course, the essential basis for these truths. No theory, and no General, should get entangled in psychological or philosophical sophistries.

16. THE MAIN DIFFICULTY OF A THEORY OF THE CONDUCT OF WAR.

To understand clearly how difficult it is to frame a theory for the conduct of war, and from that to determine what such a theory must be like, we need to look more closely at the main elements that make up the nature of activity in war.

17. FIRST DISTINCTIVE FEATURE.—MORAL FORCES AND THEIR EFFECTS. (HOSTILE FEELING.)

The first of these distinctive features lies in moral forces and their effects.

Combat begins as an expression of hostile feeling, but in the large-scale conflicts we call wars, that feeling often becomes simply a clash of opposing aims. Usually, there is no inborn personal hatred between one individual and another. Even so, combat never takes place without stirring such feelings into action. National hatred, which is rarely absent in war, takes the place of personal hostility in the mind of one individual facing another. But even when that too is absent, and no animosity exists at first, combat itself kindles hostile feeling. If someone commits violence against us under orders from a superior, we are more likely to want to strike back at him and take revenge on him than at the higher authority who gave the order. This is human nature—or animal nature, if you prefer—but it is true. In theory, we are very prone to treat combat as an abstract test of strength, with no involvement of feeling, and that is one of the countless errors theorists knowingly make because they fail to see where it leads.

Besides the feelings naturally stirred up by combat itself, there are others that do not essentially belong to it but easily attach themselves to it because they are closely related—ambition, the love of power, enthusiasm of every kind, and so on.

18. THE IMPRESSION OF DANGER. (COURAGE.)

In the end, combat creates the element of danger, and every activity in war has to exist and operate within it, just as a bird lives in the air or a fish in the water. But the effects of danger all work on the feelings, either directly—that is, instinctively—or through the understanding. In the first case, the result is a desire to escape the danger, and if that is impossible, fear and anxiety follow. If this reaction does not occur, then what appears is courage, which balances that instinct. Courage, however, is not an act of the understanding any more than fear is; it too is a feeling. Fear is concerned with physical self-preservation, while courage is concerned with moral self-preservation. Courage, then, is the nobler instinct. But precisely because it is such, it cannot be used like a lifeless tool that produces its effects in exact obedience to a set measure. Courage, therefore, is not merely a counterweight to danger that cancels out its effects; it is a distinct power in its own right.

19. HOW FAR DANGER'S INFLUENCE EXTENDS.

But if we want to judge accurately how danger affects the main actors in war, we must not confine it to the immediate physical danger of the moment. It rules over the person involved not only by threatening him, but also by threatening everything entrusted to his care. It weighs on him not only when it is actually present, but also at all other moments connected with the present through the imagination. Finally, it acts not only directly in itself, but also indirectly through responsibility, which makes it press on the mind of the chief actor with tenfold force. Who could

advise or decide on a great battle without feeling his mind stirred up, or troubled, by the danger and responsibility that such a major decision carries within it? We may say that action in war, so far as it is real action and not merely a state of affairs, never lies outside the sphere of danger.

20. OTHER POWERS OF FEELING.

If we think of the feelings stirred up by hostility and danger as especially belonging to war, that does not mean war excludes all the other emotions that accompany people through life. Those also often have a place in it. We can certainly say that, in this grave business of life, many small movements of passion are quieted. But that is true only of those operating on a lower level, who are driven from one state of danger and exertion to another. They lose sight of the rest of life, grow unused to deceit because it is useless in the face of death, and thus acquire that soldierly simplicity of character which has always been the finest mark of the military profession. At higher levels, things are different. The higher a man's rank, the more he must look around him. Interests then arise on every side, and the passions become active in many different ways, for good and ill. Envy and generosity, pride and humility, fierceness and tenderness—all may appear as active forces in this great drama.

21. DISTINCTIVE QUALITIES OF MIND.

The chief actor's distinctive mental qualities are highly important, just as his feelings are. We should expect very different things from an imaginative, impulsive, inexperienced mind than from a calm, shrewd intelligence.

22. THE VARIETY OF MENTAL TYPES PRODUCES A VARIETY OF PATHS TO THE SAME END.

This great variety in individual mental character—whose influence is felt most strongly in the higher ranks, because it increases as we move upward—is the main source of the different paths to the same end that we noted in the first book. It is also what gives probability and chance such an uneven share in shaping the course of events.

23. SECOND DISTINCTIVE QUALITY.—IMMEDIATE REACTION.

The second distinctive feature of war is the way each side reacts to the other, and the back-and-forth interaction that follows. We are not talking here about how hard it is to judge that reaction; that belongs to the earlier problem of treating moral forces as if they were measurable. The point here is that this mutual action, by its very nature, resists anything like a fixed, orderly plan. The effect any move has on the enemy is the clearest information action can provide. But theory can deal only with categories or groups of events; it can never fully grasp the truly individual case as it actually is. That must always

be left to judgment and talent. So in a field like war, where plans built on general conditions are so often upset by unexpected and exceptional events, much more must usually be left to talent, and much less can be expected from theoretical guidance than in any other field.

24. THIRD PECULIARITY.—UNCERTAINTY OF ALL DATA.

Lastly, the great uncertainty of all data in war creates a special difficulty, because every action must be planned, to some extent, in a kind of twilight. And that dim light often—like fog or moonlight—makes things look larger than they are and gives them a distorted appearance.

What this weak light leaves unclear, talent must uncover—or else it must be left to chance. So once again, in the absence of objective knowledge, one must rely on talent or on the favor of fortune.

25. A POSITIVE THEORY IS IMPOSSIBLE.

With material of this kind, we can only conclude that it is simply impossible to build a theory of the Art of War that, like a scaffold, gives the chief actor external support on every side. In every case where he must rely on his own talent, he would find himself outside that theoretical scaffold and at odds with it. And no matter how broadly or carefully the theory was constructed, the same result would follow that we mentioned before: talent and genius operate beyond the law, while theory stands in opposition to reality.

26. WHAT REMAINS TO MAKE A THEORY POSSIBLE (THE DIFFICULTIES ARE NOT EQUALLY GREAT EVERYWHERE).

There are two ways to deal with this difficulty. First, what we have said about the nature of military action in general does not apply in the same way to everyone, whatever their rank. In the lower ranks, self-sacrifice is called for more often, but the demands on understanding and judgment are far smaller. The range of events is narrower. The possible ends and means are fewer. The available facts are clearer and are usually found in what can actually be seen. But the higher we go, the greater the difficulties become. In the Commander-in-Chief they reach their highest point, so that at that level almost everything must be left to genius.

27. THEORY MUST TAKE THE FORM OF OBSERVATIONS, NOT DOCTRINE.

A second way to make theory possible is to see that it does not have to serve as a direct set of instructions for action. As a rule, whenever an activity deals again and again with the same objects, the same aims, and the same means—even if there are small variations and many different combinations—it can be studied by reason. That study is the most essential part of any theory, and it has a special claim to the name. It is an analytical examination of the subject that leads to precise knowledge and, when applied to the results of experience—in our case, military history—to a deep familiarity with it. The more closely theory reaches that goal, the more it moves from objective knowledge

toward the subjective form of practical skill. And for that very reason, it becomes more effective when circumstances leave no room for any decision except one based on personal talent; its effects will appear in that talent itself. If theory examines the elements that make up War; if it separates clearly what at first seems fused together; if it fully explains the properties of the means; if it shows their likely effects; if it makes the nature of objectives clear; if it casts the light of fundamentally critical inquiry across the whole field of War—then it has fulfilled the main duties of its proper role. It then becomes a guide for anyone who wants to learn about War from books. It lights the whole road before him, makes his progress easier, trains his judgment, and protects him from error.

If a highly skilled man spends half his life trying to make an obscure subject fully clear, he will probably know more about it than someone who tries to master it quickly. Theory exists so that each new person does not have to repeat the same labor of clearing the ground and struggling through the subject, but can instead find it already arranged and illuminated. It should train the mind of the future leader in War—or rather, guide him in teaching himself—but it should not go with him onto the battlefield, just as a sensible tutor shapes and enlightens the developing mind of a young man without keeping him on leading strings for the rest of his life.

If principles and rules naturally grow out of the ideas theory examines—if truth gradually takes on that clear, fixed form—then theory does not work against this natural tendency of the mind. On the contrary, when the whole argument comes together in a central conclusion, theory brings that conclusion

clearly into view. But it does so only to satisfy the philosophical demand of reason: to show plainly the point where all the lines meet, not to turn it into a kind of algebraic formula for use on the battlefield. Even these principles and rules serve less as signposts to guide action in the moment than as a way of shaping, in a reflective mind, the general pattern of its habitual movements.

28. FROM THIS POINT OF VIEW, THEORY BECOMES POSSIBLE AND CEASES TO CONFLICT WITH PRACTICE.

From this point of view, a sound theory of the conduct of war becomes possible—that is, a useful theory that never comes into conflict with reality. It then depends only on treating the subject rationally to bring theory into such harmony with action that the absurd gap between theory and practice disappears. That gap has often been created by unreasonable theory in open defiance of common sense. But just as often, narrow-mindedness and ignorance have used it as an excuse for yielding to their own natural incapacity.

29. THEORY THEREFORE CONSIDERS THE NATURE OF ENDS AND MEANS—ENDS AND MEANS IN TACTICS.

Theory must therefore consider the nature of both means and ends.

In tactics, the means are the disciplined armed forces that carry on the struggle. The end is victory. A more exact definition of

that idea can be given later, when we examine combat itself. For now, it is enough to take the enemy's withdrawal from the battlefield as the sign of victory. Through this victory, strategy achieves the purpose for which it assigned the combat, and that purpose gives the combat its particular meaning. This meaning does, of course, affect the nature of the victory. A victory meant to weaken the enemy's armed forces is different from one intended only to put us in possession of a position. The purpose of a combat can therefore significantly influence how it is prepared and conducted, and for that reason it must also be considered in tactics.

30. CIRCUMSTANCES THAT ALWAYS ACCOMPANY THE USE OF THE MEANS.

Certain conditions are present throughout combat and influence its outcome to a greater or lesser degree. These must therefore be taken into account when armed forces are employed.

These conditions are the location of the combat (the ground), the time of day, and the weather.

31. LOCATION.

We prefer to deal with location under the heading "Country and Ground." Strictly speaking, it might have no influence at all if combat took place on a completely flat, uncultivated plain.

Such a case may occur in a land of steppes, but in the cultivated countries of Europe it is almost imaginary. A battle between civilised nations in which country and ground have no effect is therefore hardly conceivable.

32. TIME OF DAY.

The time of day affects combat through the difference between day and night. But its influence naturally goes beyond that simple division, since every combat lasts for some time, and great battles continue for several hours. In preparing for a great battle, it makes a major difference whether it begins in the morning or in the evening. At the same time, many battles may be fought in which the time of day matters very little, and in most cases its influence is only slight.

33. WEATHER.

Weather even more rarely has a decisive effect, and when it does matter, fog is usually the reason.

34. END AND MEANS IN STRATEGY.

Strategy, in the first instance, treats victory—that is, the tactical result—as a means to its object, and ultimately to those things that lead directly to peace. The use of its means toward this object is, at the same time, accompanied by circumstances that influence it to a greater or lesser extent.

35. CIRCUMSTANCES THAT ACCOMPANY THE USE OF THE MEANS OF STRATEGY.

These circumstances include the country and the terrain—the first covering the territory and population of the entire theater of war. They also include the time of day and the season of the year. Finally, they include the weather, especially any unusual conditions, such as severe frost.

36. THESE CREATE NEW MEANS.

By combining these factors with the results of combat, strategy gives that result—and therefore the combat itself—a particular meaning and sets a specific objective before it. But when that objective is not the one that leads directly to peace, and is therefore a subordinate one, it should be regarded only as a means. So in strategy, we can treat the results of combats or victories, in all their different meanings, as means. The capture of a position is one such result of combat applied to terrain. But it is not only individual combats with specific objectives that must be seen as means. Every higher aim we pursue in combining battles toward a common objective must also be regarded as a means. A winter campaign is a combination of this kind applied to the season.

What remain as true objectives, then, are only those things that can be assumed to lead directly to peace. Theory examines all these ends and means according to the nature of their effects and their relations to one another.

37. STRATEGY DRAWS THE ENDS AND MEANS IT EXAMINES ONLY FROM EXPERIENCE.

The first question is: how does strategy arrive at a complete list of these things? If it tried to answer through a philosophical inquiry aimed at an absolute conclusion, it would get caught in all the difficulties that the practical conduct of war, and the theory of war, rule out. So it turns to experience and focuses on the combinations that military history provides. In this way, no doubt, it can produce only a limited theory, one that fits only circumstances like those found in history. But this incompleteness is unavoidable, because theory must in any case either derive from history, or test against history, whatever it claims about such matters. Besides, this incompleteness is in every case more theoretical than real.

One great advantage of this method is that theory cannot lose itself in obscure arguments, fine distinctions, and fantasies, but must always remain practical.

38. HOW FAR THE ANALYSIS OF THE MEANS SHOULD GO.

Another question is how far theory should go in analyzing the means. Clearly, it should go only as far as those elements appear separately in practice and therefore need to be considered. The range and effect of different weapons matter greatly to tactics; their construction, though those effects come from it, does not. The conduct of war is not the business of making powder and cannon from given amounts of charcoal,

sulphur, and saltpetre, or of copper and tin. For the purposes of war, what is given is weapons in their finished form and the effects they produce. Strategy uses maps without concerning itself with triangulation. It does not ask how a country is divided into departments and provinces, or how its people are educated and governed, in order to get the best military results. Instead, it takes things as it finds them within the community of European states, and notes where very different conditions have a marked influence on war.

39. GREATLY SIMPLIFYING THE KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED.

It is easy to see that, in this way, theory greatly reduces the number of subjects it must deal with, and also cuts down the knowledge needed to conduct war. The enormous body of knowledge and technical skill that supports war in general, and that is necessary before a fully equipped army can take the field, comes together in a few large results before it can reach its final purpose in actual war. It is like the streams of a country joining into rivers before they flow into the sea. The commander who is to direct military operations needs to study only those activities that flow directly into the sea of war.

40. THIS EXPLAINS THE RAPID RISE OF GREAT GENERALS, AND WHY A GENERAL IS NOT A SCHOLAR.

This conclusion follows so necessarily from our reasoning that, if we had reached any other result, we would have doubted the soundness of our analysis. Only in this way can we explain why men have so often appeared in war with great success, even in the highest ranks and in supreme command, although their earlier occupations had been of a completely different kind. It also explains why, as a rule, the most outstanding generals have not come from the highly educated or truly scholarly class of officers, but have mostly been men who, because of their circumstances, could not have acquired any great amount of knowledge. For that reason, those who have thought it necessary, or even useful, to begin the education of a future general by teaching every detail have always been mocked as absurd pedants. It would be easy to show how harmful such a method is, because the human mind is shaped by the knowledge given to it and by the direction in which its ideas are guided. Only what is great can make the mind great; what is small can only make it small, unless the mind itself rejects it as something alien and distasteful.

41. EARLIER CONTRADICTIONS.

Because people failed to recognize how simple the knowledge required for war really is, and instead mixed that knowledge together with the whole burden of subordinate sciences and arts, they created an obvious conflict with the realities of actual

life. That conflict could then be explained only by attributing everything to genius, which supposedly needs no theory and for which no theory could be laid down.

42. FOR THIS REASON, ALL USE OF KNOWLEDGE WAS DENIED, AND EVERYTHING WAS ATTRIBUTED TO NATURAL TALENT.

People with strong common sense clearly saw the vast gap between a truly great genius and a merely learned pedant. As a result, they became, in a way, skeptics about theory altogether. They dismissed any faith in it and claimed that the conduct of war is a natural human function, carried out better or worse depending on how much talent for it a person is born with. It cannot be denied that this view came closer to the truth than the opinions of those who valued false knowledge. At the same time, it is easy to see that this view is itself an exaggeration. No work of the human mind is possible without some stock of ideas; but these ideas are, for the most part, not inborn but acquired, and together they make up a person's knowledge. The only question, then, is what kind of ideas these should be. We think we have answered that if we say they should be directed toward the things a man must deal with directly in war.

43. THE KNOWLEDGE MUST BE SUITED TO THE POSITION.

Even within the military sphere itself, the knowledge required must vary with the commander's position. For someone in a lower post, it will concern smaller and more limited matters; for someone in a higher one, it will concern larger and more comprehensive ones. There are Field Marshals who would not have distinguished themselves at the head of a cavalry regiment, and the reverse is also true.

44. KNOWLEDGE IN WAR IS VERY SIMPLE, BUT NOT THEREFORE VERY EASY.

Yet although knowledge in war is simple—that is, concerned with only a few subjects and dealing with them only in their final results—the art of carrying it out is not therefore easy. We have already spoken in the first book about the difficulties to which activity in war is generally subject. Here we leave aside those things that can be overcome only by courage, and we maintain that mental activity is simple and easy only in lower positions. As rank rises, its difficulty increases; and in the highest post, that of Commander-in-Chief, it must be counted among the hardest tasks the human mind can undertake.

45. ON THE NATURE OF THIS KNOWLEDGE.

The knowledge required for high command in war is marked by this: it can be reached through observation, and therefore through study and reflection, only by means of a special talent—an intellectual instinct that knows how to draw from the events of life only their essence or spirit, as bees draw honey from flowers. It must also be gained through experience of life as well as through study and reflection. Life, with all it teaches, will never produce a Newton or an Euler; but it may produce great calculators in war, such as Condé or Frederick.

So, if we want to defend the intellectual dignity of military activity, there is no need to fall back on falsehoods or foolish pedantry. There has never been a great and distinguished commander with a narrow mind. On the other hand, there are many cases of men who served with the highest distinction in lower positions but, when raised to the highest command, proved no better than mediocre because their intellectual capacity was not sufficient. And of course, even among Commanders-in-Chief, there may be differences depending on how full their powers are.

46. SCIENCE MUST BECOME ART.

We still need to consider one condition that is more essential to understanding the conduct of war than to almost anything else: it must be fully absorbed into the mind and almost stop existing as something external. In most other arts and professions, a person can use truths learned long ago, even if they no longer

think and feel in terms of them, and even if they pull them from dusty books. Even ideas they use every day can remain something outside themselves. If an architect picks up a pen to calculate the strength of a pier, the result is not something that springs directly from his own mind. He first has to gather the data with effort, then put them through a mental process whose rule he did not invent, whose necessity he may only partly understand at the moment, and which he mostly applies with something like mechanical skill. But war is never like that. Because of the moral forces involved and the constantly changing shape of events, the chief actor must carry within himself the entire mental equipment of his knowledge, so that at any place and at any moment he can produce the necessary decision from himself. Through this complete union with his own mind and life, knowledge must be turned into real power. That is why everything seems so easy in men distinguished in war, and why everything is attributed to natural talent. We call it natural talent to distinguish it from what is formed and developed through observation and study.

We believe these reflections have explained the problem of creating a theory of the conduct of war and have shown the way toward solving it.

Of the two fields into which we have divided the conduct of war, tactics and strategy, the theory of strategy unquestionably presents the greater difficulties, as already noted. Tactics is confined to a relatively limited range of objects, but strategy, because it deals with objects that lead directly to peace, opens out into an unlimited field of possibilities. And since the Commander-in-Chief usually has only to keep those objects

steadily in view, the part of strategy in which he operates is especially subject to this difficulty.

Theory, then—especially when it deals with the highest forms of military action—will reach this point much sooner in strategy than in tactics: it will limit itself to considering things in a simple way. It should be satisfied with helping the commander gain the kind of insight that, once absorbed into his whole way of thinking, makes his decisions easier and more reliable. It should never force him to act against his own judgment in obedience to some supposed objective truth.

CHAPTER III. The Art or Science of War

1.—USAGE STILL UNSETTLED (POWER AND KNOWLEDGE; SCIENCE WHEN THE OBJECT IS MERE KNOWING, ART WHEN THE OBJECT IS DOING.)

The choice between these terms still seems unsettled, and no one appears quite sure on what basis it should be decided. Yet the matter is simple. As we have said elsewhere, “knowing” is different from “doing.” The two differ so much that they should not easily be confused. “Doing” cannot properly be contained in a book, and for that reason “Art” should never really be the title of a book. But because we have become used to grouping, under the idea of the theory of an art—or simply under the name of art—the branches of knowledge needed for the practice of an art, even when some of them are pure sciences on their own, it is reasonable to keep this distinction. We may therefore call something Art when the aim is carrying out the “doing,” that is, the ability to perform—for example, the art of building. We call it Science when the aim is knowledge alone, as in the science of mathematics or astronomy. It is obvious enough that a single art may include several complete sciences, and that should not confuse us. Still, it is worth noting that no science exists without some element of art mixed into it. In mathematics, for example, the use of figures and algebra is an art, though that is only one case among many. The reason is that, however clear and tangible the difference between knowledge and ability may be

in the combined results of human understanding, it is hard to draw the exact line between them within the human mind itself.

2. THE DIFFICULTY OF SEPARATING PERCEPTION FROM JUDGMENT. (THE ART OF WAR.)

That is enough on this point, since we cannot do without these concepts. But we now go further and argue that war is neither an art nor a science in the true sense of the words. In fact, starting from that way of thinking has led people in the wrong direction. It has put war on the same level as other arts and sciences and has produced a number of false analogies.

This had, in fact, been recognized before, and for that reason some maintained that war is a handicraft. But that view lost more than it gained, because a handicraft is only a lesser art and, as such, is also governed by fixed and rigid rules. In reality, the Art of War did for a time develop in the spirit of a handicraft—we mean the age of the Condottieri—but it took that direction not because of its inner nature, but because of external causes. Military history shows how little that approach matched the true nature of war.

3. WAR IS PART OF THE INTERCOURSE OF THE HUMAN RACE.

So we say that war does not belong to the realm of art or science, but to the realm of social life. It is a clash of major interests decided by bloodshed, and that is the only way it differs from other conflicts. Rather than comparing it to an art, it is better to compare it to business competition, which is also a struggle of human interests and activity. It resembles state policy even more, and state policy itself can be seen as business competition on a grand scale. State policy is also the womb in which war develops. Its outlines lie hidden there in an undeveloped form, just as the qualities of living creatures exist in the germ. *

4. DIFFERENCE.

The essential difference is this: war is not an act of the will working on lifeless matter, as in the mechanical arts, or on a living but still passive and compliant subject, as in the ideal arts that deal with the human mind and feelings. It acts instead against a living force that reacts. That immediately shows how poorly the categories of art and science fit such an activity. It also helps us understand why the constant search for laws like those drawn from the dead material world has repeatedly led to error. And yet some people still want to model the art of war on the mechanical arts. Modeling it on the ideal arts was never really possible, because those arts themselves rely too little on fixed laws and rules. The rules that have been tried so far, always admitted to be inadequate and one-sided, are constantly

* The analogy has become much closer since Clausewitz's time. Now that the State's first concern is seen as the development of conditions for trade, war between great nations is only a matter of time. No Hague Conferences can prevent it.—EDITOR.

swept away by changing opinions, feelings, and customs.

Whether a conflict between living forces, such as war is and by which it is decided, is governed by general laws, and whether those laws can point to a useful course of action, will be examined in part in this book. But one thing is clear in itself: like any other subject that does not exceed our powers of understanding, war can be illuminated by careful inquiry and made more or less clear in its inner relations. That alone is enough to justify the idea of a THEORY.

CHAPTER IV. Methodicism

To explain clearly what we mean by method, and by method in action, which play such an important role in war, we must first take a quick look at the logical order by which the world of action is governed, as if through a regular chain of public officials.

Law, in the broadest sense, applying both to perception and to action, plainly contains something subjective and arbitrary in its literal meaning, and expresses precisely that on which both we and the things outside us depend. As an object of knowledge, law is the relation between things and their effects; as an object of the will, it is a motive for action, and in that sense it is equivalent to command or prohibition.

Principle is also a kind of law for action, but it lacks the fixed and formal character of law. Instead, it gives only the spirit and meaning of law, so that judgment has more freedom in applying it when the variety of the real world cannot be fully captured in a definite law. Since judgment itself must identify the cases in which the principle does not apply, the principle becomes a real aid or guiding star for the person acting.

A principle is objective when it results from objective truth and therefore has equal value for everyone. It is subjective, and is then generally called a maxim, when it includes subjective conditions and therefore has value only for the person who adopts it.

Rule is often used in the sense of law, and then means the same as principle. We say, “no rule without exceptions,” but we do

not say, “no law without exceptions.” That shows that with a rule we allow ourselves more freedom in applying it.

In another sense, a rule is a means of discovering a hidden truth from some particular sign close at hand, so that to this sign we can attach the law of action directed toward the whole truth. All the rules of games, all shortened procedures in mathematics, and the like are of this kind.

Directions and instructions are determinations of action that affect a number of minor circumstances too numerous and too unimportant to be covered by general laws.

Lastly, method—a way of acting—is a repeated course chosen from several possible ones; and methodicism is action guided by methods rather than by general principles or specific rules. This necessarily assumes that the cases covered by those methods are alike in their essential features. Since they cannot all be alike, the aim is that as many of them as possible should be. In other words, a method should be designed for the most likely cases. Methodicism, then, is based not on fixed particular premises but on the average probability of cases when compared with one another. Its ultimate tendency is to establish an average truth whose steady, uniform application soon takes on something of the character of a mechanical device, so that in the end it does what is right almost without conscious thought.

The idea of law as it relates to perception is not necessary for the conduct of war, because the complex phenomena of war are not regular enough, and the regular phenomena are not complex enough, for this idea to give us anything beyond a simple truth. And when a simple idea and plain language are

enough, turning to something more complicated is affected and pedantic. The idea of law as it relates to action cannot be used in a theory of the conduct of war, because the changing and varied nature of these phenomena does not allow for any general determination broad enough to deserve the name of law.

But principles, rules, prescriptions, and methods are indispensable concepts for a theory of the conduct of war, insofar as that theory leads to positive doctrines, because in doctrines truth can take shape only in such forms.

Since tactics is the branch of the conduct of war in which theory can come closest to positive doctrine, these concepts will appear there most often.

Not using cavalry against unbroken infantry except in some special emergency, using firearms in combat only within effective range, and preserving forces as much as possible for the final struggle—these are tactical principles. None of them can be applied absolutely in every case, but they must always remain in the commander's mind, so that the value of the truth they contain is not lost in situations where that truth can be useful.

If unusual cooking in an enemy camp is taken as a sign of movement, or if the deliberate exposure of troops in battle suggests a feigned attack, then this way of discovering the truth is called a rule, because from a single visible sign one draws the conclusion that properly matches it.

If it is a rule to attack the enemy with fresh energy as soon as he begins to limber up his artillery during the battle, then this particular fact determines a course of action aimed at the enemy's overall situation as inferred from it—namely, that he is about to abandon the fight, that he has begun to withdraw his troops, and that in doing so he can neither make a serious stand nor conduct his retreat slowly and in good order.

Regulations and methods bring preparatory theory into the conduct of war, insofar as disciplined troops absorb them and act on them in practice. The full set of instructions for formations, drill, and field service consists of regulations and methods: in drill instructions, the former are more prominent; in field service instructions, the latter. The actual conduct of war is built on these things. It therefore takes them as established ways of proceeding, and for that reason they must also appear in the theory of the conduct of war.

But for those activities that still leave freedom in how these forces are employed, there can be no regulations—that is, no fixed instructions—because such instructions would destroy freedom of action. Methods, however, understood as a general way of carrying out duties as they arise, based, as we have said, on average probability, or as the practical influence of principles and rules, can certainly have a place in the theory of the conduct of war. The only condition is that they must not be presented as something they are not: not as absolute and necessary modes of action, or systems, but as the best general forms that may be used as shortcuts in place of a special arrangement for each occasion, whenever judgment sees fit.

The frequent use of set methods is especially necessary and unavoidable in war when we consider how much action is based on guesswork, or takes place in complete uncertainty. One side is often unable to learn all the circumstances shaping the other side's decisions. And even when those circumstances are actually known, their sheer extent, and the dispositions they would require, often leave too little time to carry out every necessary countermeasure. So in war, measures must always be planned with a certain range of possibilities in mind. We should also remember how countless small details belong to every single event, and must be considered along with it. Because of that, the only practical course is to assume that one factor will offset another, and to base our arrangements only on what is general and probable. Finally, as we move down the ranks and the number of officers increases, less can be left to the true insight and mature judgment of individuals. The lower the sphere of action, the more this is true. And once we reach those ranks where we can expect no ideas beyond what service regulations and experience provide, we must assist them with methodical forms closely connected to those regulations. These forms support their judgment and also guard against the wild and mistaken views that are especially dangerous in a field where experience is so costly.

Apart from this absolute need for method in action, we must also recognize its direct advantage: through the constant repetition of formal exercises, troops gain readiness, precision, and steadiness in their movements. This reduces the natural friction of war and makes the whole machine work more smoothly.

Method will therefore be used more widely, and become more indispensable, the lower the rank of the person acting. On the other hand, its use decreases as we move upward, until at the highest level it disappears altogether. For that reason, method belongs more properly to tactics than to strategy.

In its highest form, war does not consist of countless small events whose differences cancel one another out, so that they can be managed better or worse by a better or worse system. It consists of distinct, great, decisive events, and each of these must be handled on its own terms. War is not like a field of grain, where the crop is cut more or less well depending on whether the mower is good or bad, without regard to the shape of each stalk. It is more like a stand of large trees, where the axe must be used with judgment, according to the shape and lean of each individual trunk.

How far method can properly be applied in military action is determined not by formal rank, but by the nature of the task. It affects the highest levels less, simply because those positions deal with the broadest responsibilities. A fixed order of battle, or a fixed arrangement for advance guards and outposts, are methods by which a general limits not only the freedom of his subordinates but, in some cases, his own as well. These methods may certainly have been created by the general himself and used by him as circumstances require, but they may also belong to theory insofar as they rest on the general characteristics of troops and weapons. On the other hand, any method that claims to produce definite plans for wars or campaigns ready-made, as if by a machine, is completely worthless.

As long as there is no sound theory to rely on—no clear, informed account of how war should be conducted—method in action will inevitably spread beyond its proper place, even into the highest levels of command. People working in those roles have not always had the chance to educate themselves through study and through engagement with larger strategic concerns. They cannot make sense of the impractical, contradictory writings of theorists and critics, and their healthy common sense rejects them. Since they bring with them no knowledge except what experience has taught them, they naturally fall back, in situations that allow and require individual freedom of judgment, on the tools experience provides. In other words, they imitate the particular methods used by great generals, and in this way a method of action develops on its own. If we see Frederick the Great's generals repeatedly appearing in the so-called oblique order of battle, the generals of the French Revolution repeatedly using turning movements with a long, extended battle line, and Buonaparte's lieutenants repeatedly throwing themselves into attack with the bloody force of concentrated masses, then we can clearly recognize a borrowed method in that repeated way of acting. We can see, therefore, that method in action can extend even into areas close to the very highest level. But if a better theory made the study of war easier, and helped shape the minds and judgment of those rising to the highest commands, then method in action would no longer reach so far. Whatever part of it remained indispensable would at least be formed by theory itself, rather than arising from mere imitation. However brilliantly a great commander acts, there is always something personal in the way he does it. If he has a distinctive style, much of his individuality

is bound up in it, and that will not always suit the individuality of the person who copies him.

At the same time, it would be neither possible nor desirable to remove all subjective habits or personal style from the conduct of war. These should instead be seen as signs of the way a war's overall character shapes its individual events. The only way to do justice to that influence is to allow for it, especially when theory cannot foresee that general character or account for it in advance. What could be more natural than that the War of the French Revolution developed its own way of doing things? And what theory could ever have fully included that distinctive method? The problem is only that a style born from a particular situation easily survives past its proper time, because it continues while circumstances gradually and almost unnoticed change. This is what theory should prevent through clear and rational criticism. Thus, in 1806, when the Prussian generals—Prince Louis at Saalfeld, Tauentzien on the Dornberg near Jena, Grawert in front of Kappellendorf, and Ruechel behind it—all hurled themselves into open destruction in Frederick the Great's oblique order, and succeeded in ruining Hohenlohe's Army in a way no army had ever been ruined, even on the battlefield, all of this came from a method that had outlived its time, combined with the sheer stupidity to which methodicism can lead.

CHAPTER V. Criticism

Theoretical principles influence real life more through criticism than through doctrine. Criticism applies abstract truth to actual events. In doing so, it not only brings that kind of truth closer to life, but also trains the mind to think in those terms through the repeated practice of applying it. We therefore think it necessary to define the standpoint of criticism alongside that of theory.

We distinguish the CRITICAL from the simple narration of a historical event, which merely arranges events in chronological order or, at most, touches only on their most immediate causes.

Within this CRITICAL, we can observe three different operations of the mind.

First comes the historical investigation and establishment of doubtful facts. This is properly historical research and has nothing in common with theory.

Secondly, there is tracing effects back to their causes. This is the real work of critical inquiry. It is essential to theory, because anything that theory seeks to establish, support, or even simply explain through experience can be settled only in this way.

Thirdly, there is testing the means that were used. This is criticism in the proper sense of the word, and it includes both praise and blame. Here theory assists history, or rather the lessons that can be drawn from it.

In these last two, strictly critical parts of historical study, everything depends on tracing matters back to their basic elements—that is, to unquestionable truths—and not, as so

often happens, stopping halfway at some arbitrary assumption or supposition.

When it comes to tracing effects back to causes, there is often an insurmountable difficulty: the real causes are not known. In no area of life does this happen so often as in war. Events are rarely known in full, and motives even less so, since the chief actor may have deliberately concealed them, or they may have been so fleeting and accidental that history has lost them. For that reason, critical narrative must usually proceed side by side with historical investigation. Even then, the connection between cause and effect will often remain so incomplete that it is not justifiable to treat effects as the necessary results of known causes. In such cases, historical results will appear that cannot be used for instruction. Theory can ask only that the investigation be carried rigorously to that point and then stop, without forcing a conclusion. The real harm begins only when what is known is made to serve, by force, as a sufficient explanation of effects, and is thereby given a false importance.

Along with this difficulty, critical inquiry faces another great and inherent one: in war, events rarely arise from a single simple cause. They usually result from several causes acting together. It is therefore not enough to trace a chain of events back to its origin in an honest and impartial way. It is also necessary to assign each contributing cause its proper weight. This leads to a closer examination of their nature, and in that way critical inquiry may pass into the proper field of theory.

Critical analysis—that is, testing the means used—leads to this question: what effects were specific to those means, and were

those effects included in the plans of the person in command?

Those effects that are specific to the means used lead us to examine their nature, and that brings us back into the realm of theory.

We have already seen that, in criticism, everything depends on reaching positive truth. We therefore must not stop at arbitrary claims that others do not accept, and that can be met in turn by other, perhaps equally arbitrary, assertions. Otherwise there is no end to argument and counterargument. The whole process leads nowhere and teaches nothing.

We have seen that both the search for causes and the examination of means lead into the realm of theory—that is, into the realm of general truth, which does not arise only from the particular case under examination. If there is a theory that can be applied, then critical analysis will refer to the proofs it provides, and the inquiry can stop there. But where no such theoretical truth can be found, the investigation must be carried back to its original elements. If this happens often, it must lead the historian, as the common expression goes, into a labyrinth of details. He then has more than enough to deal with, and it becomes impossible for him to pause and give proper attention to every point. As a result, in order to limit his inquiry, he adopts certain arbitrary assumptions which, even if they do not seem arbitrary to him, will seem so to others, because they are neither self-evident nor capable of proof.

A sound theory is therefore an essential foundation for criticism, and without the help of a sensible theory it cannot reach the point at which it truly begins to instruct—that is, where it

becomes a demonstration, both convincing and sans réplique.

But it is unrealistic to hope for a theory that applies to every abstract truth and leaves criticism with nothing to do except fit each case under the proper rule. It would be absurdly pedantic to insist that criticism must always stop and turn back when it reaches the limits of established theory. The same analytical spirit that gives rise to theory must also guide the critic's work. So the critic can, and sometimes must, go beyond the boundaries of theory in order to clarify the particular points at issue. In fact, criticism would be much more likely to fail altogether if it sank into the mechanical application of theory. All the positive results of theoretical inquiry—its principles, rules, and methods—become less general and less certainly true the more they harden into fixed doctrine. They are there to be used when needed, and judgment must always decide whether they fit the case or not. Theory's conclusions should never be used in criticism as rigid rules or standards. They should be used the way a person of action uses them: simply as aids to judgment. For example, if tactics recognizes as a general principle that cavalry in the usual order of battle should be placed behind infantry rather than beside it, it would still be foolish to condemn every departure from that principle on that ground alone. Criticism must examine the reasons for the departure, and only if those reasons are inadequate does it have the right to appeal to the principles laid down by theory. Likewise, if theory has established that a divided attack reduces the chances of success, it would be just as unreasonable to assume, whenever a divided attack fails, that the failure was caused by the division without further examining the connection between the two, as it

would be, when a divided attack succeeds, to conclude from that success that the theoretical principle is false. The investigative spirit proper to criticism allows neither mistake. Criticism therefore relies chiefly on the results of theory's analytical inquiry. What theory has already established and settled does not need to be proved all over again by criticism. Theory has determined it so that criticism can find it already demonstrated.

If an army is caught by surprise and therefore cannot use its strength and resources in an orderly, intelligent way, the effect of that surprise is clear. If theory has shown that a converging form of attack is likely to produce greater results, though with less certainty, then the question is whether the commander who used that converging form was aiming mainly at that greater result. If so, then he chose the right means. But if he used this form because he meant to make the result more certain, and that expectation was based not on some exceptional circumstances in this case but on the supposed general nature of the converging form, as has happened a hundred times, then he misunderstood the nature of the means and made an error.

Here the work of military analysis and criticism is easy, and it will always be easy so long as it is limited to immediate effects and immediate aims. We can do this whenever we choose if we leave aside the connection between the parts and the whole and look only at things in that narrow relation.

But in war, as in life generally, everything that belongs to a whole is connected. So however small a cause may be in itself, its effects extend to the end of the military action and influence

the final result to some degree, however slight. In the same way, every means must be judged in relation to the ultimate object.

We can therefore trace the effects of a cause for as long as the events are worth noticing. In the same way, we must not stop after testing a means against its immediate object. We must also test that object as a means to a higher one, and so move upward through the chain of facts step by step until we reach one so absolutely necessary in its nature that it needs no further examination or proof. In many cases, especially in matters involving great and decisive measures, the inquiry must be carried all the way to the final aim, to what leads directly to peace.

It is clear that as we move upward in this way, each new stage gives us a new point of view for judgment. As a result, the same means that seemed advisable at one stage may have to be rejected when viewed from the next higher one.

In any critical review of an action, tracing its causes and comparing the means used with the ends sought must always go together. Looking into causes is what first shows us which points are worth examining.

Following this line of inquiry backward and forward is quite difficult. The farther the cause we are looking for lies from the event itself, the more other causes we must keep in view at the same time. We have to account for the part each played in shaping events, and then separate them out again. The more important a fact is, the more distinct forces and circumstances will have helped determine it. If we have worked out why a

battle was lost, we have certainly identified part of the causes behind the effects that defeat has on the whole War—but only part. Other causes, to a greater or lesser extent depending on circumstances, will also feed into the final result.

The same variety of circumstances appears when we examine the means, and it increases the higher our point of view. The higher the objective, the more means must be used to reach it. The ultimate object of the War is the aim pursued by all the Armies together, and so our analysis must take in everything each of them did or could have done.

It is clear that this can sometimes open up a very wide field of inquiry, where it is easy to stray and lose direction. One particular difficulty dominates here: we must make a number of assumptions about many things that do not directly appear, but in all likelihood did happen, and so cannot be left out of account.

In 1797,() when Buonaparte led the Army of Italy forward from the Tagliamento against Archduke Charles, his aim was to force that General into a decisive battle before the reinforcements expected from the Rhine could reach him. If we look only at that immediate objective, the means were well chosen, and the result proved it. The Archduke was so badly outnumbered that he offered only a token resistance on the Tagliamento. Once he saw how strong and determined his opponent was, he gave way and left the passes of the Norican Alps open. But how could Buonaparte make use of this favorable turn of events? Could he push into the heart of the Austrian empire itself, help the

advance of the Rhine Armies under Moreau and Hoche, and open communication with them? That was Buonaparte's view, and from that standpoint he was right. But if criticism rises to a broader point of view—namely, that of the French Directory, which was in a position to see and know that the Armies on the Rhine could not begin the campaign for another six weeks—then Buonaparte's advance over the Norican Alps can only be seen as an extremely risky move. If the Austrians had drawn heavily from their Rhine Armies to strengthen their Army in Styria, and had thus enabled the Archduke to strike the Army of Italy, that army might not only have been defeated, but the whole campaign might have been lost. This consideration, which seriously occupied Buonaparte at Villach, no doubt made him so ready to sign the armistice of Leoben. *

If criticism takes an even higher position, and knows that the Austrians had no reserves between the Army of Archduke Charles and Vienna, then it becomes clear that the advance of the Army of Italy put Vienna itself under threat.

If Buonaparte knew the capital was left exposed, and knew he still had the same numerical advantage over the Archduke that he had enjoyed in Styria, then his advance toward the center of the Austrian states was no longer pointless. Its importance depended on how much the Austrians valued holding on to their capital. If they valued it so highly that they would accept the peace terms Buonaparte was prepared to offer rather than lose it, then threatening Vienna became a matter of the highest importance. If Buonaparte had good reason to believe this,

* Compare Hinterlassene Werke, 2nd edition, vol. iv. p. 276 et seq.

criticism can end there. But if it was only uncertain, then criticism must go further and ask what would have happened if the Austrians had decided to abandon Vienna and retreat deeper into the vast territories still left to them. But this question cannot be answered without also considering the likely movements of the Rhine armies on both sides. Given the clear French superiority in numbers—130,000 against 80,000—there could be little doubt about the outcome. But that leads to another question: what use would the Directory make of such a victory? Would they press their success all the way to the far frontiers of the Austrian monarchy, aiming at its complete destruction or collapse? Or would they be content with conquering a substantial part of its territory as security for peace? The likely result in each case must be weighed in order to judge what the Directory would probably decide. If these reflections led to the conclusion that the French forces were far too weak to subdue the Austrian monarchy completely, so that such an attempt might entirely reverse the positions of the opposing armies, and that even conquering and occupying a large district would place the French army in strategic circumstances it could not manage, then that conclusion would naturally affect any estimate of the position of the Army of Italy and force it to lower its expectations. This, no doubt, was what influenced Buonaparte, despite being fully aware of the Archduke's helpless condition, to sign the peace of Campo Formio. That treaty imposed no greater sacrifices on the Austrians than the loss of provinces which, even if the campaign had taken the most favorable turn for them, they could not have recovered. But the French could not even count on obtaining the moderate treaty of Campo Formio. Therefore,

that treaty cannot have been their object in making so bold an advance unless two further considerations were before them. The first was how much value the Austrians would attach to each of the results mentioned above. Even if a satisfactory outcome remained probable in either case, would it be worth continuing the war and bearing the unavoidable sacrifices that came with it, when those sacrifices might be avoided by a peace that was not too humiliating? The second consideration was whether the Austrian government, instead of seriously weighing the possible results of resistance carried to the utmost, might simply become completely discouraged by the impact of its present defeats.

The issue discussed in the first point is not some pointless piece of fine-spun argument. It is a matter of clear practical importance. It arises whenever people propose driving war to the utmost extreme, and in most cases its weight holds such plans back from being carried out.

The second point is just as important, because we do not wage war against an abstraction but against a real opponent, and we must always keep that in view. We may be sure the bold Buonaparte did not overlook this. He was sharply aware of the fear inspired by the sight of his sword. His confidence in that fear led him to Moscow. There it got him into trouble. The terror he inspired had been weakened by the gigantic struggles in which he had already been engaged. In 1797 it was still fresh, and the secret of resistance carried to extremes had not yet been discovered. Even so, in 1797 his boldness might have ended without success if, as already noted, he had not, with a kind of presentiment, avoided that outcome by signing the

moderate peace of Campo Formio.

We must now bring these reflections to an end. They are enough to show how wide the field is, and how varied and difficult the subjects are, when critical examination is carried to its fullest extent—that is, when it includes the great and decisive measures that must necessarily fall within it. From this it follows that, besides theoretical knowledge of the subject, natural talent has a major effect on the value of critical examination. It is chiefly talent that sheds the necessary light on how things are connected and separates, from the endless chain of events, the connections that truly matter.

But talent is needed in another way as well. Critical examination does not consist only in judging the means that were actually used. It must also consider all the possible means that might have been used, and these must first be suggested—that is, discovered. No one can fairly condemn the use of a particular means until a better one has been identified. Now, although the number of possible combinations is usually small, it still must be admitted that pointing out the ones that were not used is not simply an analysis of what actually happened. It is an act of original creation that cannot be laid down by rule and depends on the fertility of genius.

It is hard to see much room for great genius in a situation that calls only for applying a few simple combinations. And it seems quite absurd, as is often done, to praise the turning of a position as an invention of the highest genius. Even so, this kind of creative independent thinking on the critic’s part is necessary, and it is one of the main things that determines the value of

critical analysis.

When Buonaparte, on 30 July 1796,() decided to lift the siege of Mantua so that he could march with his whole force against the enemy, who were advancing in separate columns to relieve the place, and defeat them one by one, this seemed the surest path to brilliant victories. Those victories did in fact follow, and later, when another attempt was made to relieve the fortress, they were repeated on an even more brilliant scale. We hear only one judgment on these achievements: unqualified admiration. *

At the same time, Buonaparte could not have taken this course on 30 July without effectively abandoning the siege of Mantua, because it was impossible to save the siege train, and it could not be replaced during that campaign. In fact, the siege became a blockade, and the town, which would have fallen very soon if the siege had continued, held out for six months despite Buonaparte's victories in the open field.

Critics have generally treated this as an unavoidable evil, because they have not been able to suggest a better alternative. By that time, resisting a relieving army from behind lines of circumvallation had fallen so completely into disfavor and contempt that it seems to have been left out of consideration altogether. And yet under Louis XIV this method had often been used successfully. We can only explain the fact that, a hundred years later, no one even thought to propose it by the power of military fashion. If anyone had seriously considered such a plan, a closer look at the situation would have shown that Buonaparte, with 40,000 of the best infantry in the world behind

* Compare Hinterlassene Werke, 2nd edition, vol. iv. p. 107 et seq.

strong lines of circumvallation around Mantua, had very little to fear from the 50,000 men Wurmser was bringing to relieve the place. It was therefore highly unlikely that they would even attempt an attack on those lines. We will not try here to prove that point in full, but enough has been said to show that this was a course of action that deserved consideration. Whether Buonaparte himself ever thought of such a plan we leave undecided. Neither his memoirs nor any other sources contain any sign that he did, and no critical works mention it, because the idea had simply dropped out of view. There is no great merit in reviving this possibility, since it would occur at once to anyone who freed himself from the constraints of fashion. Still, it must occur to us if we are to weigh it properly and compare it with the course Buonaparte actually chose. Whatever the result of that comparison may be, criticism should not leave it out.

In February 1814,() after winning the battles of Etoges, Champ-Aubert, and Montmirail, Buonaparte left Blücher's army and turned against Schwartzenberg, defeating his troops at Montereau and Mormant. Everyone admired this move, because by throwing his concentrated force first at one opponent and then at the other, Buonaparte brilliantly exploited the mistake his enemies had made in dividing their forces. When these bold attacks in different directions still failed to save him, people generally thought the failure was not his fault, at least. Yet no one has asked what would have happened if, instead of turning from Blücher to Schwartzenberg, he had struck Blücher again and pursued him to the Rhine. We are convinced that this would have completely changed the course of the campaign, and that

the Allied army, instead of marching on Paris, would have fallen back behind the Rhine. We do not ask others to share our conviction. But anyone who understands the matter will see, as soon as this alternative is mentioned, that it is too important to ignore in criticism. *

In this case, the grounds for comparison are much more obvious than in the previous one, yet they have been just as much overlooked. The reason is that one-sided views have dominated, and judgment has not been free.

Because critics have felt obliged to point out a better method that could have been used instead of the one they condemn, a form of criticism has developed that is now used almost exclusively. It is satisfied with merely naming the better method, without showing why it is better. The result is that some people remain unconvinced, while others step forward and do exactly the same thing. In this way, discussion arises without any firm basis for argument. Military literature is full of this kind of material.

The kind of demonstration we require is always necessary whenever the superiority of the proposed means is not so obvious that no doubt remains. It consists first in examining each means on its own merits, and then in comparing it with the object to be achieved. Once the issue has been reduced to a simple truth, controversy must stop, or at least some new result is reached. Under the other method, the pros and cons go on forever, endlessly cancelling each other out.

* Compare Hinterlassene Werke, 2nd edition, vol. vii, p. 193 et seq.

For example, if we are not satisfied simply to assert, in the case just mentioned, that continuing the pursuit of Blücher would have been more advantageous than turning against Schwartzenberg, then we should base that argument on the following simple points:

1. In general, it is more advantageous to keep striking in the same direction, because changing direction costs time. And when the enemy's morale has already been shaken by heavy losses, there is even more reason to expect further success. In that way, none of the superiority already gained is left unused.

2. Although Blücher was weaker than Schwartzenberg, he was the more important opponent because of his enterprising spirit. He was therefore the centre of attraction that drew the others in the same direction.

3. The losses Blücher had suffered were so severe that they almost amounted to a defeat. They gave Buonaparte such superiority over him that a retreat to the Rhine was nearly certain. At the same time, no reserves of any importance were waiting for him there.

4. No other result would have been so terrifying in appearance or so overwhelming to the imagination. That would have been an immense advantage when dealing with a Staff as weak and irresolute as Schwartzenberg's was notoriously at that time. Prince Schwartzenberg must have known perfectly well what had happened to the Crown Prince of Wartemberg at Montereau and to Count Wittgenstein at Mormant. But all the misfortunes on Blücher's distant and separate line, from the Marne to the Rhine, would have reached him only through an

avalanche of rumour. The desperate movements Buonaparte made toward Vitry at the end of March, to see what the Allies would do if he threatened to turn them strategically, were clearly based on the idea of playing on their fears. But he did this under very different circumstances, after his defeat at Laon and Arcis, and because Blücher, with 100,000 men, was then in communication with Schwartzenberg.

No doubt some people will remain unconvinced by these arguments. Even so, they cannot reply that "while Buonaparte threatened Schwartzenberg's base by advancing to the Rhine, Schwartzenberg at the same time threatened Buonaparte's communications with Paris," because, for the reasons already given above, we have shown that Schwartzenberg would never have considered marching on Paris.

As for the example we cited from the campaign of 1796, we would say this: Buonaparte regarded the plan he adopted as the surest way to defeat the Austrians. But even if that was true, the result to be gained was only an empty victory, one that could scarcely have had any real effect on the fall of Mantua. In our view, the course we would have chosen would have been far more certain to prevent the relief of Mantua. But even if we put ourselves in the French General's position, assume that this was not so, and suppose the chance of success was lower, the issue still comes down to a choice between, on the one hand, a more certain but less useful—and therefore less important—victory, and, on the other, a somewhat less likely but far more decisive and important one. Seen in that light, boldness should have favored the second course, which is the opposite of what seemed right when the matter was viewed

only superficially. Buonaparte was certainly not lacking in boldness, and we may be sure that he did not see the whole situation and its consequences as completely and clearly as we can now.

Naturally, when discussing the means employed, the critic must often turn to military history, since in the Art of War experience is worth more than any philosophical truth. But using history as an example is subject to certain conditions, which we will discuss in a separate chapter. Unfortunately, those conditions are so rarely observed that appeals to history generally do little more than add to the confusion.

We still have one highly important question to consider: to what extent is criticism, when judging particular events, allowed—or even required—to use its broader view of things, including what later results reveal? And when, and in what cases, should it set those things aside in order to place itself as nearly as possible in the exact position of the chief actor?

If criticism is going to give praise or blame, it should try to adopt, as closely as possible, the same point of view as the person who acted. In other words, it should gather everything that person knew and all the motives behind the action. At the same time, it should leave out anything the person could not know or did not know, and above all, the outcome. But this is only an ideal to aim at; it can never be fully achieved. The circumstances from which an event arose can never be set before the critic exactly as they appeared to the person involved. Many lesser circumstances that must have influenced the result disappear from view entirely, and many personal

motives never come to light.

Those personal motives can be learned only from the memoirs of the main actor or from close friends. Even then, such matters are often discussed in a scattered way or deliberately misrepresented. Criticism, therefore, must always do without much that was present in the minds of the people whose actions it judges.

On the other hand, it is far harder to ignore what criticism knows in addition. This is only easy when it comes to accidental circumstances—that is, circumstances that became involved but are not necessarily connected to the matter. But it is very difficult, and in fact never completely possible, when it comes to things that are truly essential.

Let us begin with the result. If it did not arise from accidental circumstances, then it is almost impossible for knowledge of that result not to affect our judgment of the events that came before it. We see those earlier events in the light of the result, and to some extent it is through that result that we first come to know and assess them. Military history, with all its events, is itself a source of instruction for criticism, and it is only natural for criticism to cast on events the light it has gained from considering the whole. Therefore, even if criticism may wish in some cases to leave the result out of account, it can never do so completely.

But this difficulty does not arise only when we look at the outcome—that is, at what happened in the end. It also comes up when we look at earlier events, and therefore at the information that supplied the motives for action. In most cases, the critic has

more information on this point than the person actually involved in the affair. It may seem easy to leave all that out of account, but it is not as easy as we might think. Knowledge of earlier and simultaneous events rests not only on definite information, but also on many guesses and assumptions. In fact, there is hardly any information about things that are not purely accidental that was not first preceded by assumptions or conjectures, ready to stand in for certain knowledge if that knowledge never arrived. So can criticism, looking back later and having all the earlier and concurrent circumstances before it as facts, really avoid being influenced by them when it asks: What part of the circumstances that were unknown at the moment of action would it then have regarded as probable? We maintain that in this case, just as in the case of results, and for the same reason, it is impossible to leave all these things completely out of consideration.

If, therefore, the critic wants to praise or blame any particular act, he can place himself in the position of the person whose action he is judging only up to a certain point. In many cases he can come close enough for practical purposes, but in many others the opposite is true, and this should never be forgotten.

But criticism neither needs nor ought to identify itself completely with the person who acted. In war, as in every skilled activity, a certain natural gift is required: talent. That talent may be great or modest. In the first case, it may easily surpass the critic’s own, for what critic could claim the skill of a Frederick or a Buonaparte? So if criticism is not to give up judging cases that involve outstanding talent, it must be allowed to use the advantage of its wider view. Criticism must not, then,

treat a great general's solution to a problem like an arithmetic exercise. Only by looking at the results and the precise way events fit together can it recognize, with admiration, how much was due to genius in action. Only then does it come to understand the essential combination that the genius's glance first conceived.

But whenever even the smallest act of genius is involved, criticism must take a higher standpoint. It must rely on as many objective grounds for judgment as possible, so that it remains as little subjective as it can. The critic must not make the narrow limits of his own mind the standard.

This higher position of criticism—its praise and blame delivered with full knowledge of all the circumstances—contains nothing in itself that should offend us. It becomes offensive only when the critic puts himself forward and speaks as though all the wisdom gained from a thorough examination of the event were actually his own talent. Obvious as this self-deception is, vanity can easily lead people into it, and others naturally find it unpleasant. Very often, even when the critic makes no such arrogant claim, the reader attributes it to him simply because he has not explicitly denied it. Then, at once, comes the accusation that he lacks sound critical judgment.

So if a critic points out an error made by a Frederick or a Buonaparte, that does not mean the critic himself would not have made the same mistake. He may even readily admit that, in the place of those great generals, he might have made far greater ones. He simply sees the error in light of the chain of events, and he believes it should not have escaped the

general’s insight.

This opinion, then, is formed by linking events together and drawing a conclusion from the result. But the result itself can also influence judgment in a very different way: it may be taken on its own as evidence for or against the soundness of a measure. This may be called JUDGMENT ACCORDING TO THE RESULT. At first glance, that kind of judgment seems unacceptable, yet it is not.

When Buonaparte marched on Moscow in 1812, everything depended on one question: would taking the capital, along with the events leading up to its capture, force Emperor Alexander to make peace, as he had after Friedland in 1807, and as Emperor Francis had after Austerlitz in 1805 and Wagram in 1809? If Buonaparte failed to secure peace at Moscow, he had no real choice but to retreat—and that meant nothing less than a strategic defeat. We will set aside the question of what he did to reach Moscow, and whether he missed many chances during the advance to bring Emperor Alexander to terms. We will also leave aside the disastrous conditions of the retreat, which may well have grown out of the campaign’s overall conduct. Even so, the central question remains unchanged. No matter how much more brilliant the campaign up to Moscow might have been, there would still always have been uncertainty about whether Emperor Alexander could be intimidated into making peace. And even if a retreat had not carried within it the seeds of the disasters that actually followed, it still could never have been anything but a major strategic defeat. If Emperor

Alexander had accepted a peace that was unfavorable to him, then the campaign of 1812 would have stood beside Austerlitz, Friedland, and Wagram. But those campaigns too, if they had not ended in peace, would most likely have ended in similar catastrophes. So whatever genius, skill, and energy the Conqueror of the World brought to the task, this final question put to fate() always remained the same. Should we then reject the campaigns of 1805, 1807, and 1809, and say, because of the campaign of 1812, that they were reckless ventures; that their results ran against the nature of things; and that in 1812 strategic justice finally asserted itself against blind chance? That would be an unjustified conclusion, a highly arbitrary judgment, and a case only half proved, because no human eye can trace the chain of necessary events all the way to the decision of the defeated princes. *

We can say even less that the campaign of 1812 deserved the same success as the others, and that it turned out differently because of something unnatural, since we cannot treat Alexander's firmness as something unforeseeable.

What could be more natural than to say that in 1805, 1807, and 1809 Buonaparte judged his opponents correctly, but in 1812 he was mistaken on that point? In the earlier cases, then, he was right; in the later one, wrong. In both, we are judging by the outcome.

As we have already said, all action in war is aimed at probable results, not certain ones. Whatever cannot be made certain must always be left to fate, or chance, whichever name you

* "Frage an das Schicksal," a familiar quotation from Schiller.—TR.

prefer. We may insist that as little as possible be left to chance, but only in relation to the particular case—that is, as little as can be managed in that specific case. We must not conclude that the course leaving the least to chance is always the one to choose. That would be a serious mistake, as all our theoretical views show. There are situations in which the greatest boldness is the greatest wisdom.

Now, in everything the chief actor leaves to chance, his personal merit—and therefore his responsibility as well—seems to disappear completely. Even so, we cannot help feeling an inner satisfaction when events turn out as expected, and dissatisfaction when they do not. We should mean nothing more by right and wrong than this in the judgment we form—or rather find—in the mere result.

Still, it cannot be denied that the satisfaction we feel in success, and the pain caused by failure, come from a kind of mysterious impression. We imagine a subtle thread, invisible to the mind's eye, connecting success attributed to good fortune with the genius of the commander, and that idea gives us pleasure. What strengthens this impression is that our sympathy grows stronger and more definite when the principal actor's successes and defeats are repeated again and again. In this way, it becomes clear why good luck in war takes on a much nobler character than good luck in gambling. In general, when a fortunate warrior does nothing else to lessen our interest in him, we take pleasure in following his career.

Criticism, then, after weighing everything that falls within the reach of human reason and judgment, should let the outcome

speak for those deeper, mysterious connections that do not appear in any visible form. In this way, it protects the quiet verdict of a higher authority from the clamor of crude opinion on the one hand, while on the other it guards against the serious misuse that might be made of this final court of appeal.

This verdict of the outcome must therefore always reveal what human insight cannot discover on its own. It will be called on most often in matters involving intellectual powers and processes, partly because these can be judged with the least certainty, and partly because their close connection with the will allows them to exert a powerful influence over it. When fear or courage drives a decision forward, nothing objective stands between them for us to examine, and so there is nothing by which insight and calculation could have anticipated the likely result.

We must now be allowed to make a few observations about the instrument of criticism, that is, the language it uses, because this is connected to action in war to a certain extent. Critical examination is really nothing more than the deliberation that ought to come before action in war. We therefore consider it essential that the language of criticism should have the same character as the language proper to deliberation in war. Otherwise it would cease to be practical, and criticism would find no place in real life.

In our remarks on the theory of conducting war, we said that theory should train the commander’s mind for war, or, in other words, that its teaching should guide his education. We also said that it is not meant to provide him with fixed doctrines and

systems that he can use like mental tools. But if war never requires, or even allows, the construction of scientific formulas to help decide a particular case; if truth does not appear there in a systematic form; if it is found not indirectly but directly through the mind's natural perception, then the same must also be true of critical review.

As we have seen, when a full demonstration of the nature of things would be too long and cumbersome, criticism must rely on the truths that theory has already established on the subject. But just as in war the person acting follows these theoretical truths less because he treats them as fixed, objective laws and more because they have become part of his thinking, criticism must use them in the same way. It must not treat them as an external rule or an algebraic formula that needs no fresh proof each time it is applied. Instead, it should always shed light on the proof itself, leaving only the more detailed and specific proof to theory. In this way, it avoids obscure, baffling language and proceeds in plain speech, with a clear and constantly visible chain of ideas.

Of course, this cannot always be achieved completely, but it must always remain the goal in critical writing. Such writing should use the complicated forms of science as little as possible. It should never fall back on scientific devices as if they were a truth-producing apparatus of their own, but should always be guided by the mind's natural and unbiased impressions.

But this sincere effort, if we may call it that, has unfortunately seldom guided critical examinations up to now. Most of them

have instead been expressions of a kind of vanity—a desire to put ideas on display.

The first fault we constantly encounter is the weak and wholly unacceptable application of certain one-sided systems as if they were a formal code of laws. But it is never hard to show the one-sidedness of such systems, and once that has been done, it is enough to discredit forever the critical judgments based on them. Here we are dealing with a definite subject, and since the number of possible systems can only be small in the end, they are themselves the lesser evil.

An even greater problem is the grand parade of technical terms—scientific expressions and metaphors—that these systems drag along behind them. They spread everywhere like a disorderly mob, like the baggage of an army that has broken away from its commander. Any critic who has not adopted a system, either because none has satisfied him or because he has not yet mastered one, will still sometimes borrow a piece of one, much as someone might use a ruler, to point out a general's mistakes. Most critics cannot reason at all without leaning here and there on scraps of scientific military theory. The smallest of these scraps, made up of little more than scientific words and metaphors, are often nothing but decorative flourishes in critical writing. And it is only natural that technical and scientific expressions belonging to a system lose whatever precision they may once have had as soon as they are twisted into general axioms or treated like tiny crystalline talismans, supposedly more convincing than plain language.

As a result, our theoretical and critical books, instead of being clear and straightforward discussions in which the author knows what he is saying and the reader knows what he is reading, are crammed with technical terms. These become dark points of confusion where author and reader lose contact with each other. And often they are worse than that: they are empty shells with nothing inside. The author himself has no clear sense of what he means and is satisfied with vague ideas that, if put into plain language, would seem inadequate even to him.

A third fault in criticism is the misuse of historical examples and the display of great reading or learning. We have already said what the history of the Art of War is, and in later chapters we will explain our views on examples and on military history in general more fully. For now, one point is enough: a single fact, mentioned only briefly and superficially, can be used to support completely opposite arguments. And when three or four such facts, utterly unlike one another, are gathered from the most distant countries and the most remote times and piled together, they usually only confuse and mislead judgment and understanding instead of proving anything. Once examined in the light, they turn out to be mere worthless rubbish, used only to display the author's learning.

But what practical value comes from ideas that are obscure, partly wrong, confused, and arbitrary? Very little. Because of them, theory has often stood in direct opposition to practice and has frequently been mocked by people whose skill and courage in the field are beyond doubt.

But this could not have happened if theory, stated plainly and dealing naturally with the things that make up the art of war, had tried to establish only what really can be established. If it had avoided false claims, empty displays of scientific method, and irrelevant historical comparisons, and had stayed close to the subject, it could have worked alongside those who must handle events in the field through their own natural genius.

CHAPTER VI. On Examples

Historical examples make everything clearer and provide the best kind of proof in the empirical sciences. This is even more true of the art of war than of any other field. General Scharnhorst, whose handbook is the best ever written on real war, says that historical examples are of the highest importance, and he uses them admirably himself. If he had survived the war in which he fell,() the fourth part of his revised treatise on artillery would have offered even stronger evidence of the observant and enlightened spirit with which he examined matters of experience.

But theoretical writers rarely use historical examples in this way. More often, the way they use them leaves the reader dissatisfied and even offends common sense. We therefore think it important to look closely at both the proper use and the misuse of historical examples. *

Without question, the branches of knowledge that form the foundation of the art of war belong to the empirical sciences. Although they are derived to a great extent from the nature of things, we can learn that nature itself mostly through experience. And practical application is shaped by so many circumstances that the effects can never be fully understood from the nature of the means alone.

The effects of gunpowder, that great force in warfare, have only been understood through experience, and even now

* General Scharnhorst died in 1813 from a wound received at the battle of Bautzen or Grosz Gorchen.—EDITOR.

experiments continue in order to understand them more fully. It is easy enough to grasp that an iron ball driven by powder at 1,000 feet per second will crush every living thing it strikes along its path; we do not need experience to tell us that. But how many hundreds of factors are involved in producing that result, and how many of them can only be learned through experience? Nor is the physical effect the only one we must study. We are also looking for the moral effect, and that can be discovered only through experience. There is no other way to learn it or judge it properly. In the Middle Ages, when firearms were first invented, their physical effect was slight compared with what it is now because the weapons were so crude, but their moral effect was much greater. To understand what troops hardened by long exposure to danger can do, once a career of victory has raised them to the noble standard of demanding their utmost from themselves, one must have seen the steadiness of those masses trained and led by Buonaparte under the heaviest and most unbroken cannon fire. No one would believe it from theory alone. On the other hand, it is well known that there are troops now serving European powers who would be easily scattered by a few cannon shots.

But no empirical science, and therefore no theory of the art of war, can always support its truths with historical proof. In some cases, it is also difficult to back up experience with isolated facts. Once some method has been found effective in war, it gets repeated. One nation copies another. The thing becomes fashionable, and in this way it comes into use, supported by experience, and takes its place in theory. Theory then is satisfied to appeal to experience in general to explain its origin,

rather than to prove its truth in each case.

But the situation is quite different when experience is used to overturn an accepted method, to confirm something doubtful, or to introduce something new. In those cases, specific examples from history must be cited as proof.

Now, if we look closely at the use of historical proof, four points of view immediately present themselves.

First, they may be used simply to explain an idea. In any abstract discussion, it is very easy to be misunderstood—or not understood at all. When an author is concerned about that, an example from history can cast the needed light on the idea and make it clear to the reader.

Second, they may serve as an application of an idea, because an example gives us a chance to show how smaller circumstances work—details that cannot all be included or explained in any general statement of the idea. That, in fact, is the difference between theory and experience. Both of these cases belong to examples in the proper sense; the next two belong to historical proof.

Third, a historical fact may be cited specifically to support an argument. This is always enough when we only need to prove that a fact or effect is possible.

Lastly, fourth, we may draw a theory from the detailed account of a historical event, or by bringing several such events together. In that case, the theory finds its real proof in the testimony itself.

For the first of these purposes, all that is usually needed is a brief mention of the case, since it is being used only in part. Historical accuracy is a secondary concern here; an invented case could serve just as well. Still, historical examples are always preferable, because they bring the idea they illustrate closer to practical life.

The second use calls for a fuller account of events, but historical authenticity is still a secondary matter. On that point, the same applies as in the first case.

For the third purpose, simply citing an unquestioned fact is generally enough. If someone claims that fortified positions can achieve their purpose under certain conditions, it is enough to mention the position of Bunzelwitz() in support of the claim. *

But if a historical case is being used to prove an abstract truth, then every part of that case that matters to the argument must be examined as thoroughly and completely as possible. The case must, to some extent, unfold carefully before the reader's eyes. The less fully this is done, the weaker the proof will be. And the more necessary it will become to make up for what the single case fails to demonstrate by adding a number of other cases, since we may reasonably assume that, across a larger number of cases, the smaller details we cannot provide will tend to cancel one another out in their effects.

If we want to show, from experience, that cavalry are better placed behind infantry than on the same line with them, or that it is very dangerous to attempt an enveloping movement with

* Frederick the Great's famous entrenched camp in 1761.

widely separated columns, unless one has a clear superiority in numbers, whether on the battlefield or in the theatre of war—that is, tactically or strategically—then examples must be handled with care. In the first case, it is not enough simply to list some lost battles in which the cavalry stood on the flanks and some won battles in which the cavalry stood behind the infantry. In the latter case, it is not enough merely to point to the battles of Rivoli and Wagram, or to the Austrian attack in the Italian theatre of war in 1796, or the French attack on the German theatre of war in the same year. We must show exactly how these battle formations or plans of attack materially helped bring about disaster in those particular cases, by tracing the circumstances and events closely. Only then will it become clear how far such formations or measures deserve condemnation. That is a point that must be shown, because to condemn them absolutely would not be true.

As already noted, when it is impossible to give a full, detailed account of the facts, some of the missing force of proof can, to a certain extent, be made up for by citing a larger number of cases. But this is a very risky way of dealing with the problem, and it has often been misused. Instead of giving one example that is fully explained, people briefly mention three or four and create the appearance of strong evidence. But in some matters, even a dozen cases would prove nothing. If the facts happen often, then a dozen cases with the opposite outcome could just as easily be produced. If someone points to a dozen lost battles in which the defeated side attacked in separate converging columns, we can point to a dozen victories won with the same arrangement. Clearly, no conclusion can be reached in this way.

If these different points are considered carefully, it becomes clear how easily examples can be misused.

When an event is only noticed superficially instead of being carefully analyzed in all its parts, it is like an object seen from far away: it looks much the same on every side, and its details cannot be made out. Examples of this kind have in fact been used to support completely opposite opinions. To some, Daun's campaigns are models of prudence and skill. To others, they are simply examples of timidity and lack of resolve. Buonaparte's passage across the Noric Alps in 1797 can be presented either as a supremely bold decision or as an act of sheer recklessness. His strategic defeat in 1812 can be described as the result either of too much energy or too little. All of these views have been put forward, and it is easy to see how they could arise, because each person sees the connection between events differently. At the same time, these opposing opinions cannot both be right, and so one of the two must be wrong.

We owe a good deal to the worthy Feuquières for the many examples in his memoirs. They preserved a number of historical incidents that might otherwise have been lost, and he was also one of the first to connect theoretical—that is, abstract—ideas with the practical conduct of war, since the cases he presents are clearly meant to illustrate and support his theoretical claims. Even so, an impartial reader will hardly think he achieved his main aim: proving theoretical principles through historical examples. Although he sometimes describes events in great detail, he too often fails to show that his conclusions necessarily arise from the inner relationships of those events.

Another problem caused by treating historical events too superficially is that some readers either do not know the events at all, or cannot remember them well enough to follow the author's meaning. As a result, they are left with only two choices: either accept what is said blindly or remain unconvinced.

It is extremely difficult to present historical events to a reader clearly enough, and in enough detail, to use them as proof. Writers often lack the means to do so, and cannot spare the necessary time or space. Still, we maintain that when the goal is to establish a new or doubtful opinion, a single example that is thoroughly analyzed is far more instructive than ten that are treated superficially. The great harm in these shallow accounts is not simply that the writer offers his story as proof when it does not truly deserve that name. The deeper problem is that he has not properly mastered the subject. From this careless, superficial handling of history come a hundred false views and attempts to build theories—ideas that would never have appeared if the writer had considered it his duty to derive every new claim from the strict connection of events and to prove it from history.

Once we recognize both the difficulties of using historical examples and the need to use them, we also arrive at this conclusion: recent military history is naturally the best source for them, because it alone is detailed enough and reliably documented.

In ancient times, both the conditions of war and the way it was fought were different. For that reason, those events are less

useful to us in theory and in practice. On top of that, military history, like every other kind of history, naturally loses many of the small details and distinctive features that were once visible as time passes. It loses color and vitality, like a faded or darkened picture, until in the end perhaps only the broad masses and main outlines remain, and these then seem larger and more important than they really were.

If we look at the current state of warfare, we would say that the wars since the War of the Austrian Succession are almost the only ones that still bear a substantial resemblance to the present, at least in terms of armament. Despite the many important changes that have taken place, both large and small, they can still teach us a great deal. The War of the Spanish Succession is quite different, because firearms had not yet developed nearly as far, and cavalry was still the most important arm. The farther back we go, the less useful military history becomes, because it grows increasingly thin and lacking in detail. The least useful of all is the military history of the ancient world.

But this lack of usefulness is not absolute. It applies only to subjects that depend on knowing very fine details, or to matters in which the way war is fought has changed. Even though we know very little about the tactics used in the battles between the Swiss and the Austrians, and between the Burgundians and the French, those battles still clearly show that they were the first in which well-trained infantry proved superior to even the best cavalry. A broad look at the age of the Condottieri shows how completely the whole conduct of war depends on the instrument employed. In no other period did the forces used in

war so strongly take on the character of a special instrument and stand so completely apart from the rest of the national community. The striking way in which the Romans, during the second Punic War, attacked the Carthaginian possessions in Spain and Africa while Hannibal still held his ground in Italy is also highly instructive, because the general relations between the states and armies involved in this indirect act of defence are well enough known.

But the more closely we move into particulars, and the more events differ in character from the most general relations, the less we can expect examples and practical lessons from very remote times. We do not have the means to judge those events properly, and we cannot apply them to our entirely different way of making war.

Unfortunately, historical writers have always been fond of talking about ancient times. We will not try to say how much vanity or charlatanism may have contributed to this habit, but in general we do not find in it any sincere purpose or serious effort to instruct and persuade. We can therefore regard such quotations and references only as decoration, used to fill empty spaces and conceal weaknesses.

It would be an immense service to teach the art of war entirely through historical examples, as Feuquieres proposed. But it would be enough work for a whole lifetime, when we consider that anyone who undertakes it must first prepare himself through long personal experience in actual war.

Anyone driven by ambition to take on such a task should prepare for this serious duty as if for a long pilgrimage. He must

give his time freely, hold nothing back, fear no worldly rank or power, and rise above personal vanity and false shame, so that, in the words of the French code, he may speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

BOOK III. STRATEGY IN GENERAL

CHAPTER I. Strategy

In the second chapter of the second book, Strategy was defined as “the employment of the battle as the means towards the attainment of the object of the War.” Strictly speaking, it deals only with battle. But its theory must also take into account the instrument through which this real activity is carried out—the armed force itself—and its main relationships, because battle is fought by that force and in turn affects it. Strategy must also understand battle itself, especially its possible results and the mental and moral powers that matter most in making use of it.

Strategy is the use of battle to achieve the end of the war. It must therefore set the purpose for all military action, and that purpose must match the object of the war. In other words, strategy creates the plan of the war. To do this, it connects the series of actions that are meant to lead to the final decision. That means it makes the plans for individual campaigns and directs the combats to be fought in each. Since much of this can be decided only by conjecture, and some of those conjectures will prove wrong, while many other detailed arrangements cannot be made in advance at all, strategy must accompany the army into the field. There it can settle particulars on the spot and make the constant changes to the general plan that war requires. Strategy, therefore, can never step away from its work even for a moment.

That this has not always been the accepted view is clear from the old practice of keeping strategy in the cabinet instead of with the army. That arrangement is justifiable only if the cabinet is so close to the army that it can effectively be treated as the army's main headquarters.

Theory should therefore support strategy in shaping its plans—or, more accurately, it should shed light on things as they are, clarify how they relate to one another, and bring into clear view whatever principles or rules actually exist.

If we remember from the first chapter how many matters of the highest importance war touches, we can see that thinking through all of them demands an exceptionally wide-ranging mind.

A prince or general who knows exactly how to organize a war in line with his aims and resources, doing neither too little nor too much, gives the clearest proof of genius. But this talent shows itself less in inventing new methods that immediately catch the eye than in the successful final outcome of the whole campaign. What deserves our admiration is the precise fulfillment of unspoken assumptions, the quiet harmony of the entire action—and this becomes visible only in the overall result. Anyone who looks back from that final result and still does not recognize the signs of that harmony is likely to look for genius where it is not, and cannot be, found.

The means and forms strategy uses are in fact so simple, and so familiar through constant repetition, that any ordinary common sense must find it ridiculous to hear critics so often discuss them in such inflated language. A turning movement, carried out a thousand times before, is praised in one case as proof of dazzling genius, in another as evidence of profound insight, or even of the broadest knowledge. Could anything in the world of books be more absurd?() *

It becomes even more ridiculous when we remember that the same critic, following the prevailing view, leaves all moral forces out of theory and allows it to deal only with material forces. Everything is then reduced to a few mathematical relations of balance and superiority, of time and space, and to a few lines and angles. If that were all there was to it, then this pitiful exercise would not amount to a scientific problem even for a schoolboy.

But let us be clear: this is not a matter of scientific formulas or technical problems. The relationships between material things are generally quite simple. What is harder is understanding the moral forces at work. Even so, these complications really appear only in the highest levels of strategy, where strategy meets political science—or rather, where the two become one. And there, as we have already noted, they affect more how much or how little should be done than the form the action itself should take. Where execution is the main issue, as in individual acts of war both large and small, the moral factors have already

* This paragraph refers to the works of Lloyd, Bülow, and in fact to all the eighteenth-century writers, from whose influence we in England are still not entirely free.—ED.

been reduced to a very small number.

So in strategy, everything is very simple, but that does not make it easy. Once the condition of the State has made clear what war should do and what it can do, the path to that goal is easy enough to identify. But to follow that path directly, and carry out the plan without being forced off course a thousand times by a thousand changing influences, requires not only great strength of character but also great clarity and steadiness of mind. Out of a thousand exceptional men—some distinguished by intellect, others by insight, others by boldness or strength of will—perhaps not one will bring together all the qualities needed to rise above mediocrity as a general.

It may sound strange, but anyone who knows war in this respect will recognize it as unquestionably true: making an important decision in strategy requires far more strength of will than making one in tactics. In tactics, the moment carries us forward. A commander feels himself swept along by a powerful current, one he hardly dares resist without disastrous consequences. He suppresses his rising fears and pushes on boldly. In strategy, where everything moves more slowly, there is more room for our own anxieties and for those of others, for objections and protests, and therefore also for untimely regret. And because in strategy we do not see things directly, as we do at least half the time in tactics, with our own eyes, but must instead infer and assume everything, our convictions are less forceful. As a result, most generals, at the very moment when they should act, remain trapped in paralyzing doubt.

Now let us look at history—at Frederick the Great's campaign of 1760, famous for its elegant marches and maneuvers, and often praised by critics as a masterpiece of strategic skill. But is there really anything so astonishing in the King's first trying to turn Daun's right flank, then his left, then his right again, and so on, that it should overwhelm us with admiration? Should we see deep wisdom in that alone? No—we cannot, at least not if we judge plainly and without pretension. What we admire above all is the King's good judgment: while pursuing a major objective with very limited means, he attempted nothing beyond his strength, and only what was necessary to achieve his aim. This quality in the general appears not only in this campaign, but throughout all three wars of the Great King.

His objective was to bring Silesia safely into a peace secured by firm guarantees.

As ruler of a small state—one that resembled other states in most respects and surpassed them only in certain branches of administration—he could not be an Alexander; and if he had acted like Charles XII, he would only have ruined himself, as Charles did. So throughout his conduct of war we see power kept under control, always carefully balanced and never lacking in energy. In the most critical moments, it rises to astonishing action; the next moment, it settles back calmly under the influence of the most subtle political considerations. Neither vanity, nor the desire for glory, nor revenge could turn him from his course, and it was this course alone that brought the struggle to a successful end.

These few words hardly do justice to this side of the great general's genius. To understand it fully, we must look closely at the extraordinary outcome of the struggle and trace the causes that produced it. Only then do we see that nothing but the King's penetrating judgment brought him safely through all his dangers.

This is one quality we admire in this great commander in the campaign of 1760—and indeed in all his campaigns, though especially in this one—because in no other did he maintain the balance against such a superior enemy force at so small a cost.

Another point is how hard these plans are to carry out. It is easy enough to combine marches meant to turn an enemy's flank, whether right or left. It is just as easy to grasp, and to describe, the idea of keeping a small force tightly concentrated so it can meet the enemy on equal terms at any point, and of increasing a force's effect through rapid movement. So the mere design of such measures does not, by itself, call forth our admiration. In matters this simple, there is nothing more to say than that they are simple.

But let a general try to carry out these things as Frederick the Great did. Long afterward, writers who had seen events themselves still spoke of the danger—indeed, the recklessness—of the King's camps. No doubt, when he actually established them, the danger seemed three times greater than it did in retrospect.

The same was true of his marches, made under the enemy army's eyes, and often almost under its guns. These camps were chosen and these marches carried out not because he

lacked prudence, but because Frederick found security in Daun's system, in the way he drew up his army, in the responsibility weighing on him, and in his character. That was what justified Frederick's camps and marches. But it took the King's boldness, resolve, and strength of will to see the situation this way, and not to be misled or frightened by dangers that people were still writing and talking about thirty years later. Few generals in such a position would have believed these simple strategic methods could actually be put into practice.

There was also another practical difficulty: throughout this campaign, the King's army was constantly on the move. Twice it marched by miserable cross-roads from the Elbe into Silesia, behind Daun and with Lascy in pursuit, at the beginning of July and again at the beginning of August. The army had to be ready for battle at all times, and its marches had to be organized with a level of skill that demanded equally great effort. Even so, and despite being accompanied and slowed by thousands of wagons, supplying it remained extremely difficult. In Silesia, during the eight days before the battle of Leignitz, it had to keep marching without pause, filing alternately to the right and left in front of the enemy. This meant severe fatigue and serious privation.

Should we really assume that all of this could be done without causing tremendous strain in the machine? Can a Commander's mind work out movements like these as easily as a surveyor's hand handles an astrolabe? Doesn't the sight of their comrades suffering from hunger and thirst wound the hearts of the Commander and his Generals again and again? Mustn't the complaints and doubts this creates reach his ears? Would an

ordinary man have the courage to demand such sacrifices? And wouldn't such exertions almost certainly demoralize the Army, shatter discipline, and, in short, destroy its military spirit, if unwavering trust in the greatness and infallibility of the Commander did not make up for it all? This, then, is where our respect is due; these are the miracles of execution we should admire. But it is impossible to grasp their full force without some experience of them. Anyone who knows War only from books or the parade ground cannot fully understand how this counterweight works in practice; we therefore ask him to accept, on faith and trust, what he cannot supply from personal experience of his own.

This example is meant to make our line of thought clearer. To close this chapter, we will simply note that in our discussion of Strategy we will describe the separate subjects that seem to us most important, whether moral or material in nature. We will then move from the simple to the complex, and finish with the inner connection of the whole act of War—in other words, with the plan for a War or a campaign.

OBSERVATION.

In an earlier manuscript of the second book, the following passages were marked by the author himself for use in the first chapter of that book. Since the planned revision of that chapter was never completed, the passages referred to are included here in full.

Simply bringing armed forces together at a particular point makes a battle there possible, though it does not mean a battle

will actually happen. Should that possibility now be treated as a reality, and therefore as something effective? Certainly it should, because of its results; and those effects, whatever form they take, never fail to appear.

1. POSSIBLE COMBATS ARE, BECAUSE OF THEIR RESULTS, TO BE REGARDED AS REAL ONES.

If a detachment is sent out to cut off a fleeing enemy's retreat, and the enemy then surrenders without further resistance, that decision is still brought about by the combat this pursuing detachment presents to him.

If part of our army occupies an enemy province that was left undefended, and in doing so deprives the enemy of major resources for maintaining his army's strength, we hold that province only because the detached force makes the enemy expect a battle if he tries to retake it.

In both cases, then, the mere possibility of a battle has produced real results, and should therefore be counted among actual events. Suppose that in these cases the enemy had met our troops with superior forces and had therefore compelled them to give up their objective without a fight. Our plan would certainly have failed. But the battle we offered at those points would still not have been without effect, because it drew the enemy's forces there. And if the whole operation ended up harming us, it still cannot be said that these positions, these possible battles, produced no result. Their effects would then be like those of a lost battle.

In this way, we see that destroying the enemy's military forces and breaking the enemy's power can be achieved only through the effect of battle, whether the battle actually takes place or is merely offered and refused.

2. THE TWOFOLD OBJECT OF COMBAT.

But these effects are of two kinds: direct and indirect. They are indirect when other things intervene and become the focus of the struggle—things that cannot be treated as the destruction of the enemy's forces itself, but only as steps toward it. They may lead there by a roundabout path, but often with even greater effect. The capture of provinces, towns, fortresses, roads, bridges, magazines, and the like may be the immediate object of a battle, but never its ultimate one. Such things should never be seen as anything other than means of gaining greater superiority, so that in the end battle can be offered to the enemy under conditions in which he cannot refuse it. Therefore, all these things must be regarded only as intermediate links, or steps, leading to the effective principle, never as that principle itself.

3. EXAMPLE.

In 1814, the capture of Buonaparte's capital achieved the object of the war. The political divisions rooted in Paris immediately became active, and a vast rupture caused the Emperor's power to collapse on its own. Still, the right way to understand this is that these developments suddenly and greatly reduced Buonaparte's forces and means of defense. The superiority of

the Allies therefore increased by exactly the same amount, and any further resistance became impossible. It was this impossibility that produced peace with France. If we imagine that, at that same moment, the forces of the Allies had been reduced to a similar extent by external causes—if their superiority disappeared—then the effect and importance of taking Paris would disappear as well.

We have followed this line of argument in order to show that this is the natural and only sound way to understand the matter, and the source of its importance. It always brings us back to the same question: at any given moment in the war or campaign, what will probably be the result of the greater or lesser combats the two sides might offer each other? When considering a plan for a campaign, this question alone decides what measures should be taken from the very beginning and throughout.

4. WHEN THIS VIEW IS NOT TAKEN, THEN A FALSE VALUE IS GIVEN TO OTHER THINGS.

If we do not train ourselves to see war, and each campaign within a war, as a chain made up of linked battles, each one leading to the next, we are likely to make a serious mistake. We may start to think that capturing a particular place or occupying an undefended province has value in itself. Then we are likely to treat it as a gain we can simply hold on to. But if we see it that way, instead of as one step in the larger course of events, we fail to ask whether holding it may later bring even greater disadvantages. Military history shows this mistake again and again.

We might say that, just as in commerce a merchant cannot separate the profit from a single transaction and put it safely aside on its own, so in war a single advantage cannot be separated from the outcome of the whole. Just as the merchant must always work with the full extent of his resources, so in war it is only the total result that determines whether each individual gain is truly an advantage or a disadvantage.

If the mind is kept fixed on the chain of combats, as far as they can be foreseen, then it is always directed the right way. As a result, the movement of the force gains speed. In other words, intention and action take on the energy the situation requires, and that energy is not obstructed or diverted by outside influences.() *

* This entire chapter is aimed against the theories of the Austrian Staff in 1814. It may be regarded as the foundation of the modern teaching of the Prussian General Staff. See especially von Kämmer.—E. D.

CHAPTER II. Elements of Strategy

The factors that shape the use of combat in strategy can easily be divided into different kinds of elements: moral, physical, mathematical, geographical, and statistical.

The first class includes everything that arises from moral qualities and their effects. The second includes the whole body of military force: its organization, the proportion of the three arms, and so on. The third covers the angle of the lines of operation, and concentric and eccentric movements, insofar as their geometrical character has any value in calculation. The fourth includes the influence of the terrain, such as commanding positions, hills, rivers, woods, roads, and so on. Finally, the fifth includes all means of supply. Separating these things clearly in the mind is useful. It gives us clarity and helps us judge, as we go forward, whether each class should be valued more highly or less. For when we consider them one by one, many of them lose the importance they seemed to borrow from their connection with other things. We can see plainly, for example, that the value of a base of operations, even if we look only at its position relative to the line of operations, depends far less on the geometrical angle they form with each other than on the nature of the roads and the country through which they pass.

But to discuss strategy according to these elements would be the worst possible approach, because these elements are usually numerous and, in every single operation of war, closely

bound together. We would lose ourselves in a lifeless analysis. Like someone trapped in a nightmare, we would keep trying in vain to build an arch connecting this foundation of abstractions to the facts of the real world. Heaven save every theorist from such an attempt. We will remain with things as they exist in their full reality, and we will not carry our analysis any further than is needed at a given moment to make the idea clear. That idea has come to us not through speculative inquiry, but through the impression made by the realities of war taken as a whole.

CHAPTER III. Moral Forces

We must return to this subject, mentioned in the third chapter of the second book, because moral forces are among the most important elements in war. They are the spirit that runs through every part of it. These forces attach themselves most quickly and most strongly to the will that sets the whole mass of power in motion and directs it, almost merging with it into a single current, because the will itself is a moral force. Unfortunately, they escape any analysis books can provide. They cannot be reduced to numbers or neatly sorted into categories; they have to be seen and felt.

The spirit and other moral qualities that drive an army, a general, or a government; public opinion in the provinces where a war is being fought; and the moral effect of victory or defeat—these all differ greatly in their nature. Their influence also changes depending on how they relate to our purpose and our situation.

Even though books can say little or nothing about these matters, they belong to the theory of the art of war just as much as anything else that makes up war. I must repeat here that it is a poor philosophy to lay down rules and principles, in the old way, while completely ignoring moral forces, and then, as soon as those forces appear, start counting exceptions and turning them into theoretical rules. It is no better to appeal to genius as something above all rules. That implies not only that rules were made only for fools, but also that the rules themselves are little better than foolishness.

Even if the theory of the art of war does nothing more than remind us of these things—showing that moral forces must be given their full weight and always taken into account—it still expands its scope into the realm of immaterial forces. By establishing that point of view, it condemns in advance anyone who tries to justify himself before its judgment by pointing only to the physical balance of forces.

Out of respect for all the other so-called rules as well, theory cannot push moral forces outside its boundaries. The effects of physical forces and moral forces are completely intertwined; they cannot be separated the way a chemical process separates a metal alloy. So in every rule that deals with physical forces, theory must also keep in view the part played by moral forces. Otherwise it will end up making absolute statements that are sometimes too cautious and narrow, and at other times too sweeping and dogmatic. Even the most practical theories have crossed into this moral realm without realizing it. For example, the effects of a victory cannot be explained at all unless we take moral impressions into account. That is why most of the subjects we will discuss in this book are made up half of physical causes and effects and half of moral ones. We might even say that the physical elements are little more than the wooden hilt, while the moral elements are the noble metal—the true, brightly polished blade.

History shows most clearly the value of moral forces and the often astonishing influence they exert. This is the richest and purest nourishment a general's mind can draw from it. At the same time, we should note that the seeds of knowledge that enrich the mind come less from formal proofs, critical analysis,

and learned treatises than from feelings, broad impressions, and sudden flashes of truth.

We could examine the most important moral forces in war one by one and, with all the care of a diligent professor, try to teach what can be said about each, whether good or bad. But that method slips too easily into the commonplace and the stale, while real insight quickly disappears under analysis. In the end, one gradually arrives at connections that everyone already knows. We therefore prefer to remain here more incomplete and more rhapsodic than usual, satisfied to have drawn attention to the general importance of the subject and to have indicated the spirit in which the views in this book have been formed.

CHAPTER IV. The Principal Moral Forces

These are the commander's talents, the army's military virtue, and its national spirit. No one can say in general which matters most, because it is very hard to measure the strength of each, and even harder to compare one with another. The safest course is not to underrate any of them—a mistake human judgment is always inclined to make, swinging capriciously first to one side and then to the other. Better to rely on the clear proof history gives of the power of all three.

It is true, however, that in modern times the armies of European states have become much more equal in discipline and readiness for service. The conduct of war has also—as philosophers would say—developed naturally into a method that is, in a sense, common to all armies. As a result, little more can now be expected from commanders in the way of applying special technical devices in the narrow artistic sense, such as Frederick the Second's oblique order. So, under present conditions, it cannot be denied that national spirit and an army's habit of war have more room to exert their influence. A long peace may change all this again.() *

The national spirit of an army—enthusiasm, fanatical zeal, faith, opinion—shows itself most clearly in mountain warfare, where everyone, down to the common soldier, is left largely to himself. For that reason, mountainous country is the best field of operations for popular levies.

* Written shortly after the great Napoleonic campaigns.

An army’s skill from training, and the steady courage that keeps its ranks together as though they had been cast from a single mould, show their superiority in open country.

A general’s talent has the greatest room to show itself in broken, rolling country cut up by many obstacles. In the mountains, he has too little control over the separate parts, and directing them all is beyond his power. On open plains, command is straightforward and does not test those powers to the same degree.

Plans should be shaped in accordance with these undeniable natural affinities.

CHAPTER V. Military Virtue of an Army

This is different from mere bravery, and even more so from enthusiasm for the business of war. Bravery is certainly a necessary part of it. But just as bravery, which is a natural gift in some men, can develop in a soldier through habit and custom as part of an army, it must also take a different direction in him than it does in others. It must give up the impulse toward unchecked action and the use of force that marks it in the individual. Instead, it must submit to higher demands: obedience, order, rule, and method. Enthusiasm for the profession gives life and greater intensity to an army's military virtue, but it is not necessarily part of that virtue itself.

War is a distinct profession. However broad its connections may be, and even if every man in a country who is able to bear arms takes part in it, it still remains different from the other pursuits that fill human life. To be filled with a sense of the spirit and nature of this profession; to use, awaken, and absorb into its system the powers that should be active within it; to understand its nature completely; to gain confidence and skill in it through practice; to devote oneself to it entirely; to pass out of the private individual and into the role assigned to us in war—that is the military virtue of an army in the individual.

No matter how hard people try to unite the soldier and the citizen in the same person, no matter what is done to make wars national, and no matter how much we may think times have changed since the days of the old Condottieri, it will never be

possible to erase the distinct character of the military profession. And if that cannot be erased, then those who belong to it will always see themselves, while they remain in it, as a kind of guild, expressed through the rules, laws, and customs in which the “Spirit of War” most readily appears. That is, in fact, how things are. Even if we are strongly inclined to view War from the highest standpoint, it would be a serious mistake to look down on this corporate spirit (esprit de corps), which can and should exist to some degree in every Army. This corporate spirit is the bond that unites the natural forces at work in what we have called military virtue. The elements of military virtue are drawn more strongly to the spirit of a corporate body than to anything else.

An Army that keeps its usual formations even under the heaviest fire, that is never thrown into confusion by imagined fears, and that, when faced with real danger, fights for every inch of ground; an Army that, proud of its victories, never loses its obedience, or its respect for and confidence in its leaders, even under the discouraging effects of defeat; an Army whose physical powers have been hardened by exercise to endure privation and fatigue like an athlete’s muscles; an Army that sees all its hardships as the means to victory, not as a curse hanging over its standards, and that is constantly reminded of its duties and virtues by the brief catechism of a single idea, namely the honour of its arms—such an Army is filled with the true military spirit.

Soldiers can fight bravely, like the Vendéans, and achieve great things, like the Swiss, the Americans, or the Spaniards, without showing this particular military virtue. A commander can also

succeed at the head of a standing army, like Eugene and Marlborough, without having its support. So we should not say that a successful war without it is impossible. We stress this point especially to define the idea more precisely, so it does not blur into a vague generalization and so no one assumes that military virtue is ultimately everything. It is not. Military virtue in an army is a specific moral force. We can imagine an army lacking it, and can therefore judge its influence, just as we can measure the power of any other instrument.

Having defined it in this way, we can now consider what may be said about its influence and how its support can be gained.

Military virtue does for the parts what the commander's genius does for the whole. The general can direct the whole, but not every separate part; and where he cannot direct a part, military virtue must lead it. A general is chosen because of his reputation for superior ability, and the chief leaders of large bodies of troops are appointed only after careful testing. But this testing becomes less thorough as we move down the ranks, and to the same extent we can rely less on individual talent. What is lacking in that respect, military virtue must make up for. The natural qualities of a warlike people play exactly this role: bravery, aptitude, endurance, and enthusiasm.

These qualities can therefore take the place of military virtue, and military virtue can likewise take the place of them. From this, the following may be concluded:

1. Military virtue is a quality found only in standing armies, but they are also the ones that need it most. In national uprisings, its place is taken by natural qualities, which emerge there more

quickly.

2. Armies facing other standing armies can manage more easily without this quality than a standing army facing a national uprising. In that kind of conflict, the troops are spread out more widely, and individual divisions have to act more on their own. But when an army can remain concentrated, the General's genius matters more and can make up for what the army lacks in spirit. So, in general, military virtue becomes more necessary as the theatre of operations and other circumstances make war more complicated and force the troops to disperse.

The only lesson to draw from these truths is this: if an army lacks this quality, every effort should be made to simplify the operations of the war as much as possible, or to build greater effectiveness into the army's organisation in some other way. We should not expect the mere name of a standing army to provide what only the real thing can give.

The military virtue of an army is therefore one of the most important moral forces in war. When it is absent, we either see some other force take its place—such as greatly superior generalship or popular enthusiasm—or we see results that do not match the effort expended. History shows how much this spirit, this solid worth of an army, this process of refining ore into polished metal, has already achieved: the Macedonians under Alexander, the Roman legions under Cesar, the Spanish infantry under Alexander Farnese, the Swedes under Gustavus Adolphus and Charles XII, the Prussians under Frederick the Great, and the French under Buonaparte. We would have to deliberately shut our eyes to the evidence of history not to

admit that the astonishing successes of these Generals, and their greatness in moments of extreme difficulty, were possible only because they commanded armies that possessed this virtue.

This spirit can arise from only two sources, and it needs both together. The first is a series of campaigns and major victories. The second is an army kept in active motion, sometimes at the highest level of effort. Only through these does the soldier come to know his own strength. The more a general is used to asking much of his troops, the more certain he can be that they will meet those demands. A soldier takes as much pride in enduring hardship as in facing danger. So this seed can grow only in the ground of constant action and exertion, and only in the light of victory. Once it has grown into a strong tree, it can withstand the fiercest storms of misfortune and defeat, and even the lazy inactivity of peace, at least for a while. It can therefore be created only in war, and under great generals; but it may certainly endure for several generations, even under generals of ordinary ability and through long periods of peace.

We must not confuse this generous and noble spirit of unity in a line of veteran troops, scarred and fully hardened by war, with the self-importance and vanity of a standing army() held together only by service regulations and drill manuals. A certain steady seriousness and strict discipline may preserve military virtue for a long time, but they can never produce it. These things do have value, but they must not be overrated. Order, neatness, willingness, and even a certain amount of pride and

elevated feeling are valuable qualities in an army formed in peacetime, but they cannot stand on their own. The whole depends on the whole; like glass cooled too quickly, a single crack can shatter the entire mass. Above all, the highest spirit in the world can all too easily turn into discouragement at the first setback, even into a kind of boastful panic—the French sauve que peut. Such an army can achieve something only through its leader, never by itself. It must be led with twice the caution until, little by little, through victory and hardship, its strength grows into full armor. So take care not to mistake an army's spirit for its mood. *

* Clausewitz is, of course, thinking of the long-service standing armies of his own youth, not the short-service standing armies of today (EDITOR).

CHAPTER VI. Boldness

The role boldness plays in the overall balance of forces, where it stands against foresight and prudence, was explained in the chapter on certainty of results. The point was to show that theory has no right to limit boldness through rules it tries to impose.

But this noble impulse, by which the human spirit lifts itself above the greatest dangers, should be seen as an active principle that belongs especially to war. In truth, in what field of human activity would boldness have a stronger claim to belong than in war?

From the wagon driver and the drummer to the general, it is the highest of virtues, the true steel that gives the weapon its sharpness and shine.

We should also admit that in war boldness has privileges of its own. Beyond what can be worked out by calculating space, time, and numbers, we must allow for a certain advantage that boldness gains from the weakness of others whenever it takes control. In that sense, it is a creative force. This is not hard to show in philosophical terms. Whenever boldness meets hesitation, the odds necessarily turn in its favor, because hesitation itself already means a loss of balance. Only when it meets cautious foresight—which we may say is equally bold, or at least equally strong and powerful—does it face a disadvantage; but such cases are rare. Of all the prudent men in the world, most are prudent because they are timid.

Among large bodies of troops, boldness is a force whose special cultivation can never harm the others, because the mass is tied to a higher will by the structure and connections of battle order and military service, and is therefore directed by an outside intelligence. Here, then, boldness is like a spring kept compressed until the moment its action is needed.

The higher the rank, the more necessary it is for boldness to be joined with thoughtful judgment, so that it does not become a blind burst of passion that achieves nothing. As rank increases, the issue becomes less one of personal sacrifice and more one of protecting others and serving the good of the whole. For the mass of soldiers, service regulations act like a second nature and tell them what to do. But a general must be guided by reflection, and in his case personal boldness in action can easily turn into a mistake. Even so, it is a noble fault and should not be judged like other faults. Fortunate is the army in which ill-timed boldness often appears; it is vigorous growth that shows the soil is rich. Even recklessness—that is, boldness without a clear purpose—should not be dismissed. In fact, it comes from the same energy of feeling, only acting as passion without the help of intelligence. It is only when it strikes at the foundation of obedience, when it openly disregards the orders of higher authority, that it must be restrained as a dangerous evil—not because of boldness itself, but because of the disobedience. For in war, nothing is more important than obedience.

The reader will readily agree that, if the same degree of judgment is present in a given number of cases, a thousand times more of them will end badly because of excessive caution than because of boldness.

One might naturally suppose that having a rational objective would encourage boldness and therefore reduce its real merit. In reality, however, the opposite is true.

Clear thought, or the general dominance of the mind, takes away a large part of the power of the emotions. For that reason, boldness becomes rarer the higher we go in rank. Whether judgment and understanding actually increase with rank or not, commanders at each higher level are pressed more and more by objective realities, by outside relationships and competing claims. As a result, they become more perplexed, especially when their personal intelligence is limited. In war, this is the main basis for the truth of the French proverb:

"Tel brille au second qui s'éclipse au premier."

Almost all the generals whom history portrays as merely mediocre, and as lacking decisiveness when they held supreme command, had earlier won fame for their boldness and determination.( ) *

We need to distinguish among the motives for bold action that come from necessity. Necessity has different degrees of force. When it is immediate—when a person, in pursuing his goal, is driven into great danger in order to escape another danger just as great—we can only admire his resolve, and that resolve still has its own value. If a young man jumps across a deep chasm to show his skill at riding, he is bold. If he makes the same jump while being chased by a troop of head-chopping Janissaries, he is only resolute. But the farther the necessity is from the

* Beaulieu, Benedek, Bazaine, Buller, Melas, Mack, etc., etc.

moment of action, and the more intervening considerations the mind must pass through in order to grasp it, the less necessity subtracts from the boldness of the act. If Frederick the Great, in 1756, saw that war was inevitable, and that he could avoid destruction only by striking before his enemies, then it became necessary for him to begin the war himself. But at the same time, it was certainly a very bold step, because few men in his position would have been able to decide on it.

Although strategy belongs only to generals-in-chief or commanders in the highest positions, boldness in every other branch of an army matters to it just as much as any other military virtue. With an army drawn from a bold people, and one in which the spirit of boldness has always been cultivated, very different things can be attempted than with an army in which this quality is unknown. For that reason, we have considered it in connection with the army as a whole. But our main subject is the boldness of the general, and after describing this military virtue in general terms as well as we could, there is not much more for us to add about it.

The higher someone rises in command, the more their actions are shaped by intellect, understanding, and insight. As a result, boldness—which belongs more to feeling—is held in check. That is why it appears so rarely at the highest levels, and why it deserves all the more admiration when it does appear. Boldness guided by a commanding intelligence is the mark of the hero. It does not mean charging blindly against the nature of things or openly defying the laws of probability. It means that once a choice has been made, a person holds firmly to the higher calculation that genius—the quick, instinctive tact of

judgment—has grasped in a flash. The more boldness gives wings to the mind and to discernment, the farther they can fly, the wider the view becomes, and the more exact the result. But this is true only in the sense that greater aims always bring greater dangers. An ordinary person, not to mention someone weak or irresolute, can reach a sound conclusion—so far as that is possible without direct proof—only after careful reflection in the safety of a room, far from danger and responsibility. But when danger and responsibility press in on every side, that person loses the ability to see the whole situation. And even if the influence of others helps preserve some of that vision, he will still lose the power to decide, because at that point no one can help him.

We therefore believe it is impossible to imagine a great general without boldness. In other words, no one can become one unless he is born with this strength of soul, and so we regard it as the first requirement for such a career. The second question is how much of this natural power remains once it has been developed and restrained by education and by the circumstances of life, and once the man has reached a high position. The more of it that still remains, the more powerfully genius can take flight, and the higher it will rise. The risks continually grow greater, but the purpose grows with them. Whether its lines emerge from a distant necessity and take their direction from it, or whether they come together at the keystone of a structure planned by ambition—whether it is Frederick acting or Alexander—the difference matters little from a critical point of view. If the one stirs the imagination more because he is bolder, the other satisfies the understanding more because

there is in him a greater absolute necessity.

We still need to address one very important point.

An army's spirit of boldness can come from two sources: it may already exist in the people, or it may be created during a successful war led by capable generals. In the second case, it is naturally absent at the beginning.

In our time, there is hardly any way to cultivate this spirit in a people except through war, and through war led by bold generals. Only this can counter the softness of feeling and the desire for comfort that lead a people into decline as they grow prosperous and become deeply absorbed in commerce.

A nation can hope to hold a strong place in the political world only when its character and its conduct in actual war continually strengthen each other through mutual influence.

CHAPTER VII. Perseverance

The reader expects to hear about angles and lines, but instead finds, in place of these familiar figures of the scientific world, ordinary people like those he meets every day in the street. Even so, the author cannot bring himself to be a hair more mathematical than the subject seems to require, and he is not troubled by whatever surprise the reader may feel.

In war, more than anywhere else, things turn out differently from what we expected, and they look very different up close from how they appeared at a distance. An architect can calmly watch a building rise step by step according to the plan. A doctor, though far more subject than an architect to hidden forces and chance, still knows a good deal about how his methods will work and what effects they will have. In war, by contrast, the commander of a vast whole is caught in a constant whirl of true and false reports; mistakes caused by fear, negligence, or haste; violations of his orders, whether from mistaken or sound motives; and acts driven by ill will, real or supposed duty, laziness, exhaustion, or accidents no human being could have foreseen. In short, he is subjected to countless impressions, most of them discouraging and only a few encouraging. Long experience in war develops the judgment needed to quickly assess the value of such incidents. Great courage and steadiness of character withstand them as a rock withstands crashing waves. Anyone who gave way to these impressions would never carry an undertaking through. For that reason, perseverance in the chosen aim, so long as there is no decisive reason to abandon it, is an essential

counterweight. Moreover, hardly any famous military enterprise has ever been accomplished without endless effort, hardship, and deprivation. Since both body and mind are always inclined to give in under such strain, only an immense force of will—shown in a perseverance admired by both contemporaries and later generations—can lead us to our goal.

CHAPTER VIII. Superiority of Numbers

In tactics as in strategy, this is the most general principle of victory, and we will examine it first in its broadest form. To do so, we may begin with the following explanation:

Strategy decides where a battle will be fought, when it will happen, and with what strength it will be fought. Through these three decisions, it has a major effect on the outcome of the fighting. Tactics fights the battle itself; once the result is settled, whether victory or defeat, strategy uses that result in whatever way best serves the larger purpose of the war. That purpose is often far off and rarely close at hand. A series of lesser objectives serve it as means. These objectives, which are at the same time means to a higher end, can in practice take many different forms; even the final aim of the war as a whole may differ in every case. We will become familiar with these matters as we examine the particular objectives with which they are connected, and we do not intend here to cover the whole subject by listing them all, even if that were possible. So for now, we will postpone discussing how the battle is used.

Even the ways in which strategy influences the outcome of combat, by setting its conditions and to some extent determining it in advance, are not simple enough to be taken in all at once. Strategy fixes the time, place, and force, but in practice it can do this in many different ways, and each way affects both the result of the combat and its consequences differently. So we can only come to understand this gradually,

through the topics that more closely shape its application.

If we strip combat of all the variations it may take on because of its immediate purpose and the circumstances from which it arises, and if we also set aside the courage of the troops, since that is a given quantity, then only the bare idea of combat remains: combat without form, in which we can distinguish nothing except the number of the combatants.

That number, then, will determine victory. But if we consider everything that had to be set aside to reach this point, it becomes clear that numerical superiority in battle is only one of the factors that produce victory. So having superior numbers does not mean we have gained everything, or even the main thing. Depending on how the other cooperating circumstances vary, we may have gained very little by it.

But this superiority can exist in different degrees. We can imagine it as twofold, threefold, or fourfold, and everyone can see that, if it keeps increasing in this way, it must eventually overwhelm everything else.

Seen in this light, we admit that superiority in numbers is the most important factor in the outcome of a battle. It must, however, be great enough to outweigh all the other contributing circumstances. The direct conclusion is that the largest possible number of troops should be brought into action at the decisive point.

Whether the troops brought forward in this way are sufficient or not, we have at least done everything our resources allowed in this respect. This is the first principle of strategy. Stated in these general terms, it applies just as much to Greeks and

Persians, or to Englishmen and Mahrattas, as to French and Germans. But to form a more definite idea of the matter, we should take a look at the conditions of war in Europe.

Here we find armies that are much more alike in equipment, organization, and practical skill of every kind. What remains are differences in the military quality of armies and in the talent of their generals, both of which may shift over time from one side to the other. If we review the military history of modern Europe, we find no example like Marathon.

Frederick the Great defeated 80,000 Austrians at Leuthen with about 30,000 men, and at Rosbach he defeated some 50,000 allies with 25,000. These are, however, the only examples of victories won against an enemy with double, or more than double, the numbers. We cannot easily cite Charles XII at the battle of Narva, because at that time the Russians could hardly be regarded as Europeans, and because even the main circumstances of the battle are too little known. At Dresden, Buonaparte had 120,000 against 220,000, so not quite double. At Kollin, Frederick the Great did not succeed with 30,000 against 50,000 Austrians, nor did Buonaparte in the desperate battle of Leipsic, where he had 160,000 against 280,000.

From this we can conclude that, in the current state of Europe, even the most gifted general would find it very hard to defeat an enemy with twice his strength. If numbers on that scale weigh so heavily against the greatest commanders, then in ordinary situations—in smaller engagements as well as larger ones—a significant numerical advantage, even if it is less than two to one, will usually be enough to secure victory, no matter how

unfavorable the other circumstances may be. Of course, we can imagine a narrow pass that even a force ten times larger could not break through; but in that case, we are not really talking about a battle at all.

We therefore believe that, under our conditions and in all similar ones, superiority at the decisive point is of the highest importance. In most cases, it is clearly the most important factor of all. Strength at the decisive point depends both on the army's total strength and on the skill with which that strength is used.

The first rule, then, is to take the field with an army as strong as possible. That may sound like a mere commonplace, but it is not.

To show that, for a long time, the strength of forces was by no means treated as a central issue, we need only note that in most histories of the wars of the eighteenth century—even the most detailed ones—the size of the armies is either not given at all or mentioned only in passing, and never given any special importance. In his history of the Seven Years' War, Tempelhof is the earliest writer to provide it regularly, but even he does so only in a very superficial way.

Even Massenbach, in his many critical observations on the Prussian campaigns of 1793–94 in the Vosges, says a great deal about hills and valleys, roads and footpaths, but not a word about the relative strength of the opposing forces.

Another proof is the remarkable idea that occupied the minds of many critical historians: they believed there was a certain army size that was best, a normal strength beyond which additional troops became more of a burden than a benefit.() *

Lastly, there are a number of cases in which not all available forces were actually committed to the battle() or to the war, because people did not recognize how important numerical superiority is by its very nature. *

If we are fully convinced that a substantial superiority in numbers can achieve everything that is possible, then that conviction will inevitably shape our preparations for war. It will lead us to take the field with as many troops as possible, and either secure superiority for ourselves or at least prevent the enemy from gaining it. So much for the absolute force with which war is to be carried on.

The government determines the size of this absolute force. Although that decision marks the real beginning of war and forms an essential part of its strategy, in most cases the general who is to command those forces must treat their total strength as a given fact. This may be because he had no part in deciding it, or because circumstances prevented it from being expanded enough.

Therefore, when absolute superiority cannot be achieved, the only remaining course is to create a relative superiority at the decisive point through skillful use of the forces we have.

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* Tempelhof and Montalembert are the first examples that come to mind—the former in a passage in the first part, page 148; the latter in his correspondence concerning the Russians' plan of operations in 1759.

* The Prussians at Jena, 1806. Wellington at Waterloo.

To do this, the calculation of space and time seems to be the most essential element. That has led people to treat it as a subject that includes almost the whole art of employing military forces. Some have even gone so far as to claim that great strategists and tacticians possess a special mental faculty uniquely suited to it.

But although the calculation of time and space underlies strategy everywhere and is, to a certain extent, its daily bread, it is still neither the most difficult part nor the most decisive.

If we look at military history without bias, we find that mistakes in this kind of calculation have only rarely caused serious losses, at least in strategy. And if we try to explain every case in which a determined, energetic commander defeats several separated enemies with the same army—such as Frederick the Great or Buonaparte—as nothing more than a skillful combination of time and space, then we are only confusing ourselves with conventional language. For the sake of clarity and the useful application of ideas, we must always call things by their proper names.

What really explains such victories is a correct judgment of the enemy (Daun, Schwartzenberg), the boldness to leave only a small force in front of them for a short time, the energy shown in forced marches, the courage behind sudden attacks, and the heightened drive that great spirits gain in moments of danger. What do these qualities have to do with the ability to calculate two such simple things as time and space with precision?

But even this rebounding play of forces—"when the victories at Rosbach and Montmirail set in motion the victories at Leuthen

and Montereau"—on which great defensive generals have often relied, is still, if we want to speak clearly and precisely, only a rare event in history.

Far more often, relative superiority—that is, the skillful concentration of stronger forces at the decisive point—rests on correctly identifying those decisive points, on wisely directing forces toward them from the very beginning, and on having the resolve to sacrifice what is unimportant for the sake of what matters most. In other words, it depends on keeping forces concentrated in an overwhelming mass. Frederick the Great and Buonaparte are especially striking examples of this.

We believe we have now assigned numerical superiority the importance it deserves: it should be treated as the basic principle, always to be pursued before anything else and as far as circumstances allow.

But treating this as a necessary condition for victory would completely misunderstand our argument. The only conclusion to draw is the importance that should be given to numerical strength in battle. If that strength is made as great as possible, then the rule has been followed. After that, a review of the overall situation must decide whether the battle should be avoided because the available force is insufficient.() *

* Because we have been free from invasion, and because of the conditions created by our Colonial Wars, England has not yet reached a proper understanding of the value of superior numbers in war. We still cling to the idea of an army that is just “big enough,” an idea Clausewitz has ridiculed without mercy. (EDITOR.)

CHAPTER IX. Surprise

From the subject of the previous chapter—the general effort to gain relative superiority—follows another effort that is just as universal in character: surprising the enemy. It underlies more or less every undertaking, because without it, superiority at the decisive point is hardly conceivable.

Surprise, then, is not only a means of gaining numerical superiority. It must also be seen as an important principle in its own right because of its moral effect. When it succeeds to a high degree, the result is confusion and shaken morale in the enemy's ranks. There are more than enough examples, large and small, of how greatly this can increase success. We are not speaking here of the particular kind of surprise that belongs to attack. We mean the general effort, through measures of all kinds and especially through the disposition of forces, to surprise the enemy. This can be imagined just as well on the defensive, and in tactical defence it is especially important.

We say that surprise lies at the foundation of all undertakings without exception, though in very different degrees depending on the nature of the undertaking and the surrounding circumstances.

This difference arises from the qualities and particular characteristics of the army and its commander, and even from those of the government.

Secrecy and speed are the two essentials here, and they require great energy from the government and the commander-in-chief, as well as a strong sense of military duty

throughout the army. If an army is soft and undisciplined, it is useless to count on achieving surprise. But although this effort is widespread—indeed, almost indispensable—and although it is true that it is never entirely without effect, it is equally true that it rarely succeeds to any striking degree. That follows from the very nature of the idea. We would misunderstand war if we believed that this was the main way to achieve major results. In theory, surprise promises a great deal; in practice, it usually gets bogged down in the friction of the whole machine.

In tactics, surprise is much more at home, for the simple reason that time and space are both on a smaller scale. In strategy, then, it becomes more feasible the closer the measures are to the sphere of tactics, and more difficult the higher they rise toward the sphere of policy.

Preparing for war usually takes several months. Gathering an army in its main positions generally requires setting up depots and supply stores, along with long marches whose purpose can be guessed soon enough.

It is therefore rare for one state to catch another by surprise either by going to war or by the direction it gives to the bulk of its forces. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when war depended heavily on sieges, it was often an objective—and a distinct and important part of the art of war—to invest a fortress unexpectedly. But even that only rarely succeeded.() *

On the other hand, when something can be done in a day or two, surprise is much more plausible. For that reason, it is often

* Railways, steamships, and telegraphs have, however, greatly changed the relative importance and practicality of surprise. (EDITOR.)

possible to steal a march on the enemy and gain a position, a piece of ground, a road, and so on. But it is clear that what surprise gains here in ease of execution, it loses in effect; the greater the effect, the harder it is to carry out. Anyone who thinks that small-scale surprises of this kind can be tied to major results—for example, winning a battle or capturing an important magazine—is believing in something easy enough to imagine, but not supported by history. On the whole, there are very few cases in which anything important has come from such surprises. We may therefore reasonably conclude that there are inherent obstacles that stand in the way of their success.

Certainly, anyone who turns to history on questions like this must not rely on the hobbyhorses of historical critics, their solemn pronouncements, and their self-satisfied terminology, but must look at the facts for himself. There is, for example, a particular day in the Silesian campaign of 1761 that has become somewhat notorious in this connection. It is 22 July, when Frederick the Great gained the march on Laudon to Nossen, near Neisse. This move is said to have made a junction between the Austrian and Russian armies in Upper Silesia impossible and thus to have won the King a period of four weeks. But anyone who reads the main histories carefully() and considers the event impartially will never find this level of importance in the march of 22 July. More generally, in all the fashionable reasoning on this subject, he will see nothing but contradictions, while in Laudon’s actions during this famous period of manoeuvres there is much that cannot be explained. How could anyone with

a real desire for truth and a clear judgment accept such historical evidence? *

When we expect a campaign to achieve major results through surprise, we usually think of speed, quick decisions, and forced marches as the ways to make that happen. But even when these are present to an exceptional degree, they do not always produce the effect we want. We can see that in the examples of two generals who may fairly be considered masters of such methods: Frederick the Great and Buonaparte. In July 1760, Frederick suddenly left Dresden, struck at Lascy, and then turned back against Dresden. Yet this whole episode gained him nothing. In fact, it left his situation noticeably worse, since the fortress of Glatz fell in the meantime.

In 1813, Buonaparte twice turned suddenly from Dresden against Blücher, not to mention his advance into Bohemia from Upper Lusatia, and neither time did he achieve his objective in the slightest. These were blows struck at empty air. They cost him only time and strength, and they might even have put him in a dangerous position at Dresden.

So even here, surprise does not automatically bring great success simply because the commander shows activity, energy, and resolve. Other circumstances must also work in its favour. We do not deny that success is possible. We only insist that it depends on favourable conditions, which certainly do not arise very often and which the commander can rarely create for himself.

* Tempelhof, The Veteran, Frederick the Great. Compare also (Clausewitz), "Hinterlassene Werke," vol. x., p. 158.

These same two generals each provide a striking example of this. Let us begin with Buonaparte in his famous operation against Blücher's Army in February 1814, when that army had become separated from the Grand Army and was moving down the Marne. It would be hard to find a two-day march undertaken to surprise an enemy that produced greater results than this one. Blücher's Army, stretched out over a distance of three days' march, was defeated in detail and suffered losses nearly equal to those of a defeat in a major battle. This was entirely the result of surprise, because if Blücher had considered it at all likely that Buonaparte might attack from so near at hand, he would have arranged his march very differently. The outcome must therefore be attributed to Blücher's mistake. Buonaparte did not know all these circumstances, so an element of good fortune also entered into his success. *

The same was true at the battle of Liegnitz in 1760. Frederick the Great won this remarkable victory by changing, during the night, a position he had only just taken up. This completely took Laudon by surprise, and he lost 70 guns and 10,000 men. Although Frederick had by this time adopted the principle of moving back and forth to make a battle impossible, or at least to upset the enemy's plans, the change of position on the night of the 14th–15th was not made precisely for that reason. As the King himself says, he did it because he was not satisfied with the position of the 14th. So here too chance played a major part. Without this fortunate combination of the attack, the nighttime change of position, and the difficult terrain, the outcome would

* Blücher believed Pahlen's Cossacks were covering his march, but Grand Army Headquarters under Schwartzenberg had withdrawn them without warning him.

not have been the same.

Even in the higher and highest sphere of strategy, there are some examples of surprises that produced important results. We will mention only the Great Elector's brilliant marches against the Swedes, from Franconia to Pomerania and from the Mark (Brandenburg) to the Pregel in 1757, and Buonaparte's famous crossing of the Alps in 1800. In the latter case, an army gave up its entire theatre of war through a capitulation, and in 1757 another army came very close to losing not only its theatre of war but itself as well. Finally, as an example of a war that came wholly unexpectedly, we may point to Frederick the Great's invasion of Silesia. In all these cases, the results were great and powerful. But such events are not common in history, unless we confuse them with cases in which a state, through lack of activity and energy, failed to complete its preparations in time, as Saxony did in 1756 and Russia in 1812.

One further point still needs to be made about the essence of the matter. A surprise can be carried out only by the side that sets the terms for the other; and the side that is right sets those terms. If we catch the enemy off guard by making a wrong move, then instead of gaining an advantage, we may suffer a heavy blow in return. In any case, the enemy need not worry much about our surprise, because our mistake gives him the means to escape its effects. Since the offensive involves far more positive action than the defensive, surprise naturally belongs more to the attacker, though not always, as we shall see later. The offensive and defensive may even surprise each other at the same time; when that happens, the advantage goes to the side that has judged the situation more accurately.

That is how it ought to be, but in practice things do not follow this rule so closely, for a very simple reason. The moral effects that come with surprise often turn the worst situation into a good one for the side that benefits from them, while preventing the other side from making any orderly decision. Here, more than anywhere else, we must think not only of the commander-in-chief but of every individual leader, because surprise especially tends to loosen unity and make the personal character of each separate commander stand out.

Much here depends on the overall relationship between the two sides. If one side, through general moral superiority, can intimidate and surpass the other, then it can use surprise more effectively and may even gain advantages in situations where it ought, properly speaking, to be ruined.

CHAPTER X. Stratagem

A stratagem involves a hidden purpose, so it stands opposed to straightforward dealing in much the same way that wit differs from direct proof. It therefore has nothing in common with persuasion, self-interest, or force, but a great deal in common with deceit, because deceit also hides its aim. A stratagem is itself a kind of deceit when it is carried out, but it differs from what we usually call deceit in one important respect: it does not directly break one's word. In a stratagem, the deceiver leads the other person to make the mistakes of judgment for himself, until those mistakes combine into a single result and suddenly make things appear different to him. We may therefore say that, just as wit is sleight of hand with ideas and concepts, stratagem is sleight of hand with actions.

At first glance, it seems that Strategy may well have taken its name from stratagem; and despite all the real and apparent changes in the character of war since the time of the Greeks, the term still seems to point to its true nature.

If we assign to tactics the actual delivery of the blow—the battle itself—and understand Strategy as the art of using that means skillfully, then, apart from qualities of character such as burning ambition that constantly drives like a spring, or a strong will that hardly bends, there seems to be no personal quality better suited to direct and animate strategic action than stratagem. The general tendency toward surprise, discussed in the previous chapter, leads to the same conclusion, because every attempt at surprise rests on some degree of stratagem, however small.

But however much we may wish to see those engaged in war surpass one another in secrecy, alertness, and stratagem, we still have to admit that these qualities appear only rarely in history, and have seldom been able to rise to the surface through the mass of surrounding conditions and events.

The explanation is obvious, and it is almost the same as the subject of the previous chapter.

Strategy deals with one thing only: directing combat and the measures connected to it. Unlike ordinary life, it is not concerned with transactions made up only of words—statements, declarations, and the like. Yet those cheap verbal devices are exactly what a cunning person usually uses to deceive others.

War does have something similar: plans and orders issued only for show, or false reports deliberately sent to the enemy. But in strategy these usually have so little effect that they are used only in special situations that arise on their own. They therefore cannot be treated as a normal, self-generated form of action by the commander.

Measures such as preparing for a battle far enough to mislead the enemy require a substantial investment of time and effort. Naturally, the stronger the impression you want to make, the greater the cost. Since that cost is usually not worth paying for this purpose, very few so-called demonstrations in strategy achieve what they are meant to achieve. In fact, it is dangerous to detach large forces for long merely for a trick, because there is always the risk that it will accomplish nothing, and then those forces will be missing at the decisive point.

The main actor in war is always fully aware of this hard truth, and so he has no wish to rely on clever tricks. The harsh seriousness of necessity drives him so completely toward direct action that there is no room for that kind of game. In short, the pieces on the strategic chessboard do not have the mobility that makes stratagem and subtlety possible.

The conclusion, then, is that a clear and penetrating eye is more necessary and more useful in a general than cunning, though cunning too can be helpful—provided it does not come at the expense of the essential qualities of character, as too often happens.

But the weaker the forces under Strategy's command become, the more suited they are to stratagem. For those who are so weak and insignificant that prudence and judgment no longer help them—at the point where all art seems to abandon them—stratagem presents itself as a last resort. The more helpless the situation, the more everything drives toward a single desperate stroke, and the more naturally stratagem comes to support boldness. Released from further calculation and freed from concern for the future, boldness and stratagem strengthen one another. In that way, they gather a tiny glimmer of hope into a single beam that may still be enough to start a flame.

CHAPTER XI. Assembly of Forces in Space

The best strategy is always to be very strong: first in general, and then at the decisive point. Therefore, aside from the energy needed to create the army—a task not always carried out by the general—there is no rule in strategy more necessary or more straightforward than keeping forces concentrated. No part should be separated from the main body unless some urgent necessity requires it. We hold firmly to this principle and regard it as a reliable guide. We will gradually see what reasonable grounds may justify detaching forces. We will also see that this principle does not produce the same general effects in every war, but different ones depending on the available means and the objective.

It seems incredible, yet it has happened hundreds of times: troops have been divided and separated simply because of a vague, conventional habit of thinking, without any clear understanding of why.

If we accept concentration of the whole force as the rule, and treat every division or separation as an exception that must be justified, then not only will that kind of folly be entirely avoided, but many mistaken reasons for splitting up troops will also be excluded from the start.

CHAPTER XII. Assembly of Forces in Time

Here we are dealing with an idea that, in real life, casts many kinds of misleading light. A clear definition and explanation of it are therefore necessary, and we hope to be allowed a brief analysis.

War is the collision of two opposing forces. It naturally follows that the stronger force not only overpowers the other, but drives it along in its own movement. In principle, this leaves no room for a step-by-step use of power; instead, it makes the simultaneous use of all forces meant for the clash seem like a basic law of war.

That is true in reality, but only as long as the struggle is, in practice as well, like a mechanical collision. When it becomes a sustained, mutual action of destructive forces, we can clearly think of the forces acting in succession. This is especially true in tactics, mainly because firearms are the foundation of all tactics, though there are other reasons too. If 1,000 men are engaged in a firefight against 500, then the total loss is estimated from both the enemy's strength and our own. The 1,000 men fire twice as many shots as the 500, but more shots will hit among the 1,000 than among the 500, because we assume they are drawn up more closely. If we suppose the number of hits is doubled, then the losses on each side would be equal. Out of the 500, for example, 200 would be disabled, and out of the 1,000 the same number as well. Now if the 500 had kept another body of equal size completely out of the fire,

then both sides would have 800 effective men left. But on one side there would be 500 men entirely fresh, fully supplied with ammunition, and at full strength; on the other side there would be only 800 men who had all been shaken in their formation, were short of ammunition, and had been physically weakened. The assumption that the 1,000 men, simply because of their greater number, would lose twice as many as 500 would have lost in their place is certainly incorrect. So the heavier loss suffered by the side that kept half its force in reserve must be counted as a disadvantage of that original formation. It must also be admitted that, in most cases, the 1,000 men would have the initial advantage of being able to drive their opponent from his position and force him to retreat. Whether these two advantages outweigh the disadvantage of ending up with 800 men, to some extent disordered by the fight, facing an enemy not much weaker in numbers and still possessing 500 completely fresh troops, cannot be settled by pushing the analysis any further. Here we must rely on experience, and hardly any officer experienced in war would fail, in most cases, to give the advantage to the side that has the fresh troops.

This makes it clear how using too many forces in combat can be a disadvantage. Whatever benefit numerical superiority gives us at the start, we may have to pay heavily for in the next moment.

But this danger lasts only as long as the disorder does—as long as confusion and weakness continue, in short, until the crisis that every battle brings, even for the victor, has passed. During this temporary state of exhaustion, the arrival of a matching number of fresh troops can be decisive.

But once the disorganizing effect of victory has ended, and all that remains is the moral advantage that every victory brings, fresh troops can no longer restore the fight. They would simply be swept along by the general movement. An army that has been beaten cannot be turned back into a victor the next day by bringing up a strong reserve. Here we come to the source of an important practical difference between tactics and strategy.

Tactical results—the results that fall within the limits of the battle itself and before it ends—mostly lie within that period of disorder and weakness. But the strategic result, that is, the result of the whole struggle, of the victories actually gained, whether small or great, lies completely outside that period. The strategic result appears only when the results of the separate engagements have joined together into an independent whole. By then, however, the crisis is over. The forces have returned to their original form and are weakened only by those actually destroyed or put hors de combat.

The consequence of this difference is that tactics can keep using forces successively, while strategy can use them only simultaneously.() *

In tactics, if I cannot settle everything with the first success, and if I must worry about what may happen in the next moment, then I naturally use only as much of my force as seems necessary to win that first moment. I keep the rest out of range of fire and away from the fighting, so that I can send fresh troops against fresh enemy forces, or use them to defeat troops that have already been worn down. But strategy is different. First, as we

* See Chapters XIII and XIV of Book III, and Chapter XXIX of Book V.—TR.

have just shown, it has less reason to fear a counterstroke after a success, because once that success is achieved, the crisis is over. Second, not all forces used strategically are necessarily weakened. Only those that have actually fought the enemy tactically—that is, those engaged in partial combat—are worn down by it. So only the troops that had to be committed are weakened, not all the forces that were strategically opposed to the enemy, unless tactics has wasted them unnecessarily. Units which, because of an overall superiority in numbers, were only lightly engaged or not engaged at all, and whose mere presence helped produce the result, remain after the decision just as they were before. They are as ready for new operations as if they had taken no part at all. It is obvious how much such units, which make up our surplus strength, can add to total success. Indeed, it is easy to see that they may even greatly reduce the losses suffered by the forces on our side that were actually engaged in tactical combat.

If, then, in strategy, losses do not increase with the number of troops employed, but are often reduced by it, and if, as a natural result, that makes victory more certain, then it follows that in strategy we can never use too many forces. It also follows that those forces must be directed at the immediate objective at the same time.

But we must support this proposition on another basis. So far we have spoken only of combat itself. Combat is the central activity of war, but we must also keep in view men, time, and space, which are the elements of that activity, and take into account the effects they produce as well.

In war, fatigue, strain, and hardship form a distinct source of destruction. They are not part of combat itself, but they are more or less inseparable from it, and they belong especially to strategy. They exist in tactics as well, and perhaps there even more intensely. But tactical actions are shorter, so the effects of exhaustion and deprivation usually matter less there. In strategy, by contrast, time and distance operate on a much larger scale. As a result, these forces are not only always important but often decisive. It is by no means unusual for a victorious army to lose far more men to sickness than on the battlefield.

If, then, we consider this kind of destruction in strategy in the same way we have considered fire and hand-to-hand combat in tactics, we can easily imagine that everything drawn into its pull will, by the end of a campaign or any other strategic period, be worn down into weakness. In that condition, the arrival of a fresh force becomes decisive. We might therefore conclude that, in this case as in the other, there is a reason to aim at the first success with as few forces as possible, so that this fresh force can be preserved for the final stage.

To judge this conclusion accurately—which in practice often seems very convincing—we need to look at the separate ideas it contains. First, we must not confuse reinforcement with fresh, unused troops. By the end of almost any campaign, both the victor and the defeated side strongly want more forces, and those extra troops may seem decisive. But that is not the issue here. If the original force had been much larger, that increase might not have been needed at all. Still, it would go against all experience to rate an army newly entering the field as morally

superior to one already in it, in the same way that a tactical reserve is valued more highly than troops that have already been badly battered in battle. Just as an unsuccessful campaign lowers an army's courage and morale, a successful one strengthens them. In most cases, these effects balance each other out, and beyond that there remains one clear advantage: familiarity with war. We should also think here more about successful campaigns than unsuccessful ones, because if the greater likelihood of failure can be seen in advance, then additional forces are obviously needed, and keeping part of the army back for later use is out of the question.

Once that point is settled, the question becomes this: do the losses a force suffers from fatigue and hardship increase in proportion to its size, as losses in battle do? Our answer is no.

The fatigues of war arise largely from the dangers that surround every moment of military action. Meeting those dangers at every point, and moving forward securely while carrying out one's plans, requires many different efforts, which together make up the army's tactical and strategic work. This work becomes harder the weaker an army is, and easier the greater its numerical superiority over the enemy. Who could doubt that? A campaign against a much weaker enemy therefore demands less effort than one against an enemy of equal or greater strength.

That covers the hardships of exertion. Privation is a somewhat different matter. It mainly comes down to two things: a lack of food and a lack of shelter for the troops, whether in quarters or in proper camps. No doubt both shortages become worse as

more men are gathered in one place. But does not superiority in numbers also provide the best means of spreading out, finding more space, and therefore securing more supplies and shelter?

When Buonaparte invaded Russia in 1812, he concentrated his army in huge masses on a single road in a way never seen before, and this led to privations just as unprecedented. We must attribute that to his maxim that it is impossible to be too strong at the decisive point. Whether in this case he pushed that principle too far is a question that does not belong here. But one thing is certain: if he had wanted to avoid the distress that this arrangement caused, he only needed to advance on a broader front. Russia had ample room for that purpose, and in very few cases is such room lacking. So this example gives us no basis for proving that the simultaneous use of greatly superior forces must lead to greater weakening. But even if, despite the general relief gained by setting aside part of the army, wind and weather and the labors of war had still reduced the portion kept in reserve for later use, we must look at the matter broadly and as a whole. We must therefore ask: would this loss of strength be enough to outweigh the gain in strength that our superiority in numbers may allow us to achieve in more than one way?

But one very important point still needs attention. In a limited engagement, it is usually not too hard to estimate roughly how much force is needed to achieve a major result, and from that we can judge what is more than necessary. In strategy, however, this is essentially impossible, because a strategic result does not have the same clear objective or fixed boundaries that a tactical result does. So what would count in tactics as excess strength must, in strategy, be seen as a way to

widen success if the opportunity arises. As success grows, the advantage in force grows with it, and numerical superiority can quickly reach a level that even the most careful economy of force could never have produced.

It was his overwhelming numerical superiority that allowed Buonaparte to reach Moscow in 1812 and capture that central capital. If that same superiority had enabled him to destroy the Russian army completely, he would in all likelihood have been able to make peace in Moscow—something far less likely by any other means. This example is meant to illustrate the idea, not to prove it. A full proof would require a detailed demonstration, and this is not the place for that.() *

All these reflections apply only to the idea of using forces successively, not to the concept of a reserve in the proper sense. The two are certainly related at many points, but, as we shall see in the next chapter, the reserve is tied to other considerations as well.

What we want to establish here is this: in tactics, military force loses strength simply through the duration of its actual use, so time becomes a factor in the result. In strategy, however, this is not materially the case. Time does also have destructive effects on forces in strategy, but those effects are partly reduced by the size of the forces and partly offset in other ways. Therefore, in strategy, it cannot be an aim in itself to make time an ally by committing troops to action one after another.

* Compare Book VII, second edition, p. 56.

We say “on its own account” because time can influence one of the two sides through other conditions it brings about, conditions that are distinct from time itself. That influence is certainly not neutral or unimportant; indeed, it must have an effect. We will consider it later.

The rule we have been trying to explain, then, is this: all forces that are available and assigned to a strategic objective should be applied to it at the same time. And this application is more complete the more everything is concentrated into a single act and a single movement.

Even so, strategy still involves renewed effort and sustained action, and one important means of achieving final success must not be overlooked: the continual development of new forces. This, too, is the subject of another chapter. We mention it here only so that the reader does not keep in mind something we have not yet been discussing.

We now turn to a subject very closely connected with what we have been considering, and one that must be settled before the whole can be fully understood: the strategic reserve.

CHAPTER XIII. Strategic Reserve

A reserve serves two very different purposes. First, it can prolong and renew the combat. Second, it can be used in unforeseen circumstances. The first purpose assumes that forces can be committed in succession, and for that reason it does not belong to strategy. Cases in which a corps is sent to support a point that is thought to be on the verge of collapse clearly belong to the second purpose, since the resistance required there could not have been fully foreseen. But a corps expressly intended to prolong the combat, and therefore stationed in the rear for that purpose, would simply be a corps kept out of range of fire while remaining under the command and control of the general directing the action. It would therefore be a tactical reserve, not a strategic one.

But strategy, too, may require a force kept ready for unexpected events, and so it may also need a strategic reserve—but only where such surprises are actually possible. In tactics, the enemy's moves are usually learned first by direct observation, and they may be hidden by any wood or any rise and fall in the ground. So we must always remain more or less alert to unforeseen developments, so that we can reinforce points that seem too weak and, more generally, adjust the deployment of our troops to match the enemy's more effectively.

The same kind of situation can arise in strategy, because strategic action is directly connected to tactical action. In strategy as well, many decisions are made only after something has actually been seen, or because uncertain reports arrive day

by day, or even hour by hour, and finally because of the actual results of fighting. It is therefore an essential requirement of strategic command that, in proportion to the uncertainty of the situation, forces must be kept in reserve for future contingencies.

This is especially true in defence generally, and above all in defending particular features of the ground, such as rivers, hills, and the like, where such contingencies, as is well known, arise constantly.

But this uncertainty decreases as strategic activity becomes less tactical in character, and it almost disappears altogether in those areas where strategy borders on politics.

The direction in which the enemy moves his columns into battle can be known only by direct observation. The place where he intends to cross a river is learned from a few preparations made shortly beforehand. But the line by which he plans to invade our country is usually announced in the newspapers before a pistol shot has been fired. The larger the measure, the less likely it is to take the enemy by surprise. Time and space are so great, and the circumstances from which the action arises are so public and so little open to change, that the coming event is either known well in advance or can be discovered with reasonable certainty.

On the other hand, the use of a reserve in this part of strategy, even if one is available, will always be less effective the more the measure tends to be general in nature.

We have seen that the outcome of a limited engagement means little by itself. Such engagements reach their full significance only through the outcome of the overall conflict.

But even the outcome of the overall conflict has only a relative meaning, with many degrees, depending on how large and important the defeated force is in relation to the whole. The loss of a battle by one corps may be made good by victory elsewhere in the army. Even the defeat of an entire army may not only be offset by winning a more important battle, but may even be turned into an advantage, as in the two days of Kulm, August 29 and 30, 1813.(). No one can doubt this. But it is just as clear that the importance of each victory—the successful outcome of each major engagement—grows with the importance of the part that has been defeated. As that importance increases, the chance of repairing the loss through later events decreases in the same measure. We will examine this more closely elsewhere. For now, it is enough to have pointed out the undeniable existence of this progression. *

If we now add a third point to the two already mentioned—namely, that in tactics the continued use of forces always pushes the main result toward the end of the action, whereas in strategy the rule of using forces simultaneously usually brings the principal result, though not necessarily the final one, near the beginning of the larger action—then these three considerations give us sufficient reason to see strategic reserves as increasingly unnecessary, increasingly ineffective,

* This refers to the destruction of Vandamme's column, which had been sent forward without support to cut off the retreat of the Austrians and Prussians from Dresden, but was forgotten by Napoleon.—EDITOR.

and increasingly dangerous the broader their intended purpose.

The point at which the idea of a strategic reserve begins to contradict itself is not hard to identify: it is the SUPREME DECISION. Within the sphere of that supreme decision, all forces must be committed, and any reserve—any active force held back for use only after that decision—runs against common sense.

Tactics, then, has reserves that can do more than respond to unexpected moves by the enemy. They can also help recover from developments that could never have been predicted, even when the outcome of the engagement turns out badly. Strategy, by contrast, must give up these means, at least when the main result is concerned. As a rule, it can make up for losses at one point only by gaining advantages at another, and in a few cases by shifting troops from one place to another. But the idea of preparing for such setbacks in advance by holding forces back in reserve can never be accepted in strategy.

We have called it absurd to speak of a strategic reserve that is not meant to take part in the main result. Since that point is so clear, we would not have gone into the analysis of these two chapters if the idea did not so often reappear under other names and in more plausible forms. One person sees in it the height of strategic wisdom and foresight; another rejects it, and along with it rejects the very idea of any reserve, including even a tactical one. This confusion of ideas carries over into real life. A memorable example is Prussia in 1806, which left a reserve of 20,000 men quartered in the Mark under Prince Eugene of Wurtemberg, though they could not possibly reach the Saale in

time to be of any use. At the same time, another force of 25,000 men belonging to that power remained in East and South Prussia, intended only to be placed on a war footing later as a reserve.

After these examples, no one can accuse us of fighting windmills.

CHAPTER XIV. Economy of Forces

As we have said, the path of reason can rarely be drawn as neatly as a mathematical line by means of principles and opinions. There is always some room for variation. But that is true of all the practical arts of life. Beauty cannot be plotted with abscissae and ordinates, and circles and ellipses are not actually drawn by using their algebraic formulas. In war, therefore, the practitioner soon learns that he must rely on the fine tact of judgment. Grounded in natural quickness of perception and trained by reflection, it almost unconsciously grasps what is right. He soon sees that sometimes he must simplify theory by reducing it to a few prominent points that serve as rules, while at other times the chosen method must become the staff he leans on.

One of these simplified guiding points, used as a mental tool, is the principle of constantly watching over the cooperation of all forces—in other words, always keeping in mind that no part of them should ever be left idle. If someone has forces that the enemy is not giving enough work to, or has part of his forces on the march—that is, lying dead—while the enemy's are fighting, then he is managing his forces badly. In this sense, there is a waste of force that is even worse than using it to no purpose. If action must be taken, then the first requirement is that every part should act, because even the most aimless activity still keeps troops engaged and destroys some portion of the enemy's force, whereas completely inactive troops are, for the moment, entirely neutralized. Clearly, this idea is connected

with the principles discussed in the last three chapters. It is the same truth, but seen from a broader point of view and condensed into a single idea.

CHAPTER XV. Geometrical Element

We can see how dominant geometry can become in arranging military force in war by looking at fortification, where geometry governs both the large features and the small details. It also plays a major role in tactics. It forms the basis of elementary tactics, or the theory of moving troops. In field fortification, too, as well as in the theory of positions and how to attack them, angles and lines rule almost like lawgivers deciding the outcome of the contest. In the past, some of this was misused, and some of it was mere trifling. Even so, in modern tactics, where every engagement aims in some degree at surrounding the enemy, the geometrical element has once again gained great importance in a very simple but constantly recurring form. Still, in tactics, where everything is more fluid, and where morale, individual character, and chance matter more than they do in siege warfare, geometry can never become as dominant as it does there. Its influence is even smaller in strategy. Here too, the arrangement of troops and the shape of countries and states matter greatly. But the geometrical element is not decisive, as it is in fortification, and it is nowhere near as important as it is in tactics. The way this influence shows itself can only be explained gradually, in the places where it actually appears and deserves attention. For the moment, we mainly want to draw attention to the difference between tactics and strategy in relation to it.

In tactics, time and space quickly shrink to their smallest limits. If a body of troops is attacked by the enemy on the flank and in the rear, it soon reaches a point where retreat is no longer possible. A position like that comes very close to making it absolutely impossible to continue the fight. The force must therefore either break free or avoid being trapped in such a situation in the first place. That is why combinations designed from the outset to produce this effect have such great power. Their force lies chiefly in the anxiety they create in the enemy about what may follow. This is why the geometrical arrangement of forces is such an important element in tactical results.

In strategy, this appears only faintly because of the much larger scale of space and time. We do not strike from one theater of war into another in a single moment. And a strategic movement meant to surround the enemy often takes weeks or months to carry out. The distances are also so great that, even with the best plans, the chance of finally hitting the right point is small.

In strategy, then, there is much less room for combinations of this kind—that is, for those based on geometric considerations. For the same reason, the effect of an advantage once actually gained at any point is much greater. It has time to develop fully before it is disrupted or completely canceled out by opposing concerns. We therefore do not hesitate to treat it as an established truth that, in strategy, more depends on the number and scale of victorious engagements than on the shape of the great lines that connect them.

The opposite view has been a favorite theme of modern theory. It was believed that this gave greater importance to strategy, and because strategy was seen as the sphere of the mind's higher powers, people thought this would elevate war and, as they said, make it more scientific through a new substitution of ideas. We believe one of the main purposes of a complete theory is to expose such errors openly. And because the geometric element is the basic idea from which theory usually begins, we have deliberately brought this point out with special emphasis.

CHAPTER XVI. The Suspension of Action in War

If we think of war as an act of mutual destruction, we have to imagine both sides making some progress. At the same time, in the present moment, we must also assume that one side is waiting while the other is actually moving forward, because circumstances can never be exactly the same for both sides, or remain that way for long. Sooner or later, conditions must change, and that means the present moment will be more favorable to one side than to the other. If we assume that both commanders fully understand this, then one has a reason to act, while that same situation gives the other a reason to wait. So it cannot be in both sides' interest to advance at the same time, and it cannot be in both sides' interest to wait at the same time. This conflict of interest over the objective is not derived here from the principle of general polarity, so it does not contradict the argument in the fifth chapter of the second book. It rests instead on the fact that, in reality, the same consideration affects both commanders at once: the likelihood that future action will improve or worsen their position.

But even if we assume that perfect equality of circumstances is possible in this respect, or if we allow for the fact that imperfect knowledge of each other's position may make such equality seem to exist to the two commanders, the difference in their political aims still rules out any real suspension of action. One of the two sides must necessarily be regarded, politically, as the aggressor, because no war could arise from purely defensive intentions on both sides. But the aggressor has a positive

objective, while the defender has only a negative one. Positive action therefore belongs to the aggressor, because only through action can he achieve that positive objective. So when both sides are in exactly the same circumstances, the aggressor is the one compelled to act by virtue of his positive aim.

From this perspective, any pause in warfare is, strictly speaking, contrary to its nature. Two armies are opposing forces, and they should be constantly trying to destroy each other, just as fire and water can never settle into balance but keep acting against one another until one is gone. What would we say of two wrestlers who stayed locked together for hours without making a move? Action in war, then, should be like a wound clock: once set in motion, it should keep running steadily down. But however fierce war may be, it is still bound by human weakness, and there is nothing surprising in this contradiction: man seeks out and creates dangers that he also fears at the same time.

If we look at military history as a whole, we find almost the exact opposite of a constant advance toward the goal. Standing still and doing nothing is clearly the normal condition of an army in the midst of war; action is the exception. That might well make us question whether our view is correct. But although military history seems to lead to that conclusion when taken broadly, the most recent series of campaigns restores our position. The wars of the French Revolution show this reality plainly enough, and prove its necessity only too clearly. In those operations, and especially in Buonaparte’s campaigns, the conduct of war reached that unlimited degree of energy which we have described as the natural law of this element. That degree, then,

is possible; and if it is possible, it is necessary.

How, in fact, could anyone justify to reason the expenditure of force in war if action were not the object? The baker heats his oven only when he has bread to put into it. The horse is yoked to the carriage only when we intend to drive. Why, then, make the enormous effort that war requires if all we expect from it is an equal effort from the enemy?

That is enough in support of the general principle. Now let us turn to its modifications, so far as they arise from the nature of the matter itself and do not depend on special cases.

Here we must note three causes, which act as natural counterweights and keep the machinery from moving too quickly or spinning out of control.

The first cause, which creates a constant tendency to delay and so acts as a brake, is the natural fearfulness and lack of resolve in the human mind. It is a kind of inertia in the moral world, produced not by attraction but by repulsion—that is, by fear of danger and responsibility.

In the fiery element of war, ordinary people seem to grow heavier. So if movement is to continue, the impulse behind it must be stronger and applied more often. The mere idea of the goal for which arms have been taken up is rarely enough to overcome this resistance. Unless a bold, enterprising spirit is in command—someone who feels in war as much in his natural element as a fish does in the sea—or unless some great responsibility presses from above, standing still will be the rule and progress the exception.

The second cause is the weakness of human perception and judgment, which is greater in war than anywhere else. A person scarcely knows his own exact position from one moment to the next, and can only guess at the enemy's position on slight evidence, especially since the enemy deliberately conceals it. This often leads both sides to see the same object as advantageous to themselves, when in fact one side's interest must outweigh the other's. As a result, each may think it is acting wisely by waiting a little longer, as we already said in the fifth chapter of the second book.

The third cause, which catches from time to time like a ratchet wheel in a machine and brings everything to a complete halt, is the greater strength of the defensive form. A may feel too weak to attack B, but that does not mean B is strong enough to attack A. The extra strength that defense provides is not merely lost when one side takes the offensive; it also passes to the enemy. Figuratively speaking, the difference between a + b and a - b is equal to 2 b. So it can happen that both sides, at the same moment, not only feel too weak to attack, but actually are too weak to do so.

So even in the middle of war itself, cautious calculation and fear of excessive danger find room to operate, and through them they can restrain the elemental force and violence of war.

At the same time, even if we do not overstate their effects, these causes can hardly account for the long periods of inactivity that used to occur in military operations in earlier times, especially in wars fought over interests of little importance. In such wars, inactivity took up nine-tenths of the

time the troops were kept in the field. This feature of those wars is due mainly to the influence that one side's demands, and the other side's situation and state of mind, had on the conduct of operations, as already noted in the chapter on the nature and purpose of war.

These factors can become so dominant that war turns into a halfway measure. A war is often nothing more than an armed neutrality, or a threatening posture meant to support negotiations, or an attempt to gain some minor advantage through limited effort and then wait for circumstances to change, or the reluctant fulfillment of a treaty obligation in the stingiest way possible.

In all such cases, where the interests at stake are slight and hostility is weak, where neither side wants to do much and neither has much to fear from the enemy—in short, where no strong motives are pushing events forward—governments will not risk much in the contest. The result is this tame way of conducting war, in which the hostile spirit of real war is kept in chains.

The more war is drained of life in this way, the more its theory loses the firm supports and fixed points its reasoning requires. What is necessary steadily shrinks, while what is accidental steadily grows.

Even so, this kind of warfare also involves a certain kind of skill. In fact, its activity may be more varied and spread over a wider field than in the other kind. A game of chance played for gold rouleaux seems to have turned into a business game played for groschen. On this ground, war drags on through a series of

small displays: skirmishes at outposts, half serious and half playful; long arrangements that come to nothing; positions and marches later praised as skilful only because their tiny causes have been forgotten and plain common sense can no longer explain them. It is precisely here that many theorists think the true art of war is at home. In the feints, parades, and half- or quarter-thrusts of earlier wars, they see the true goal of theory and the triumph of mind over matter. To them, modern wars look like nothing but brutal fistfights, from which nothing can be learned, and which must be seen as a backward step toward barbarism. This view is as shallow as the things it admires. Where great forces and great passions are absent, polished skill can certainly display itself more easily. But is commanding great forces not, in itself, a higher exercise of intelligence? And is this conventional kind of swordplay not already included within the other way of conducting war, and part of it? Does it not stand in the same relation to it as the movements on a ship stand to the movement of the ship itself? In truth, it can exist only on the unspoken condition that the enemy does not do better. And who can say how long he will choose to respect those conditions? Did not the French Revolution burst upon us in the midst of the false security of our old system of war, and drive us from Chalons to Moscow? And did not Frederick the Great similarly catch the Austrians resting in their old habits of war, and make their monarchy tremble? Woe to the cabinet that, with a wavering policy and a military system enslaved to routine, encounters an enemy who, like a raw force of nature, recognizes no law but that of his own inherent strength. Then every lack of energy and effort adds weight to the enemy's side of the scale. It is not so easy, in such a moment, to shift from the

stance of a fencer to that of an athlete, and a slight blow is often enough to bring the whole structure down.

The combined effect of all the causes just described is this: military action in a campaign does not move forward continuously, but in bursts. Between separate bloody engagements, there is a period of observation, during which both sides adopt a defensive posture. Usually, too, one side is driven by a larger objective, which makes the principle of attack stronger on that side and generally keeps it in an advancing position. That, in turn, modifies its operations to some extent.

CHAPTER XVII. The Character of Modern War

The need to pay attention to the way war is now fought has a major influence on every kind of planning, especially strategic planning.

The older methods of war were overturned by Buonaparte's luck and audacity, and leading powers were nearly destroyed in a single blow. The Spaniards, through their stubborn resistance, showed what the general arming of a nation and large-scale insurgent action can achieve, despite the weakness and looseness of its individual parts. Russia, in the campaign of 1812, taught us two things: first, that an empire of great size cannot be conquered easily, though that should have been obvious already; second, that the chances of ultimate success do not always decline in direct proportion to the loss of battles, capitals, and provinces. Earlier, diplomats had treated the opposite view as unquestionable, and so they were always ready to accept some poor temporary peace at once. But a nation is often strongest in the interior of its own country, once the enemy's offensive strength has worn itself out, and then the defensive can turn into the offensive with tremendous force. Prussia, in 1813, further showed that sudden exertions could increase an army sixfold through the militia, and that this militia was just as capable of serving abroad as at home. Since all these events have shown how enormously the spirit and feelings of a nation can add to its political and military power, and since governments have now discovered all these additional resources, we should not expect them to leave such

means unused in future wars, whether their own existence is threatened or restless ambition drives them forward.

It is easy to see that a war fought with the full strength of the nation on both sides must be organized on fundamentally different principles from wars in which everything is measured by the relationship between standing armies alone. Standing armies once resembled fleets: in their relation to the rest of the state, land forces were much like sea forces. Because of that, the art of war on land once had something in common with naval tactics, but that resemblance has now completely disappeared.

CHAPTER XVIII. Tension and Rest

The Dynamic Law of War

As we saw in the sixteenth chapter of this book, most campaigns once spent far more time standing still and inactive than in actual operations.

Now, although, as we noted in the previous chapter, war in its present form has a very different character, it is still certain that real action will always be interrupted, to a greater or lesser extent, by long pauses. This makes it necessary to look more closely at the nature of these two phases of war.

If action is suspended in war—that is, if neither side is pursuing any positive aim—then there is rest, and therefore equilibrium. But this is equilibrium in the broadest sense, taking into account not only moral and physical military forces, but all relationships and interests as well. As soon as one side sets itself a new positive objective and begins to act toward it, even if only through preparations, and as soon as the enemy resists, a tension of forces arises. This continues until a decision is reached—that is, until one side either abandons its objective or the other grants it.

This decision, whose basis always lies in combat and in the combinations made by each side, is followed by movement in one direction or the other.

When that movement has spent itself—whether in the difficulties it had to overcome, in its own internal friction, or because of new resisting forces created by the enemy's actions—then either a state of rest follows, or a new tension arises, leading to another decision and then another movement, usually in the opposite direction.

This theoretical distinction between equilibrium, tension, and motion is more important for practical action than it may seem at first glance.

In a state of rest and balance, one side may still carry out various kinds of activity that arise from opportunity and are not meant to bring about any major change. That activity may include serious fighting—even set-piece battles—but it is still quite different in character, and for that reason its effects are usually different as well.

When a state of tension exists, the effects of a decision are always greater. This is partly because a stronger force of will and heavier pressure from circumstances show themselves in it, and partly because everything has been prepared and arranged for a major movement. In such cases, the decision is like the explosion of a mine that has been properly sealed and tamped down, whereas an event that may be just as large in itself, when it happens in a state of rest, is more like a quantity of powder flaring away in the open air.

At the same time, the state of tension must naturally be understood as existing in different degrees of intensity. It can therefore, through many gradual steps, come close to a state of rest, until in the end there is only a very slight difference

between the two.

The practical conclusion to draw from these reflections is that every measure taken during a state of tension matters more and produces more results than the same measure would in a state of equilibrium. And this importance increases enormously at the highest levels of tension.

The cannonade of Valmy, September 20, 1792, decided more than the battle of Hochkirch, October 14, 1758.

In a region that the enemy abandons to us because he cannot defend it, we can establish ourselves differently than we would if his retreat were made only with the aim of seeking a decision under more favorable circumstances. Likewise, a strategic attack already under way, a bad position, or a single mistaken march may have decisive consequences. In a state of equilibrium, by contrast, errors usually have to be very obvious before they even stir the enemy to general action.

As we have already said, most wars in earlier times spent most of their duration in a state of balance, or at least in brief periods of strain separated by long pauses, with only weak effects. As a result, the events they produced were rarely major successes. They were often little more than staged displays held to honor a royal birthday (Hochkirch), or actions meant merely to satisfy military honor (Kunersdorf), or a commander's personal vanity (Freiberg).

We consider it a major requirement that a commander should fully understand these conditions and have the tact to act in keeping with them. Our experience in the campaign of 1806 showed how greatly this quality can sometimes be lacking. In

that immense strain, when everything was driving toward a decisive outcome, and when that alone, with all its consequences, should have filled the commander's whole mind, measures were proposed and even partly carried out—such as the reconnaissance toward Franconia—that could at best have produced only a mild back-and-forth movement within a state of equilibrium. These mistaken plans and ideas absorbed the army's efforts, and in the process the truly necessary measures, the only ones that could have saved the situation, were overlooked.

But the theoretical distinction we have drawn is also necessary for the further development of our theory. Everything we have to say about the relation between attack and defence, and about the completion of this two-sided act, concerns the state of crisis in which forces are placed during periods of tension and movement. Any activity that takes place during a condition of equilibrium can be treated only as a secondary consequence. For that crisis is war in its true form, while the state of equilibrium is only its reflection.

BOOK IV THE COMBAT

CHAPTER I. Introduction

In the previous book, we examined the subjects that may be regarded as the effective elements of war. We now turn to combat, the real activity of warfare, which through its physical and moral effects sometimes includes the aim of the whole campaign in a simple way and sometimes in a more complex one. These elements must therefore reappear in this activity and in its effects.

The way a battle is formed belongs to tactics. Here we will look at it only in broad outline, so we can understand it as a whole. In practice, the smaller and more immediate aims give each battle its particular shape; we will discuss those later. Compared with the general features of combat, however, these differences are usually minor, and most battles resemble one another closely. To avoid repeating the same general points at every step, we must examine them here before turning to their more specific applications.

So, in the next chapter, we will briefly describe the course of the modern battle in tactical terms, because that provides the basis for our understanding of what a battle really is.

CHAPTER II. Character of a Modern Battle

From the distinction we have drawn between tactics and strategy, it naturally follows that if the nature of the former changes, that change must affect the latter as well. If tactical realities are completely different in one case from what they are in another, then strategy must differ too, if it is to remain coherent and sensible. It is therefore important to describe a general engagement in its modern form before we go on to study how it is used in strategy.

What do we usually do now in a great battle? We take up position calmly in large masses, arranged next to one another and in successive lines behind one another. We deploy only a relatively small part of the whole force, and let it wear itself out in a firefight that lasts for several hours, interrupted only from time to time and shifted from place to place by small separate shocks from bayonet charges and cavalry attacks. When that line has gradually spent part of its fighting spirit in this way, and nothing remains but the embers, it is withdrawn() and replaced by another. *

In this kind of battle, fought on a changed principle, the action dies away slowly, like damp powder burning. If night brings it to a halt because neither side can still see and neither is willing to trust to blind chance, then each side takes stock of what

* The relief of the fighting line played a major role in battles of the Smooth-Bore era. It was made necessary by the fouling of muskets, the physical exhaustion of the men, and the consumption of ammunition, and Napoleon himself recognized it as both necessary and advisable.—EDITOR.

remains. They count the forces still capable of fighting—that is, those not yet completely spent and collapsed like extinct volcanoes. They consider the ground won or lost and how secure their rear is. They gather these results together with their particular impressions of courage and fear, skill and foolishness, as they believe they have seen them in themselves and in the enemy. From all this, one overall impression is formed, and from that comes the decision either to leave the field or to renew the battle the next day.

This description is not meant to be a complete picture of a modern battle, but only to convey its general character. It applies to both attack and defense, and the special features created by the objective, the terrain, and so on can be added without materially changing the basic idea.

But modern battles are not like this by chance. They take this form because the opposing sides are usually nearly equal in military organization and in their knowledge of the art of war, and because the warlike spirit, stirred by great national interests, has broken through artificial restraints and now moves in its natural course. As long as these two conditions exist, battles will always keep this character.

This general idea of the modern battle will be useful to us later in more than one place when we want to judge the value of particular factors such as strength, terrain, and so on. This description applies only to general, large, decisive engagements, and to those that closely resemble them. Smaller combats have also changed in the same direction, but not as much as major battles. The proof of this belongs to tactics;

however, we will later have an opportunity to make the point clearer by giving a few details.

CHAPTER III. Combat in General

Combat is the true activity of war; everything else is only there to support it. Let us therefore look closely at its nature.

Combat means fighting. In it, the aim is to destroy or defeat the enemy, and in any particular engagement the enemy is the armed force facing us.

That is the basic idea. We will come back to it, but first we need to introduce a series of others.

If we think of the state and its military force as a single unit, the most natural way to picture war is as one great combat. Among savage nations in their simple relations, it is not very different. But our wars consist of many large and small combats, happening at the same time or one after another. This division of action into so many separate engagements comes from the great complexity of the relationships out of which war arises for us.

In fact, the ultimate object of our wars—the political one—is not always entirely simple. And even if it were, action is still tied up with so many conditions and considerations that the object can no longer be achieved by one single great act. It can be reached only through a number of larger or smaller acts joined together into a whole. Each of these separate acts is therefore part of a larger whole, and so it has its own particular object that connects it to that whole.

We have already said that every strategic act can be traced back to the idea of combat, because it is a use of military force,

and at the root of that lies the idea of fighting. We may therefore reduce every military activity in the sphere of strategy to the unit of individual combats and concern ourselves only with their objects. We will come to understand these particular objects gradually, as we discuss the causes that produce them. For now, it is enough to say that every combat, large or small, has its own distinct object, subordinate to the main one. If that is so, then the destruction and defeat of the enemy must be regarded only as the means of gaining that object, as indeed it unquestionably is.

But this conclusion is true only in form, and important only because of the connection between the ideas themselves. We have sought it out only so that we may set it aside at once.

What does it mean to overcome the enemy? It always means destroying his military force, whether by killing, wounding, or any other means, and whether completely or only enough that he can no longer keep fighting. So long as we leave aside the special aims of particular combats, we can regard the complete or partial destruction of the enemy as the sole purpose of all combat.

We maintain that in most cases, and especially in great battles, the special aim that gives a battle its individual character and connects it to the larger whole is only a slight variation on that general purpose, or a secondary aim attached to it. It may be important enough to distinguish one battle from another, but it is always insignificant compared with the general purpose. If that secondary aim alone is achieved, then only a small and unimportant part of the combat's purpose has been fulfilled. If

this is true, then the idea that the destruction of the enemy's force is merely the means, while something else is always the object, is true only in a formal sense. It leads to false conclusions unless we remember that destroying the enemy's force is included within that object, and that the object itself is only a slight modification of it. Forgetting this led to thoroughly mistaken views before the wars of the last period. It also produced tendencies and partial systems in which theory imagined it had risen above mere craft all the more because it believed it had less need for the real instrument—the destruction of the enemy's force.

A system like this could not have arisen unless it had been supported by other false assumptions, and unless things other than the destruction of the enemy had been put in its place and credited with an effectiveness they did not truly possess. We will challenge these errors whenever the occasion arises. But we could not discuss combat without insisting on its true importance and value, and warning against the mistakes to which a merely formal truth can lead.

But how are we to show that in most cases—and especially in the most important ones—the main objective is the destruction of the enemy's army? How are we to answer the very subtle idea that, by using some special artificial method, it is possible to achieve a far greater result indirectly while inflicting only slight direct losses on the enemy's forces? Or that a few small but perfectly aimed blows can so paralyse the enemy's forces, and so dominate the enemy's will, that this approach should be seen as a much shorter path to success? No doubt, a victory at one point may be worth more than a victory at another. No

doubt, even in Strategy, there is a scientific way of arranging battles in relation to one another; in fact, Strategy is nothing else than the art of arranging them in this way. We do not mean to deny that. But we maintain that the direct destruction of the enemy's forces is always the dominant consideration. What we are arguing for here is the overriding importance of this destructive principle, and nothing else.

We must remember, however, that we are dealing here with Strategy, not tactics. So we are not speaking of the means by which Strategy might destroy a large body of the enemy's forces at small cost. By direct destruction, we mean tactical results. Our claim, therefore, is that only great tactical results can produce great strategic ones—or, as we have already stated more clearly before, tactical successes are of paramount importance in the conduct of War.

The proof of this claim seems simple enough to us: every complicated, artificial plan takes time. The question of whether a simple attack or a more carefully prepared, and therefore more artificial, one will have greater effect can certainly be answered in favor of the latter, as long as we assume the enemy remains completely passive. But every carefully arranged attack needs time to prepare, and if the enemy strikes back during that time, our whole design may be thrown off. If the enemy chooses some simple attack that can be carried out more quickly, then he gains the initiative and ruins the effect of our larger plan. So, along with considering the usefulness of a complicated attack, we must also consider all the dangers we face while preparing it, and should adopt such a plan only if there is no reason to fear that the enemy will upset it. Whenever

that is not the case, we must choose the simpler, quicker course ourselves, and lower our aims accordingly, as far as the character of the enemy, our relations with him, and other circumstances make necessary. Once we leave the faint impressions of abstract ideas and come down to practical life, it becomes clear that a bold, brave, determined enemy will not give us time for far-reaching, skillful combinations, and it is precisely against such an enemy that we would need skill the most. From this, it seems clear to us that simple and direct results have a decisive advantage over complicated ones.

Our view is not, for that reason, that the simple blow is always the best. It is that we must not draw back the arm too far when the time allowed for striking is short, and that this condition will always push us more toward direct conflict the more warlike our opponent is. Therefore, instead of making it our aim to outdo the enemy through complicated plans, we should try to get ahead of him through greater simplicity in our designs.

If we look for the deepest foundations of these two opposing claims, we find that one rests on ability and the other on courage. The idea that a moderate amount of courage combined with great ability will achieve more than great courage combined with moderate ability is certainly appealing. But unless we assume an illogical imbalance between these qualities, we have no grounds for giving ability an advantage over courage in a sphere defined by danger, and therefore properly regarded as courage's true domain.

After this more theoretical view, we need only add that experience, far from leading us to a different conclusion, is in

fact the very thing that has driven us to it and prompted these reflections.

Anyone who reads history without prejudice will inevitably conclude that, among all military virtues, energy in conducting operations has always contributed most to military glory and success.

How we justify our principle that the destruction of the enemy's forces is the main objective, not only in war as a whole but also in each individual combat, and how this principle fits all the forms and conditions necessarily arising from the relationships out of which war grows, will become clear in what follows. For now, we want only to affirm its general importance, and with that established, we return once more to combat.

CHAPTER IV. Combat in General (continued)

In the last chapter, we identified the destruction of the enemy as the true object of combat. We also tried to show, by examining the issue directly, that this is true in most cases and especially in the most important battles, because the destruction of the enemy's army is always the dominant objective in war. The other aims that may be bound up with destroying the enemy's forces, and that may exert more or less influence, we will describe in general in the next chapter and come to understand more fully as we go on. Here, however, we set them aside completely and treat the destruction of the enemy as the full and sufficient purpose of any combat.

What, then, do we mean by the destruction of the enemy's army? It means reducing his army by more, in relative terms, than our own. If we greatly outnumber the enemy, then the same absolute loss on both sides naturally hurts him more than it hurts us, and in that sense it counts as an advantage for us. Since we are considering combat here apart from all other aims, we must also leave out cases in which combat is used only indirectly to bring about a greater destruction of the enemy's force. Accordingly, the only object we can consider is the direct gain achieved through this mutual process of destruction, because that is an absolute gain: it carries through the entire campaign and, in the end, always appears as clear profit. Every other kind of victory over an opponent either depends on other aims, which we have entirely excluded here, or else gives only a temporary relative advantage. An example will make this clear.

If, through skillful deployment, we have forced our opponent into such a dilemma that he cannot continue the fight without danger, and after some resistance he withdraws, then we may say that we have defeated him at that point. But if we have spent just as much force in winning that victory as the enemy has lost, then when the campaign account is finally settled, no gain remains from this victory—if such a result can even be called a victory. Therefore, overcoming the enemy in the sense of putting him in a position where he must break off the fight has no value in itself, and for that reason it cannot be included in the definition of the object. What remains, then, as we have said, is only the direct gain made in the process of destruction. And this includes not only the losses suffered during the combat itself, but also those that occur after the defeated side withdraws, as direct consequences of the same action.

Experience shows that, in battle, the actual physical losses on the two sides usually differ very little between the victor and the defeated. Often there is no difference at all. Sometimes the losses even seem to run opposite to the result. The heaviest losses for the defeated side usually begin only during the retreat—that is, losses the victor does not share. The weakened remnants of battalions already thrown into disorder are cut down by cavalry. Exhausted men lie scattered across the ground. Disabled guns and broken caissons are abandoned. Others, because of the poor condition of the roads, cannot be moved away fast enough and are captured by the enemy’s troops. During the night, many lose their way and fall helpless into the enemy’s hands. In this way, victory usually takes on tangible form only after it has already been decided. This would

seem paradoxical if it were not explained in the following way.

Physical strength is not the only thing both sides lose in the course of combat. Moral forces are also shaken, broken, and destroyed. What matters is not only the loss of men, horses, and guns, but also the loss of order, courage, confidence, cohesion, and plan when the question is whether the fight can still be continued. It is mainly these moral forces that decide the issue here, and in every case where the victor has suffered as heavily as the defeated, they alone explain the result.

In battle, it is hard to judge the relative scale of physical losses, but not the relative scale of moral losses. Two things mainly reveal them. The first is the loss of the ground where the fighting took place. The second is the enemy's superiority. The more our reserves have been reduced compared with the enemy's, the more strength we have had to spend just to hold the balance. That is already clear proof of the enemy's moral superiority, and it rarely fails to leave the commander with a sense of bitterness and even a kind of contempt for his own troops. But the main point is this: men who have been engaged for a long time become, more or less, like burnt-out cinders. Their ammunition is used up. Their numbers have shrunk to some extent. Their physical and moral energy is exhausted, and perhaps their courage has been broken as well. Such a force, quite apart from the reduction in its numbers, is very different as an organic whole from what it was before the combat. In this way, the loss of moral strength can be measured by the reserves that have been used, almost as if with a ruler.

Loss of ground and the lack of fresh reserves are therefore usually the main causes that lead to a retreat. At the same time, we do not mean to exclude, or to push into the background, other reasons that may arise from the interdependence of different parts of the army, the general plan, and so on.

Every combat, then, is a bloody and destructive test of strength, both physical and moral; whoever has the greater amount of both left at the end is the victor.

In combat, the loss of morale is the main reason a decision is reached. Once that happens, the loss keeps growing until it peaks at the very end of the action. That is the moment the victor should seize to reap the full reward by restricting the enemy's forces as much as possible, which is the real purpose of fighting the battle. On the defeated side, the collapse of order and control often means that continued resistance by individual units does more harm than good to the whole, because of the further punishment they are sure to suffer. The spirit of the mass is broken. The original excitement about winning or losing, which had made men forget danger, is gone, and danger now appears to most of them not as a call to courage but as the endurance of cruel punishment. So, at the first moment of the enemy's victory, the instrument is weakened and dulled, and is no longer able to answer danger with danger.

This period does not last, however. The moral strength of the conquered gradually recovers, order is restored, and courage returns. In most cases, only a small part of the superiority gained remains, and often none of it does. In some cases, though rarely, a spirit of revenge and sharpened hostility may

even produce the opposite result. On the other hand, whatever has been gained in killed, wounded, prisoners, and captured guns can never be erased from the account.

The losses in a battle consist mainly of killed and wounded. The losses after the battle consist more of artillery taken and prisoners. The first kind the conqueror shares, more or less, with the conquered; the second kind he does not. For that reason, they usually occur only on one side of the conflict, or at least are far greater on one side.

Artillery and prisoners are therefore always regarded as the true trophies of victory, and also as its measure, because they show its extent beyond any doubt. Even the degree of moral superiority can be judged better from them than from any other comparison, especially when they are set beside the number of killed and wounded. From this comes a new force that increases the moral effects.

As we have said, the army's morale, once crushed in battle and in the movements that immediately follow, gradually recovers and often shows little sign of damage. This is usually true of smaller parts of the whole force, and less often true of larger ones. It may sometimes even be true of the main army, but it is rarely, if ever, true of the state or government to which that army belongs. Those authorities judge the situation more impartially and from a higher vantage point. They see all too clearly, in the number of trophies captured by the enemy and in their relation to the number of killed and wounded, the measure of their own weakness and ineffectiveness.

In fact, this loss of moral balance must not be taken lightly simply because it has no fixed, absolute value, or because it does not always show itself in the final result. It can grow so powerful that it brings everything down with irresistible force. For that reason, it can often become a major objective in the operations we will discuss elsewhere. Here, we still need to examine some of its basic relationships.

The moral effect of a victory grows not only with the size of the forces engaged, but at an increasing rate. In other words, it grows not just in scale, but in intensity. Order is easily restored in a defeated detachment. Just as a single frozen limb is quickly warmed again by the rest of the body, the courage of a defeated detachment is easily revived by the courage of the rest of the army once it rejoins it. So even if the effects of a small victory are not entirely erased, the enemy still loses part of them. That is not so when the army itself suffers a major defeat. Then everything collapses together. A great fire reaches a very different heat than several small ones.

Another factor that shapes the moral significance of a victory is the relative size of the forces that fought each other. Defeating a larger force with a smaller one is not just a twofold success; it also shows a higher, and especially a more broadly applicable, superiority—one the defeated side must always fear meeting again. In practice, however, this effect is barely noticeable in the moment. During actual combat, ideas about the enemy's real strength are usually so uncertain, and estimates of our own strength so often wrong, that the side with superior numbers either does not recognize the imbalance or falls far short of admitting its full extent. As a result, it largely escapes the moral

disadvantages that would otherwise follow. Only later, in history, does the truth emerge—long hidden by ignorance, vanity, or prudent silence. Then it certainly adds glory to the army and its commander, but its moral effect can no longer influence events that are already past.

If prisoners and captured guns are the main things that give a victory real substance—its true concrete results—then the battle plan should be directed especially toward securing them. In that case, killing and wounding the enemy appears only as a means to that end.

How far this should affect the arrangements made during the battle is not a matter for strategy. But the decision to fight the battle is closely connected with it, as can be seen in the direction given to our forces and in their overall grouping—whether we threaten the enemy's flank or rear, or whether he threatens ours. The number of prisoners and captured guns depends greatly on this point, and in many cases tactics alone cannot achieve it, especially when the strategic situation works too strongly against it.

The danger of having to fight on two sides, and the even more dangerous position of having no open line of retreat, paralyzes movement and weakens resistance. If defeat comes, these conditions also increase the losses, often driving them to the extreme point—total destruction. So when the rear is threatened, defeat becomes both more likely and more decisive.

From this comes a constant instinct throughout the conduct of war, especially in both major and minor engagements: to secure

our own line of retreat and to cut off the enemy's. This follows from the idea of victory, which, as we have seen, means more than simply killing the enemy.

So in every combat, this is the first immediate aim, and it applies universally. No battle can be imagined in which this effort, whether in both forms or only one, does not accompany the direct use of force. Even the smallest unit will not throw itself at the enemy without thinking about its own line of retreat, and in most cases it will also keep an eye on the enemy's.

To explain how often this instinct is kept from taking the most direct course, and how often it must give way to difficulties created by more important considerations, would take us too far afield. So we will be content to state that it is a general natural law of combat.

It is therefore an active force. It presses everywhere with its natural weight, and thus becomes the pivot on which almost all tactical and strategic maneuvers turn.

If we now look at the idea of victory as a whole, we find that it has three elements:

1. The enemy's greater loss of physical strength.

2. His greater loss of moral strength.

3. His open admission of this through the abandonment of his intentions.

The reports each side issues about its dead and wounded are never exact, rarely truthful, and often deliberately misleading. Even the reported number of trophies can seldom be fully

trusted. As a result, when that number is small, it may even cast doubt on whether the victory was real. There is no reliable way to measure the loss of moral strength except through trophies. So in many cases, the clearest proof of victory is simply that one side gives up the fight. That should be seen as an admission of inferiority—a lowering of the flag by which, in this particular case, the enemy's right and superiority are acknowledged. This element of humiliation and disgrace, though it must be distinguished from the other moral effects of losing one's balance, is an essential part of victory. It is this element above all that shapes opinion outside the army—among the people and the government in both warring states, and among all others who are in any way concerned.

For generals and armies whose reputation is not yet established, this is itself one of the difficulties in many operations. Circumstances may justify a series of engagements, each ending in retreat, without those actions being real defeats. Yet they may still look like a string of defeats, and that appearance can have a deeply discouraging effect. A retreating general cannot prevent that moral effect from spreading among the public and his troops by explaining his true intentions. To do so effectively, he would have to reveal his plans in full, which would conflict far too seriously with his main interests.

To highlight the special importance of this idea of victory, we need only point to the battle of Soor,() where the trophies were not significant—a few thousand prisoners and twenty guns. Frederick nevertheless declared it a victory by remaining on the

battlefield for five days afterward, even though his retreat into Silesia had already been decided on and was a natural step given his overall situation. By his own account, he believed the moral effect of his victory would help bring peace more quickly. Now, although two further successes were also needed before that peace was concluded—namely, the battle at Katholisch Hennersdorf in Lusatia and the battle of Kesseldorf—we still cannot say that the moral effect of the battle of Soor was nil. *

When defeat mainly breaks a force's morale, and the enemy takes an unusually large number of trophies, the lost battle becomes a rout. But that is not the automatic result of every victory. A rout begins only when the defeated side's morale has been shattered very deeply. Then there is often a complete inability to resist any further, and the whole action turns into retreat—that is, flight.

Jena and Belle Alliance were routs; Borodino was not.

We cannot draw a single exact line here without becoming pedantic, because the difference is one of degree. Even so, keeping this distinction in mind is essential. It gives our theoretical ideas a clear center. Our terminology is deficient because we have only one word to describe both a victory over the enemy that amounts to a rout and a defeat of the enemy that amounts only to an ordinary victory.

* Soor, or Sohr, Sept. 30, 1745; Hennersdorf, Nov. 23, 1745; Kealteldorf, Dec. 15, 1745; all in the Second Silesian War.

CHAPTER V. The Significance of Combat

In the previous chapter, we examined combat in its absolute form, as a miniature picture of war as a whole. We now turn to the relation it bears to the other parts of that larger whole. First, we must ask more precisely what a combat signifies.

If war is nothing but a mutual process of destruction, then the most natural answer, in theory and perhaps in reality as well, would seem to be that each side combines all its forces into one great mass, and that everything is decided in one immense collision between those masses. There is certainly a good deal of truth in this idea, and it may seem wise to hold to it. From that point of view, we might at first regard small combats as mere unavoidable waste, like the shavings from a carpenter’s plane. Even so, the matter is not so simple.

When forces are divided, multiple engagements naturally follow. The immediate aims of those separate engagements therefore belong under the subject of divided forces. But those aims, and with them the whole body of engagements, can generally be grouped into certain classes, and knowing those classes will

make our observations easier to understand. *

These motives, however, do not seem to cover the whole subject. We need only remember that there are reconnaissances and demonstrations in which none of these three points is plainly the object of the combat. For that reason, we must allow a fourth class. Strictly speaking, in reconnaissances where we want the enemy to reveal himself, in alarms by which we aim to wear him out, and in demonstrations by which we try to keep him from leaving one point or draw him toward another, the objects are all of a kind that can be achieved only indirectly and under the pretext of one of the three objects listed in the table, usually the second. For an enemy whose aim is to reconnoitre must deploy his force as if he truly meant to attack and defeat us, or drive us off, and so on. But this apparent object is not the real one, and our present concern is only with the latter. We must therefore add to the three offensive objects above a fourth: to lead the enemy to a false conclusion. That offensive means can be used for this purpose is inherent in the nature of the case.

On the other hand, we must note that the defense of a position can take two forms: it may be absolute, when the position is not to be given up under any circumstances, or relative, when it

* The destruction of the enemy's military forces is, in fact, the aim of all combat. But other aims may be attached to it, and those other aims may even take precedence. We must therefore distinguish between combats in which destroying the enemy's forces is the main aim and those in which it is more a means to another end. The destruction of the enemy's force, the possession of a place, or the possession of some object may each be the general motive for a combat. Any one of these may stand alone, or several may be combined, though in that case one is usually the chief motive. Now the two main forms of war, the offensive and the defensive, which we shall discuss shortly, do not alter the first of these motives, but they do affect the other two. If we arrange them in a scheme, they would appear as follows:

only needs to be held for a certain time. The latter occurs constantly in actions involving advanced posts and rear guards.

It is obvious that these different aims in combat must strongly affect the arrangements made beforehand. We act differently when our aim is simply to force the enemy from a position than when we intend to defeat him completely. We also act differently when we mean to hold a place to the very end than when our purpose is only to delay the enemy for a time. In the first case, we pay little attention to the line of retreat; in the second, it becomes the main concern, and so on.

But these reflections properly belong to tactics, and are introduced here only as examples for the sake of clarity. What strategy has to say about the different objects of combat will appear in the chapters that deal with those objects. Here we need make only a few general observations. First, the importance of these objects declines roughly in the order given above; therefore the first of them must always take precedence in a great battle. Finally, in a defensive battle, the last two are in fact unproductive—that is, purely negative—and so can be useful only indirectly, by making something positive easier to achieve. It is therefore a bad sign of the strategic situation when battles of this kind become too frequent.

CHAPTER VI. Duration of Combat

If we consider combat not by itself but in relation to the other forces at work in war, then its duration takes on special importance.

To some extent, this duration must be regarded as a second, subordinate kind of success. For the victor, a combat can never end too quickly; for the defeated, it can never last too long. A swift victory shows greater power to win, while a delayed decision gives the defeated side some compensation for its loss.

This is generally true, but it becomes practically important when applied to combats whose object is a relative defense.

Here, success often depends simply on how long the action lasts. That is why we have included duration among the strategic elements.

How long a combat lasts is necessarily tied to its basic conditions. These are the total size of the forces, the balance of strength and of the different arms in relation to one another, and the nature of the terrain. Twenty thousand men do not wear each other down as quickly as two thousand. We cannot hold out against an enemy two or three times our strength as long as we can against one of equal strength. A cavalry engagement is decided more quickly than an infantry engagement, and a fight

between infantry alone more quickly than one in which artillery() is also involved. In hills and forests, we cannot advance as fast as we can over flat ground. All this is plain enough. *

It follows, then, that if a combat is to achieve its purpose through its duration, we must take into account the size of the forces, the relation between the three arms, and the position. But for our present argument, stating this rule matters less than immediately connecting it with the main results that experience provides on the subject.

Even the resistance of an ordinary division of 8,000 to 10,000 men of all arms, when facing an enemy considerably superior in numbers, will last several hours, provided the advantages of the ground are not too overwhelming. If the enemy is only slightly superior, or not superior at all, the combat will last half a day. A corps of three or four divisions will extend it to twice that time; an army of 80,000 or 100,000 men to three or four times as long. Therefore, these larger bodies can be left to themselves for that period, and no separate combat arises if, within that time, other forces can be brought up whose cooperation then merges at once into a single stream with the results of the combat already fought.

These estimates come from experience. But it is equally important for us to define more precisely the moment of decision, and therefore the point at which the combat ends.

* The increase in the relative range of artillery and the introduction of shrapnel have completely changed this conclusion.

CHAPTER VII. Decision of the Combat

No battle is decided in a single instant, though every battle has moments of crisis on which the outcome depends. A defeat, therefore, usually comes as the balance gradually tips. But in every engagement there is a point in time () *

when the battle may be considered decided, so that renewing the fight would amount to a new battle rather than a continuation of the old one. A clear understanding of this moment is very important, because it allows one to judge whether, with the prompt arrival of reinforcements, the combat can be resumed to advantage.

Often, in battles that cannot be restored, fresh troops are sacrificed for nothing. Just as often, through neglect, a decision has not been seized when it could easily have been secured. Here are two examples that make the point perfectly:

When Prince Hohenlohe, at Jena in 1806,() accepted battle with 35,000 men against Buonaparte's 60,000 to 70,000, he lost it—but lost it in such a way that the 35,000 may be considered completely broken up. General Rüchel then tried to renew the fight with about 12,000 men; the result was that his force was scattered just as quickly.

* This is to be understood under the conditions of armament that existed at the time. This point is extremely important, because in practice the conduct of a great battle depends largely on answering this question correctly: How long can a given command continue to resist? If the answer is wrong in practice, the entire manoeuvre based on it may collapse—for example, Kouroupatkin at Liao-Yang in September 1904.

On the other hand, on the same day at Auerstadt, the Prussians kept up the fight with 25,000 men against Davoust's 28,000 until midday. They had not succeeded, it is true, but their force had not been reduced to complete dissolution, nor had they suffered heavier losses than the enemy, who was very weak in cavalry. Yet they failed to use the reserve of 18,000 under General Kalkreuth to restore the battle—a battle which, under those circumstances, it would have been impossible to lose.

Each battle is a complete whole, made up of smaller clashes that combine into one overall outcome. The decision of the battle lies in that overall result. This result does not always amount to a full victory in the sense described in Chapter 6. Often the necessary preparations for that have not been made. Often there is no chance to achieve it because the enemy gives way too soon. And in most cases, even when the resistance has been stubborn, the decision comes before success has reached the level that would fully match the idea of a victory.

We therefore ask: at what point is a battle usually decided? In other words, when has the moment come at which a fresh and effective force—provided it is not disproportionately large—can no longer reverse an unfavorable battle?

If we set aside feigned attacks, which by their nature do not really lead to a decision, then:

1. If the object of the battle was possession of a movable thing, then losing it always decides the matter.

2. If the object of the battle was possession of ground, then the decision generally comes with the loss of that ground. But not always. If the ground has unusual strength, that is different.

Ground that is easy to move across, however important it may be in other ways, can be retaken without much danger.

3. In all other cases, when these first two conditions have not already decided the battle—and especially when the main object is the destruction of the enemy's force—the decision is reached at the moment when the victor no longer feels himself to be in a state of disintegration, that is, no longer partly unfit for service. At that point, there is no further advantage in making the successive efforts discussed in Chapter 12 of Book III. It is on this basis that we have assigned the strategic unity of the battle its place here.

A battle, therefore, cannot be recovered if the attacker has not lost his order and full effectiveness at all, or has lost it only in a small part of his force, while the opposing forces are more or less disorganized throughout. Nor can it be recovered if the enemy has regained his effectiveness.

So, the smaller the part of a force that has actually been committed to the fight, the larger the part kept in reserve that has helped shape the result simply by being there. That means any fresh enemy force will be less able to snatch victory back from us. A commander who pushes furthest the principle of fighting with the greatest economy of force, while getting the fullest moral effect from strong reserves, is following the safest path to victory. We must admit that in modern times the French, especially under Buonaparte, showed complete mastery of this.

Also, the point at which the crisis of combat ends for the victor, and his original order is restored, comes sooner the smaller the unit under his control. A cavalry picket chasing an enemy at full

gallop can recover its proper order in a few minutes, and the crisis is over. A whole cavalry regiment needs more time. It lasts longer still with infantry spread out in single lines of skirmishers, and longer again with divisions made up of all arms, especially when chance has sent one part in one direction and another part in another. In that case, the fighting has disrupted the formation, and the confusion usually grows worse because no part knows exactly where the others are. So the moment when the victor has gathered up the forces he has been using, which are intermixed and partly disordered, when he has to some extent rearranged them and put them back in their proper places, and has brought the workshop of battle into some order again—this moment, we say, always comes later the larger the total force.

This moment also comes later if night catches the victor in the middle of the crisis. Finally, it comes later still if the country is rough and heavily wooded. But on these two points we must note that night is also a powerful form of protection, and only rarely do circumstances justify expecting a successful result from a night attack, as on March 10, 1814, at Laon,() where York against Marmont provides a perfectly relevant example. In the same way, wooded and broken country protects those passing through the long crisis of victory against a counterstroke. So both night and rough, wooded terrain make it harder, not easier, to renew the same battle. *

So far, we have treated help arriving for the losing side as simply an increase in strength—that is, as reinforcements

* The famous night charge against Marmont's Corps.

coming up directly from the rear, which is the most common situation. But the situation is very different when these fresh troops strike the enemy on the flank or in the rear.

We will discuss the effects of flank or rear attacks, insofar as they belong to strategy, elsewhere. The kind we mean here—one intended to restore the fight—belongs mainly to tactics. We mention it only because we are dealing here with tactical results, so our discussion must briefly cross into the field of tactics.

Sending a force against the enemy's flank and rear can greatly increase its effect. But that result is by no means guaranteed; under some conditions, its effect may be weakened just as much. The circumstances in which the fighting has taken place determine the value of this plan, as they do every other, and we cannot go into those conditions here. At the same time, two points matter for our subject. First, attacks on the flank and rear usually have a more favorable effect on the consequences of a decision than on the decision itself. Now, when the aim is to recover a battle, the first and most important thing is to secure a favorable decision, not to increase the scale of success. From that point of view, one might think that a force sent to restore our position helps less if it falls on the enemy's flank and rear, and is therefore separated from us, than if it joins us directly. There are certainly cases in which that is true. But we must say that most cases point the other way, and for the second reason that matters here.

The second point is the psychological effect of surprise, which a reinforcing force that arrives to revive a fight usually has in its

favor. Surprise always has a stronger effect when it strikes the flank or rear. And an enemy fully absorbed in the crisis of victory, stretched out and scattered in formation, is in a weaker position to resist it. Anyone can see that an attack on the flank or rear, which at the start of a battle would matter little when forces are concentrated and ready for such a move, carries far greater weight in the final moments of the fight.

We must therefore admit at once that, in most cases, a reinforcement arriving on the enemy's flank or rear will be more effective. It is like applying the same weight at the end of a longer lever. Under such conditions, we may hope to recover the battle with a force that would be far too weak if used in a direct attack. Here the results almost escape calculation, because moral forces gain complete ascendancy. This is therefore the proper field for boldness and daring.

The eye must therefore be kept on all these factors. Every one of these moments, and all these cooperating forces, must be weighed when we have to decide in doubtful cases whether it is still possible to recover a fight that has turned against us.

If the combat is not yet over, then the new struggle opened by the arrival of reinforcements merges with the earlier one. The two blend into a single result, and the first setback disappears entirely from the calculation. But that is not so if the combat has already been decided. In that case, there are two separate results. If the arriving assistance has only relative strength—that is, if it is not by itself a match for the enemy—then we can hardly expect a favorable outcome from this second fight. But if it is strong enough to undertake the second fight without regard

to the first, then a favorable result may compensate for, or even outweigh, the first combat. It can never erase it completely from the account.

At the Battle of Kunersdorf,() Frederick the Great broke through the left side of the Russian position in the opening attack and captured seventy guns. By the end of the battle, however, both had been lost again, and the entire result of that first clash was erased. If it had been possible to stop after that initial success and postpone the second part of the battle until the next day, then even if the King had lost on that following day, the gains from the first would still have offset the losses of the second.

But when a battle that is going badly is halted and reversed before it ends, the negative result on our side not only disappears from the reckoning, but becomes the basis of an even greater victory. If, for example, we picture the tactical course of the battle clearly, we can easily see that until the fighting is finally over, all successes in partial engagements remain undecided outcomes that the final decision may not only cancel, but turn into their opposite. The more our forces have suffered, the more the enemy will also have spent on his side. The greater the enemy's crisis, therefore, the more the superiority of our fresh troops will matter. If the final result then turns in our favor, if we take the battlefield from the enemy and recover all the trophies, then all the forces he sacrificed to win them become pure gain for us, and our earlier defeat becomes a stepping-stone to a greater triumph. The most brilliant achievements, which in victory the enemy would have valued so highly that the losses they cost would have been ignored, now leave behind nothing but regret for the sacrifice involved.

Such is the change that the magic of victory and the curse of defeat produce in the relative weight of the very same elements.

Therefore, even when we are clearly stronger and capable of answering the enemy's victory with an even greater one, it is still better, when the matter is important enough, to prevent a disadvantageous engagement from reaching its conclusion and change its course rather than fight a second battle.

In 1760, Field-Marshal Daun tried to come to General Laudon's aid at Leignitz while the battle was still in progress. But when he failed, he did not attack the King the next day, although he had the means to do so.

For these reasons, serious clashes between advance guards before a battle should be seen only as necessary evils, and avoided whenever they are not truly necessary.() *

We still have one more conclusion to consider.

If the decision in a regular pitched battle has gone against one side, that alone is not a reason to decide on another battle. The decision to fight again must arise from other circumstances. Yet there is a moral force working against this conclusion, and we must take it into account: the feeling of anger and revenge. This feeling is common to everyone, from the oldest Field-Marshal to

* This, however, was not Napoleon's view. He believed a strong attack by the advance guard was always necessary in order to fix the enemy's attention and "paralyse his independent will-power." The failure to grasp this point repeatedly brought von Moltke to the brink of defeat in August 1870. He was saved only by Bazaine's sluggishness on the one hand and by the initiative of his subordinates, especially von Alvensleben, on the other. This is the core of the new Strategic Doctrine of the French General Staff. See the works of Bonnal, Foch, &C.—EDITOR

the youngest drummer-boy. For that reason, troops are never more eager to fight than when they want to wipe out a disgrace. This holds true, however, only if the defeated part is not too large in proportion to the whole; otherwise, that feeling is overwhelmed by a sense of helplessness.

There is therefore a very natural tendency to use this moral force to repair the disaster at once, and for that reason especially to seek another battle if other circumstances allow it. In that case, it follows naturally that this second battle must be an offensive one.

Among battles of secondary importance, many examples can be found of this kind of retaliatory battle. But great battles are usually shaped by too many other decisive causes to be brought about by this weaker motive.

That feeling must surely have been what brought the noble Blücher, with his Third Corps, onto the battlefield on February 14, 1814, after the other two corps had been beaten three days earlier at Montmirail. If he had known he would be facing Buonaparte himself, stronger reasons would naturally have led him to postpone his revenge for another day. But he expected to take revenge on Marmont, and instead of winning the satisfaction he sought for his honour, he paid the price for misjudging the situation.

The length of a battle and the moment when it is decided determine how far apart the forces meant to fight together should be placed. This arrangement is tactical insofar as it concerns a single battle. But it can only be treated that way if the troops are positioned so closely that two separate

engagements are unthinkable, and the whole space they occupy can therefore be treated, in strategic terms, as a single point. In war, however, forces intended to fight together are often spread far enough apart that, although joining in one common battle remains the main aim, separate engagements are still possible. In that case, the arrangement is strategic.

Arrangements of this kind include marches in separate bodies and columns, the use of advance guards and flanking columns, the grouping of reserves meant to support more than one strategic point, and the concentration of several corps from widely scattered cantonments, and so on. It is easy to see that the need for such arrangements can arise constantly. We may think of them as the small change of strategic economy, while major battles, and everything of similar importance, are the gold and silver coin.

CHAPTER VIII. Mutual Understanding as to a Battle

No battle can take place without the consent of both sides. In that idea, which forms the whole basis of a duel, lies the source of a certain way of speaking used by historical writers that leads to many vague and mistaken notions.

According to the view of the writers we mean, it has often happened that one commander offered battle to the other, and the other did not accept.

But battle is a highly modified form of duel, and it is not based simply on both sides wanting to fight—that is, on mutual consent. It is also shaped by the larger purposes tied to the battle itself. Those purposes always belong to something greater, and all the more so because even war as a whole, considered as a single “combat-unit,” has political aims and conditions that come from a higher level. The simple desire to defeat one another therefore becomes quite secondary, or rather stops existing as an independent motive at all. It becomes only the channel through which the higher will passes its impulse to act.

Among the ancients, and then again in the early period of standing armies, the phrase that we had offered battle to the enemy in vain meant more than it does now. For the ancients, everything was arranged with the aim of testing each other’s strength in the open field, free from obstacles of any kind.().

The whole art of war consisted in organizing and forming the army—that is, in the order of battle. *

Since their armies regularly fortified themselves in camp, a camp position was regarded as something that could not be attacked. A battle therefore could not take place until the enemy left his camp and moved into terrain where fighting was possible—entered the lists, as it were.

So if we hear that Hannibal offered battle to Fabius in vain, that tells us nothing more about Fabius than that battle was not part of his plan. By itself, it proves neither Hannibal's physical superiority nor his moral superiority. But as far as Hannibal is concerned, the phrase is still accurate enough in the sense that he genuinely wanted a battle.

In the early period of modern armies, the situation in major engagements and battles was much the same. Large masses of troops were brought into action and directed throughout the fight by a fixed order of battle. Like one large, unwieldy whole, this formation needed more or less open, level ground and was suited neither to attack nor to defense in rough, confined, or mountainous terrain. So here too the defender still had, to some extent, the means of avoiding battle. Although these conditions gradually changed, they continued until the First Silesian War. Only in the Seven Years' War did attacks on an enemy positioned in difficult country gradually become practical and common. Terrain certainly did not stop being a source of strength for those who used it well, but it was no longer a magic

* Note the custom in Anglo-Saxon times of sending formal challenges, setting a time and place for action, and "enhazelug" the battlefield.—ED.

barrier that shut out the natural forces of war.

Over the past thirty years, war has developed much further in this respect, and now nothing stands in the way of a general who truly wants a decision through battle. He can seek out his enemy and attack him. If he does not do so, he cannot claim that he wanted to fight. So the phrase that he offered battle and his opponent did not accept it now means nothing more than that he did not find the circumstances favorable enough for battle. That is an admission the phrase does not honestly express, but only tries to conceal.

It is true that the defensive side can no longer refuse battle, but it can still avoid it by abandoning its position and the role connected with that position. Even so, this is already half a victory for the offensive side and a recognition of its superiority for the moment.

This idea, together with the cartel of defiance, can therefore no longer be used to dress up the inaction of the side whose task is to advance—that is, the offensive—with such empty boasting. The defender, who as long as he does not give way must be credited with being willing to fight, may certainly say that he has offered battle if he is not attacked, if that is not already understood.

On the other hand, if a commander wants to retreat and is able to do so, it is not easy to force him into battle. The attacker often gains too little from such a retreat, while a decisive victory may be urgently necessary. For that reason, the limited ways of forcing an opponent to stand and fight are often carefully sought out and skillfully used.

The main ways of doing this are, first, surrounding the enemy so that retreat becomes impossible, or at least so difficult that accepting battle is the better choice; and second, surprising him. This second method, which once mattered because all movement was extremely difficult, has become much less effective in modern times.

Because troops today are more flexible and better able to maneuver, commanders do not hesitate to begin a retreat even when the enemy is in sight. Only unusual obstacles in the terrain can create serious difficulty in carrying it out.

An example of this is the battle of Neresheim, fought by the Archduke Charles against Moreau in the Rauhe Alp on August 11, 1796, simply to make his retreat easier. We must admit, however, that we have never been able fully to understand the explanation given by that celebrated general and writer himself in this case.

The battle of Rosbach() is another example, if we assume that the commander of the allied army did not actually intend to attack Frederick the Great. *

Of the battle of Soor,() the King himself says that it was fought only because retreating in the enemy's presence seemed to him a dangerous operation. At the same time, the King also gave other reasons for the battle. *

Taken as a whole, apart from regular night surprises, such cases will always be rare. Cases in which an enemy is forced to

* November 5, 1757.

* Or Sohr, September 30, 1745.

fight because he is effectively surrounded will usually occur only with isolated corps, such as Mortier's at Dürrenstein in 1809 and Vandamme's at Kulm in 1813.

CHAPTER IX. The Battle(*)

*

ITS DECISION

What is a battle? It is a clash of the main forces, not a minor fight over some secondary objective, and not a mere attempt abandoned as soon as we realize in time that the goal is probably beyond our reach. It is a struggle fought with all our strength to win a decisive victory.

Secondary aims may also be tied to the main objective, and a battle may take on many different shades from the circumstances that give rise to it, since it also belongs to a larger whole of which it is only one part. But because the essence of war is conflict, and a battle is the conflict of the main armies, it must always be seen as the true center of gravity of war. Its defining feature, therefore, is that unlike all other encounters, it is planned and undertaken for the single purpose of winning a decisive victory.

This affects how a battle is decided, the effect of the victory contained in it, and the value theory must assign to it as a means to an end.

* Clausewitz still uses the term “die Hauptschlacht,” but in modern usage only “die Schlacht” is used for the decisive act of an entire campaign. Encounters that arise from forces colliding, or from troops advancing toward the strategic climax of a phase of the campaign or of the campaign as a whole, are called either “Treffen,” that is, “engagements,” or “Gefecht,” that is, “combat” or “action.” So, in technical terms, Gravelotte was a “Schlacht,” or “battle,” but Spicheren, Woerth, Borny, and even Vionville were only “Treffen.”

For that reason, we will examine it separately at this point, before turning to the particular aims that may be connected with it but do not essentially change its character, provided it truly deserves to be called a battle.

If a battle is fought mainly for its own sake, then the elements that decide it must lie within the battle itself. In other words, victory must be pursued as long as any possibility or hope remains. It should not be abandoned because of secondary circumstances, but only when the forces available clearly appear completely inadequate.

But how are we to define that exact moment?

If the main condition for winning is a certain artificial organization and tight cohesion in an army—as it was through much of the period of the modern Art of War—then the decision comes when that formation breaks apart. A defeated wing thrown out of order decides the fate of everything connected with it. If, at another time, the essence of defense lies in a close union between the army and the ground it fights on, together with its obstacles, so that army and position are effectively one, then the decision comes with the capture of a vital point in that position. People say the key of the position is lost; it can no longer be defended, and the battle cannot continue. In both cases, the defeated armies are much like the broken strings of an instrument that can no longer do their work.

That geometrical principle, and this geographical one as well, both tended to hold an army in a rigid state of tension that kept its available strength from being used to the last man. At least to that extent, they have lost their influence and no longer

dominate. Armies are still brought into battle in a certain order, but that order is no longer decisive. Features of the ground are still used to strengthen a position, but they are no longer its only support.

In the second chapter of this book, we tried to give a general view of the nature of the modern battle. In our view, the order of battle is only an arrangement of forces suited to using them conveniently, and the course of the battle is a mutual, gradual wearing down of those forces, as each side tries to exhaust the other first.

The decision to give up the fight therefore arises, in battle more than in any other kind of combat, from the relation between the fresh reserves still available. Only these still keep their full moral vigor, and the remnants of battered, hard-hit battalions, already burned out in the destructive struggle, must not be rated on the same level. Lost ground also matters, as we have said elsewhere, because it is a measure of lost moral force. It therefore enters into the calculation as well, though more as a sign of losses suffered than because of the loss itself. The number of fresh reserves is always the main point both commanders must consider.

In general, a battle begins to lean one way from the very start, though at first the shift is hard to notice. That direction is also often set quite clearly by arrangements made beforehand, and a general shows poor judgment if he begins a battle under such unfavorable conditions without recognizing them. Even when that is not the case, the nature of battle is less like a back-and-forth swing, as misleading accounts often suggest,

and more like a gradual loss of balance. It begins early, almost imperceptibly, but with each passing moment it grows stronger and more visible.

But whether the balance remains only slightly disturbed for a long time, or after being lost on one side is restored and then lost on the other, one thing is certain: in most cases, the defeated general sees his fate coming long before he retreats. Cases in which some decisive event unexpectedly changes the course of the whole battle mostly exist in the way people dramatize a lost battle when they describe it afterward.

Here we can only appeal to the judgment of fair-minded, experienced men, who, we are sure, will agree with what we have said and answer on our behalf to readers who do not know war from personal experience. To explain why this must be so from the nature of the matter itself would take us too far into the field of tactics, where this part of the subject properly belongs. Here we are concerned only with its results.

If we say that a defeated general usually sees the battle turning against him some time before he finally decides to break it off, we also have to admit that there are cases where this is not true; otherwise the claim would contradict itself. If every decisive shift in a battle meant the battle was already lost, then no one would commit further forces to try to reverse it, and that decisive shift could not come long before the retreat. Of course, there are battles that have clearly swung to one side and still ended in victory for the other. But those cases are rare, not the rule. Even so, every general whom fortune has turned against counts on such exceptions, and must do so as long as there is

still any chance of changing the outcome. He hopes that greater effort, renewed morale, an act of extraordinary resolve, or simply a lucky accident will bring a change in the next moment, and he keeps trying for it as long as his courage and judgment remain in agreement. We will have more to say about this, but first we must show the signs that the balance is beginning to tip.

The outcome of the whole battle is made up of the combined results of all the smaller engagements within it; but the outcome of each of those separate engagements is determined by different factors.

First, there is the purely moral force in the minds of the senior officers. If a divisional general has seen his battalions overwhelmed, that will affect both his bearing and his reports, and those in turn will influence the commander-in-chief's decisions. So even unsuccessful partial engagements that seem, on the surface, to have been recovered are not without effect. Their impact remains, and these impressions accumulate in the commander's mind almost of themselves, even against his will.

Second, there is the faster thinning of our troops, which in the slow and relatively() less tumultuous course of our battles can be estimated fairly easily. *

Third, there is the loss of ground.

All these signs act like a compass for the General, showing him the direction the battle is taking. If entire batteries have been lost while none of the enemy’s have been captured; if battalions

* Relatively, that is to say, compared with the shock of former days.

have been broken by the enemy's cavalry while the enemy's own battalions still stand everywhere in solid, unbreakable masses; if the line of fire in his order of battle shifts involuntarily from one point to another; if repeated attempts to seize certain positions have failed, and each time the attacking battalions have been scattered by well-aimed volleys of grape and case; if our artillery begins to answer the enemy's only weakly; if the battalions under fire shrink unusually fast because crowds of unwounded men, along with the wounded, are going to the rear; if individual Divisions have been cut off and taken prisoner because the plan of battle has broken apart; if the line of retreat begins to be threatened—then the Commander can clearly see where the battle is leading him. The longer this trend continues, the more definite it becomes. The harder it will be to reverse, and the closer he comes to the moment when he must give up the battle. We will now make some observations about that moment.

We have already said more than once that the final decision depends mainly on the relative size of the fresh reserves left at the end. A commander who sees that his opponent is clearly stronger in this respect decides to retreat. This is a defining feature of modern battles: setbacks and losses suffered during the fighting can be repaired by fresh troops, because the modern battle formation, and the way troops are committed, generally make it possible to use them in almost any position. Therefore, as long as the commander against whom the battle seems to be turning still has stronger reserves than his enemy, he will not give up the day. But once his reserves begin to fall below his enemy's, the result may be considered settled. What

he does then depends partly on particular circumstances and partly on his own courage and persistence, which can sometimes turn into foolish stubbornness. How a commander develops the ability to judge correctly the reserves still remaining on both sides is a matter of practical military genius and does not belong here; we are concerned only with the conclusion as it takes shape in his mind. But even this conclusion is not yet the true moment of decision, because a motive that arises only gradually cannot by itself produce that moment. It is only a general reason pushing him toward a decision, and the decision itself still requires some immediate, specific causes. Two main ones appear again and again: the danger of retreat and the coming of night.

If the retreat grows more dangerous with every new stage of the battle, and if the reserves have been reduced so much that they can no longer provide enough breathing room, then nothing remains but to accept the situation and, through a well-managed retreat, save what would otherwise be lost through further delay ending in rout and disaster.

But night usually brings all battles to an end, because fighting at night offers no hope of advantage except in special circumstances. And since night is better suited to retreat than daylight, a commander who sees retreat as inevitable, or at least highly likely, will choose to use the night for that purpose.

Besides the two usual and main causes mentioned above, there are of course many others as well, varying more or less from case to case, and they should not be overlooked. The more a battle moves toward a complete collapse of balance, the more

strongly each smaller result is felt in speeding up the reversal. So the loss of a battery, or a successful charge by a couple of cavalry regiments, may bring to a head a decision to retreat that was already forming.

To conclude this subject, we must pause for a moment at the point where a commander's courage comes into a kind of conflict with his reason.

On the one hand, the overpowering pride of a victorious conqueror, the unbending will of a naturally stubborn spirit, and the fierce resistance of noble feelings refuse to give up the battlefield, where honour must be left behind. On the other hand, reason advises against throwing everything away, against staking the last remaining chance on the contest, and instead urges the preservation of enough strength to carry out an orderly retreat. However highly we may value courage and firmness in war, and however little hope of victory there is for anyone who cannot bring himself to seek it with all his strength, there is still a point beyond which persistence can only be called desperate folly. At that point, no critic can approve of it. In the most famous of all battles, that of Belle-Alliance, Buonaparte committed his last reserve in an attempt to recover a battle that could no longer be recovered. He spent his last farthing, and then, like a beggar, abandoned both the battlefield and his crown.

CHAPTER X. Effects of Victory

Three things can easily be distinguished here: the effect on the instrument itself, that is, on the generals and their armies; the effect on the states involved in the war; and the specific result of these effects as they appear in the later course of the campaign.

If we look only at the small difference that usually separates the victor from the defeated in the numbers killed, wounded, captured, and in artillery lost on the battlefield itself, the consequences that grow out of that slight advantage often seem almost impossible to understand. And yet, in most cases, they follow quite naturally.

We already said in the seventh chapter that the scale of a victory does not increase merely in proportion to the size of the defeated force, but at a greater rate. The moral effects of a great battle are stronger on the side of the defeated than on that of the victor. They lead to greater physical losses, which then react on morale, and the two go on reinforcing and intensifying each other. We must therefore give this moral effect special importance. It moves in opposite directions for the two sides. It weakens the energy of the defeated, while it raises the strength and spirit of the victor. But its main effect falls on the vanquished, because there it directly causes fresh losses. It is also of the same kind as danger, fatigue, hardship, and all the difficult conditions that surround war. So it joins forces with them and grows stronger through their support. For the victor, by contrast, these same things are like weights that make his courage swing higher. As a result, the defeated army falls much

farther below the original balance than the victor rises above it. For that reason, when we speak of the effects of victory, we are thinking especially of the effects that appear in the army. And if this effect is stronger in an important engagement than in a smaller one, it is far stronger in a great battle than in a minor one. A great battle is fought for its own sake—for the victory it is meant to bring, and which is pursued with the utmost effort. Here, on this ground, at this very hour, defeating the enemy is the point toward which the whole plan of the war, in all its threads, comes together. Here all distant hopes and all faint glimpses of the future meet. Here fate steps before us to answer the bold question. That is the state of mental tension not only for the commander but for the whole army, down to the lowest wagon-driver—less intense as it descends the ranks, no doubt, but also less important.

By its very nature, a great battle has never been a routine duty carried out blindly, without preparation or warning. It is a major event that, both in itself and because of the commander's purpose, rises above the mass of ordinary efforts and lifts everyone's tension to a higher pitch. And the higher that tension over the outcome, the more powerful the outcome's effect must be.

The moral effect of victory in our battles is also greater than it was in the earlier battles of modern military history. If these battles are what we have described them to be—a true struggle of forces pushed to the limit—then the total strength involved, both physical and moral, must decide more than any particular arrangement or mere chance.

A single mistake can be corrected the next time. Good luck and chance may also favor us more on another occasion. But the total of moral and physical strength cannot be changed so quickly. For that reason, what a victory has decided seems far more important for the future as a whole. Probably very few of those connected with battles, whether inside or outside the army, have ever reflected on this difference. Yet the course of the battle itself impresses this conviction on the minds of everyone present. And public accounts of the battle, however much they may distort particular details, still show the wider world, at least to some extent, that the causes were general rather than merely particular.

Anyone who has not been present at the loss of a great battle will find it hard to form a vivid or fully accurate idea of it, and abstract notions drawn from one or another minor mishap can never equal a true understanding of a lost battle. Let us pause for a moment over the picture.

The first thing that overwhelms the imagination—and really the understanding as well—is the shrinking of the forces. Then comes the loss of ground, which always happens to some extent and therefore affects the attacker too, unless he has been especially fortunate. Next comes the breaking of the original formation, the confusion of troops, and the dangers of retreat, which, with few exceptions, always appear in one degree or another. Then comes the retreat itself, most of which begins at night, or at least continues through the night. On this first march, we must immediately leave behind a number of men who are completely exhausted and scattered about—often the bravest men, those who were at the front of the fighting and

held out the longest. The sense of defeat, which on the battlefield had affected only the senior officers, now spreads through every rank, down to the common soldiers. It is made worse by the terrible thought that so many brave comrades—who only a moment before were so valuable to us in battle—must now be left in the enemy's hands. It is made worse again by a growing distrust of the commander, to whom every subordinate, to a greater or lesser extent, blames the useless efforts he has made. And this feeling of defeat is not some imagined impression that one might simply overcome. It is the plain truth that the enemy is stronger than we are. The reasons for that superiority may earlier have been so hidden that they could not be recognized. But in the outcome they become clear and unmistakable. Or perhaps they had already been suspected, but because there was no certainty, we had set against them the hope of chance, trust in good fortune, Providence, or a bold front. Now all of that has proved not enough, and the bitter truth confronts us with harsh authority.

All these feelings are very different from panic, which in an army strengthened by military discipline and courage never follows the loss of a battle, and in any other army does so only in exceptional cases. These feelings arise even in the best armies. Long experience of war, repeated victories, and strong confidence in a commander may lessen them somewhat in particular cases, but they are never completely absent at first. They are not simply the result of losing trophies. Those are usually lost later, and news of their loss does not spread so quickly. So these feelings will still appear even when the balance shifts in the slowest and most gradual way, and they

make up that effect of victory on which we can always rely in every case.

We have already said that the number of trophies increases this effect.

It is clear that an army in this condition, considered as an instrument, is weakened. How can we expect it, once reduced to this state—so that, as we said earlier, it finds new enemies in all the ordinary difficulties of war—to recover through fresh efforts what it has lost? Before the battle, there was a real or assumed balance between the two sides. That balance is gone, and some outside help is therefore needed to restore it. Any new effort without such external support can only lead to further losses.

So even the most moderate victory over the main army must tend to keep the balance sinking on the opponent's side until new external circumstances bring about a change. If such circumstances are not close at hand, and if the victor is an aggressive enemy who, hungry for glory, pursues great aims, then only a first-rate commander and, in the defeated army, a genuine military spirit hardened by many campaigns can stop the rising flood of success from overflowing all bounds. Only they can check its course through small but repeated acts of resistance, until the force of victory has spent itself at the limit of its advance.

Now consider what defeat does beyond the army itself, to the nation and the government. It brings a sudden collapse of hopes that had been stretched to their limit, and the loss of all self-confidence. Into the space left by those shattered

strengths rushes fear, which spreads destructively and completes the breakdown. It is a genuine shock to the nerves, like the electric jolt of victory felt by one of two athletes. The degree may vary, but the effect is never entirely absent. Instead of everyone hurrying forward with determination to help repair the disaster, each person fears that his efforts will be useless and pauses in hesitation when he ought to act at once; or, in despair, he lets his arm fall and leaves everything to fate.

The consequences that this effect of victory produces in the course of the war itself depend partly on the character and ability of the victorious general, but even more on the circumstances out of which the victory arises and into which it leads. Without boldness and an enterprising spirit in the commander, even the most brilliant victory will not produce great success, and its force will be spent all the more quickly if circumstances oppose it with strength and stubborn resistance. How differently Frederick the Great would have used the victory at Kollin than Daun did; and what different results France, instead of Prussia, might have drawn from a battle like Leuthen!

We will learn what conditions justify expecting great results from a great victory when we reach the subjects connected with them. Then it will be possible to explain the disproportion that at first glance seems to exist between the size of a victory and its results, and which people are only too ready to blame on a lack of energy in the conqueror. Here, where we are dealing with the great battle in itself, we will say only this: the effects just described always accompany victory. They increase with the intensity of the victory. They increase still more when the whole strength of the army has been concentrated in it, when

the whole military power of the nation is contained in that army, and when the state itself is bound up in that military power.

But this raises a question: must theory treat this effect of victory as absolutely inevitable? Or should it instead try to discover countermeasures that could offset it? At first, the obvious answer seems to be yes. But we should be careful not to fall into the common error of theory, where endless arguments for and against simply consume each other.

That effect is certainly necessary, because it is grounded in the nature of things, and it exists even when we find ways to resist it. A cannonball, for example, always moves in the direction of the earth's rotation, although if it is fired from east to west, that opposite motion cancels part of its overall velocity.

All war assumes human weakness and is directed against it.

So if, later on, we examine what can be done after losing a great battle; if we review the resources that still remain even in the most desperate situations; if we argue that everything may still be recovered even then, this should not be taken to mean that the effects of such a defeat can gradually be erased completely. The forces and means used to repair the disaster could have been used instead to achieve some positive aim, and this is true of both moral and physical forces.

Another question is whether the loss of a great battle may sometimes call new forces into being that otherwise would never have emerged. This is certainly possible, and in fact it has happened with many nations. But creating this intensified reaction lies beyond the scope of military art, which can only take it into account when it can reasonably be assumed as a

possibility.

If there are cases in which the results of a victory seem more destructive than beneficial because of the reaction of the forces it has stirred into action—and such cases are certainly very rare—then we must all the more readily admit that the effects of one and the same victory can differ according to the character of the people or state that has been conquered.

CHAPTER XI. The Use of the Battle

Whatever form warfare may take in particular cases, and whatever qualifications we may later have to admit as necessary: we need only look at the concept of war itself to be convinced of the following:

1. The destruction of the enemy's military force is the central principle of war and, in all positive action, the most direct path to the objective.

2. This destruction of the enemy's force must be achieved mainly through battle.

3. Only large, general battles can produce large results.

4. Those results are greatest when separate combats come together in one great battle.

5. Only in a great battle does the Commander-in-Chief command in person, and naturally he will trust his own judgment more than that of his subordinates.

From these truths follows a twofold law, whose two parts support each other: the destruction of the enemy's military force should be sought chiefly through great battles and their results; and the main purpose of great battles must be the destruction of the enemy's military force.

No doubt the principle of annihilation appears, to a greater or lesser extent, in other means as well. There are cases in which favorable circumstances in a minor combat have led to a

disproportionately great destruction of the enemy's forces (Maxen). On the other hand, in a battle, taking or holding a single position may at times be the most important objective. But as a general rule, one fundamental truth remains: battles are fought with a view to destroying the enemy's army, and that destruction can be achieved only through them.

The battle may therefore be seen as war in concentrated form, the focal point of effort in the whole war or campaign. Just as the sun's rays are gathered by a concave mirror into a single image at the height of their heat, so the forces and circumstances of war come together in the great battle for one concentrated, utmost effort.

Bringing forces together into one large whole—as happens to some degree in every war—shows an intention to deliver a decisive blow with that whole force, whether by choice as the attacker or under pressure from the other side as the defender. When that great blow does not come, it means some restraining or delaying motives have attached themselves to the original hostile impulse and have weakened, altered, or completely stopped the movement. Yet even in this state of mutual inaction, which has marked so many wars, the idea of a possible battle still serves both sides as a guide, a distant focal point in shaping their plans. The more war is war in the full sense—the more it is an outpouring of animosity and hostility, a mutual struggle to overpower the other—the more all activity tends toward deadly conflict, and the more central battle becomes.

In general, when the aim is great and concrete—one that deeply affects the enemy's interests—battle presents itself as the most

natural means. It is therefore also the best means, as we will show more clearly later. As a rule, when it is avoided out of fear of a decisive outcome, punishment follows.

A positive aim belongs to the offensive, and so battle is especially the attacker's instrument. But without examining the ideas of offense and defense more closely here, we should still note that in most cases the defender also has no other effective means of meeting the demands of the situation and solving the problem before him.

Battle is the bloodiest way to settle the issue. True, it is not simply mutual slaughter, and its effect lies more in destroying the enemy's courage than in killing the enemy's soldiers, as we will see more clearly in the next chapter. Still, blood is always its price, and slaughter is both its nature and its name;() and that is why the general's humanity recoils from it in horror. *

But a man's spirit trembles even more at the thought of a decision that must be made in a single stroke. At one point in space and time, all action is compressed into the present moment. At such a time, we dimly feel that our powers cannot fully unfold or come into play within so narrow a space, and we imagine that we would already have gained much simply by having more time, though time itself owes us nothing. This is pure illusion, but even an illusion has its force. The same weakness that seizes a man in every other momentous decision may be felt even more strongly by a General, when he must risk interests of such enormous weight on a single venture.

* "Schlacht," from schlachten = to slaughter.

For that reason, statesmen and generals have always tried to avoid a decisive battle. They have either sought to reach their objective without one, or quietly let that objective go. Historians and theorists then set themselves to finding, in some other feature of these campaigns, not only an equivalent to the decision that battle would have given, but even a superior kind of art. In this way, in our own age, people came very close to treating battle, within the whole economy of war, as an evil made necessary only by some mistake—a kind of unhealthy convulsion to which a proper, prudent system of war would never lead. According to this view, only those generals deserved laurels who knew how to wage war without bloodshed, and the theory of war—a true occupation for Brahmins—was to be directed especially toward teaching that lesson.

Contemporary history has destroyed this illusion,() but no one can guarantee that it will not return sooner or later and lead those in authority into distortions that appeal to human weakness and therefore fit all too easily with human nature. Perhaps, in time, Buonaparte's campaigns and battles will be regarded as nothing more than acts of barbarism and stupidity, and we will once again turn with satisfaction and confidence to the dress-sword of obsolete and dusty institutions and forms. If theory warns against this, then it performs a real service for those who listen to its voice. May we succeed in helping those in our dear native land who are called upon to speak with authority on these matters, so that we may guide them into this

field of inquiry and encourage them to examine the subject candidly.() *

Both the idea of war and actual experience lead us to expect a major decision only from a major battle. Since the earliest times, only great victories have produced great successes: on the offensive side in the absolute sense, and on the defensive side in a more or less satisfactory way. Even Buonaparte would never have seen the day of Ulm, remarkable as it was, if he had recoiled from bloodshed. That event should instead be seen as a second harvest from the victories of his earlier campaigns. It has not been only bold, reckless, and overconfident generals who have tried to finish their work through the great risk of a decisive battle. Successful generals have done the same. We may be content with the answer they have given to this great question.

Let us hear no more about generals who win without bloodshed. If bloody slaughter is a terrible sight, that is a reason to treat war with greater seriousness, not to keep dulling the sword we carry out of humanitarian feeling, little by little, until someone appears with a sharp one and cuts the arm from our body.

We regard a great battle as a main decision, but certainly not as the only one needed in a war or a campaign. Cases in which a great battle has decided an entire campaign have been common only in modern times. Cases in which one has decided an entire

* Only on the Continent does it still remain fully alive in the minds of British politicians and journalists.—EDITOR. (**) This prayer was granted in full—see the German victories of 1870.—EDITOR.

war belong among rare exceptions. *

How a general can increase its importance in the first respect is obvious in itself, and we will only add that the more important the great battle is, the more issues are decided along with it. For that reason, generals who trusted in themselves and favored great decisions have always found ways to bring most of their troops into it without, at the same time, neglecting essential points elsewhere.

The consequences—or, more accurately, the effectiveness—of a victory depend mainly on four factors:

1. The tactical formation adopted as the order of battle.

2. The nature of the terrain.

3. The relative proportions of the three arms.

4. The relative strength of the two armies.

A battle fought on parallel fronts, with no attack on a flank, will rarely produce results as great as one in which the defeated army has been outflanked or forced to change front to some degree. In broken or hilly country, success is also more limited, because the force of the blow is weaker everywhere.

If the cavalry of the defeated side is equal to or stronger than that of the victor, the effects of the pursuit are reduced, and with that a large part of the fruits of victory is lost.

* This was Moltke's central idea in his preparations for the War of 1870. See his secret memorandum issued to G.O.C.s on May 7, 1870, which identifies a battle on the Upper Saar as his primary objective.—EDITOR.

Finally, it is easy to see that if the conqueror has superior numbers on his side, and uses that advantage to turn his opponent's flank or force him to change front, the results will be greater than if the conqueror had been weaker in numbers than the defeated army. The battle of Leuthen may certainly be cited as a practical refutation of this principle, but we ask leave, for once, to say something we do not usually like to say: there is no rule without an exception.

In all these ways, then, the commander has the means to give his battle a decisive character. He certainly exposes himself to greater danger by doing so, but his whole course of action is subject to that dynamic law of the moral world.

There is nothing in war that can compare in importance with a great battle, and the highest strategic skill is shown in preparing the means for this great event, in judging place and time and the direction of troops with skill, and in making good use of success.

But the importance of these matters does not mean they must be highly complicated or obscure. What is involved here is actually fairly simple, and the skill of combining things is not especially great. What is needed, however, is quick judgment in changing circumstances, energy, firm resolve, and a youthful spirit of daring—heroic qualities to which we will often return. So there is little here that books can teach, and much that, if it can be taught at all, must reach the General through some means other than the printed page.

The drive toward a great battle, and the deliberate, confident advance toward it, must come from a sense of natural strength

and a clear understanding of necessity. In other words, it must arise from inborn courage and from judgment sharpened by contact with the higher interests of life.

Great examples are the best teachers. But it is certainly unfortunate when a cloud of theoretical prejudice comes between them and us, because even sunlight is bent and colored by clouds. It is theory's urgent duty to destroy such prejudices, which so often arise and spread like a miasma, for the distorted offspring of human reason can in turn be destroyed by reason in its pure form.

CHAPTER XII. Strategic Means of Utilising Victory

The harder task—fully preparing a victory—is quiet work whose credit belongs to Strategy, though it is rarely praised enough. Strategy appears brilliant and glorious when it makes effective use of a victory that has already been won.

What the particular aim of a battle may be, how it connects to the whole structure of a war, where the course of victory may lead depending on circumstances, and where its culminating point lies—these are matters we will not take up until later. But in every possible case, one fact remains true: without pursuit, no victory can have a great effect. And no matter how short the course of victory may be, it must always go beyond the first steps of pursuit. To avoid repeating this point again and again, we will pause here to look briefly at this necessary complement of victory in general.

The pursuit of a defeated army begins the moment that army abandons the fight and leaves its position. Any earlier movement in one direction or another is not part of the pursuit; it still belongs to the course of the battle itself. At that moment, even when victory is certain, it is usually still limited and fragile. It would not count as any major positive gain unless it were followed by pursuit on the first day. As we have said before, that is usually when the tangible results that give victory real substance begin to be collected. We will speak next about this pursuit.

Usually, both sides enter battle with their physical strength already badly worn down, because the movements just before it are often driven by extreme urgency. The effort required to bring on a major battle finishes that exhaustion. As a result, the winning side is often almost as disordered and far from its original formation as the losing side. It therefore needs time to reorganize, gather stragglers, and issue fresh ammunition to those who have run out. All this puts the victor into the very state of crisis we have already described. If the defeated force is only a detached part of the enemy's army, or if it can expect substantial reinforcements, then the victor may easily face the obvious danger of paying dearly for the victory. In such a case, that consideration quickly brings pursuit to an end, or at least sharply limits it. Even when there is no reason to fear a major increase in the enemy's strength, the victor still finds a strong check on the energy of pursuit in these same circumstances. There is no danger that the victory itself will be taken away, but unfavorable engagements are still possible, and they may reduce the advantages gained so far. Moreover, at this moment the full weight of everything physical in an army—its needs and weaknesses—depends on the commander's will. The thousands under his command all need rest and refreshment, and they long for at least a temporary end to exertion and danger. Only a few, as exceptions, can see and feel beyond the present moment. Only among that small number is there enough mental strength, once the immediate necessities have been dealt with, to think about results which, at such a moment, appear to everyone else as mere ornaments of victory—as a luxury of triumph. Yet all these thousands have a voice in the general's council, because through the different levels of the military

hierarchy, the interests of physical human nature are reliably carried into the commander's mind. He himself, worn down in body and spirit, is also more or less weakened in his natural energy. So it happens that, mostly for these reasons, which arise simply from human nature, less is done than might have been done. And what is done must generally be credited entirely to the commander-in-chief's thirst for glory, his energy, and indeed his hardness of heart. Only in this way can we explain the hesitant manner in which many generals pursue a victory that superior numbers have given them. We generally limit the first pursuit of the enemy to the first day, including the night after the victory. At the end of that period, our own need for rest requires a halt in any case.

This first kind of pursuit has several natural levels.

The first is when only cavalry is used. In that case, the pursuit usually serves more to harass and observe the enemy than to press him seriously, because even a small obstacle in the terrain is often enough to stop it. Cavalry can be very useful against isolated groups of broken, demoralized troops. But when it faces the main body of a defeated army, it again becomes only a supporting arm, because the retreating force can use fresh reserves to cover its movement. Then, at the next minor obstacle in the ground, by bringing all arms together, it can successfully make a stand. The only exception is when an army is in full flight and completely disintegrated.

The second level is when the pursuit is carried out by a strong advance guard made up of all arms, though naturally with cavalry forming the larger part. A pursuit of this kind usually

drives the enemy as far as the nearest strong position for his rear guard, or the next position that offers enough room for his army. Since neither is usually available at once, the pursuit can often be pushed farther. In general, however, it does not go beyond one or at most two leagues, because beyond that the advance guard would no longer feel adequately supported. The third and most forceful level is when the victorious army itself keeps advancing for as long as its physical strength allows. In that case, the beaten army will usually abandon the ordinary positions the country offers at the mere appearance of an attack, or even of an intention to turn its flank. The rear guard will be even less likely to put up stubborn resistance.

In all three cases, if night falls before the whole action is over, it usually brings it to an end. The few cases in which this has not happened, and the pursuit has continued through the night, must be regarded as exceptionally vigorous pursuits.

If we remember that fighting at night leaves much to chance, and that any battle inevitably disrupts an army's normal order and cohesion by the end, it is easy to understand why both generals are reluctant to continue under such unfavorable conditions. Unless the defeated army has completely fallen apart, or the victorious army has an unusually great superiority in military quality, the outcome is left largely to fate. That can never be in anyone's interest, not even that of the most reckless general. As a rule, then, night brings pursuit to an end, even when the battle has been decided only shortly before darkness falls. This gives the defeated side either time to rest and rally at once or, if it retreats during the night, a head start on the march. After this pause, the defeated army is clearly in a better

position. Much that had fallen into confusion has been put back in order, ammunition has been replenished, and the whole force has been reorganized. Any further clash with the enemy is now a new battle, not a continuation of the old one. And although it may still offer little promise of complete success, it is a fresh engagement, not simply the victor gathering up the debris.

When, therefore, the victor can keep up the pursuit through the night, even if only with a strong advance guard made up of all branches of the service, the effect of the victory is enormously increased. The battles of Leuthen and La Belle Alliance() are examples of this. *

This pursuit is mainly tactical in character, and we discuss it here only to make clear how much it can change the effect of a victory.

This first stage of pursuit, up to the nearest stopping point, belongs by right to every victor. It is barely connected to his later plans and combinations. Those later plans may greatly reduce the positive results of a victory won by the main army, but they cannot prevent this first use of the victory. At least, if such cases are possible at all, they must be so rare that they should have no real effect on theory. Here, modern wars clearly open up an entirely new field for energetic action. Earlier wars rested on a narrower foundation and were much more limited in scope. As a result, they were burdened by many unnecessary conventional restraints, especially on this point. Generals were so taken with the idea of the honour of victory that they treated it as far more important than the complete destruction of the

* Waterloo.

enemy's military force. In practice, they saw the destruction of that force as only one of many means in war, not as the main one, still less as the only one. So they were all the more ready to sheathe the sword the moment the enemy lowered his. To them, nothing seemed more natural than to stop the fighting as soon as the decision had been reached and to regard any further bloodshed as needless cruelty. Even when this mistaken philosophy did not fully determine their decisions, it still shaped their thinking. Because of it, claims about total exhaustion and the physical impossibility of continuing the struggle were more easily accepted and carried more weight. Of course, preserving one's own instrument of victory is a vital concern if that is the only one we possess, and if we can foresee a time when it may not be enough for everything still left to do. Every continued offensive must, in the end, lead to complete exhaustion. But this calculation was still mistaken, because the additional losses caused by continuing the pursuit could never be proportional to the losses the enemy would suffer. That view, then, could only exist because military forces were not regarded as the decisive factor. So we find that in earlier wars only true heroes—such as Charles XII, Marlborough, Eugene, and Frederick the Great—followed up decisive victories with a vigorous pursuit. Other generals usually contented themselves with holding the battlefield. In modern times, the greater energy brought into the conduct of war by the greater importance of the circumstances from which these wars have arisen has swept away these conventional barriers. Pursuit has become a matter of the highest importance for the victor. For that reason, trophies have greatly increased in scale. And although there are also cases in modern warfare where this has not happened, they belong

among the exceptions and must be explained by special circumstances.

At Gorschen() and Bautzen, only the superior allied cavalry kept the fighting from turning into a complete rout. At Gross Beeren and Dennewitz, it was Bernadotte's hostility—the Crown Prince of Sweden—that prevented it. At Laon, the deciding factor was Blücher's weakened physical condition: he was then seventy years old and, at that moment, confined to a dark room because of an injury to his eyes. *

But Borodino also helps make the point here, and we cannot resist adding a few more words about it. We do so partly because we do not think the circumstances can be explained simply by blaming Buonaparte, and partly because it might otherwise seem as though this case, along with many similar ones, belonged to that extremely rare class we have identified: cases in which the broader situation grips and restrains the General from the very start of the battle. French writers in particular, especially strong admirers of Buonaparte such as Vaudancourt, Chambray, and Ségur, have blamed him outright for not driving the Russian Army completely from the field and using his last reserves to break it apart. They argue that, had he done so, what was merely a lost battle would have become a total rout. To describe the exact position of the two Armies would take us too far afield, but one fact is clear. When Buonaparte crossed the Niemen with his Army, the same corps that later fought at Borodino numbered 300,000 men; by this point, only 120,000 remained. He therefore had good reason to

* Gorschen or Lutzen, May 2, 1813; Gross Beeren and Dennewitz, August 22, 1813; Bautzen, May 22, 1913; Laon, March 10, 1813.

fear that he would not have enough left to march on Moscow, the point on which everything seemed to depend. The victory he had just won gave him almost complete confidence that he would take that capital, since it seemed highly unlikely that the Russians would be able to fight a second battle within eight days. And in Moscow he hoped to find peace. No doubt the complete destruction of the Russian Army would have made that peace far more certain. Even so, the first priority was to reach Moscow—that is, to reach it with a force large enough to make him appear master of the capital, and through it of the Empire and the Government. The force he actually brought to Moscow was already no longer sufficient for that, as later events showed. It would have been even less sufficient if, in breaking up the Russian Army, he had broken up his own as well. Buonaparte understood all this perfectly, and in our view he was entirely justified. But that still does not place this case among those in which the general situation prevents the General from following up his victory, because in his case there was never any question of simple pursuit. The victory had been decided by four o'clock in the afternoon, but the Russians still held most of the battlefield. They were not yet ready to give up the ground, and if the attack had been renewed, they would still have resisted with the utmost determination. That would no doubt have ended in their complete defeat, but it would also have cost the victor much more blood. We must therefore count the Battle of Borodino among battles that, like Bautzen, were left unfinished. At Bautzen, the defeated army chose to leave the field sooner. At Borodino, the victor chose to be satisfied with a half victory—not because the outcome seemed uncertain, but because he was not wealthy enough to pay the price for the

whole.

Returning to our subject, the conclusion we draw about the first stage of pursuit is this: the energy put into it largely determines the value of the victory. This pursuit is a second phase of the victory, and in many cases it matters even more than the first. Here strategy comes close to tactics in order to gather the fruits of success, and it exercises its first act of authority by insisting that the victory be completed in this way.

But the effects of victory rarely end with this first pursuit. It is only now that the real course begins, the one to which victory gave momentum. As we have already said, this course depends on other factors that it is not yet time to discuss. Still, we must mention the general features of pursuit here, so that we do not have to repeat them when the subject comes up again.

In the later stages of pursuit, we can again distinguish three degrees: simple pursuit, hard pursuit, and a parallel march to intercept.

For example, instead of merely moving each day into the camp the enemy has just left and occupying only as much territory as he chooses to give up, we can arrange matters so that we push farther forward every day. With an advance guard organized for that purpose, we can attack his rear guard whenever it tries to stop. This will speed up his retreat and, as a result, increase his disorder. It does so mainly by turning the retreat into something like continuous flight. Nothing weighs more heavily on a soldier than hearing the enemy’s guns again just when, after a forced march, he is trying to rest. If that strain continues day after day for some time, it may end in a complete rout. It constantly

reminds him that he is forced to submit to the enemy's will and is unable to offer resistance, and that awareness can only seriously damage an army's morale. The effect of pressing the enemy in this way reaches its highest point when it forces him into night marches. If the victor drives the beaten opponent from a camp at sunset, just after it has been occupied either by the army's main body or by the rear guard, the defeated side must either march through the night or shift its position during the night by retreating still farther, which amounts to much the same thing. The victorious side, on the other hand, can spend the night in peace.

In this case, the way marches are arranged and positions are chosen also depends on many other factors—especially the army's supply situation, major natural obstacles in the terrain, large towns, and so on. So it would be pointless pedantry to try to prove through geometric analysis how a pursuer, because he can dictate terms to a retreating enemy, can force that enemy to march at night while he himself rests. Even so, it is both true and practical that a pursuit can be planned in ways that produce this result, and that doing so greatly increases its effectiveness. If this is seldom done in practice, it is because such a method is harder for the pursuing army than simply sticking to ordinary daytime marches. It is far easier to set out early in the morning, make camp at midday, spend the rest of the day taking care of the army's usual needs, and use the night for rest. It is much less convenient to time one's movements exactly to the enemy's, to postpone decisions until the last moment, to march sometimes in the morning and sometimes in the evening, to remain for hours in the enemy's presence while exchanging

cannon fire and skirmishing shots, and to plan maneuvers to outflank him—in short, to employ all the tactical means that such a course requires. All this naturally places a heavy burden on the pursuing army, and in war, where there are already so many burdens to bear, men are always inclined to cast off those that do not seem absolutely necessary. These observations apply equally whether we are speaking of a whole army or, as is more often the case, of a strong advance guard. For the reasons just given, this second method of pursuit—this constant pressure on the retreating enemy—is comparatively rare. Even Buonaparte, in his Russian campaign of 1812, made little use of it, for the obvious reason that the difficulties and hardships of that campaign already threatened to destroy his army before it could reach its objective. In their other campaigns, however, the French also distinguished themselves by their energy in this respect.

Lastly, the third and most effective form of pursuit is the parallel march toward the immediate objective of the retreat.

Every defeated army will naturally have some point behind it, nearer or farther away, that becomes its first objective. This may be a place it must reach because, if it fails to do so, its further retreat could be cut off, as at a defile. Or it may be important to reach the place before the enemy because of the place itself, as with a great city, magazines, and the like. Or, finally, it may be a point where the army gains new defensive strength, such as a strong position or a junction with other corps.

Now if the victor marches on this point by a side road, it is clear how this can speed up the retreat of the beaten army in a ruinous way, turning it into haste and perhaps even into flight.() The defeated side has only three ways to counter this. The first is to throw itself in front of the enemy and, by a sudden attack, recover some chance of success that it has generally lost because of its position. This plainly requires a bold, enterprising general and an excellent army—beaten, but not completely broken. It can therefore be used by a defeated army only in very few cases. *

The second way is to speed up the retreat. But that is exactly what the victor wants, and it easily drives the troops to excessive exertion, causing enormous losses in stragglers, broken guns, and carriages of every kind.

The third option is to make a detour and go around the nearest point where the enemy might cut you off. That lets the army march more comfortably at a greater distance from the enemy, and makes the required speed less exhausting. But this last option is the worst of all. It usually works out like a new debt taken on by someone already bankrupt, and it leads to even greater difficulties. There are cases in which this course is wise. In others, nothing else is possible. There are also times when it has succeeded. But in general, it is certainly true that commanders choose it less because they are clearly convinced it is the surest way to reach their objective than because of

* Von Bernhardi discusses this point exceptionally well in his “Cavalry in Future Wars.” London: Murray, 1906.

another, unacceptable motive: fear of meeting the enemy. Woe to the commander who yields to that fear. No matter how much the spirit of his army has declined, and no matter how justified his concern may be that it will be at a disadvantage in battle, the situation will only grow worse if he tries too anxiously to avoid every possible clash. In 1813, Buonaparte would never have brought the 30,000 or 40,000 men who remained after the battle of Hanau across the Rhine if he had avoided that battle and tried to cross at Mannheim or Coblenz instead. It is precisely through small engagements, carefully prepared and skillfully carried out, in which the defeated army is on the defensive and therefore always has the help of the terrain—it is through these that the army's moral strength can first be restored. *

The value of even the smallest successes is astonishing. But for most generals, following this approach demands a great deal of self-control. The alternative—avoiding every engagement—seems much easier at first, so commanders are naturally drawn to it. Yet this policy of evasion usually serves the pursuer's purpose best, and it often ends in the complete ruin of the force being chased. We should remember, however, that we are speaking here of an entire army, not of a single division that has been cut off and is trying to rejoin the main army by taking a détour. In that case, the circumstances are different, and success is not uncommon. But one condition is necessary if this race between two corps toward the same objective is to succeed: a division of the pursuing army must

* At Hanau (October 30, 1813), the Bavarians, about 50,000 strong, blocked Napoleon's line of retreat from Leipsic. By using their artillery with great skill, the French split the Bavarians apart and marched forward over their bodies.—EDITOR.

follow along the very road taken by the retreating force. It must gather up stragglers and maintain the pressure that the enemy's presence always creates. Blücher failed to do this in his pursuit after La Belle Alliance, though in other respects that pursuit was beyond reproach.

CHAPTER XIII. Retreat After a Lost Battle

When an army loses a battle, its strength is broken—its morale even more than its physical force. Unless new and favorable circumstances arise, a second battle would lead to total defeat, perhaps even destruction. That is a basic military principle. In the usual course of events, the retreat continues until the balance of forces is restored, whether through reinforcements, the protection of strong fortresses, strong defensive ground provided by the country, or a division of the enemy's forces. The size of the losses, the scale of the defeat, and even more the character of the enemy, determine how soon that balance returns or how long it is delayed. There are many cases in which a beaten army has rallied again only a short distance away, even though its situation had not changed at all since the battle. This can be explained either by the enemy's weakness of spirit or by the fact that the advantage won in battle was not great enough to leave a lasting effect.

To take advantage of this weakness or mistake by the enemy, to give up not an inch more than circumstances absolutely require, and above all to keep morale as strong as possible, a retreat must be slow, must offer constant resistance, and must strike back boldly and courageously whenever the enemy tries to gain too much. The retreats of great generals and of armies hardened by war have always been like the retreat of a wounded lion. That, without doubt, is also the soundest theory.

It is true that, when leaving a dangerous position, we have often seen minor formalities observed that wasted time and therefore increased the danger, even though in such situations everything depends on getting out quickly. Experienced generals regard this as a very important rule. But such cases must not be confused with a general retreat after a lost battle. Anyone who thinks that a few rapid marches will give him a lead and make it easier to regain a firm position is making a serious mistake. The first movements should be as limited as possible, and as a general rule we should not let the enemy dictate our actions. This rule cannot be followed without hard fighting against an enemy pressing on our heels, but the advantage is worth the cost. Without it, we fall into an ever faster pace that soon becomes a headlong flight, and in stragglers alone costs more men than rear-guard actions, while also destroying the last remains of the will to resist.

A strong rear guard made up of selected troops, led by the bravest general, and supported by the whole army at critical moments; careful use of the terrain; strong ambushes wherever the enemy advance guard's boldness and the ground create an opportunity; in short, preparation and a system of regular small battles—these are the means of following this principle.

The difficulties of a retreat are naturally greater or less depending on whether the battle was fought under more or less favourable circumstances, and on whether it was contested with more or less stubbornness. The battles of Jena and La Belle-Alliance show how impossible anything like an orderly retreat can become if the last man is exhausted against a powerful enemy.

From time to time, people have suggested that an army should split up when retreating, and therefore fall back in separate divisions or even in diverging directions. We are not talking here about a separation made purely for convenience, where united action still remains possible and is still intended. Any other kind of division is extremely dangerous. It goes against the nature of the situation and is therefore a serious mistake. Every lost battle leaves an army weakened and disordered. The first and most urgent need is to concentrate, and through concentration to restore order, courage, and confidence. The idea of harassing the enemy with separate corps on both flanks at the very moment when he is pressing his victory is completely unnatural. A timid, overly theoretical commander might be intimidated in that way, and in such a case the method might work. But unless we are sure our opponent has that weakness, it is better not to attempt it. If the strategic situation after a battle requires us to protect ourselves on the right and left with detachments, then that must be done to the extent circumstances make unavoidable. But this splitting of forces must always be regarded as an evil, and we are rarely in a condition to begin it on the very day after the battle itself. *

When Frederick the Great, after the battle of Kollin and the lifting of the siege of Prague, retreated in three columns, he did so not by choice but because the position of his forces, and the need to cover Saxony, left him no other option. After the battle of Brienne, Buonaparte sent Marmont back to the Aube, while he himself crossed the Seine and turned toward Troyes. But the only reason this did not end in disaster was that the Allies,

* This refers to the works of Lloyd, Bülow, and others.

instead of pursuing him, divided their own forces in the same way. One part, under Blücher, turned toward the Marne, while the other, under Schwartzenberg, advanced with excessive caution because it feared being too weak.

CHAPTER XIV. Night Fighting

How a battle is fought at night, and the details of how it unfolds, belongs to tactics. Here we consider it only insofar as, taken as a whole, it appears as a distinct strategic means.

At bottom, every night attack is just a more intense form of surprise. At first glance, that kind of attack seems especially advantageous. We imagine the enemy caught off guard, while the attacker is naturally ready for anything that might happen. What a striking imbalance that seems to be. The imagination pictures total confusion on one side, and on the other an attacker doing nothing but collecting the rewards of that advantage. That is why people who do not have to lead such attacks, and bear no responsibility for them, are always inventing plans for night attacks, even though in reality such attacks rarely happen.

All these ideal plans rest on the assumption that the attacker knows the defender's arrangements, because they were made and announced beforehand and could not have escaped notice during reconnaissance and inquiry. At the same time, they assume that the attacker's own measures, taken only at the moment of execution, cannot be known to the enemy. But the second point is not always true, and the first is even less so. Unless we are close enough to the enemy to keep him constantly in view, as the Austrians had Frederick the Great before the battle of Hochkirch in 1758, whatever we know about his position will always be incomplete. It comes from reconnaissance, patrols, reports from prisoners, and spies—sources that can never be fully trusted, because

intelligence gathered in that way is always somewhat out of date, and the enemy's position may have changed in the meantime. Moreover, under the tactics and camping methods of earlier times, it was much easier than it is now to examine the enemy's position. A line of tents is far easier to make out than a line of huts or a bivouac. An encampment drawn up fully and regularly in a front line is also easier to read than one made up of Divisions formed in columns, which is a method often used now. We may have the ground on which a Division is bivouacked in that way completely in view, and still be unable to form any accurate idea of its position.

But the defender's position, by itself, is not all we need to consider. The measures he can take during the fighting are just as important, and they are by no means limited to firing at random. These measures also make night attacks harder in modern wars than they were before, because in these campaigns they offer an advantage over preparations already made. In our wars, the defender's position is more temporary than fixed, and for that reason he is better able to surprise his opponent with unexpected blows than he was formerly.() *

Therefore, what the attacker knows about the defense before a night attack is seldom, if ever, enough to make up for the lack of direct observation.

But the defender also has another small advantage: he is more familiar than the attacker with the ground that makes up his position. Like someone in his own room, he can find his way

* All these difficulties obviously increase as the greater power of weapons forces the combatants to remain farther apart.—EDITOR.

around it in the dark more easily than a stranger can. He knows better where each part of his force is located, and so he can reach it more readily than his opponent can.

From this it follows that, in a night engagement, the attacker misses the use of his eyes just as much as the defender does. Therefore, only special reasons can make a night attack advisable.

These reasons usually arise in connection with subordinate parts of an army, and only rarely with the army as a whole. It follows that, as a rule, a night attack can take place only in secondary engagements, and only seldom in great battles.

We can attack part of the enemy's army with a much stronger force and surround it, aiming either to capture the whole body or to inflict very heavy losses through an uneven fight, if other conditions are also in our favor. But a plan like this can succeed only through a major surprise, because no isolated part of the enemy's army would willingly stay in such an unequal fight; it would withdraw instead. And, except in rare cases in very confined terrain, a surprise on an important scale can be achieved only at night. So if we want to take advantage of the faulty position of part of the enemy's army in this way, we must use the night at least to complete the preliminary movements, even if the fighting itself does not begin until near daybreak. That is exactly what happens in small night operations against outposts and other minor detachments. The essential point is always to use superior numbers and to get around the enemy's position, so as to trap him unexpectedly in such a disadvantageous fight that he cannot break away without heavy

loss.

The larger the force being attacked, the harder the operation becomes, because a strong body has greater resources of its own and can keep up the fight long enough for help to arrive.

For that reason, in ordinary circumstances, the whole of the enemy's army can never be the target of such an attack. Although it cannot expect help from outside, it still contains within itself enough strength to repel attacks from several directions, especially in our own day, when everyone is prepared from the outset for this very common form of attack. Whether the enemy can successfully attack us from several sides usually depends on conditions quite different from mere surprise. Without discussing those conditions here, we need only note that turning an enemy involves both great opportunities and great dangers. Therefore, unless special circumstances apply, nothing justifies it except a very great superiority—the same kind of superiority we would employ against only a part of the enemy's army.

But surrounding and cutting off a small part of the enemy—especially at night—is also more feasible for another reason. Whatever we commit to the attempt, and however strong the force we use, it will probably still be only a limited part of our army. We can risk that more readily than we can risk the whole army on a major gamble. Besides, the larger part, or perhaps the entire army, remains available to support the force committed and to serve as a rallying point for it, which greatly reduces the danger of the operation.

Not only the risk, but also the difficulty of carrying them out, limits night operations to small forces. Surprise is their true essence, and a stealthy approach is the main condition for success. But that is easier with small bodies than with large ones, and for the columns of a whole army it is rarely possible. For that reason, such operations are generally aimed only at single outposts, and can be practical against larger bodies only if those bodies lack adequate outposts, as with Frederick the Great at Hochkirch.(). In the future, this will happen less often to armies themselves than to smaller divisions.

In recent times, when war has been conducted with much greater speed and energy, armies have often ended up encamped very close to one another without maintaining a very strong outpost system, because such situations have usually arisen at the crisis just before a major decision.

But at such moments, both sides are also more fully prepared for battle. In earlier wars, by contrast, armies often camped within sight of each other when their only aim was to keep one another in check, and they did so for longer periods. Frederick the Great, for example, often stood so near the Austrians for weeks that the two sides might have exchanged cannon fire.

But these practices, which certainly made night attacks more favorable, have disappeared in later times. Armies are no longer self-contained bodies, independent in matters of supply and camp requirements, and so they usually need to keep about a day’s march between themselves and the enemy. If we focus specifically on a night attack by an army, it follows that strong reasons for it will arise only rarely, and that such cases fall into

one or another of the following classes.

1. An unusually high level of carelessness or boldness, which happens only rarely and, when it does, is offset by a much greater strength of morale.

2. Panic in the enemy's army, or more generally such clear superiority in morale on our side that it can make up for the lack of direction in action.

3. Breaking through a stronger enemy army that has us surrounded, because everything here depends on surprise, and the limited aim of simply forcing a passage allows a much greater concentration of forces.

4. Finally, in desperate situations, when our forces are so inferior to the enemy's that we can see no chance of success except through extraordinary boldness.

But in all these cases, one condition still remains: the enemy's army must be in full view and not protected by any advance guard.

For the rest, most night battles are conducted so that they end in daylight. Only the approach and the initial attack take place under cover of darkness, because in that way the attacker can make better use of the confusion into which he throws his opponent. Engagements of this kind that do not begin until daybreak, and in which the night is used only for the approach, should not be counted as night battles.

BOOK V MILITARY FORCES

CHAPTER I. General Plan

We shall consider military forces in the following ways:

1. In terms of their numerical strength and organization.

2. In their condition apart from actual fighting.

3. In relation to their maintenance; and finally,

4. In their general relationship to the country and the terrain.

We shall therefore devote this book to matters belonging to an army that fall only under the necessary conditions of fighting, but do not make up the fighting itself. These matters are connected with combat to varying degrees and in turn affect it, so they must often appear when we consider how combat is applied. But we must first examine each one on its own, as a whole, in its essential character and distinctive features.

CHAPTER II. Theatre of War, Army, Campaign

The subject itself does not allow a fully satisfactory definition of these three factors, which stand for space, mass, and time in war. Still, to avoid being misunderstood, we must try to make the usual meaning of these terms somewhat clearer. In most cases, that is the sense in which we will use them.

1.—Theatre of War.

Properly speaking, this term means a part of the overall area in which war is being fought that has protected boundaries and therefore a certain degree of independence. That protection may come from fortresses, from major natural obstacles in the terrain, or simply from being separated by a considerable distance from the rest of the region involved in the war. Such an area is not just one piece of a larger whole, but a smaller whole complete in itself. As a result, it is more or less in a condition where changes in other parts of the seat of war affect it only indirectly, not directly. To make this clearer, we may imagine that an advance is taking place in this area while a retreat is happening elsewhere, or that one army is acting on the defensive here while an offensive is being carried on in another quarter. A definition this precise cannot be applied universally; it is used here only to mark the line of distinction.

2.—Army.

Once we have the idea of a Theatre of War, it is easy to say what an army is: in the strict sense, it is the mass of troops within the same Theatre of War. But that plainly does not cover everything the term usually means. In 1815, Blücher and Wellington each commanded a separate army, even though both were in the same Theatre of War. So chief command is another mark that helps define the idea of an army. At the same time, this mark is closely connected with the first one, because where things are well organized, there should be only one supreme command in a Theatre of War, and the commander-in-chief in a particular Theatre of War should always have a corresponding degree of independence.

The sheer number of troops in a force matters less here than it might seem at first. When several armies operate under a single command and in the same theatre of war, they are called armies not because of their size, but because of the relationships and organization that existed before the war began (for example, in 1813, the Silesian Army and the Army of the North). Even if we divided a large body of troops that was meant to stay in the same theatre into corps, we would not divide it into separate armies; at least, doing so would go against the meaning generally attached to the term. On the other hand, it would clearly be pedantic to call every independent band of irregular troops in some distant province an army. Still, it is worth noting that no one finds it strange to speak of the Army of the Vendeans in the Revolutionary War, even though it was not much stronger.

As a rule, then, the ideas of an army and a theatre of war belong together and imply one another.

3.—Campaign.

Although people sometimes use the word campaign to mean the total of all military events that take place in every theatre of war during a single year, it is more common, and more accurate, to use it for events in one single theatre of war. It is even more misleading to tie the idea of a campaign to the period of one year, because wars no longer naturally divide themselves into yearly campaigns separated by long, fixed stays in winter quarters. Still, events within a theatre of war naturally fall into major sections. For example, the direct effects of a greater or lesser catastrophe may come to an end, and new combinations may begin to develop. These natural divisions must therefore be taken into account when assigning to each year, or campaign, its full share of events. No one would end the campaign of 1812 at Memel, where the armies stood on the 1st of January, and then assign the French retreat that continued until they recrossed the Elbe to the campaign of 1813, since that further retreat was plainly just part of the whole retreat from Moscow.

It does not matter that we cannot make these ideas any more precise, because they are not meant to serve as philosophical definitions on which any propositions are based. They are only meant to make our language a little clearer and more exact.

CHAPTER III. Relation of Power

In the eighth chapter of the third book, we discussed the value of superior numbers in battle, and from that follows the general advantage of numerical superiority in strategy. That establishes the importance of relative strength. We will now add a few more detailed observations on the subject.

An impartial study of modern military history leads to the conclusion that numerical superiority is becoming more decisive every day. The principle of concentrating the greatest possible numbers for a decisive battle may therefore be regarded as more important than ever.

In every age, courage and the spirit of an army have increased its physical power, and they will continue to do so in the future. But history also shows that, at certain times, superiority in organization and equipment has given an army a great moral advantage. At other times, a great superiority in mobility has had the same effect. In one period, a new system of tactics comes to light; in another, the art of war develops through efforts to use terrain skillfully according to broad principles, and in this way one general here and there gains great advantages over another. But even this tendency has disappeared, and wars now proceed in a simpler and more natural way. If we set aside preconceived ideas and look at the experience of recent wars, we must admit that there is little sign of any of these influences, either across an entire campaign or in engagements of a decisive kind—that is, the great battle, a term we discussed in the second chapter of the preceding book.

In our time, armies are so nearly equal in weapons, equipment, and training that there is no striking difference between the best and the worst in these respects. Some difference can still be seen because the technical branches are better taught in some armies than in others. But in general, this means only that one army invents and introduces improved methods or tools, and the other quickly copies them. Even subordinate generals and the commanders of corps and divisions usually think and act in much the same way in everything that falls within their responsibilities. So, apart from the talent of the commander-in-chief—which depends entirely on chance and has no fixed connection to the general level of education among the people or the army—nothing but familiarity with war can now give one army a clear advantage over another. And the closer all these things come to equality, the more decisive numerical strength becomes.

The nature of modern battles follows from this general equality. Take the battle of Borodino, for example, where the first army in the world, the French, tested its strength against the Russian army, which in many parts of its organization and in the training of its specialized branches might have been considered the most backward. Yet in the whole battle there is not a single sign of superior skill or intelligence. It is simply a test of strength between the two armies from beginning to end. And since they were nearly equal in that respect, the result could only be a gradual shift in favor of the side whose commander showed greater energy and whose troops had more experience in war. We have chosen this battle as an example because it also involved a degree of numerical equality on both sides that is

rarely found.

We do not claim that every battle is exactly like this, but it shows the prevailing character of most of them.

In a battle where the two sides test each other's strength slowly and methodically, a surplus of force on one side makes victory far more certain. In fact, if we look through modern military history, we do not find a battle in which an army defeated another army twice its size, though that was by no means uncommon in earlier times. Buonaparte, the greatest general of modern times, won all his great battles—except Dresden in 1813—only after bringing together an army that outnumbered his opponent's, or was at least only slightly smaller. When he could not do that, as at Leipsic, Brienne, Laon, and Belle-Alliance, he was defeated.

In strategy, total strength is generally a fixed quantity that the commander cannot change. But that does not mean a war cannot be fought with a clearly inferior force. War is not always a voluntary act of state policy, and this is least true when the two sides are very unequal in strength. So in war, any balance of forces is possible, and it would be a strange theory of war that abandoned its task precisely where it is most needed.

However much theory may prefer a proper balance of forces, it still cannot claim that even the most unequal forces are useless. No fixed limits can be laid down here.

The weaker the force, the more limited the aim it must set for itself, and the weaker the force, the less time it can endure. In both respects, weakness has room to yield, if we may put it that way. We can speak of the changes that differences in strength

produce in the conduct of war only step by step, as they arise. For now, it is enough to have pointed out the general perspective, though to complete it we will add one further observation.

The more an army in an unequal struggle is outnumbered by its opponent, the more intensely it must strain its powers, and the greater its energy must be when danger presses. If the opposite happens, and instead of heroic desperation there appears a spirit of discouragement, then all art of war comes to an end.

When this energetic use of force is joined to wise restraint in the goal being pursued, it produces the blend of brilliant action and prudent self-restraint that we admire in the wars of Frederick the Great.

But the less that moderation and caution can achieve, the more tension and energy must dominate the use of force. When the imbalance of forces is so great that no adjustment of our own aim can protect us from disaster, or when the danger is likely to last so long that even the strictest economy of strength can no longer carry us to our goal, then all our power should be gathered for one desperate blow. A man pressed on every side, with little hope from circumstances that offer none, will place his final and only trust in the moral superiority that despair gives to courage. He will see the boldest course as the wisest one, while also making use of every subtle stratagem. And if he does not succeed, he will at least find in an honorable fall the right to rise again later.

CHAPTER IV. Relation of the Three Arms

We will speak only of the three main arms: infantry, cavalry, and artillery.

We ask to be excused for the following analysis. It belongs more properly to tactics, but it is necessary if our ideas are to be clear.

Combat takes two forms, and they are fundamentally different: the destructive force of fire, and hand-to-hand, or personal, combat. This second kind, in turn, is either attack or defence. (Since we are speaking here of basic elements, attack and defence should be understood in a completely absolute sense.) Artillery, obviously, operates only through the destructive force of fire. Cavalry operates only through personal combat. Infantry uses both.

In close combat, the essence of defence is to stand firm, as though rooted to the ground; the essence of attack is movement. Cavalry entirely lacks the first quality, but possesses the second to a remarkable degree. It is therefore suited only for attack. Infantry is especially marked by the ability to stand firm, though it is not without mobility.

Because the basic forces of war are divided among different branches, infantry proves superior to the other two and more generally useful, since it is the only branch that combines all three basic forces within itself. Another conclusion follows from this: combining the three branches makes it possible to use

force more effectively, because it lets us strengthen, as needed, one or another of the principles that infantry contains in a fixed and inseparable way.

In modern war, the destructive power of fire is by far the most effective element. Even so, close combat, man against man, must still be seen as the true foundation of fighting. For that reason, an army made up only of artillery would be absurd. An army of cavalry alone is imaginable, but it would have very little fighting power. An army of infantry alone is not only imaginable but also by far the strongest of the three. So, in terms of independent value, the three branches rank in this order: infantry, cavalry, artillery.

But this order does not remain the same when we consider the relative importance of each branch while all three are operating together. Since the destructive principle is far more effective than the principle of movement, the complete absence of cavalry would weaken an army less than the complete absence of artillery.

An army made up only of infantry and artillery would certainly be at a disadvantage if it faced an army that had all three branches. But if its lack of cavalry were balanced by a proportional increase in infantry, it could still perform quite well tactically, though it would have to fight in a somewhat different way. Its outpost duties would be more difficult. It would never be able to pursue a defeated enemy with much speed, and any retreat would be harder and more exhausting. But these disadvantages alone would never be enough to force it entirely from the field. On the other hand, such an army, facing one

made up only of infantry and cavalry, could still play a very strong role, whereas it is hard to imagine that the latter could remain in the field at all against an army composed of all three branches.

These reflections on the relative importance of each arm apply only to war in general, where one case balances out another. We do not mean to apply this conclusion mechanically to every individual engagement. A battalion on outpost duty or in retreat might, for example, prefer to have a squadron with it rather than a couple of guns. A cavalry force with horse artillery, sent in fast pursuit of a fleeing enemy or to cut one off, has no need of infantry, and so on.

If we sum up the results of these considerations, they come to this:

1. Infantry is the most self-sufficient of the three arms.

2. Artillery lacks independence altogether.

3. In a force made up of all three arms, infantry is the most important.

4. Cavalry is the easiest to do without.

5. A combination of all three arms produces the greatest strength.

Now, if combining all three produces the greatest strength, it is natural to ask what the best fixed proportion of each should be. But that is a question that is almost impossible to answer.

If we could compare the initial cost of organizing each of the three arms, then the cost of supplying and maintaining them,

and then measure the relative service each provides in war, we could arrive at a definite answer and determine the best proportion in the abstract. But this is little more than an exercise of the imagination. The very first part of the comparison is hard to settle. One factor, the cost in money, is not difficult to calculate. But another, the value of human lives, is something no one would willingly try to reduce to figures.

There is also the fact that each of the three arms depends mainly on a different source of strength in the state: infantry on the size of the male population, cavalry on the number of horses, and artillery on available financial resources. This brings unlike conditions into the calculation, and their controlling influence can be clearly seen in the broad course of the history of different peoples in different periods.

Still, because we cannot entirely do without some standard of comparison, we must use only the part of the comparison that can actually be measured: monetary cost. For our purposes, it is enough to assume that, in general, a squadron of 150 cavalry, an infantry battalion 800 strong, and an artillery battery of 8 six-pounders cost about the same, both to raise and to maintain.

The other side of the comparison—how much service each arm can render compared with the others—is much harder to express in any clear quantity. That might perhaps be possible if the question depended only on destructive power. But each arm is intended for its own particular use, and therefore has its own sphere of action. That sphere is not so sharply defined that it cannot become larger or smaller simply through changes in the

way the war is conducted, without producing any definite disadvantage.

We are often told that experience settles this question, and it is assumed that military history provides the information needed to decide it. But anyone should recognize that this is little more than a manner of speaking. Since it is not drawn from anything primary and necessary, it does not deserve weight in an analytical examination.

Although we can imagine a fixed ratio that would represent the best proportion among the three arms, it remains an x that cannot be discovered—an entirely imaginary quantity. Even so, we can still judge the effects of having either a great superiority or a great inferiority in one particular arm compared with the same arm in the enemy's army.

Artillery greatly increases the destructive power of fire. It is the most formidable of the three arms, so lacking it significantly reduces an army's concentrated fighting strength. But it is also the least mobile, and that makes an army more cumbersome. It also always needs troops to protect it, because it cannot fight at close quarters. If there is too much artillery, and the troops assigned to guard it cannot repel enemy attacks at every point, it is often lost. That creates another serious disadvantage, because of the three arms it is the only one whose main parts—guns and carriages—the enemy can quickly turn against us.

Cavalry increases an army's mobility. If there is too little of it, the quick energy of war is weakened, because everything has to be done more slowly, on foot, and everything must be

arranged with greater care. The rich harvest of victory, instead of being cut down with a scythe, can only be gathered with a sickle.

An excess of cavalry cannot really be seen as a direct reduction of fighting strength or as an organic imbalance in the army. But it can become one indirectly, because that arm is difficult to feed. It can also be considered a disadvantage when we remember that, instead of 10,000 surplus horsemen we do not need, we might have had 50,000 infantry.

These effects, which arise when one arm outweighs the others, are especially important in the narrower art of war, because that art teaches how to use whatever forces are available. And when a general takes command, the proportion of the three arms has usually already been fixed, often with little input from him.

If we want to understand the character of warfare as shaped by the predominance of one or another of the three arms, we should do so in the following way:

An excess of artillery gives our operations a more defensive and passive character. Our interest will be to seek safety in strong positions, major natural obstacles, and even mountain positions, so that the natural difficulties of the ground can help defend and protect our numerous artillery, while the enemy's forces come forward and bring about their own destruction. The whole war will then be conducted with a grave, formal, minuet-like step.

On the other hand, if we lack artillery, we are driven to favor the offensive—action, movement, and mobility. Marching, endurance, and exertion become our main weapons. The war then grows more varied, more energetic, and harsher; many

small actions take the place of great events.

With a very large cavalry force, we look for broad plains and undertake sweeping movements. At a greater distance from the enemy, we can enjoy more rest and better conditions without giving him the same advantages. We can risk bolder attempts to outflank him, and more daring maneuvers in general, because we command more space. And insofar as diversions and invasions are genuine auxiliary means of war, we can employ them more easily.

A serious lack of cavalry reduces an army's mobility without increasing its destructive power, as an excess of artillery does. In that case, prudence and method become the dominant features of the war. We stay close to the enemy so that he remains constantly in view. We avoid rapid movements, and even more so hurried ones. Everywhere, we advance slowly with tightly concentrated masses. We prefer the defensive and broken ground. And when we must take the offensive, we choose the shortest direct route to the center of strength in the enemy's army. These are the natural tendencies, or principles, in such situations.

These different forms that warfare takes, depending on which of the three arms predominates, rarely exert so complete and decisive an influence that they alone, or even mainly, determine the direction of an entire campaign. Whether we act strategically on the offensive or defensive, how we choose a theater of war, whether we decide to fight a great battle or use some other means of destruction—these are questions that must be settled by other, more essential considerations. If not,

there is good reason to fear that we have mistaken secondary details for the main issue. Still, even though the larger questions must be decided on other grounds, there is always some room for the influence of the predominant arm. In an offensive campaign, for example, we can still be prudent and methodical; in a defensive one, bold and enterprising; and so on through all the different stages and degrees of military life.

On the other hand, the character of a war may have a significant influence on the proportions of the three arms.

First, a national war sustained by militia and a general levy (Landsturm) will naturally put a very large infantry force into the field. In wars of this kind, the shortage is usually not men but equipment. Since the available equipment must therefore be limited to what is absolutely necessary, it is easy to see that for every battery of eight guns, it might be possible to raise not just one battalion, but two or three.

Second, if a weak state facing a stronger one cannot rely on a general call-up of the male population for regular military service, or on a similar militia system, then increasing its artillery is certainly the quickest way to bring its small army closer to equality with the enemy's. Artillery saves men and strengthens the essential element of military force: its destructive power. In any case, such a state will usually be restricted to a limited theatre, and that makes this arm especially suitable for it. Frederick the Great used this method in the later years of the Seven Years' War.

Third, cavalry is the arm of movement and decisive action. Increasing it beyond the usual proportion is therefore important

when the war covers a wide area, when expeditions must be sent in different directions, and when large, decisive blows are intended. Buonaparte provides an example of this.

That offense and defense do not, in themselves, really affect the proper proportion of cavalry will become clear only when we discuss these two methods of conducting war. For now, we will simply note that both attacker and defender generally cover the same distances in war and may also, at least in many cases, pursue the same decisive aims. We remind our readers of the campaign of 1812.

It is often assumed that, in the Middle Ages, cavalry made up a much larger share of armies than infantry, and that this gap has steadily narrowed ever since. But that is at least partly mistaken. In terms of numbers, cavalry was probably not, on average, much more numerous than it was later. We can see this by following the detailed records of the forces used throughout medieval history. Just think of the great bodies of foot soldiers in the armies of the Crusaders, or the large numbers who accompanied the German Emperors on their expeditions to Rome. What was really greater in those days was not the number of cavalry, but its importance. It was the stronger arm, made up of the finest part of the population. So, although it was always far smaller in actual numbers, it was still treated as the main element of an army. Infantry was valued little and scarcely mentioned. That is why people came to believe its numbers were small. Of course, it happened more often than it does now that, in minor raids in France, Germany, and Italy, a small army consisted entirely of cavalry. Since cavalry was the principal arm, there is nothing surprising about that. But if we look at the

broader picture, such cases prove little, because they are far outnumbered by examples of larger armies from the same period that were organized differently. It was only after the feudal duty of military service had come to an end, and wars were fought by enlisted, hired, and paid soldiers—when war therefore depended on money and recruitment, as in the time of the Thirty Years' War and the wars of Louis XIV—that the use of huge masses of almost useless infantry was reduced. In those days, armies might perhaps have come to rely almost entirely on cavalry, if infantry had not at that very time gained new importance through improvements in firearms. Because of that, infantry kept its numerical advantage over cavalry. In this period, when infantry was relatively weak, the proportion was one to one; when it was numerous, it was three to one.

Since then, cavalry has steadily become less important as firearms have improved. That is easy enough to understand, but the improvement we mean involves more than just better weapons and greater skill in using them. We also mean a growing ability to use troops armed with those weapons effectively. By the Battle of Mollwitz, the Prussian army had brought infantry fire to such a high level that, in that respect, there has been no further improvement since. By contrast, the use of infantry in broken terrain and as skirmishers developed more recently, and it should be regarded as a major advance in the art of destruction.

Our view, then, is that cavalry has not changed much in its numerical proportion, but its importance has changed greatly. That may seem contradictory, but it is not. In the Middle Ages, infantry made up the larger part of an army, but not because it

was valued more highly than cavalry. Rather, everyone who could not be assigned to the very expensive cavalry was placed in the infantry. Infantry was therefore only a last resort; and if the number of cavalry had depended solely on the value attached to that arm, there could never have been too much of it. In this way, we can understand how cavalry, despite its steadily declining importance, may still retain enough importance to keep roughly the same numerical proportion it has so consistently held until now.

It is a striking fact that, at least since the Wars of the Austrian Succession, the proportion of cavalry to infantry has changed very little. It has consistently varied only between one fourth, one fifth, and one sixth. This seems to suggest that these proportions meet the natural needs of an army, and that these figures provide the answer that cannot be reached directly. We doubt, however, that this is really so, and we believe the main examples of the use of large cavalry forces can be explained well enough by other causes.

Austria and Russia maintained large cavalry forces because their political systems still preserved remnants of a Tartar-style organization. For his own purposes, Buonaparte could never have too much cavalry. Once he had used conscription as far as he could, the only way left to strengthen his armies was to expand the supporting arms, since they cost him more money than manpower. And in campaigns on a scale as vast as his, cavalry naturally had greater value than it would in more ordinary circumstances.

As is well known, Frederick the Great carefully counted every recruit he could spare his own country. One of his main concerns was to keep his army strong as much as possible at the expense of other countries. The reason is easy to understand if we remember that his small territories did not then include Prussia and the Westphalian provinces. Cavalry could be kept up to strength more easily than infantry, quite apart from the fact that it required fewer men. In addition, his whole system of war rested on the mobility of his army. So while his infantry steadily declined in number, his cavalry continued to grow until the end of the Seven Years' War. Even then, however, it amounted to little more than a quarter of the infantry he had in the field.

At that time there were also many examples of armies going into battle unusually weak in cavalry and still winning. The most striking case is the battle of Gross-gorschen. If we count only the French divisions that actually took part, Buonaparte had 100,000 men: 5,000 cavalry and 90,000 infantry. The Allies had 70,000: 25,000 cavalry and 40,000 infantry. So instead of matching the Allies' cavalry advantage of 20,000 over the entire French cavalry force, Buonaparte had only 50,000 more infantry when he should have had 100,000. Since he won the battle with that infantry advantage, we may ask whether he was at all likely to have lost if the proportions had been 140,000 to 40,000.

Certainly our great superiority in cavalry showed itself immediately after the battle, for Buonaparte gained hardly any trophies from his victory. So winning a battle is not everything—but is it not still the main thing?

If we consider all these points together, it is hard to believe that the cavalry-to-infantry ratio seen over the last eighty years is the natural one, based only on their actual value. It seems more likely that, after many shifts, the balance between these two arms will continue to move in the same direction as before, and that the settled number of cavalry will eventually be much lower.

As for artillery, the number of guns has naturally increased since it was first invented, especially as guns have become lighter and improved in other ways. Even so, since the time of Frederick the Great, artillery has remained fairly close to the same proportion: two or three guns for every 1,000 men at the start of a campaign. Over the course of a campaign, however, artillery does not diminish as quickly as infantry. As a result, by the end of a campaign the proportion is usually noticeably higher—perhaps three, four, or five guns per 1,000 men. Whether this is the natural proportion, or whether artillery can be increased still further without harming the overall conduct of war, must be left to experience to decide.

The main conclusions we draw from all these considerations are as follows—

1. Infantry is the main arm, and the other two are subordinate to it.

2. If command is exercised with great skill and energy, the lack of the two subordinate arms can be made up for to some extent, provided we are much stronger in infantry; and the better the infantry, the easier this becomes.

3. It is harder to do without artillery than without cavalry, because artillery is the main instrument of destruction, and its way of fighting is more closely integrated with that of infantry.

4. Since artillery is the strongest arm in destructive power, and cavalry the weakest in that respect, the general question must be: how much artillery can we have without causing difficulty, and what is the smallest proportion of cavalry we need?

CHAPTER V. Order of Battle of an Army

The order of battle is the way the different arms are divided and organized into separate parts or sections of the whole army, together with the general arrangement or disposition of those parts that is meant to serve as the standard throughout the entire campaign or war.

It therefore includes, to some extent, both an arithmetical element and a geometrical one: division and form of disposition. The first grows out of the army's permanent peacetime organization. It takes certain parts—such as battalions, squadrons, and batteries—as its basic units, and from them builds larger formations, step by step, up to the largest of all, the whole army, according to the needs of the prevailing circumstances. In the same way, the form of disposition comes from elementary tactics, in which the army is trained and drilled in peacetime. These tactics must be regarded as a quality of the troops that cannot be fundamentally changed at the moment war begins. Disposition links those tactics with the conditions required when troops are employed in war and in large bodies, and so it establishes, in a general way, the rule or standard by which the troops are to be drawn up for battle.

This has always been the case when great armies have taken the field, and there have been periods when this form was regarded as the most essential part of battle.

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, improvements in infantry firearms greatly increased the importance of that arm

and made it possible to deploy troops in long, thin lines. This simplified the order of battle, but it also made execution more difficult and more artificial. At the same time, the only known way to place cavalry at the start of a battle was on the wings, where they were out of enemy fire and had room to move. As a result, the army in battle formation always became a single, tightly bound whole. If such an army was split in the middle, it was like an earthworm cut in two: the wings still had life and could move, but they had lost their natural function. The army was therefore, in a sense, under a spell of unity, and whenever parts of it had to be posted separately, a small process of organization and disorganization became necessary. The marches the whole army had to make were situations in which it was, to some extent, outside its normal order. If the enemy was near, the march had to be arranged in a highly artificial way, and to keep one line or wing always at the prescribed distance from the other, the troops had to force their way over every obstacle. Marches also constantly had to be concealed from the enemy, and this continual concealment escaped serious punishment only because the enemy was under the same constraint.

So when, in the second half of the eighteenth century, it was discovered that cavalry could protect a wing just as well from behind the army as from an extension of the line, and that it could also be used for purposes other than simply dueling with the enemy's cavalry, a major advance was made. The army's main extension, or front—which is always the width of its order of battle, or position—could now be made up entirely of uniform elements. That meant it could be formed, as needed, from any number of parts, each part resembling the others and the whole.

In this way, it stopped being a single solid piece and became an articulated whole, flexible and manageable. Its parts could be detached and then rejoined without difficulty, while the order of battle remained the same. Thus arose the corps composed of all arms; that is, this kind of organization now became possible, though the need for it had been felt long before.

It is only natural that all of this relates to combat. In earlier times, battle was the whole of war, and it will always remain its main element. But the order of battle generally belongs more to tactics than to strategy. It is mentioned here only to show how tactics, by organizing the whole into smaller units, prepared the way for strategy.

As armies grow larger, they spread out over broader areas, and the interactions among their different parts become more varied. As a result, the field of strategy also expands. Therefore, the order of battle, in the sense we have defined it, must also enter into a kind of mutual relationship with strategy. This appears most clearly at the outer points where tactics and strategy meet—that is, at the moments when the general distribution of fighting forces turns into the specific arrangements for combat.

We now turn to these three points from a strategic point of view: division, combination of arms, and order of battle (disposition).

1.—Division.

In strategy, we should never ask how strong a division or corps ought to be, but how many corps or divisions an army should have. Nothing is harder to manage than an army split into three parts—except one split into only two, in which case the commander's control is almost neutralized.

Trying to fix the size of large and small corps, whether on the basis of elementary tactics or broader principles, leaves an enormous amount to personal judgment, and heaven knows what odd lines of reasoning have wandered through that open field. By contrast, the need to divide an independent whole—an army—into a certain number of parts is both obvious and definite. That idea provides real strategic reasons for deciding how many major divisions an army should have, and therefore how strong they should be, while the size of smaller units, such as companies and battalions, is left for tactics to determine.

It is hard to imagine even the smallest independent force without at least three distinct parts, so that one can be sent ahead and another kept back. Four is even more practical, since the middle part, as the main division, should be stronger than either of the others. From there, we can extend the arrangement to eight, which seems to us the most suitable number for an army: one part as an advance guard, which is always necessary; three for the main body—the right wing, center, and left wing; two reserve divisions; and one detachment for the right and one for the left. We do not mean to assign excessive importance to these numbers and formations in any pedantic way. Still, we believe they represent the most common and

repeatedly useful strategic arrangement, and are therefore convenient.

At first glance, it may seem that the supreme command of an army—and indeed the direction of any whole—becomes much easier when there are only three or four subordinates to manage. But the commander-in-chief pays heavily for that convenience in two ways. First, an order loses speed, force, and precision when it must pass down a long chain of command, as it must when corps commanders stand between the division leaders and the chief. Second, the broader the authority of his immediate subordinates becomes, the more the chief usually loses in his own real power and effectiveness. A general commanding 100,000 men in eight divisions exercises more direct power than if those same 100,000 men were grouped into only three corps. There are several reasons for this, but the most important is that each commander comes to regard his corps as something like his own possession, and he will almost always resist having any part of it taken away, whether for a short time or a long one. Anyone with even a little experience of war will recognize this at once.

On the other hand, the number of divisions must not become too large, or confusion will follow. Managing eight divisions from a single headquarters is difficult enough, and the number should never be allowed to rise above ten. But within a division, where the means of sending orders around are much more limited, the smaller standard number of four, or at most five, should be considered more suitable.

If these factors—five and ten—do not work, that is, if the brigades are too large, then corps d'armée must be introduced. But we must remember that doing so creates a new level of command, and that immediately reduces the importance of all the other factors.

But what counts as a brigade that is too large? The usual practice is to make brigades between 2,000 and 5,000 men, and there seem to be two reasons for setting the upper limit at the latter figure. First, a brigade is meant to be a subdivision that one man can command directly, that is, within the reach of his own voice. Second, any larger body of infantry ought not to be left without artillery, and once this first combination of arms is introduced, it becomes a distinct formation in its own right.

We do not want to get drawn into these tactical subtleties, nor will we enter the disputed question of where and in what proportions the combination of all three arms should begin—whether at the level of divisions of 8,000 to 12,000 men, or at that of corps of 20,000 to 30,000. Even the strongest opponent of such combinations will hardly object to the simple claim that only this union of the three arms can make a division independent, and that for divisions intended to be detached frequently and operate on their own, it is at least highly desirable.

An army of 200,000 men divided into ten divisions, with each division made up of five brigades, would produce brigades of 4,000 men. We see no imbalance in that. Certainly, the same army could also be divided into five corps, each corps into four divisions, and each division into four brigades, which would

make each brigade 2,500 men strong. But considered in the abstract, the first arrangement seems better to us. In the second, there is not only one additional level of rank, but five parts are too few to make an army easy to manage. In the same way, four divisions are too few for a corps, and a brigade of 2,500 men is weak. Under that arrangement there would be eighty brigades, whereas the first has only fifty, and is therefore simpler. All these advantages are sacrificed merely so that orders need be sent to only half as many generals. Naturally, organizing into corps is even less suitable for smaller armies.

That is the general view of the matter. In a specific case, there may be strong reasons to decide differently. We must also admit that, while eight or ten divisions may be manageable when they are united in flat country, that may be impossible in broad mountain positions. If a great river splits an army into two halves, a separate commander for each half becomes necessary. In short, there are a hundred local and particular factors of the most decisive kind before which all rules must give way.

Even so, experience shows that these general principles apply more often, and are overridden less often, than we might suppose.

We want to define the scope of the preceding considerations more clearly with a simple outline. To do that, we will now place the most important points side by side.

By numbers, or parts of a whole, we mean only those created by the primary, immediate division. With that in mind, we say:

1. If a whole has too few parts, it becomes unwieldy.

2. If the parts of a whole are too large, the power of the superior will is weakened.

3. Every additional stage through which an order must pass weakens it in two ways: first, through the loss of force it suffers as it passes through another stage; second, through the extra time required to transmit it.

The overall point is that the number of co-ordinate divisions should be as great as possible, and the number of hierarchical stages as small as possible. The only limit to this rule is that, in armies, no more than eight to ten subdivisions, and in subordinate corps no more than four, or at most six, can be directed conveniently.

2.—Combination of Arms.

For strategy, combining the three arms in the order of battle matters only for those parts of the army that, under normal conditions, are likely to be used separately and may have to fight on their own. By their very nature, units of the first class—and generally only these—are the ones assigned to detached positions, because, as we shall explain elsewhere, detached positions are usually adopted on the assumption and the need for a force that can act independently.

In the strict sense, then, strategy would require a permanent combination of arms only in army corps, or, where corps do not exist, in divisions. It would leave it to circumstances to decide when a temporary combination of the three arms should be formed in smaller subordinate units.

But it is easy to see that when corps are very large—say 30,000 or 40,000 men—they can rarely occupy a fully connected position as a single mass. For corps of that size, the arms must therefore be combined within the divisions. Anyone with real experience of war knows how serious the delay can be when urgent messages must be sent to some other, perhaps distant, point before cavalry can be brought up to support the infantry—not to mention the confusion that results.

The details of how the three arms should be combined—how far the combination should extend, how low in the organization it should go, what proportions should be maintained, and how strong the reserves of each arm should be—are all purely tactical questions.

3.—The Disposition.

Deciding the spatial relations by which the parts of an army are arranged among themselves in the order of battle is likewise entirely a tactical matter, concerned only with the battle itself. There is, of course, also a strategic disposition of the parts. But that depends almost entirely on the immediate demands and decisions of the moment, and whatever is rational in it does not fall within the meaning of the term "order of battle." We shall therefore discuss it in the following chapter under the heading Disposition of an Army.

An army's order of battle is the way it is organized and arranged as a whole when it is prepared for combat. Its different parts are connected in such a way that the immediate needs of both tactics and strategy can be met easily by using individual units

taken from the main body. Once that temporary need has passed, those units return to their original place. In this way, the order of battle becomes the first step and the main foundation of that sound methodical system which, like the swing of a pendulum, regulates the work of war, and which we already discussed in the fourth chapter of the Second Book.

CHAPTER VI. General Disposition of an Army

Between the first gathering of military forces and the moment when strategy has brought the army to the decisive point, with tactics assigning each separate part its position and role, there is in most cases a long interval. The same is true between one decisive disaster and the next.

In earlier times, these intervals did not, to some extent, belong to war at all. Take, for example, the way Luxemburg camped and marched. We choose this general because he is famous for his camps and marches, and may therefore be taken as a representative commander of his period. From the Histoire de la Flandre militaire, we also know more about him than about other generals of the same time.

Camps were routinely set up with their rear close to a river, a marsh, or a deep valley—something that would be considered reckless today. The enemy's position had so little influence on how the army was oriented that it was often the case that the rear faced the enemy while the front faced their own country. This now unimaginable way of doing things makes no sense unless we assume that, in choosing camps, the troops' convenience was the main concern—indeed, almost the only one. In that view, being in camp was treated as something outside the real business of war, almost like stepping behind the scenes into a place of comfort and ease. The habit of always placing the rear against some obstacle seems to have been the only security measure then taken, at least according to the

military methods of that time. Naturally, such an arrangement was completely incompatible with being forced to fight in that position. But there was usually little reason to fear that, because battles generally depended on a kind of mutual understanding, almost like a duel in which both sides go to an agreed meeting place. Armies could not fight effectively in every kind of terrain. This was partly because of their large cavalry forces, which, even after their greatest glory had faded, were still regarded—especially by the French—as the chief arm. It was also partly because their battle formations were so cumbersome. As a result, an army in close, broken country was almost as if protected by neutral ground. Since it could make little use of such terrain itself, it was considered better to go out and meet an enemy who was looking for battle. We know, however, that Luxemburg's battles at Fleurus, Stienkirk, and Neerwinden were conceived in a different spirit. But under this great general, that spirit had only just begun to break free from the old method, and it had not yet changed the way camps were arranged. Changes in the art of war always begin in matters of decisive importance, and only gradually lead to changes in other areas. The expression il va à la guerre, used of a partisan setting out to watch the enemy, shows how little an army in camp was regarded as being in a state of real warfare.

Marches were much the same. The artillery then moved entirely separately from the rest of the army so it could use better, safer roads. The cavalry on the wings also usually alternated the right flank, so that each side could in turn enjoy the honor of marching on the right.

Today—that is, mainly since the Silesian wars—the situation outside battle is so deeply shaped by its connection to battle that the two are closely bound together, and neither can really be understood without the other. In earlier campaigns, battle was the true weapon, while everything outside battle was only the handle—the battle the steel blade, the rest the wooden shaft glued to it, so that the whole was made of unlike parts. Now battle is the edge, and the situation outside battle is the back of the blade: the whole must be seen as metal fully welded together, so that it is no longer possible to tell where the steel ends and the iron begins.

The army's condition outside battle is now shaped partly by the organization and regulations it brings with it from peacetime, and partly by the tactical and strategic arrangements required at the moment. An army can be in one of three situations: in quarters, on the march, or in camp. All three belong as much to tactics as to strategy. At this boundary, the two branches overlap in many ways and often seem to merge, or actually do merge, so that many dispositions can be regarded at the same time as both tactical and strategic.

We shall discuss these three situations of an army outside combat in general terms, before connecting them with any particular purposes. First, however, we must consider the general disposition of the forces, because it is the broader and more important measure, and it determines the arrangement of camps, cantonments, and marches.

If we consider the disposition of the forces in general terms, setting aside any special purpose, we can imagine it only as a

single unit—that is, as a whole meant to fight together. Any departure from this simplest form would imply some special purpose. From this, then, comes the idea of an army, whether small or large.

Further, when there is no special objective, the only remaining aim is to preserve the army itself, which naturally includes its security. The army must be able to maintain itself without hardship, and it must be able to assemble easily for battle. From this follow the main considerations that bear most directly on the army's existence and safety.

1. Ease of obtaining supplies.

2. Ease of providing shelter for the troops.

3. Security of the rear.

4. Open ground in front.

5. The position itself in broken country.

6. Strategic points d'appui.

7. A suitable distribution of the troops.

We explain these several points as follows:

The first two lead us to look for cultivated areas, large towns, and good roads. They shape our decisions in a general sense rather than in specific detail.

In the chapter on lines of communication, we explain what we mean by security of the rear. The first and most important requirement here is that the center of the position should stand at a right angle to the main line of retreat connected with it.

As for the fourth point, an army cannot survey the whole stretch of country in front of it in the same way it can see the ground immediately before it when drawn up in a tactical battle position. But an army's strategic eyes are its advanced guard, its scouts and patrols sent ahead, its spies, and so on. Their work will naturally be easier in open country than in broken, intersected terrain. The fifth point is simply the opposite of the fourth.

Strategic points of support differ from tactical ones in two ways: the army does not need to be in immediate contact with them, and they must cover a larger area. The reason is simple. By its nature, strategy operates on a broader scale of time and space than tactics. So if an army positions itself a mile from the seacoast or from the banks of a great river, it is strategically supported by those obstacles, because the enemy cannot use that space to carry out a strategic turning movement. Within such narrow limits, he cannot risk marches that stretch for miles and take days or weeks. On the other hand, in strategy, a lake several miles around can hardly be treated as an obstacle at all; in strategic operations, moving a few miles to the right or left matters little. Fortresses become strategic points of support when they are large enough to provide a broad base for offensive combinations.

An army may be arranged in separate bodies either for particular purposes and needs or for more general ones; here we can speak only of the latter.

The first general requirement is to send forward the advance guard and the other troops needed to observe the enemy.

The second is that, in very large armies, the reserves are usually stationed several miles to the rear and therefore hold a separate position.

Lastly, protecting both wings of an army usually requires certain corps to be posted separately.

By this kind of covering, we do not mean that part of the army should be detached to defend the ground around its wings in order to keep the enemy away from these so-called weak points. If that were done, who would defend the wings of those flanking corps? This very common idea is pure nonsense. An army's wings are not weak points in themselves, because the enemy also has wings and cannot threaten ours without exposing his own. The wings become vulnerable only when circumstances are unequal—if the enemy's army is larger than ours, or if his lines of communication are more secure (see Lines of Communication). But we are not dealing here with such special cases. Nor are we discussing a situation in which a flanking corps is assigned, as part of a broader plan, to defend the ground on our wings effectively, because that no longer belongs to the category of general dispositions.

Still, although the wings are not especially weak, they are especially important. Because of flanking movements, defense there is not as straightforward as it is in front. The necessary measures are more complicated and take more time and preparation. For that reason, in most cases the wings must receive special protection against unexpected enemy moves. This is done by placing stronger forces on the wings than would be needed merely for observation. It takes more time to push

back these forces, even if they do not offer very serious resistance. And the stronger they are, the more the enemy must reveal both his strength and his intentions. In that way, the purpose of the measure is achieved. What should be done next depends on the particular plans of the moment. We may therefore regard corps placed on the wings as lateral advanced guards, meant to delay the enemy's advance through the ground beyond our wings and give us time to make arrangements to counter his movement.

If these corps are meant to fall back on the main body, while the main body itself is not to retreat at the same time, then it follows that they must not stand in the same line as the front of the main body. They must be posted somewhat farther forward, because when they have to withdraw—even if no serious engagement has taken place first—they should not retire directly onto the flank of the position.

For these subjective reasons, which concern the army's internal organization, a natural system of deployment emerges. It consists of four or five parts, depending on whether the reserve stays with the main body or not.

Just as the troops' food supply and shelter partly determine the choice of a position in general, they also affect how the army is divided into separate formations. These needs must be weighed alongside the other considerations already mentioned, and we try to meet them without harming the others. In most cases, dividing an army into five separate corps will solve the main problems of supply and quartering, so no major changes will later be needed for those reasons.

We must still take a look at how far apart these separate corps may be placed if we want to preserve the advantage of mutual support and therefore the ability to concentrate for battle. On this point, we refer readers to what was said in the chapters on the duration and decision of combat. There, it was shown that no fixed distance can be laid down. Only very general, average rules are possible, because both the absolute and relative strength of the forces, as well as the nature of the country, have great influence.

The distance of the advanced guard is the easiest to determine. In a retreat, it falls back on the army's main body and therefore can, in any case, be placed as far as a long day's march away without risking being forced to fight a separate battle on its own. But it should not be sent farther forward than the army's security requires, because the farther it must retreat, the more it suffers.

As for corps on the flanks, as we have already said, a battle involving an ordinary division of 8,000 to 10,000 men usually lasts several hours, and may continue for half a day before it is decided. For that reason, there is no need to hesitate in placing such a division some leagues away, or one or two miles distant. For the same reason, corps of three or four divisions may be detached by a day's march, or by a distance of three or four miles.

From this natural and general arrangement of the main body into four or five divisions at set distances, a certain method has developed of dividing an army in a mechanical way whenever there are no strong special reasons to depart from this usual

method.

Even if we assume that each separate part of an army is capable of fighting on its own, and may at times be forced to do so, it does not follow that the army is divided so those parts can fight separately. In most cases, the army is distributed simply because time makes it necessary. Once the enemy moves against our position and seeks a decisive battle, the strategic phase is over. Everything is drawn into that single moment of battle, and the purpose of dividing the army comes to an end. As soon as the battle begins, concerns about quarters and supplies are set aside. Watching the enemy in front and on the flanks has already served its purpose by slowing his advance through limited resistance. After that, everything is absorbed into one great whole: the great battle. The clearest sign of skill in arranging an army is showing that its distribution was treated only as a condition, a necessary evil, while united action in battle was treated as the true aim of that arrangement.

CHAPTER VII. Advanced Guard and Out-Posts

These two bodies belong to a class of subjects in which tactical and strategic considerations are closely intertwined. On the one hand, they must be counted among the measures that shape a battle and help carry out tactical plans. On the other hand, they often lead to independent engagements, and because they are positioned at some distance from the main body, they must also be seen as links in the strategic chain. It is precisely this dual character that requires us to add to the previous chapter by giving them some brief attention here.

Whenever a body of troops is not fully ready for battle, it needs an advance guard to detect the enemy's approach and learn more about his strength before he comes into view, since as a rule a person cannot see much farther than firearms can reach. But what kind of man could see no farther than his own arms can reach? As we have already said, the foreposts are the eyes of the army. Still, the need for them is not always the same; it varies by degree. The size of armies, the amount of ground they occupy, time, place, circumstances, the way the war is being fought, and even chance all affect the matter. So it is no surprise that military history does not offer any clear and simple model for the use of advance guards and outposts, but instead presents the subject as a kind of chaos made up of highly varied examples.

Sometimes the security of an army is entrusted to a corps specifically assigned as an advance guard. At other times, it

depends on a long line of separate outposts. Sometimes both arrangements exist together; sometimes neither does. In some cases there is a single advance guard serving all the advancing columns; in others, each column has its own. We will try to form a clear idea of what the subject really involves, and then see whether we can arrive at some principles that can be applied.

When troops are on the march, a detachment of greater or lesser strength forms the van, or advance guard; if the army's movement is reversed, that same detachment becomes the rearguard. When troops are in cantonments or in camp, an extended line of weak posts forms the vanguard, the outposts. This follows naturally from the situation: when an army is halted, a wider area can and must be watched than when it is moving. So in the first case the idea of a chain of posts arises naturally, while in the second the idea is that of a concentrated corps.

The size of an advance guard, like that of outposts, can vary widely. At one extreme, it may be a substantial corps made up of all three branches of the service. At the other, it may be only a regiment of hussars. In the same way, the defensive arrangements may range from a heavily fortified line held by detachments from each branch to nothing more than a few forward pickets and their supporting troops sent out from camp. The duties assigned to these vanguards vary just as much. Sometimes they are meant only to observe the enemy. Sometimes they are expected to oppose or resist him. That resistance may be intended not only to give the main army the time it needs to prepare for battle, but also to force the enemy to reveal his plans and intentions, which makes the work of observation even more important.

The strength of the advance guard and the outposts must therefore be adjusted to the situation. It should depend on how much time must be gained and on whether the resistance they are to offer is designed to meet the enemy's particular measures.

Frederick the Great, a commander more ready for battle than almost any other, and one who nearly directed his army in action by verbal command, never needed strong outposts. We therefore find him repeatedly encamping close to the enemy and almost in full view of him, without any elaborate outpost system. For security, he might rely in one place on a regiment of hussars, in another on a light battalion, or simply on pickets and supports sent out from camp. On the march, a few thousand cavalry, usually drawn from the cavalry on the flanks of the first line, formed his advance guard and then rejoined the main body at the end of the march. He very rarely kept any corps permanently assigned as an advance guard.

When a small army means to throw the full weight of its force forward with energy and speed, and make the enemy feel the effects of its better discipline and the stronger resolve of its commander, then almost everything must be done sous la barbe de l'ennemi, just as Frederick the Great did when facing Daun. A strategy of keeping at a distance from the enemy, along with a rigid and far-reaching outpost system, would cancel out all the advantages of that kind of superiority. It is true that a different mistake, namely pushing Frederick's system too far, can lead to a battle like Hochkirch. But that is no argument against the method itself. Rather, since there was only one battle of Hochkirch in the whole Silesian war, we should see in this

system proof of the King's exceptional skill.

Napoleon, however, though he commanded an army that was fully disciplined and steady, and though he himself was not lacking in resolve, never moved without a strong advanced guard. There were two reasons for this.

The first reason is the change in tactics. An entire army is no longer led into battle as a single body by simple word of command, to decide the issue like a great duel through greater or lesser skill and courage. Armies now arrange their forces in ways that fit the ground and the circumstances, so the order of battle, and therefore the battle itself, becomes a whole made up of many parts. As a result, the mere decision to fight turns into a carefully developed plan, and the word of command becomes a preparatory process that may take some time. For that, both time and information are needed.

The second reason lies in the great size of modern armies. Frederick brought thirty or forty thousand men into battle; Napoleon brought from one hundred thousand to two hundred thousand.

We chose these examples because everyone will agree that two such generals would never have adopted any regular method of operating without good reason. Overall, the use of advanced guards and outposts improved in modern wars. That does not mean everyone acted as Frederick did, even in the Silesian wars. At that time, the Austrians maintained a system of strong outposts and often pushed a corps forward as an advanced guard, and they had good reason to do so because of the position they were in. In the same way, we find plenty of

differences in how war was conducted in more recent times. Even the French marshals Macdonald in Silesia, and Oudinot and Ney in the Mark (Brandenburg), advanced with armies of sixty or seventy thousand men without any mention of their having an advanced guard. So far, we have been discussing advanced guards and outposts in terms of their numerical strength. But there is another distinction we must clarify. When an army advances or retreats across a certain width of ground, it may either have one common van and rear guard for all the columns marching side by side, or each column may have its own. To understand this clearly, we must look at it in the following way.

The basic idea of an advanced guard, when a corps is specifically assigned that role, is that its task is to protect the main body, or center, of the army. If that main body is marching along several neighboring roads that lie close enough together to be easily used by the advanced guard as well, and therefore covered by it, then the flank columns naturally do not need separate protection.

But corps moving at great distances from the rest, and therefore really operating as detached corps, must provide their own van-guards. The same is true of any corps that belongs to the central mass but, because of the direction of the roads, lies too far from the center column. There will therefore be as many advanced guards as there are columns that are effectively separated from one another. If each of these advanced guards is much weaker than a single general advanced guard would be, then they belong more to the category of other tactical arrangements, and there is no advanced guard in the strategic

tableau. But if the main body, or center, has a much larger corps assigned as its advanced guard, then that corps will appear as the advanced guard of the whole army, and in many respects it will truly be so.

But why should the centre have a vanguard so much stronger than the wings? There are three reasons.

1. Because the main body of troops in the centre is usually much larger.

2. Because the central point of the stretch of country along which an army's front is spread must naturally always be the most important point, since most of the campaign's combinations are connected with it. For that reason, the battlefield is also usually closer to the centre than to the wings.

3. Because, although a corps pushed forward in front of the centre does not directly protect the wings in the way a true vanguard would, it still greatly adds to their security indirectly. For example, in ordinary circumstances the enemy cannot pass such a corps at a certain distance in order to carry out any important operation against one of the wings, because he must fear an attack on his flank and rear. Even if the restraint imposed on the enemy by a corps advanced in the centre is not enough to give the wings complete security, it is at least enough in many cases to free the flanks from serious concern.

If the centre's vanguard is much stronger than that of a wing—that is, if it consists of a separate corps acting as an advanced guard—then it has more than the ordinary task of a vanguard, which is to protect the troops behind it from sudden surprise. It also serves a broader strategic purpose, operating

as an army corps pushed forward in advance.

The following are the purposes for which such a corps may be used, and these therefore determine its practical duties.

1. To ensure stronger resistance and make the enemy advance more cautiously; in other words, to perform the duties of a vanguard on a larger scale whenever our arrangements require time before they can be put into effect.

2. If the army's central mass is very large, to allow us to keep this unwieldy body some distance from the enemy while still remaining close to him with a more mobile force.

3. So that we may have a corps of observation close to the enemy, if other reasons require us to keep the main mass of the army at a considerable distance.

The idea that weaker outposts, or small partisan units, could do this observation just as well can be dismissed at once. A weak corps could easily be scattered, and its ability to observe is far more limited than that of a substantial corps.

4. In pursuing the enemy. A single corps serving as the advance guard, with most of the cavalry attached to it, can move faster than the whole army. It can reach its bivouac later and set out earlier in the morning.

5. Lastly, in retreat, as a rearguard used to defend the main natural obstacles of the terrain. Here too, the centre is extremely important. At first glance, it may seem that such a rearguard would always be in danger of having its flanks turned. But we must remember that even if the enemy manages to extend beyond the flanks to some degree, he still has to march

from there to the centre before he can seriously threaten the main body. That gives the rearguard in the centre time to hold out longer and remain in the rear somewhat longer. On the other hand, the situation becomes critical at once if the centre falls back faster than the wings. It immediately creates the impression that the line has been broken through, and even that impression alone is dangerous. At no time is there a greater need for concentration and cohesion, and at no time is this felt more strongly by everyone than during a retreat. The intention is always that, in an emergency, the wings should close in on the centre. And even if shortages of supplies and the condition of the roads force the retreat to be made across a wide stretch of country, the movement generally ends in a concentration on the centre. If we add one more consideration—that the enemy usually advances with his main force in the centre and attacks the centre with the greatest energy—we must see that the rearguard of the centre is especially important.

Accordingly, whenever one of the situations described above arises, a special corps should always be sent forward as an advance guard. These arrangements largely lose their value if the center is not stronger than the wings. That was the case, for example, with Macdonald when he advanced against Blücher in Silesia in 1813, and also with Blücher when he moved toward the Elbe. Each of them had three corps, which usually marched in three columns along different roads, with the heads of the columns abreast. For that reason, there is no mention of either having an advance guard.

But this arrangement of three columns of equal strength is not one to recommend, partly for that reason and also because

dividing a whole army into three parts makes it very hard to manage, as explained in the fifth chapter of the third book.

When the whole force is arranged as a center with two wings separated from it—which, as we showed in the previous chapter, is the most natural formation so long as there is no special reason for another—the corps forming the advance guard will, in the simplest case, take its place in front of the center, and therefore ahead of the line formed by the front of the wings. But since the first purpose of corps posted on the flanks is to do for the sides what the advance guard does for the front, it will often happen that these corps are level with the advance guard, or even pushed farther forward, depending on the circumstances.

As for the strength of an advance guard, there is little to add. It is now, quite properly, standard practice to assign to that duty one or more major parts of the army, reinforced by some cavalry. So if the army is organized into corps, the advance guard will consist of a corps; if it is organized into divisions, it will consist of a division.

It is easy to see that, in this respect as well, having a larger number of higher formations or divisions is an advantage.

How far ahead the advance guard should be sent depends entirely on the situation. In some cases, it may be more than a day's march in front; in others, it should stay just ahead of the army's front. If, in most cases, the chosen distance is between one and three miles, that certainly suggests that circumstances have usually shown this to be the best range. But we cannot turn that into a fixed rule to follow in every case.

In the discussion above, we left out outposts entirely, so we must now return to them.

When we said at the beginning that the relation between outposts and stationary troops is similar to that between advance guards and troops on the move, our purpose was to trace these ideas back to their source and keep them clearly distinct afterward. But it is obvious that, if we cling too closely to the words themselves, we end up with little more than a pedantic distinction.

If an army on the march stops for the night and plans to continue the next morning, the advance guard must naturally do the same. It must also organize whatever outpost duty is needed for its own security and for that of the main body. That does not, however, turn it from an advance guard into a line of outposts. For that change to be real, the advance guard would have to be completely broken up into a chain of small posts, with either only a very small force—or no force at all—kept together in anything like a mass. In other words, the idea of a line of outposts must outweigh that of a concentrated body of troops.

The shorter the army's halt, the less complete its protective screen needs to be, because the enemy has little time to discover from one day to the next what is covered and what is not. The longer the halt, the more complete the observation and protection of every approach must be. As a rule, then, when the halt is long, the vanguard spreads out more and more into a line of posts. Whether this change becomes complete, or whether the idea of a concentrated body still remains dominant, depends

mainly on two things: first, how close the opposing armies are to each other; second, the nature of the terrain.

If the armies are very close together compared with the width of their front, it is often impossible to place a vanguard between them. In that case, the armies must rely on a chain of outposts.

A concentrated corps covers the approaches to an army less directly, so it usually needs more time and space to act effectively. Therefore, if an army stretches across a wide front, as it does in cantonments, and a corps assembled in mass is expected to cover all the avenues of approach, the army must be at a considerable distance from the enemy. For this reason, winter quarters, for example, are generally protected by a cordon of posts.

The second factor is the nature of the country. If, for example, some strong natural obstacle makes it possible to form a solid line of posts with only a few troops, we should take full advantage of it.

Lastly, in winter quarters, the severity of the season may also justify breaking up the advanced guard into a line of posts, because shelter is easier to find for it in that arrangement.

The Anglo-Dutch army brought the use of a reinforced line of outposts to a high degree of perfection during the 1794 and 1795 campaign in the Netherlands. Its defensive line was formed by brigades made up of all arms, posted at single points and supported by a reserve. Scharnhorst, who was with that army, introduced this system into the Prussian army on the Passarge in 1807. In other places in modern times, it has been used only rarely, mainly because wars have involved too much

movement. But even when there was reason to use it, it was neglected, as Murat neglected it at Tarutino. A broader extension of his defensive line would have saved him from losing thirty pieces of artillery in an outpost engagement.

There can be no doubt that, in certain circumstances, this system can offer major advantages. We will return to the subject on another occasion.

CHAPTER VIII. How Advanced Corps Operate

We have just seen how an army's security depends on the effect an advance guard and flank detachments have on an enemy moving forward. But these forces must always be regarded as very weak if we imagine them facing the enemy's main body. They therefore have to be used in a special way, so they can do the job assigned to them without risking the serious losses that this imbalance of strength would otherwise bring.

The purpose of a corps of this kind is to watch the enemy and slow his advance.

For the first of these purposes, a smaller force would never be enough. It would be driven back more easily, and its means of observation—its eyes—would not reach as far.

But that observation must be pushed to a high degree. The enemy must be compelled to reveal his full strength before such a corps, and in doing so disclose, to some extent, not only his numbers but also his intentions.

For that purpose, its mere presence would be enough. It would only need to wait and see what measures the enemy takes to drive it back, and then begin its retreat at once.

But it must also delay the enemy's advance, and that requires real resistance.

So how are we to imagine this waiting until the last moment, and this resistance as well, without such a corps being constantly exposed to serious loss? Mainly in this way: the enemy himself

is preceded by an advance guard, and so he does not move forward at once with the full outflanking and overwhelming weight of his entire force. If this advance guard is, from the outset, stronger than our own advanced corps—as we may naturally assume it is meant to be—and if the enemy's main body is also closer to his advance guard than we are to ours, and if that main body, already on the march, will soon arrive to support the attack of its advance guard with all its strength, even then this first stage, in which our advanced corps has to face the enemy's advance guard—that is, a force not greatly stronger than itself—still secures a certain gain of time. In that way, it allows us to observe the enemy's movements for a while without putting our own retreat in danger.

Even so, the resistance a corps can offer from a good position does not bring the kind of disadvantage we might expect in other situations where the forces engaged are so unequal. In a fight against a stronger enemy, the main danger is usually that he will outflank us and put us in a critical position by surrounding our line. But in the case we are considering, that risk is much smaller. The enemy advancing does not know exactly how close support from the main body of our army may be, and his leading column may suddenly find itself caught between two fires. As a result, when the enemy moves forward, he keeps the heads of his separate columns as nearly aligned as possible. He only begins, and then very cautiously, to turn one wing or the other after he has thoroughly reconnoitred our position. While he is still probing and advancing carefully in this way, the corps we have pushed forward has time to withdraw before it is in any serious danger.

How long such a corps should continue resisting an attack from the front, or the beginning of any flanking movement, depends mainly on the nature of the ground and on how near the enemy's supporting forces are. If the resistance is prolonged beyond its proper limit, whether through poor judgment or because the corps must be sacrificed to give the main body the time it needs, the result will always be very heavy loss.

Only in rare cases, especially when some local obstacle favors the defense, can the resistance actually made in such a fight be important in itself. The duration of the corps's small battle would hardly, by itself, be enough to gain the time required. In reality, that time is gained in three ways, inherent in the nature of the situation:

1. By making the enemy advance more cautiously, and therefore more slowly.

2. By the time taken up by the actual resistance offered.

3. By the retreat itself.

This withdrawal must be carried out as slowly as safety allows. If the terrain offers strong positions, they should be used, because that forces the enemy to prepare new attacks and new flanking moves, and in that way more time is gained. It is even possible that in a new position another real engagement may be fought.

We can see that direct fighting to slow the enemy's advance and the retreat itself are completely bound up with each other, and that the brief duration of each fight must be made up for by fighting them again and again.

This is the kind of resistance an advanced corps should offer. Its effectiveness depends chiefly on the strength of the corps and the nature of the terrain; next on the length of the road the corps must march, and on the support it receives.

A small force, even when both sides are equal in strength, can never hold out as long as a large corps, because the larger the masses, the more time they need to complete any action, whatever it may be. In mountainous country, marching alone is slower, resistance at different positions lasts longer and involves less danger, and favorable positions can be found at every step.

The farther forward a corps is pushed, the longer its retreat will be, and therefore the greater the total time gained by its resistance. But because a corps in such a position has less power of resistance in itself and is harder to reinforce, it must retreat more quickly, in proportion, than it would if it stood closer to the main body and had a shorter distance to cover.

The support and opportunities to rally available to an advanced corps naturally affect how long it can resist, because every moment that prudence demands for securing the retreat is time taken away from resistance, and therefore reduces it.

There is a clear difference in how much time an advanced corps can gain when the enemy first appears after midday. In that case, the night itself adds extra time, since an advance is rarely pushed on through the night. That is what happened in 1815. Over the short distance from Charleroi to Ligny, no more than

two miles,() the first Prussian corps under General Ziethen, about 30,000 strong, facing Buonaparte with 120,000 men, managed to gain twenty-four hours for the Prussian army while it was concentrating. The first attack on General Ziethen began at about nine o'clock on the morning of 15 June, and the battle of Ligny did not begin until about two in the afternoon of the 16th. General Ziethen did, of course, suffer very heavy losses, amounting to five or six thousand men killed, wounded, or taken prisoner. *

If we look to experience, the following results emerge, and they may serve as a basis for calculations of this kind.

A division of ten or twelve thousand men, with its proper share of cavalry, posted a day's march of three or four miles ahead in ordinary country that is not especially strong, will be able to delay the enemy, including the time taken in retreat, by about half again as long as he would otherwise need to march over the same ground. But if the division is only a mile in advance, then it should delay the enemy for about two or three times as long as he would otherwise spend on the march.

So, if we assume the distance is a march of four miles, which usually takes ten hours, then from the moment the enemy appears in force before the advanced corps, we may count on fifteen hours before he is in a position to attack our main body. If, on the other hand, the advanced guard is posted only a mile in advance, then the time before our army can be attacked will be more than three or four hours, and may very easily reach twice that. The reason is that the enemy still needs just as much

* Here, as elsewhere, the word mile means the German mile.—Tr.

time to settle his first measures against our advanced guard, and the resistance offered by that guard in its original position will be greater than it would be in a position farther forward.

The result is that, in the first of these imagined situations, the enemy cannot easily attack our main force on the same day he drives back the advance corps. This matches what experience shows. Even in the second case, the enemy must push our advance guard off its position in the first half of the day if he is to have enough time for a general engagement.

Since night works in our favor in the first of these situations, we can see how much time can be gained by placing an advance guard farther forward.

As for corps posted on the sides or flanks, whose purpose we have already explained, the way they operate usually depends to some extent on circumstances that belong to immediate practical use. The simplest way to view them is as advance guards placed on the sides and also somewhat forward, which then fall back diagonally toward the army.

Because these corps are not directly in front of the army, and cannot be supported as easily as a regular advance guard, they would face greater danger. But this is offset by the fact that the enemy's attacking power is usually somewhat weaker at the outer ends of his line. Even in the worst cases, such corps have enough space to withdraw without exposing the army as directly to danger as a fleeing advance guard would during a rapid retreat.

The most common and best way to support an advance corps is with a substantial force of cavalry. For that reason, when the corps is posted far forward, the reserve cavalry is placed between the main body and the advance corps.

The conclusion from these observations is that an advance corps achieves more by being there than by what it actually does. It matters less through the fights it enters than through the fights it might enter. It should never try to halt the enemy's movements outright. Instead, it should act like a pendulum, moderating and regulating those movements so they can be calculated.

CHAPTER IX. Camps

We are now looking at the three situations of an army outside actual combat purely from a strategic point of view—that is, only as they are shaped by place, time, and the number of troops available for action. Everything that concerns the internal arrangement for battle and the transition into combat belongs to tactics.

By the disposition of an army in camp, we mean every arrangement of an army outside quarters, whether in tents, huts, or bivouac. Strategically, this is entirely identical with the battle that may arise from that arrangement. Tactically, however, that is not always the case, because for many reasons we may choose a campsite that is not exactly the same as the intended battlefield. Since we have already said all that is necessary about the disposition of an army—that is, the position of its different parts—we need only add a few observations on camps in connection with their history.

In earlier times—that is, before armies again grew to great size, before wars lasted longer, and before separate operations were connected to an overall plan, and indeed up to the wars of the French Revolution—armies always used tents. That was their normal condition. When the milder season began, they left their quarters, and they did not return to them until winter arrived. Winter quarters at that time must, to some extent, be regarded as a state outside war, because in them the forces were neutralized and the whole machinery stopped. The quarters used to restore an army before the true winter quarters, along with other temporary cantonments for short periods within

narrow limits, were transitional and exceptional conditions.

This is not the place to ask how such a regular, voluntary suspension of military power fit with—or could now fit with—the purpose and nature of war; we will return to that subject later. It is enough here to note that this was in fact the case.

Since the wars of the French Revolution, armies have completely abandoned tents because of the burden they impose. In part, it has been judged better for an army of 100,000 men to have, instead of 6,000 horses for tents, 5,000 additional cavalry or a couple of hundred extra guns. In part, experience has shown that in large and rapid operations, carrying tents is a hindrance and of little value.

But this change brings two disadvantages: more casualties in the army and greater devastation of the countryside.

However limited the protection of an ordinary canvas tent may be, over a long period it still gives the troops real relief. For a single day, the difference is slight, because a tent offers little defense against wind and cold and does not keep out all rain. But when that small advantage is repeated two or three hundred times over the course of a year, it becomes significant. A higher rate of sickness is the natural result.

It needs no explanation that the lack of tents for the troops increases the devastation of the country.

One might suppose that, because of these two counteracting effects, abolishing tents would also have reduced the energy of war in another way. Troops would have had to remain longer in quarters, and for lack of proper means of encampment they

would have been forced to give up many positions that would have been possible if tents had been available.

That would indeed have happened if, during the same period, war in general had not undergone an enormous revolution that absorbed all these smaller, secondary influences.

The elemental fire of war has become so overwhelming, its force so extraordinary, that these regular periods of rest have also disappeared. Every power now presses forward with relentless strength toward the great decision, which will be discussed more fully in the ninth book. In these circumstances, any question about the effects on an army of no longer using tents in the field is pushed into the background. Troops now live in huts or bivouac under the open sky, regardless of the season, the weather, or the location, exactly as the general plan and purpose of the campaign require.

Whether war will continue in the future, in every situation and at all times, to preserve this energy is a question we will consider later. When that energy is absent, the lack of tents can have some effect on how war is conducted. But it is very doubtful that this effect will ever be strong enough to restore the use of tents. Now that the scope of war has expanded so much, it will never again remain within its old narrow limits, except now and then, for a time and under particular conditions, before breaking out again with the full force of its nature. Permanent arrangements for an army must therefore be based only on that nature.

CHAPTER X. Marches

Marches are simply the movement from one position to another, governed by two main conditions.

The first is proper care for the troops, so that no strength is wasted uselessly when it could be used to advantage. The second is accuracy in movement, so that all parts fit together exactly. If we were to march 100,000 men in a single column, that is, along one road with no intervals of time, the rear of the column would never reach the intended destination on the same day as the front. We would either have to move at an unusually slow pace, or the mass would spread out like a stream of water breaking into drops. That dispersal, together with the excessive strain placed on those in the rear because of the column's length, would soon throw everything into confusion.

If we look at the opposite extreme, we find that the smaller the body of troops in a column, the more easily and accurately it can march. This creates a need to divide forces that is separate from the division of an army into parts based on its position. So although the division into marching columns generally grows out of the army's overall strategic disposition, that is not true in every case. Any large force that is meant to concentrate at a single point must be divided for the march. But even when the army's disposition in separate parts leads to a march in separate divisions, sometimes the original disposition matters most, and sometimes the march itself does. For example, if the troops are disposed simply for rest, in a situation where no battle is expected, then the needs of the march take priority. Those needs mainly concern the choice of good, well-traveled roads.

With this distinction in mind, in one case we choose the road because of the quarters and campsites; in the other, we accept whatever quarters and campsites we can get because of the road. When a battle is expected, and everything depends on reaching a particular point with a large body of troops, we should not hesitate to use even the worst side roads if necessary. But if we are still on the way to the theater of war, then the columns should take the nearest main roads, and we should look for the best quarters and camps that can be found near them.

Whichever kind of march it is, if combat is possible—as it is throughout the whole sphere of actual war—it is a fixed rule in modern warfare to organize the columns so that each body of troops is capable of fighting independently. This requirement is met by combining the three arms, by creating an organized subdivision of the whole force, and by placing each under a competent commander. Marches, therefore, have been the main cause of the new order of battle, and they benefit from it more than anything else.

In the middle of the last century, especially in the wars fought by Frederick II, generals began to treat movement as a core part of combat and to believe they could win by the effect of unexpected maneuvers. But because there was no organized battle formation, this led to extremely complicated and exhausting marching evolutions. When an army moved near the enemy, it needed to be ready to fight at any moment. At that time, however, it was never truly ready unless the entire army was assembled together, because only the whole army counted as a complete fighting body. On a flank march, the second line

had to stay at the prescribed distance from the first—about a quarter of a mile—and so it had to march over every rise and hollow of the ground. That demanded enormous effort, as well as detailed local knowledge; for where are there two good roads running parallel to each other only a quarter of a mile apart? The cavalry on the wings faced the same problem even when the army marched straight ahead. The artillery created another difficulty. It needed a road of its own, protected by infantry. But the infantry lines had to remain unbroken, and the artillery made their already long, straggling columns even longer, throwing all the carefully regulated distances into confusion. One need only read the marching arrangements in Tempelhof's History of the Seven Years' War to see all these problems clearly, and to understand the restrictions they placed on the conduct of war.

Since then, however, the modern art of war has divided armies according to a regular system, so that each main part is itself a complete whole—small in scale, but able to fight in battle much like the larger whole, except in one respect: it cannot keep up its action for as long. The result of this change is that, even when the entire force is meant to take part in a battle, the columns no longer need to stay so close together that they can unite before the fighting begins. It is now enough if they concentrate during the action itself.

The smaller a force is, the easier it is to move. For that reason, it needs less of the subdivision that comes not from a deliberate separate deployment, but simply from the awkwardness of handling a large mass. A small force can therefore march on a single road, and if it has to advance on several lines, it can

usually find nearby roads that are good enough for the purpose. As the mass grows larger, the need to divide it also grows. The number of columns increases, and because there may be too few prepared roads, or even too few major highways, the columns are forced farther apart. The danger created by this subdivision increases in inverse proportion to the need for it. The smaller the separate parts are, the more quickly they must be able to support one another; the larger they are, the longer they can safely act on their own. If we recall what was said in the preceding book on this subject, and also remember that in cultivated countries there are usually fairly good roads running parallel to the main road just a few miles away, it becomes clear that arranging a march presents no great difficulty that would make speed and precision incompatible with proper concentration of force. In mountainous country, parallel roads are scarce, and communication between them is difficult; but a single column also has much greater defensive strength.

To make this idea clearer, let us look at a concrete example.

A division of 8,000 men, with its artillery and other wagons, occupies, as experience shows in ordinary circumstances, a length of one league. If two divisions march one behind the other on the same road, the second will arrive one hour after the first. But, as stated in the sixth chapter of the fourth book, a division of this size is fully capable of sustaining combat for several hours, even against a stronger force. Therefore, even in the worst case—if the first division had to begin fighting at once—the second would still not arrive too late. Moreover, within a league to the right and left of the road on which we are marching, there are generally, in the cultivated countries of

central Europe, side roads that can also be used for marching. There is therefore no need to move across open country, as was so often done in the Seven Years' War.

Experience shows that the head of a column made up of four divisions and a cavalry reserve can usually cover a march of three miles in eight hours, even on poor roads. If we allow one league of depth for each division, and another league for the reserve cavalry and artillery, then the entire march would take thirteen hours. That is not an excessive amount of time, and in that period forty thousand men would have passed along the same road. With a force of that size, however, we can also use side roads farther out, which are generally available and can easily shorten the march. If the mass of troops moving along the same road is even larger than this, then it is no longer essential for the whole force to arrive on the same day, because armies of that size do not now fight as soon as they meet, but usually not until the next day.

We have given these specific examples not to cover every possible case, but to make our meaning clearer. By briefly looking at what experience has shown, we want to demonstrate that under the modern conduct of war, organizing marches no longer presents such great difficulties. Even the fastest marches, carried out with the greatest precision, no longer demand the special skill or exact knowledge of the terrain that Frederick needed for his rapid and precise marches in the Seven Years' War. With the way armies are now organized, marches largely proceed on their own, or at least without much advance planning. In earlier times, battles were directed by simple verbal command, while marches required a carefully

worked-out plan. Now the reverse is true: the order of battle requires the plan, while for a march a verbal command is almost enough.

As is well known, all marches are either perpendicular to the front or parallel to it. The latter, also called flank marches, change the geometric position of the divisions: units that stood side by side in line will move one after another, and the reverse as well. Although the line of march may form any angle with the front, the order of march must still clearly belong to one or the other of these two classes.

This geometric change could be fully carried out only by tactics, and even then only through what is called a file march, which is impossible with large bodies of troops. Strategy is even less able to accomplish it. In the old order of battle, the only parts that changed their geometric relationship were the centre and the wings. In the new order, the parts are the divisions of the first line—corps, divisions, or even brigades, depending on how the army is organized. The conclusions already drawn from the new order of battle apply here as well. Since it is no longer as necessary as it once was for the whole army to be assembled before action begins, greater care is taken to ensure that troops marching together make up a complete whole, or unit. If two divisions were arranged so that one served as the reserve for the other, and they were to advance against the enemy on two roads, no one would think of sending part of each division along each road. One road would immediately be assigned to each division. They would then march side by side, and each divisional commander would be left to provide a reserve for himself in case of combat. Unity of command matters far more

than the original geometric arrangement. If the divisions reach their new position without fighting, they can restore their former relationship. Still less, if two divisions standing together are to make a parallel flank march on two roads, would we think of placing the second line or reserve of each division on the rear road. Instead, we would assign one road to each division and, during the march, treat one division as the reserve for the other. If an army of four divisions, with three forming the front line and the fourth the reserve, is to march against the enemy in that order, it is natural to assign a road to each of the divisions in front and have the reserve follow the centre. If there are not three roads at suitable distances from one another, we need not hesitate to march at once on two roads, since no serious inconvenience will result from doing so.

The same applies in the opposite case: the flank march.

Another issue is whether columns should march out from the right flank or the left. In parallel marches, or marches to a flank, the answer is obvious. No one would march out from the right in order to move toward the left flank. In a march to the front or rear, the marching order should ideally be chosen based on how the road network relates to the line on which the army is expected to deploy later. In tactics, this can often be done, because the spaces involved are smaller and the geometric relationships are easier to see. In strategy, that is quite impossible. So although we sometimes find attempts to carry this tactical analogy over into strategy, it was nothing but pedantry. Formerly, the whole marching order was purely a tactical matter, because an army on the march still remained a single, indivisible body and considered nothing except a battle

fought by the whole force. Even so, when Schwerin marched out from his position near Brandeis on 5 May, he could not know whether his future battlefield would lie to his right or left, and for that reason he was forced to make his famous countermarch.

If an army in the old order of battle advanced against the enemy in four columns, then on each wing the cavalry in the first and second lines made up the two outer columns, while the two lines of infantry forming the wings made up the two central columns. These columns might all march out from the right or all from the left; or the right wing might march from the right and the left wing from the left; or the left from the right and the right from the left. In the last case, it was called a "double column from the centre." But all these arrangements, though they should properly have been directly connected to the army's later deployment, were in fact completely indifferent to it. When Frederick the Great entered the battle of Leuthen, his army had marched out by wings from the right in four columns. That is why the remarkable shift into a march in order of battle, described by all historians, was carried out with such ease: it happened to suit the king's decision to attack the Austrian left wing. If he had wanted instead to turn their right, he would have had to countermarch his army, as he did at Prague.

If these formations did not achieve that purpose in those days, they would be even more pointless now. We still know no more than people did before about where the future battlefield lies in relation to the road we are taking. And the small loss of time caused by marching out in inverted order matters far less now than it once did. The new order of battle also helps in this respect: it no longer matters which division arrives first or which

brigade comes under fire first.

In these circumstances, it makes no difference whether the march begins from the right or the left, except that alternating between the two helps spread the troops' fatigue more evenly. Since that is the only purpose, it is still an important reason for keeping both methods of marching off in large bodies of troops.

For the reasons just given, an advance from the centre as a deliberate maneuver naturally disappears, and can occur only by chance. In strategy, an advance from the centre by one and the same column is in fact absurd, because it assumes the existence of two roads.

The order of march belongs more to tactics than to strategy, because it involves dividing a whole into parts that, after the march, are meant to become a whole again. But in modern warfare, the formal connection between those parts no longer has to be constantly maintained during a march. On the contrary, the parts may become more widely separated and must therefore rely more on their own resources. As a result, independent engagements are now much more likely to occur, in which the separate parts must hold their own. These must therefore be counted as complete engagements in themselves, and that is why we have thought it necessary to say this much on the subject.

Further, as we saw in the second chapter of this book, an order of battle arranged in three side-by-side parts is the most natural one when no special objective takes precedence. From this it also follows that an order of march in three columns is the most natural.

It only remains to note that, in strategy, the idea of a column does not mainly depend on a single body of troops marching in one line. The term is also used to describe bodies of troops moving along the same road on different days. The division into columns is made chiefly to shorten and ease the march, since smaller bodies move faster and more conveniently than large ones. But that same result can be achieved by sending troops along the same road on different days, just as well as by sending them along different roads.

CHAPTER XI. Marches (Continued)

As for the length of a march and the time it takes, we naturally rely on the general results of experience.

For modern armies, it has long been accepted that a march of three miles should be the usual day's work. Over long distances, this may be reckoned as an average of two miles per day, once the necessary rest days are included for whatever repairs of all kinds may be needed.

In level country and on reasonably good roads, such a march will take a division of 8,000 men from eight to ten hours. In hilly country, it will take from ten to twelve hours. If several divisions are combined in one column, the march will take a couple of hours more, not counting the intervals that must pass between the departure of the first division and those that follow.

We see, then, that a march of this kind takes up most of the day. We should not judge the fatigue of a soldier carrying his pack for ten or twelve hours by comparing it to an ordinary walk of three miles, which a person on fairly good roads might easily cover in five hours.

In exceptional cases, the longest marches are five miles a day, or at most six; for any sustained period, four.

A march of five miles requires a halt of several hours, and a division of 8,000 men cannot complete it, even on a good road, in less than sixteen hours. If the march is six miles, and several divisions are in the column, we may count on at least twenty

hours.

Here we mean the movement of several full divisions at the same time from one camp to another, because that is the usual form of marching in a theater of war. When several divisions march in a single column, the first division is formed up and sent off before the others, and so it reaches its campsite earlier. Even so, the difference can never equal the full amount of time represented by the depth of a division along the road of march, which the French express well as the time required for its découlement (running down). So the soldier gains very little relief from fatigue in this way, while the total duration of the march increases greatly as the number of troops being moved grows. It is seldom practical to assemble and send off the different brigades of a division at separate times in the same way, and for that reason we have taken the division itself as the unit.

Over long distances, when troops move from one cantonment to another and travel in small bodies without assembly points, the distance covered each day can certainly be greater. In fact, it is greater, because of the detours that are necessary in getting to quarters.

But marches in which the troops must assemble every day in divisions, or perhaps in corps, and then make an additional move to reach quarters, take the most time. They are advisable only in rich countries and where the bodies of troops are not too large, because in such cases the easier supply of provisions and the shelter the troops receive are enough to make up for the fatigue of a longer march. The Prussian army undoubtedly

followed a mistaken system during its retreat in 1806 by putting the troops into quarters every night for the sake of subsistence. They could have obtained subsistence while bivouacking, and the army would not have had to spend fourteen days covering fifty miles, which in the end it managed only by extreme effort.

When an army has to march over bad roads or through hilly country, all calculations of time and distance have to be adjusted so much that it becomes hard to estimate with any confidence how long a particular march will take. It is even less possible, then, to build any general theory on the subject. Theory can only warn us how easily error arises here. To avoid it, we need the most careful calculations and a wide allowance for unexpected delays. The weather and the condition of the troops must also be taken into account.

Since armies stopped using tents and adopted the system of feeding troops through compulsory local requisitions, their baggage has been greatly reduced. The natural and highly important result would seem to be faster movement by the army and, therefore, longer daily marches. In practice, however, this happens only under certain conditions.

Within the theatre of war, this change has done very little to speed up marches. It has long been well known that whenever unusually long marches were required, the usual practice was to leave the baggage behind, send it ahead, or in general keep it separate from the troops for as long as those movements continued. As a result, the baggage usually had little effect on the march itself, because once it was out of the way and no longer a direct obstacle, no further concern was given to it,

whatever losses or damage it might suffer. For that reason, marches took place during the Seven Years' War that still cannot be surpassed. One example is Lascy's march in 1760, when he had to support the Russians' diversion against Berlin. On that occasion, he covered the road from Schweidnitz to Berlin through Lusatia, a distance of 225 miles, in ten days—an average of twenty-two miles a day—which would be an extraordinary march even now for a corps of 15,000 men.

On the other hand, the new way of supplying troops has introduced a new cause of delay in army movements. When troops have to gather part of their own supplies, as often happens, they need more time for that work than they would if they were simply issued rations from supply wagons. In addition, on long marches, troops cannot be camped in such large numbers at a single point; the divisions have to be spread out so they can be supplied more easily. Finally, it is almost always necessary to quarter part of the army, especially the cavalry. Taken together, all of this causes a noticeable delay. We therefore find that Buonaparte, in pursuing the Prussians in 1806 in order to cut off their retreat, and Blücher in 1815, pursuing the French for the same purpose, covered only thirty miles in ten days—a pace that Frederick the Great was able to achieve on his marches from Saxony to Silesia and back, despite all the baggage train he had to take with him.

At the same time, the mobility and practical flexibility, if we may use that expression, of both the large and small parts of an army on the theatre of war have very clearly improved because baggage has been reduced. This is partly because, while the number of cavalry and guns remains the same, there are fewer

horses, and therefore less forage is needed. It is also because we are no longer so tied to one position, since we do not have to keep constant watch over a long baggage train dragging behind us.

Marches like the one Frederick the Great made after raising the siege of Olmütz in 1758, with 4,000 carriages and an escort that used half his army, broken up into single battalions and companies, could not now be carried out in the presence of even the most timid enemy.

On long marches, such as from the Tagus to the Niemen, this lightening of the army is felt even more clearly. Although the normal length of a day's march remains the same because some carriages still remain, in cases of great urgency we can go beyond that usual distance with less sacrifice.

In general, reducing baggage contributes more to saving strength than to increasing speed.

CHAPTER XII. Marches (continued)

We must now consider the damaging effect marches have on an army. That effect is so great that it can be seen as an active force of destruction, just as much as combat itself.

A single moderate march does not wear down the force, but a series of even moderate marches will certainly do so, and a series of hard marches will naturally do it much sooner.

In the actual theater of war, shortages of food and shelter, poor and broken roads, and the constant need to be ready for battle place an extreme strain on our resources. Men, horses, vehicles of every kind, and even clothing are worn out and ruined by it.

People often say that a long period of rest is bad for an army's physical health, and that there is more sickness then than during moderate activity. No doubt illness can and does spread when soldiers are crowded together in tight quarters. But the same thing would happen if those quarters were taken on the march, and lack of fresh air and exercise can never be the cause of such illnesses, since it is so easy to provide both through drills and exercise.

Consider for a moment what a difference it makes when a person's body is already weakened and near collapse: whether he falls ill in a house, or is struck down in the middle of the road, knee-deep in mud, under pouring rain, and carrying a knapsack on his back. Even in camp, he can soon be sent to the nearest village and will not be entirely without medical help. On the

march, however, he may go for hours with no assistance at all, and then be forced to drag himself on for miles as a straggler. How many minor illnesses become serious in this way, and how many serious ones become fatal. Think also of how an ordinary march through dust and under the blazing summer sun can produce extreme heat, until the soldier, tormented by unbearable thirst, rushes to a cold spring and brings back sickness and death.

These reflections are not meant to argue for less activity in war. The instrument exists to be used, and if use wears it down, that is simply the natural course of things. What we want is to see everything kept in its proper place, and to push back against the kind of theoretical bombast that treats the most astonishing surprises, the fastest movements, and the most relentless activity as if they cost nothing, and paints them as rich mines left untouched only because the general is lazy. It is much the same with these mines as with those from which gold and silver are taken: people see only the yield, and no one asks what the labor cost that brought it to light.

On long marches outside a theater of war, the conditions are usually easier and the daily losses are no doubt smaller. But for that very reason, men with even slight illness are generally lost to the army for some time, because convalescents find it hard to catch up with an army that is constantly moving forward.

Among the cavalry, the number of lame horses and horses with sore backs rises steadily. Among the wagons and carriages, many break down or need repair. So it never fails that after a march of 100 miles or more, an army arrives greatly weakened,

especially in its cavalry and transport train.

If such marches are necessary in the theater of war, that is, under the enemy's eyes, then this disadvantage is added to the others. Combined, the two can produce losses among large bodies of troops that, under otherwise unfavorable conditions, may reach an almost incredible level.

Just a couple of examples will make our meaning clear.

When Bonaparte crossed the Niemen on 24 June 1812, the huge central force of the army he later led toward Moscow numbered 301,000 men. At Smolensk, on 15 August, he detached 13,500, which should have left him with 287,500. In fact, however, the army's actual strength at that date was only 182,000. He had therefore lost 105,000 men.( ) Since up to that point there had been only two engagements worth mentioning—one between Davoust and Bragathion, the other between Murat and Tolstoy-Osterman—we may estimate the French losses in action at no more than 10,000 men. That means the losses from sickness and straggling over fifty-two days, on a march of about seventy miles straight ahead, came to 95,000 men, or one-third of the whole army. *

Three weeks later, at the time of the battle of Borodino, the total loss had risen to 144,000, including the casualties of the battle. Eight days later, at Moscow, it had reached 198,000. In general, the army's losses at the start of the campaign ran at a rate of 1/150 daily; later they rose to 1/120; and in the final period they increased to 1/19 of the original strength.

* All these figures are taken from Chambray. Compare Bd. vii. 2nd edition, § 80 ff.

Napoleon's movement from the crossing of the Niemen to Moscow can certainly be called steady and continuous. Even so, we must remember that it lasted eighty-two days, during which he covered only 120 miles. On two occasions the French army also made regular halts: once at Wilna for about fourteen days, and again at Witebsk for about eleven days. During those pauses, many stragglers had time to rejoin. This fourteen-week advance did not take place in the worst season of the year or over the worst roads. It was summer, and the roads they marched on were mostly sandy. The real difficulties were the enormous mass of troops crowded onto one road, the lack of adequate supplies, and an enemy that was retreating, but by no means fleeing.

We will say nothing here about the retreat of the French army from Moscow to the Niemen, but one fact may be noted: the Russian army that followed them left Kaluga 120,000 strong and reached Wilna with 30,000. Everyone knows how few men were lost in actual combat during that period.

One more example comes from Blücher's 1813 campaign in Silesia and Saxony. What makes this campaign especially striking is not any single long march, but the sheer amount of marching back and forth. York's corps in Blücher's army began the campaign on 16th August about 40,000 strong, and by the battle of Leipsic on 19th October it had fallen to 12,000. The main engagements this corps fought—at Goldberg, Lowenberg, on the Katsbach, at Wartenburg, and at Mockern (Leipsic)—cost it 12,000 men, according to the best authorities. That means its losses from other causes over those eight weeks came to 16,000, or two-fifths of the whole.

We must therefore accept that a war full of movement will cause heavy wear and loss in our own forces. We must shape the rest of our plan with that in mind, and above all make proper arrangements for the reinforcements that are to follow.

CHAPTER XIII. Cantonments

In the modern system of war, cantonments have once again become indispensable, because neither tents nor a complete military train can make an army independent of them. Huts and open-air camps, or bivouacs as they are called, may be used to a great extent, but they can never become the normal way of quartering troops without sickness taking hold and wearing down their strength before its time. That happens sooner or later, depending on the weather and climate. The campaign in Russia in 1812 is one of the few cases in which, despite a very severe climate, the troops hardly ever stayed in cantonments during the six months it lasted. But what was the result of this extreme effort? It should be called an extravagance, if that word did not apply even more strongly to the political idea behind the whole enterprise.

Two things stand in the way of occupying cantonments: the nearness of the enemy and the speed of movement. For that reason, armies leave them as soon as a decision draws near, and they cannot take them up again until the decision is over.

In modern wars—that is, in all the campaigns of the last twenty-five years that come to mind—the military side has been pursued with full force. In nearly all of them, everything possible was generally done in terms of activity and the utmost exertion of strength. But these campaigns were short. They rarely lasted more than half a year, and in most cases a few months were enough to bring matters to a crisis. That meant either the defeated enemy was forced to ask for an armistice or immediate peace, or the victor’s momentum had spent itself.

During such a period of intense effort, there was little room to think about cantonments. Even in the victorious advance of the pursuing army, when danger had passed, the speed of movement made that kind of relief impossible.

But when events move less violently for any reason, and the balance of forces shifts more evenly back and forth, the housing of troops again becomes a matter of first importance. This need affects the conduct of war itself. In part, it leads us to seek more time and security through a stronger system of outposts and a larger advanced guard pushed farther forward. In part, it means our decisions are shaped less by the tactical advantages of the ground in the geometric relation of lines and points, and more by the richness and fertility of the country. A commercial town of twenty or thirty thousand inhabitants, or a road lined with large villages or prosperous towns, offers such good means for gathering large bodies of troops in one place that the resulting concentration gives so much freedom and room for movement that it fully makes up for the advantages some other point might have because of its better position.

As for the form to follow in arranging cantonments, we have only a few remarks to offer, since this subject belongs mostly to tactics.

Housing troops falls into two categories, because it can be either the main concern or only a secondary one. If troop positions during a campaign are determined purely by tactical and strategic reasons, and if, as especially happens with cavalry, they are sent to whatever quarters are available near the army’s concentration point for the sake of comfort, then

quarters are only a secondary matter and serve as a substitute for camps. They must therefore be chosen within a distance that allows the troops to reach the assembly point in good time. But if an army goes into quarters in order to rest and recover, then housing the troops becomes the main concern, and other arrangements, including the choice of the exact assembly point, will be shaped by that purpose.

The first question to consider here is the overall shape of the cantonments. The usual arrangement is a very long oval, almost like a broadened version of the tactical battle line. The army's assembly point is placed in front, and headquarters in the rear. In fact, all three of these arrangements work against, and indeed are almost the opposite of, what is needed for the army to assemble safely when the enemy approaches.

The more the cantonments take the shape of a square, or better yet a circle, the faster the troops can concentrate at a single point, namely the center. The farther back the assembly point is placed, the longer it will take the enemy to reach it, and therefore the more time we have to assemble. An assembly point behind the cantonments can never be in danger. On the other hand, the farther forward headquarters is placed, the sooner reports will arrive, and the better informed the commander will be about everything. At the same time, the arrangements first mentioned are not without features that deserve some attention.

By spreading cantonments out more widely, we aim to protect the countryside that the enemy might otherwise force to pay contributions. But this reason is neither entirely sound nor

especially important. It is valid only for the areas at the outer ends of the wings. It does not apply at all to the spaces between separate divisions of the army, if those divisions quarter closer around their assembly point, because no enemy will then dare enter those gaps. And it is not very important, because there are easier ways to protect nearby districts from the enemy's requisitions than by scattering the army itself.

The assembly point is placed in front in order to cover the quarters, for the following reasons. First, when troops are suddenly called to arms, they always leave behind in their cantonments a trail of stragglers, sick men, baggage, provisions, and so on. If the assembly point is placed to the rear, these can easily fall into the enemy's hands. Second, we must fear that if the enemy, with some cavalry units, gets past the advanced guard, or if that guard is defeated in any way, he may strike scattered regiments or battalions. But if he meets a force drawn up in good order, even a weak one that must eventually be overpowered, he is still checked for a time, and that delay gains us time.

As for the position of headquarters, it is generally assumed that it cannot be made too secure.

Taking all these considerations together, we may conclude that the best arrangement for cantonment districts is one in which they form an oblong shape tending toward a square or circle, with the assembly point in the center and headquarters placed on the front line, well protected by substantial bodies of troops.

What we have said about protecting the wings when discussing the army's general disposition applies here as well. Therefore,

corps detached from the main body on the right and left, although meant to fight together with the rest, will have assembly points of their own on the same line as the main body.

If we consider that a country's terrain, on the one hand, determines the most natural place for troops to assemble through its favorable features, and, on the other hand, that the location of towns and villages determines the best places for cantonments, then it becomes clear how rarely any geometric form can be decisive in this matter. Still, it was necessary to draw attention to it, because, like all general rules, it influences most cases to a greater or lesser extent.

What remains to be said about a good position for cantonments is this: they should be placed behind some natural feature of the ground that provides cover, while the sides facing the enemy are watched by small but numerous detached parties. Or they may be placed behind fortresses, which, when circumstances make it impossible to judge the strength of their garrisons, inspire the enemy with greater respect and caution.

We reserve the subject of winter quarters protected by defensive works for a separate article.

The quarters occupied by troops on the march differ from what are called standing cantonments in this respect: to spare the troops unnecessary marching, cantonments on the march are placed as much as possible along the lines of march, and not at any great distance to either side of those roads. If their spread in this direction does not exceed a short day's march, the arrangement is by no means unfavorable to the army's rapid concentration.

In every case where the enemy is present, to use the technical phrase—that is, whenever there is no considerable gap between the advance guards of the two armies—the extent of the cantonments and the time needed to assemble the army determine the strength and position of the advance guard and outposts. But when those must instead be adapted to the enemy and to circumstances, then the extent of the cantonments must, conversely, depend on how much time we can expect the advance guard to gain by its resistance.

In the third() chapter of this book, we explained how to estimate this resistance in the case of an advanced corps. From the time that resistance gives us, we must subtract the time needed to send reports and get the men under arms. Only what remains is the time available for assembling at the point of concentration. *

We will conclude here as well by stating our view in the form of a practical result, as is usual under normal circumstances. If the advanced guard is posted at the same distance as the radius of the cantonments, and the assembly point is fixed at the centre of the cantonments, then the time gained by delaying the enemy's advance can be used to send word and get the troops under arms. In most cases, that would be enough, even if communication is not made by signals, cannon shots, and the like, but simply by relays of orderlies, which is the only truly reliable method.

With an advanced guard posted three miles in front, our cantonments could cover an area of thirty square miles. In a moderately populated country, there would be 10,000 houses

* 8th Chapter.—Tr.

within that space. For an army of 50,000 men, after deducting the advanced guard, that would mean four men to a billet, which would be very comfortable quarters. For an army twice that size, it would mean nine men to a billet, which still would not be especially crowded. On the other hand, if the advanced guard is only one mile in front, we could occupy only four square miles. Although the time gained does not decrease exactly in proportion to the shorter distance, and even at one mile we may still count on gaining six hours, the need for caution increases when the enemy is so near. But within such a space, an army of 50,000 men could find only partial accommodation, even in a very densely populated country.

From all this, we can see how important large, or at least fairly large, towns are here, since they make it possible to shelter 10,000 or even 20,000 men almost in one place.

It follows from this that, if we are not very near the enemy and have a suitable advanced guard, we may remain in cantonments even when the enemy is concentrated, as Frederick the Great did at Breslau at the beginning of 1762, and Buonaparte at Witebsk in 1812. But even if proper distance and good arrangements mean we need not fear being unable to assemble in time, even against a concentrated enemy, we must remember one thing: an army that is hastily assembling can do nothing else during that period. For the time being, it is not in a position to take immediate advantage of unexpected opportunities, and that robs it of much of its real effective power. The result is that an army should completely disperse itself into cantonments only in one of the following three cases:

1. If the enemy does the same.

2. If the condition of the troops makes it unavoidable.

3. If the army's more immediate purpose is strictly limited to holding a strong position, so that the only important thing is to concentrate the troops at that point in good time.

The campaign of 1815 provides a striking example of an army assembling from cantonments. General Ziethen, with Blücher's advanced guard of 30,000 men, was stationed at Charleroi, only two miles from Sombreff, the place appointed for the army's assembly. The most distant cantonments of the army were about eight miles from Sombreff—on one side beyond Ciney, and on the other near Liége. Even so, the troops quartered around Ciney assembled at Ligny several hours before the battle began, and those near Liége (Bulow's Corps) would have done so as well, if not for accident and poor arrangements in the transmission of orders and intelligence.

No doubt proper care was not taken for the security of the Prussian army. But in explanation, it must be said that these arrangements were made at a time when the French army was still scattered across widely spread cantonments. The real fault was not changing them as soon as the first news arrived that the enemy's troops were on the move and that Buonaparte had joined the army.

Even so, it is still remarkable that the Prussian army managed to concentrate at Sombreff at all before the enemy attacked. Blücher did receive word on the night of the 14th—twelve hours before Ziethen was actually attacked—that the enemy was advancing, and he began assembling his army. But by nine

o’clock on the morning of the 15th, Ziethen was already heavily engaged, and only at that same hour did General Thielman at Ciney first receive orders to march to Namur. He then had to gather his divisions and march six and a half miles to Sombreff, which he accomplished in 24 hours. General Bulow also could have arrived at about the same time, if the order had reached him when it should have.

But Buonaparte did not decide to launch his attack on Ligny until two in the afternoon on the 16th. His fear of having Wellington on one side and Blücher on the other—in other words, the imbalance in the opposing forces—helped cause this delay. Even so, we can see how even the most determined commander may be held back by the caution that naturally arises in situations that are, to some extent, complicated.

Some of the points raised here are clearly more tactical than strategic in character. But we have preferred to go a little beyond our proper bounds rather than risk not making ourselves clear enough.

CHAPTER XIV. Subsistence

This subject has become much more important in modern warfare for two main reasons. First, armies are generally far larger now than they were in the Middle Ages, or even in the ancient world. In earlier times, armies did sometimes appear that matched or even exceeded modern ones in size, but those cases were rare and short-lived. In modern military history, by contrast, from the time of Louis XIV onward, armies have consistently been large. But the second reason matters even more, and it belongs entirely to modern times. It is the much closer internal connection within wars themselves, and the constant readiness for battle among the forces carrying them on. Most older wars were made up of separate, unconnected operations, divided by intervals during which the war had in reality either completely paused and survived only in a political sense, or during which the armies had moved so far apart that each, without concern for the opposing army, dealt only with its own needs.

Modern wars—that is, wars fought since the Peace of Westphalia—have taken on a more systematic and connected form through the efforts of governments. Military aims generally dominate throughout, and they require supply arrangements on a matching scale. It is true that the wars of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries included long periods of inactivity, sometimes almost like a complete pause in the war. These were the regular periods spent in cantonments. Even so, those periods remained subordinate to the military purpose. They were caused by the harshness of the season, not by any

necessity arising from the troops' subsistence. And because they regularly ended with the return of summer, we may say that, at least during the fine season of the year, continuous action was the normal rule of war.

Since the shift from one situation or method of action to another always happens gradually, the same was true here. In the wars against Louis XIV, the allies still used to send their troops into winter cantonments in distant provinces so they could support them more easily. In the Silesian war, that was no longer done.

This systematic, coordinated way of waging war became possible only when states replaced feudal armies with regular troops in their service. The obligations imposed by feudal law were then converted into fines or payments. Personal military service either disappeared and was replaced by enlistment, or it continued only among the lower classes, while the nobility treated the duty of supplying a set number of men—as is still done in Russia and Hungary—as a kind of tribute, a tax paid in men. In every case, as we have noted elsewhere, armies from that point on became an instrument of the cabinet, resting chiefly on the treasury or the government’s revenue.

The same kind of change that took place in the way troops were raised and maintained also had to occur in the way they were fed and supplied. Once the privileged classes had been freed from the first of these duties by paying money instead, it was not so easy to impose the second duty on them again. The cabinet and the treasury therefore had to provide for the army’s subsistence, and they could not permit it to support itself within its own country at the people’s expense. Administrations were

therefore forced to treat the army's subsistence as a matter for which they were directly responsible. This made subsistence more difficult in two ways: first, because it had become a government responsibility; and second, because forces had to remain permanently assembled in order to face those maintained by other states.

In this way, a distinct military class arose within the population, with its own independent organization for support and subsistence, developed as fully as possible.

As a result, provisions were not only gathered into stores—either by purchase or by deliveries in kind from landed estates (Dominiallieferungen), and therefore from distant places—and placed in magazines. They were then sent out from those magazines in special wagons, baked near the troops' quarters in ovens set up for the occasion, and finally carried onward by the troops themselves through another transport system attached to the army. We look briefly at this system not only because it was characteristic of the military arrangements of the period, but also because it is a system that can never be completely abolished; some parts of it must always return.

Military organization thus kept moving toward greater independence from the people and the country.

As a result, war became more systematic and orderly, and more closely subordinated to the military—that is, the political—objective. But at the same time, it became far more restricted and hampered in its movements, and its energy was greatly weakened. An army was now tied to its supply magazines and limited by the capacity of its transport service.

Naturally, everything tended toward saving as much as possible on the troops' food. The soldier lived on a miserable scrap of bread, moved about like a shadow, and had no hope of better conditions to console him in his hardships.

Anyone who treats this miserable way of feeding soldiers as unimportant, and points to what Frederick the Great accomplished with troops maintained in this way, is looking at only one part of the issue. The ability to endure hardship is one of a soldier's finest virtues, and no army possesses true military spirit without it. But such hardship should be temporary, imposed by circumstances, not the result of a wretched system or of stingy, abstract calculations about the smallest ration on which a man can survive. When that happens, the strength of the men, both physical and moral, will always decline. What Frederick the Great managed to do with his soldiers cannot serve as a standard for us, partly because he faced enemies who followed a similar system, and partly because we do not know how much more he might have achieved if he had been able to let his troops live as Buonaparte allowed his to live whenever circumstances permitted.

Feeding horses through an artificial supply system, however, was never really attempted, because forage was far harder to provide due to its bulk. A horse's ration weighs about ten times as much as a man's. And the number of horses in an army is more than one-tenth the number of men; today it is about one-fourth to one-third, and in earlier times it was one-third to one-half. As a result, the total weight of forage needed for a given period is three, four, or five times the weight of the soldiers' rations for that same time. For that reason, armies

relied on the shortest and most direct way of meeting this need: foraging expeditions. But these expeditions created serious difficulties for the conduct of war in other respects. First, they made it a primary aim to keep the war in the enemy's country. Second, they made it impossible to stay very long in one area. By the time of the Silesian War, however, foraging expeditions had become much less common. They were found to drain the countryside far more heavily, and to cause much more waste, than meeting the need through requisitions and taxes.

When the French Revolution suddenly brought a national army back onto the stage of war, the means available to governments proved inadequate. The whole system of war—shaped by the narrow limits of those means, and sustained by those same limits—collapsed. Naturally, that collapse also swept away the branch we are discussing here: the system of subsistence. Without bothering about magazines, and still less about the kind of elaborate organization we have described—the artificial clockwork in which the different parts of the transport service turned like a wheel—the leaders of the Revolution sent their soldiers into the field, forced their generals to fight, fed and reinforced their armies, and kept the war going through exaction, robbery, and plunder, taking whatever they needed for themselves.

Between these two extremes, the wars under Buonaparte, and those fought against him, followed a middle course. They simply used whichever available means suited them best; and that is how it will be in the future as well.

The modern way of supplying an army—that is, taking whatever can be found in the country, without regard for private property—can be carried out in four different ways: by living off the inhabitants, by contributions collected directly by the troops, by general contributions, and by magazines. In most cases, all four methods are used together, though one usually plays a larger role than the others. Still, there are times when only one method is used on its own.

1.—Living off the inhabitants, or the community, which amounts to the same thing.

If we keep in mind that any community—even a large town made up mainly of consumers—must always have enough provisions on hand to last several days, it is easy to see that even the most densely populated place can provide food and lodging for a day for roughly as many troops as it has inhabitants. It can also support a smaller number of troops for several days without any special advance preparation. In large towns, this is a very favorable situation, because it allows us to maintain a large force at a single point. In smaller towns, however, and still more in villages, the supply would be far from enough. A population of 3,000 or 4,000 per square mile, which would be high for such an area, would feed only 3,000 or 4,000 soldiers. If the army were large, the troops would have to be spread over so wide an area that this arrangement would hardly fit with other essential requirements. In flat countries, however, even in small towns, the amount of the kinds of provisions most necessary in war is generally much greater. The bread a peasant keeps is usually enough for his family for several days,

perhaps eight to fourteen. Meat can be obtained daily, and vegetable produce is generally available in enough quantity to last until the next harvest. Therefore, in quarters that have never before been occupied, there is no difficulty in supporting troops numbering three or four times as many as the inhabitants for several days. This again is a very satisfactory result. On this basis, where the population is about 2,000 or 3,000 per square mile and no large town is included, a column of 30,000 men would require about four square miles, or an area roughly two miles on each side. Therefore, for an army of 90,000, which we may estimate at about 75,000 combatants, marching in three columns close beside one another, we would need a front six miles wide, assuming three roads could be found within that width.

If several columns move one after another into these cantonments, then the civil authorities must take special measures. With that help, there should be no great difficulty in obtaining everything required for another day or two. Therefore, if the 90,000 mentioned above are followed the next day by an equal number, even this second force would not suffer from want. That brings the total to the large number of 150,000 combatants.

Finding forage for the horses presents even fewer difficulties. It does not need to be ground or baked, and there must be enough forage in the country to keep the horses going until the next harvest. So even where little fodder is stored in stalls, there should still be no shortage. The supply of forage should, however, be required from the community as a whole, not from individual inhabitants. It is also assumed, of course, that some

attention is paid to the character of the country when planning a march, so that cavalry is not sent mainly into commercial and manufacturing areas, or into districts where no forage is available.

The conclusion to draw from this brief survey is this: in a moderately populated country—that is, one with 2,000 to 3,000 people per square mile—an army of 150,000 fighting men can be supported by the inhabitants and the community for one or two days within a space narrow enough not to disrupt its concentration for battle. In other words, such an army can maintain itself on a continuous march without magazines or other prior preparation.

The campaigns of the French army in the Revolutionary War, and later under Buonaparte, were based on this result. They marched from the Adige to the Lower Danube, and from the Rhine to the Vistula, with little means of support beyond what they obtained from the inhabitants, and without ever suffering want. Because their operations rested on moral and physical superiority, because they aimed at definite results, and because they were never held back by indecision or caution, their advance in the course of victory was generally one long, uninterrupted march.

If conditions are less favorable—if the population is smaller, or made up more of artisans than agriculturists, if the soil is poor, or if the country has already been overrun several times—then of course the results will fall short of what we have assumed. Still, we must remember that if the width of a column's front is increased from two miles to three, the area of country it covers

becomes more than twice as large. Instead of four square miles, it commands nine. And this is still an area that, in ordinary cases, will allow concentration for action. We therefore see that even in unfavorable circumstances, this method of subsistence remains compatible with a continuous march.

But if the army is forced to stop for several days, serious hardship will follow unless preparations have already been made for that possibility in other ways. These preparations are of two kinds, and without them even a large army cannot survive. The first is to equip the troops with a wagon train so they can carry bread or flour, the most essential part of their food supply, for a few days—that is, for three or four days. If we add to this another three or four days' rations that each soldier can carry himself, then the army has secured the most necessary subsistence for eight days.

The second measure is a regular commissariat, which, whenever there is even a brief halt, gathers provisions from more distant places, so that at any moment we can shift from quartering on the inhabitants to a different system.

Living in cantonments has the great advantage of requiring hardly any transport and of being carried out very quickly. But it clearly depends on one prior condition: cantonments must be available for all the troops.

2.—Subsistence through exactions enforced by the troops themselves.

If a single battalion occupies a camp, the camp can be placed near a few villages, and those villages can be ordered to provide supplies. In that case, the method of subsistence would not differ much from the previous one. But more often, when the body of troops encamped at one point is much larger, there is no choice but to collect supplies in common from the surrounding districts marked out for that purpose. Enough is gathered to supply one part of the army, such as a brigade or division, and it is then distributed from the common stock that has been collected.

At first glance, it is clear that an army could not possibly live by this method. The amount gathered from the stores in any one district would be far less than what the troops could obtain if they were quartered there themselves. When thirty or forty men take over a farmer's house, they can, if necessary, find and take the very last bit of food. But an officer sent out with only a few men to collect provisions has neither the time nor the ability to search out everything stored in a house. Often he also lacks transport. As a result, he can collect only a small part of what is actually available. There is another problem. In camp, troops are concentrated so closely in one place that the surrounding area from which provisions can be quickly gathered is too small to supply all they need. What could really be done to feed 30,000 men from a circle only a mile across, or from an area of three or four square miles? Moreover, it would rarely be possible even to collect all that was there, because most of the nearest villages

would already be occupied by small detachments of troops, and they would not allow anything to be taken away. Finally, this method would cause enormous waste. Some men would get more than they needed, while a great deal would be lost and benefit no one.

The conclusion, then, is that feeding troops by forced contributions in this way can be done successfully only when the units are not too large—no bigger than a division of 8,000 or 10,000 men—and even then it should be used only as a necessary evil.

In general, however, it cannot be avoided for troops directly facing the enemy, such as advance guards and outposts, when the army is moving forward. These units must reach places where no preparations could have been made, and they are usually too far from the stores gathered for the rest of the army. The same is true of mobile columns operating independently, and of any situation in which, by chance, there is neither time nor any other means of obtaining supplies.

The more troops are used to living on regular requisitions, and the more time and circumstances allow that method of support to be used, the more satisfactory the results will be. But there is often not enough time, because whatever troops take directly for themselves is obtained much faster.

3.—By regular requisitions.

This is unquestionably the simplest and most effective way to supply troops, and it has formed the basis of all modern wars.

It differs from the previous method mainly in that it involves the cooperation of the local authorities. In this case, supplies must not be seized by force from the place where they are found. Instead, they should be delivered in an orderly way, according to a fair distribution of the burden. Only the country's recognized official authorities can make that distribution.

Everything here depends on time. The more time is available, the broader the area over which supplies can be collected. That reduces the burden on individuals and makes the result more orderly. Supplies can even be bought for cash to help out, which brings this method closer to the next one in order, that of magazines. When troops are assembled in their own country, there is no difficulty in feeding them through regular requisitions. As a rule, there is also no difficulty during a retreat. But when an army moves into a country it does not possess, there is very little time to make such arrangements. Usually there is no more than the single day by which the advanced guard normally precedes the army. The advanced guard sends requisitions to the local authorities, stating how many rations must be ready at particular places. But these supplies can only come from the immediate area, that is, from within a radius of a couple of miles around each point. Collections made so hastily will never be enough for a large army. As a result, unless the troops carry several days' provisions with them, they will soon face shortages. It is therefore the duty of the commissariat to

use what is received as carefully as possible and to issue it only to troops that have nothing. With each passing day, however, the difficulty becomes less. If the distance from which provisions can be obtained increases in proportion to the number of days, then the surface area from which contributions can be drawn increases by the square of that distance. If only four square miles are drawn on the first day, then on the next day there will be sixteen, and on the third day thirty-six. So on the second day there are twelve more square miles than on the first, and on the third day twenty more than on the second.

Of course, this is only a rough estimate of what may happen, and many circumstances may alter it. The most important is that one district may not be able to contribute as much as another. But we must also remember that the radius within which we can levy supplies may grow by more than two miles a day, perhaps by three or four, and in many places by even more.

These demands are carried out by detachments acting under the orders of government officials. But even more than that, they are enforced by the fear of responsibility, punishment, and mistreatment, which in such cases weighs on the whole population like a constant burden.

However, we do not intend to go into the details of the whole system of supply and army subsistence; we are concerned only with the results.

The conclusion suggested by a plain, common-sense view of the situation as a whole—and confirmed by the experience of the wars since the French Revolution—is this: even the largest army, if it carries provisions for a few days, can undoubtedly

support itself through contributions. These begin as soon as it enters a country and at first affect only the districts close to the army. Later, over time, they are imposed on a larger scale, across an ever wider area, and with steadily increasing authority.

This resource has no limit except the exhaustion, impoverishment, and devastation of the country itself. When an invading army remains for some time, the management of this system eventually passes into the hands of the highest officials. They naturally do what they can to spread the burden more evenly and to lighten it through purchases. At the same time, even an invader, when staying for a long period in enemy territory, is not usually so barbarous and reckless as to force that country to bear the whole cost of supporting his army. In this way, the system of contributions gradually comes to resemble the system of magazines, though it never disappears entirely or noticeably loses the influence it has on the conduct of the war. There is a great difference between a situation in which some of the resources taken from a country are replaced by supplies brought in from farther away—while that country still remains the army's main source of support—and a situation in which an army, as in the eighteenth century, meets all its needs from its own resources, with the country in which it operates generally contributing nothing to its support.

The main difference comes down to two things: using the country's transport and using its ovens. By doing this, an army can almost do away with that enormous burden—the military transport train—that constant dead weight which is always undermining the very work it is meant to support.

It is true that even now no army can manage entirely without some supply wagons. But their number is greatly reduced, and little more is needed than enough to carry one day's surplus into the next. Special circumstances, as in Russia in 1812, may still force an army to haul an enormous train and even field ovens. But such cases are exceptional. How often does it happen that 300,000 men advance 130 miles into hostile territory on almost a single road, through countries like Poland and Russia, and just before harvest? And even in such situations, any supplies carried with the army should be seen only as help in case of necessity, while contributions from the country must still be treated as the foundation of the whole system of supply.

Since the first campaigns of the French Revolutionary War, the requisition system has consistently been the foundation of French armies. The armies fighting them were forced to adopt the same method, and it is very unlikely ever to be given up. No other system can replace it with equally good results, whether in simplicity and lack of restriction or in the energy it gives to military operations. An army is rarely short of provisions during the first three or four weeks of a campaign, whatever direction it takes, and after that it can be supported by magazines. So we may fairly say that this method has given war the greatest possible freedom of movement. Difficulties may certainly be greater in one direction than in another, and that may matter in early planning. But we never face an absolute impossibility, and the need to provide subsistence can never by itself settle a question decisively. There is only one exception: a retreat through an enemy's country. In that case, many of the problems connected with subsistence come together. The movement is

continuous and usually carried out with hardly any real halt, so there is no time to obtain provisions. The circumstances at the start are generally unfavorable, so the troops must be kept concentrated, and they cannot be dispersed into cantonments or even spread very widely across the line of march. The hostility of the country rules out any hope of collecting contributions by simply issuing orders unless there is enough force behind them to enforce those orders. And finally, this is exactly the moment when the inhabitants are most likely to act on their feelings through open hostility. For all these reasons, an army in such a position is generally forced to keep strictly to its previously prepared lines of communication and retreat.

When Buonaparte had to retreat in 1812, he could not possibly withdraw by any route except the one by which he had advanced, because of the need to feed his army. If he had tried any other line, he would only have rushed into quicker and more certain destruction. All the criticism directed at him on this point, by French writers as well as others, is therefore sheer nonsense.

4.—Subsistence from Magazines.

If we want to draw a general distinction between this way of supplying troops and the one before it, we have to think of the kind of organization that existed for about thirty years at the end of the seventeenth century and throughout the eighteenth. Could that kind of organization ever return?

It is hard to see how it could be done without if large armies are to remain fixed in one place for seven, ten, or twelve years, as

they once did in the Netherlands, on the Rhine, in Upper Italy, Silesia, and Saxony. What country could bear, for so long, the burden of supporting two great armies as the sole source of their supplies without being ruined in the end, and therefore gradually becoming unable to meet their demands?

But this naturally raises a question: should the war determine the system of supply, or should the supply system determine the character of the war? Our answer is this: the supply system will shape the war first, as far as the other conditions it depends on allow. But when those conditions are pressed too far, the war will in turn act on the supply system and, in that case, determine it.

A war fought through requisitions and local supplies gathered on the spot has such a great advantage over one that depends on issues from magazines that the two hardly seem like the same instrument at all. No state, therefore, will willingly try to oppose the first with the second. And if some war minister were so shortsighted and blind to circumstances as to ignore the true relation between the two systems, and sent an army into the field to live by the old method, the pressure of events would force that army's commander along a different path, and the requisition system would emerge on its own. If we also consider that the heavy cost of such an organization would necessarily reduce the scale of the armament in other respects, including, of course, the actual number of fighting soldiers, since no state has unlimited wealth, then there seems little chance that such an organization will ever be used again unless the belligerents adopt it by mutual agreement—an idea that belongs purely to imagination.

We should therefore expect future wars to begin with the requisition system. How far either government will try to supplement it with an artificial supply organization in order to spare its own country remains to be seen. But we can be sure they will not do much. At such moments, governments focus on the most urgent needs, and an artificial system for feeding and supplying troops is not usually counted among them.

But if a war does not produce such decisive results, and if its operations are not as extensive as its true nature would allow, then the requisition system will begin to drain the country where the war is being fought. It will do so to such an extent that either peace must be made, or ways must be found to ease the burden on the country and free the army from depending on it for supplies. The latter happened with the French army under Buonaparte in Spain, but the former is much more common. In most wars, the exhaustion of the state grows so severe that, instead of considering how to continue the war at even greater cost, the need for peace becomes immediate and unavoidable. From this point of view, then, the modern way of waging war tends to shorten wars.

At the same time, we do not mean to deny outright that the old system of subsistence may reappear in future wars. Belligerents may perhaps return to it when the nature of their relations pushes them in that direction and circumstances favor its use. But we can never regard that system as a natural form of organization. It is far more an abnormal development, allowed by circumstances, and one that can never arise from war in its true sense. Still less can we treat that form or system as an improvement in war simply because it is more humane, for war

itself is not a humane undertaking.

Whatever method is used to supply food, it is naturally easier to carry out in rich, densely populated countries than in poor regions with sparse populations. Population matters because it affects the amount of provisions available in two ways. First, where consumption is high, the supply to meet it is usually high as well. Second, as a rule, a large population also produces a great deal. We must, of course, make an exception for districts inhabited mainly by manufacturers, especially when, as often happens, they lie in mountain valleys surrounded by barren land. But in most cases, it is far easier to feed troops in a densely populated country than in a thinly settled one. An army of 100,000 men cannot be supported as well on four hundred square miles inhabited by 400,000 people as it could be on four hundred square miles with a population of 2,000,000, even if the soil were equally good in both places. In addition, roads and water transport are much better in rich countries and offer more options because they are more numerous. Transport is more readily available, and commercial connections are easier and more reliable. In short, it is far easier to support an army in Flanders than in Poland.

As a result, war, with all its many offshoots, tends to settle along major roads, near populous towns, in the fertile valleys of large rivers, or along well-traveled sea coasts.

This clearly shows how supplying troops can broadly shape the direction and character of military operations, as well as the choice of a theater of war and lines of communication.

How much this factor matters, and how much weight we should give to the ease or difficulty of supplying the troops, depends greatly on how the war is fought. If it is waged in its true spirit—that is, with the unrestrained force natural to it, with constant pressure forward and a continual search for battle and a decisive result—then feeding the troops, though important, is still a secondary matter. But if there is a prolonged stalemate, with armies moving back and forth through the same province for years, then supply will often become the main concern, the intendant will become the commander-in-chief, and the conduct of the war will turn into the management of wagons.

There have been countless campaigns of this kind in which nothing happened. The plans failed, the forces were wasted, and the only excuse offered was lack of supplies. By contrast, Buonaparte used to say, "Qu'on ne me parle pas des vivres!"

To be sure, in the Russian campaign that general showed that this kind of recklessness can be carried too far. Even if we do not go so far as to say that the whole campaign was ruined by that cause alone—which would remain only a conjecture—it is beyond doubt that his disregard for the subsistence of his troops caused the extraordinary wasting away of his army during the advance and its complete destruction during the retreat.

But while fully recognizing in Buonaparte the eager gambler who risked many wild extremes, we may still fairly say that he and the revolutionary generals before him swept away a powerful prejudice about the subsistence of troops. They showed that it should never be regarded as anything more than

a condition of war, never as its object.

Besides, hardship in war is much like physical strain and danger: there is no fixed limit to what a general may demand from his army. A hard, unyielding nature asks more than a weak and sensitive one. An army's ability to endure also varies, depending on how far habit, military spirit, confidence in and affection for its commander, or enthusiasm for the cause of the fatherland support the soldier's will and energy. But we may take this as an established principle: no matter how far privation and want are carried, they should never be seen as anything but temporary conditions, to be followed by a state of plenty, even abundance. What could be more moving than the thought of so many thousands of soldiers, poorly clothed, carrying packs of thirty or forty pounds, struggling over every kind of road, in all kinds of weather, marching day after day without pause, with health and life constantly at risk, and yet unable to get even enough dry bread? Anyone who knows how often this happens in war can only wonder why it does not more often lead men to refuse any longer to submit their will and strength to such demands, and how the human imagination, when steadily directed toward a single purpose, can first call forth and then sustain such astonishing efforts.

So whenever a commander imposes great hardships on his men because great aims require such endurance, he should always remember, as a matter of prudence if not of feeling, that there is a reward for such sacrifices which he is bound to provide at another time.

We must now consider how the question of subsistence in war changes depending on whether operations are offensive or defensive.

The defender is able to make continuous use of the supplies laid up in advance, for as long as the defensive action lasts. The defending side, therefore, can hardly be without the necessities of life, especially when it is in its own country; but this is true even in the enemy's country. The attacker, on the other hand, moves farther and farther from his resources. As long as he continues to advance, and even during the first weeks after he stops, he must obtain what he needs from day to day, and this can very rarely be done without some want and hardship being felt.

This problem is felt most sharply at two particular stages. The first comes during the advance, before the decision is reached. At that point, the defending side still has all its supplies close at hand, while the attacker has had to leave his behind. He must keep his forces concentrated and therefore cannot spread his army over any wide area. Even his transport cannot stay close to him once he begins the movements that lead up to battle. If his preparations have not been made very carefully, it can easily happen that his army will be short of supplies for several days before the decisive battle. That is certainly no way to bring troops into action at their highest level of effectiveness.

The second time such shortages arise is at the end of a victorious campaign, when the lines of communication have become too long, especially if the war is being fought in a poor, thinly populated country, and perhaps also among a people who

are hostile in feeling. What an enormous difference there is between a line of communication from Wilna to Moscow, where every wagon must be seized by force, and one from Cologne through Liége, Louvain, Brussels, Mons, and Valenciennes to Paris, where a commercial contract or a bill of exchange would be enough to obtain millions of rations.

The difficulty we are discussing has often dimmed the glory of the most brilliant victories. It has weakened the victorious army, made retreat necessary, and then gradually produced all the signs of a real defeat.

Forage, which, as we have said before, is usually the supply least lacking at first, will be the first to run short once a country begins to be exhausted. It is the hardest supply to bring in from a distance because of its bulk, and horses feel the effects of poor feeding much sooner than men do. For that reason, too much cavalry and artillery can become a real burden and a source of weakness to an army.

CHAPTER XV. Base of Operations

When an army begins any campaign—whether to attack the enemy and his theater of war or to take up position on its own frontier—it remains necessarily dependent on the sources from which it gets food, supplies, and reinforcements. It must keep its lines of communication with those sources open, because they are essential to its survival and continued existence. The larger the army, the stronger and wider this dependence becomes. Still, the army does not always need to stay in direct communication with its entire country, nor is that always possible. It is enough if it remains connected with the part of the country directly behind it and protected by its position. In that area, as far as needed, special supply depots are established, and arrangements are made to send forward reinforcements and provisions regularly. This strip of territory therefore forms the foundation of the army and all its operations, and the two must be seen as making up a single whole. If, for greater security, the supplies are stored in fortified places, the idea of a base becomes more clearly defined. But the idea does not arise from that arrangement alone, and in many cases no such arrangement exists.

But part of the enemy’s territory can also become a base for our army, or at least part of one. When an army advances into enemy land, some of its needs are supplied from the area it occupies. But this requires one essential condition: we must be completely master of that territory, meaning we can be sure our orders will be obeyed within it. In practice, however, that certainty rarely extends beyond the area where we can keep

the inhabitants under control through small garrisons and detachments moving from place to place, and that area is usually not very large. As a result, in the enemy's country, the territory from which we can draw supplies is seldom extensive enough to provide everything we need. We must therefore still rely on our own country for much of our support, which brings us back to the importance of the part of our territory directly behind the army as an indispensable part of our base.

An army's needs fall into two categories. First, there are things any developed country can supply. Second, there are things that can be obtained only from the places where they are produced. The first category is mainly food and other provisions. The second includes what is needed to keep an army fully equipped in every respect. The first, then, can be obtained in the enemy's country. The second, as a rule, can be supplied only by our own country—for example, men, arms, and almost all munitions of war. There are some exceptions to this distinction, but they are few and minor. The distinction itself remains fundamentally important, and it shows once again that communication with our own country is indispensable.

Depots of provisions and forage are generally set up in open towns, both in the enemy's country and in our own. This is partly because there are not enough fortresses to hold these bulky stores, which are constantly being used up and may be needed now in one place, now in another. It is also because losses of this kind are easier to replace. By contrast, stores needed to keep the army complete—such as arms, munitions of war, and equipment—are never kept in open places near the theatre of war if that can be avoided. Instead, they are brought

from farther away, and in the enemy's country they are stored only in fortresses. This, again, shows that the base matters more for supplies meant to refit an army than for provisions meant to feed it.

The more resources of each kind are gathered into large magazines before they are put to use, the more all the separate streams are brought together into great reservoirs. To that extent, these magazines may be seen as standing in for the whole country, and the idea of a base will naturally become attached to these great depots of supply. But this should never be taken so far that any one such place is regarded as a base by itself.

If these sources of supply and replenishment are plentiful—if the surrounding territory is broad and fertile, if supplies are gathered in large depots so they can be used quickly, if those depots are protected in some military way, if they lie close to the army and can be reached by good roads, and if they stretch across a wide area behind the army or partly around it—then the army gains greater staying power and more freedom to move. People have tried to gather all the advantages an army gains from such a position into a single idea: the extent of its base of operations. They have tried to express the full balance of advantages and disadvantages by looking at how this base relates to the objective of the campaign, and at the angle formed by its two ends with that objective treated as a single point. But it is clear that this elegant bit of geometrical theory is only an imaginative exercise. It rests on a chain of substitutions, and every one of them sacrifices truth. As we have seen, an army's base is really a three-part arrangement connected to the

army's position: the resources of the country near the army, the supply depots established at particular points, and the province from which those supplies are drawn or collected. These three elements are spread out in space and cannot be combined into a single whole. Still less can we replace them with a line meant to represent the width of the base—a line usually drawn in a completely arbitrary way, whether from one fortress to another, from one provincial capital to another, or along a political frontier. Nor can we define exactly how these three stages in the formation of a base relate to one another, because in reality they always overlap to some degree. In one case, the surrounding country provides abundant means to refit the army with things that otherwise would have to come from far away. In another, even food must be brought from a distance. Sometimes the nearest fortresses are major arsenals, ports, or commercial cities containing the military resources of an entire state. Sometimes they are nothing more than old, weak walls, barely enough to defend themselves.

As a result, all the conclusions drawn from the length of the base of operations and its angles—and the entire geometrical theory of war built on those ideas—have never received any real attention in actual warfare. In theory, they have only led thinking in the wrong direction. But because this line of reasoning starts from a truth, even though the conclusions drawn from it are false, the same way of looking at things will easily and repeatedly reappear.

We therefore believe we can do no more than acknowledge, in general terms, that a base does influence military operations. At the same time, there is no way to turn this principle into useful

rules by means of a few abstract ideas. In every individual case, all the factors we have specified must be considered together.

Once arrangements have been made within a certain area to supply an army, keep it fully equipped, and support operations in a particular direction, that area must be treated as the army's base, even in its own country. Because changing a base takes time and effort, an army cannot shift its base from day to day, even at home. That, in turn, always limits its operations to some extent in the direction it can take. So, if in a campaign against an enemy country we treat the whole stretch of our frontier, where the two countries meet, as our base, that is true only in a general sense. We may be able to make the preparations that form a base at any point along that frontier, but no place is actually a base at a given moment unless those preparations have already been made there. When the Russian army retreated before the French in 1812, all of Russia could, at the start of the campaign, be regarded as its base. This was even more true because the country's vast size gave the army plenty of room to move in whatever direction it chose. This was not just a theoretical idea; it was later borne out in practice, when other Russian armies entered the field from different regions. Even so, at any particular stage of the campaign, the base of the Russian army was never really so broad. It was mainly limited to the road along which the whole system of transport to and from the army had been organized. That limitation meant, for example, that after the three days of fighting at Smolensk, when a further retreat became necessary, the Russian army could withdraw only toward Moscow. It could not suddenly turn toward Kaluga, as had been proposed in order to draw the

enemy away from Moscow. A change of direction like that would have been possible only if preparations for it had been made long in advance.

As we have said, the larger an army becomes, the more strongly and widely it depends on its base. That is easy to understand. An army is like a tree: it draws its nourishment from the soil in which it grows. If it is small, it can be transplanted without much trouble; as it grows larger, that becomes harder. A small body of troops also has the channels from which it draws the means of life, but it can put down roots easily wherever it happens to be. A large army cannot. So when we speak of how a base affects an army's operations, the size of the army must always be the measure by which we judge the extent of that effect.

It also follows from the nature of things that, for the immediate needs of the moment, subsistence is the main concern. But for the army's overall effectiveness over a long period, refitting and recruitment matter more. The reason is that the latter can be obtained only from particular sources, while the former can be secured in many ways. This makes the influence of the base on the army's operations even clearer.

However great that influence may be, we must never forget that it belongs to the kind of factors that produce a decisive effect only after a considerable time. The question, therefore, is always what may happen during that time. The value of a base of operations will rarely decide the choice of an undertaking at the outset. Difficulties that arise in this respect must be set beside the other means actually at our disposal and weighed against them; obstacles of this kind often disappear in the face

of decisive victories.

CHAPTER XVI. Lines of Communication

The roads that lead from an army’s position to the points in its rear where its supply depots and its means of recruiting and refitting are chiefly concentrated—and which, in ordinary circumstances, it would also choose for its retreat—have a double importance. First, they are its lines of communication, through which the fighting force receives its constant support. Second, they are roads of retreat.

As we said in the previous chapter, even though under the current system an army is fed mainly from the area where it is operating, it must still be regarded as a single whole together with its base. Its lines of communication are part of that whole. They connect the army to its base and should be seen as major vital arteries. Supplies of every kind, convoys of munitions, detachments moving back and forth, posts, orderlies, hospitals, depots, reserve stores, and administrative agents all constantly use these roads, and the combined value of these services is extremely important to the army.

These great channels of life must therefore never be permanently cut, and they must not be too long or too difficult, because strength is always lost along an extended road, and that weakens an army’s condition.

In their second role, as lines of retreat, they form the army’s strategic rear in the fullest sense.

For both purposes, the value of these roads depends on their length, their number, their position—that is, their general direction and their direction in relation to the army—their quality as roads, the difficulties of the terrain, the political conditions and attitude of the local population, and finally the protection they receive from fortresses or from natural obstacles in the country.

But not every road leading from an army's position back to the sources of its support and strength automatically counts as one of its lines of communication. Such roads can certainly be used for that purpose, and they may serve as additions to the communication system, but the system itself is limited to the routes deliberately prepared for it. Only those roads on which magazines, hospitals, stations, and posts for dispatches and letters have been organized under commandants, with police and garrisons, can be considered true lines of communication. At this point, however, a very important difference appears between our own army and the enemy's army, and it is one that is often overlooked. An army, even in its own country, has its established lines of communication, but it is not entirely confined to them. If necessary, it can shift to another route that happens to be available, because it is at home everywhere, has officials in authority, and enjoys the goodwill of the people. So although other roads may not be as good as those first chosen, nothing prevents their use, and using them should not be considered impossible if the army is outflanked and forced to change front. An army in an enemy's country, by contrast, can generally regard only those roads on which it has advanced as lines of communication. From this come small and almost

invisible causes that produce a great difference in operations. As it moves forward, the army extends its protection over the organization it must create in order to establish its lines of communication. In general, because fear and the presence of an enemy army give these measures, in the eyes of the inhabitants, the force of unavoidable necessity, the inhabitants may even come to see them as some relief from the hardships inseparable from war. Small garrisons left behind in various places support and preserve this system. But if these commissaries, station commandants, police, field posts, and the rest of the administrative machinery were sent to some distant road along which the army itself had not appeared, the inhabitants would then see such measures as a burden they would gladly throw off. Unless overwhelming defeats and disasters had already spread terror through the country, those officials would probably be treated as enemies and driven away roughly. Therefore, the first step would be to establish garrisons to subdue the new line, and those garrisons would have to be stronger than usual. Even then, there would always be a danger that the inhabitants might rise and try to overpower them. In short, an army marching into an enemy's country lacks the machinery through which obedience is secured. It has to put its officials in place by force, and that cannot be done fully without sacrifice and difficulty, nor can it be done quickly. From this it follows that changing the system of communication is far less easy in an enemy's country than in our own, where it is at least possible. It also follows that the army is more restricted in its movements and must be much more sensitive to any threats against its communications.

But from the very start, the choice and arrangement of lines of communication are also limited by a number of conditions. They must not only be good main roads in a general sense; they are more useful when they are broader, pass through larger and wealthier towns, and are protected by more fortified places. Rivers, as routes for water transport, and bridges, as crossing points, also carry decisive weight in the choice. It follows that the position of a line of communication, and therefore the route by which an army advances to begin an offensive, is a matter of free choice only up to a certain point. Its position depends on specific geographical conditions.

Taken together, all these circumstances determine the strength or weakness of an army's communications with its base. When this result is compared with the same calculation for the enemy's communications, it shows which of the two opponents is in a position to act against the other's lines of communication, or to cut off his retreat—in technical language, to turn him. Leaving aside all questions of moral or physical superiority, only the side with the stronger communications can do this effectively. Otherwise, the enemy can save himself in the quickest way: by striking back.

Now, because these lines have a double significance, this turning can also have two purposes. One is to disrupt and interrupt the enemy's communications, so that he gradually wastes away from want and is forced to retreat. The other is to cut off his retreat directly.

On the first point, we should note that a brief interruption will rarely have any effect under the way armies are supplied today.

It takes time for this kind of disruption to matter, because only repeated attacks can make the enemy's cumulative losses large enough to outweigh the small loss caused by any single incident. In earlier times, when thousands of bread wagons moved along the lines of communication as part of the organized system for supplying troops, a single operation against the enemy's flank might have been a decisive blow. Now, even if such an operation succeeded completely, it would hardly have any effect. At most, one convoy might be captured, causing the enemy some limited damage, but never forcing him to retreat.

The result is that operations of this kind against a flank, which have always been more popular in books than in actual war, now seem less practical than ever. We may safely say that lines of communication are in no danger from such attacks unless they are very long and otherwise placed at a disadvantage, especially if they are exposed everywhere and at any moment to attacks from an insurgent population.

We should be no more overconfident about cutting off an enemy's retreat. Recent experience has shown that merely threatening or blocking the enemy's line of retreat does not produce consequences as great as people often expect. When the troops are good and their commander is determined, it is harder to capture them than it is for them to break through the force opposing them.

The ways of shortening and protecting long lines of communication are very limited. The only measures that can reduce the problem are these: seizing fortresses near the

army’s position and on the roads leading to the rear; or, if there are no fortresses in the country, building temporary defenses at suitable points; treating the local people well; enforcing strict discipline on the military roads; maintaining good police; and taking active steps to improve the roads. But this is an evil that can be reduced, never completely removed.

What we said earlier about supply, in relation to the roads an army should prefer, applies just as much to lines of communication. The best lines of communication are the roads that pass through the most prosperous towns and the most important provinces. Those routes should be preferred even when they are much longer, and in most cases they have a major influence on the army’s final disposition.

CHAPTER XVII. Country and Terrain

Even apart from their effect on an army's means of subsistence, country and terrain have another constant and very close connection with war: they decisively influence battle itself, both its course and the preparations for it, as well as the use made of its results. We now turn to country and terrain in this sense—that is, in the full meaning of the French term "terrain."

How to make use of terrain belongs mostly to tactics, but its effects also appear in strategy. A battle in the mountains is, both in itself and in its consequences, something quite different from a battle on an open plain.

But until we have studied the difference between offense and defense, and examined the nature of each separately and fully, we cannot discuss the main features of terrain in terms of their effects. For now, then, we must limit ourselves to its general properties. Terrain influences action in war in three ways: by obstructing approach, by limiting wide visibility, and by providing protection from firearms. All its other effects can be traced back to these three.

There is no doubt that this threefold influence of terrain tends to make warfare more varied, more complex, and more scientific, because it clearly adds three more factors to military calculations.

A perfectly flat, completely open plain—in other words, a stretch of country that has no effect at all on warfare—really

exists only in relation to small bodies of troops, and even then only for a particular moment. Once larger forces are involved, and operations continue over a longer period, the accidents of terrain become entangled with their movements. In the case of a whole army, it is hardly possible to imagine any moment, even in battle, when the ground would not make itself felt.

The influence of terrain, then, is never absent, though it is certainly stronger or weaker depending on the nature of the country.

If we look at the broad range of topographical features, we find that countries depart from the idea of a perfectly open, level plain mainly in three ways: first, through the shape of the land itself, such as hills and valleys; second, through natural features like woods, marshes, and lakes; and third, through changes made by human hands. Each of these increases the influence of terrain on military operations. Taken to a greater extent, they produce mountainous country, sparsely cultivated country covered with woods and marshes, and well-cultivated country. In every case, the tendency is to make war more complicated and more dependent on skill.

The degree of influence that cultivation exerts varies with the kind of cultivation. The system found in Flanders, Holstein, and some other countries—where the land is cut in every direction by ditches, dykes, hedges, and walls, and dotted with many isolated dwellings and small woods—has the greatest effect on war.

War is therefore easiest to conduct in a flat, moderately cultivated country. This, however, is true only in a very general

sense, and leaves entirely aside the use the defender can make of obstacles in the terrain.

Each of these three kinds of terrain affects movement, visibility, and the cover it provides in its own way.

In a densely wooded country, restricted visibility is the main obstacle. In mountainous country, difficulty of movement is the greatest hindrance to an enemy. In heavily cultivated countries, both obstacles are present to a moderate degree.

Dense woods make large areas of ground, in a sense, unusable for military movement. They do not just make movement difficult; they also block visibility, which prevents the use of methods for clearing a way through. As a result, they simplify the measures one side must take in proportion to the difficulties they create for the other. In wooded country, it is hard in practice to concentrate forces for action. Even so, forces are not divided to the same extent as they usually are in mountainous terrain or in country heavily cut up by canals, rivers, and the like. In other words, in such country the division of forces is more unavoidable, but it is not so extensive.

In mountains, obstacles to movement are the main factor, and they affect operations in two ways. Some parts of the country are completely impassable, and even where movement is possible, it must be slower and is more difficult. For that reason, all movement in mountains is greatly reduced in speed, and every operation is more entangled with the element of time. Mountain terrain also has a special feature of its own: one point can dominate another. We will discuss commanding heights in general in the next chapter. Here we need only note that this

feature is what causes the great division of forces in mountain operations, because particular points gain importance not only from their own inherent value, but also from the influence they exert over other points.

As we have noted elsewhere, each of these three kinds of force tends, in proportion to its own distinctive character, toward an extreme. And the more it does so, the more it weakens the authority of the supreme command while increasing the independence of subordinates, all the way down to the private soldier. The more a force is divided, the less possible unified control becomes; subordinates are left more to themselves. That is obvious. Of course, when a force is more widely divided, the variety of actions and the wider range in the use of means give intelligence a greater role, and even the commander-in-chief may have more opportunity to display his abilities. But we must repeat what has already been said: in war, the total of individual results matters more than the form or method by which they are connected. If we carry this idea to an extreme and imagine a whole army spread out as a line of skirmishers, so that each private soldier is fighting his own small battle, then more will depend on the total number of individual successes than on the pattern in which they are linked. The advantages of good combinations can arise only from positive results, not from negative ones. In such a case, the courage, skill, and spirit of individuals become decisive. Only when two opposing armies are equal in military qualities, or when their distinctive strengths balance each other, do the talent and judgment of the commander once again become decisive. From this it follows that national armies and insurgent levies, and so

on, in which the warlike spirit is strongly aroused at least in the individual, can still maintain an advantage through a wide dispersal of their forces, especially when aided by difficult terrain, even if they are not superior in training and bravery. But they can sustain themselves over time only by using that kind of system, because troops of this sort generally lack the qualities and virtues that are indispensable when fairly large numbers must act together as a united body.

There are also many degrees between these two extremes in the nature of forces. Simply being engaged in the defense of its own country gives even a regular standing army something of the character of a national army, and makes it better suited to a war conducted by an army broken up into detachments.

The more an army lacks these qualities and influences, and the more its opponent possesses them, the more it will fear being split into separate parts and the more it will try to avoid broken terrain. But avoiding that kind of country is rarely a matter of choice. We cannot pick a theatre of war as if we were choosing a piece of merchandise from several patterns. So we generally find that armies which fight best in concentrated masses use all their ingenuity to preserve that system as far as possible, even when the nature of the country works directly against it. As a result, they must accept other disadvantages: scanty and difficult supplies for the troops, poor quarters, and in battle, repeated attacks from every side. But giving up their own particular advantage would be an even greater disadvantage.

These two opposing tendencies—one toward concentrating forces, the other toward dispersing them—prevail to a greater

or lesser degree depending on whether the troops engaged are naturally inclined more to one side or the other. But no matter how strong that tendency may be, one side cannot always keep its forces concentrated, and the other cannot expect to succeed on every occasion by fighting in scattered bodies. The French were forced to divide their forces in Spain, and the Spaniards, while defending their country through an insurgent population, were also compelled to test the issue in great battles fought in the open field with part of their forces.

After the connection between the country and the ground, on the one hand, and the general—and especially the political—composition of the forces engaged, on the other, the next most important point is the relative proportion of the three arms.

In any country that is hard to move through—whether because of mountains, forests, or a particular kind of cultivation—a large cavalry force is of little use. That is obvious enough. The same is generally true of artillery in wooded country: there is likely to be too little space to use it effectively, too few roads to move it, and too little forage for the horses. For artillery, highly cultivated countries are less unfavorable, and mountainous country is least unfavorable of all. Both, of course, provide cover from artillery fire, and in that sense they work against a force that depends entirely on firepower. In both kinds of terrain, enemy infantry can often threaten heavy guns, since infantry can move almost anywhere. Even so, in neither case is there usually any general lack of room for employing a large artillery force. In mountainous country, artillery also has one major advantage: its effects last longer and are increased because the enemy moves

more slowly.

Still, it cannot be denied that infantry has a clear advantage over every other arm in difficult country, and that for this reason its numbers there may be considerably greater than the usual proportion.

CHAPTER XVIII. Command of Ground

The word “command” has a special appeal in the art of war, and in fact a large part—perhaps half—of the influence that ground has on the use of troops belongs to this idea. Many of the revered doctrines of military learning have their roots here: commanding positions, key positions, strategic manœuvres, and so on. We will try to look at the subject as clearly as possible without being long-winded, and examine what is true and what is false, what is real and what is exaggerated.

Any use of physical force is harder when it is directed upward than when it is directed the other way, downward. The same is true in combat, and for three clear reasons. First, any higher ground acts as an obstacle to anyone trying to approach it. Second, although firing from a height does not noticeably increase range, the overall geometry still gives the side above a better chance of hitting than the side below. Third, higher ground provides a better view of the field. We are not concerned here with exactly how these advantages work together in battle. We are simply gathering the full set of tactical benefits that come from elevated ground and treating them as a single whole, which we regard as the first strategic advantage.

But the first and third of these advantages must also be counted as advantages in strategy itself, because in strategy, just as in tactics, we march and reconnoitre. So if elevated ground makes it harder for those below to approach, that is the second strategic advantage. And the broader view that elevated ground

provides is the third advantage that strategy can gain in this way.

At the same time, the advantage of easier movement is not absolute, and it does not always favor the side holding the higher ground. It helps only when the opponent wants to attack uphill. It does not apply when the two sides are separated by a wide valley, and it actually favors the army on lower ground if both sides intend to fight on the plain, as at the battle of Hohenfriedberg. The advantage of overlooking the field, or having a commanding view, also has serious limits. Woods in the valley below can block the view, and often the very masses of the mountains on which we stand can do the same. In countless cases, the advantages of high ground that a map seems to promise cannot be found when one reaches the spot. Indeed, we may often feel that we have entangled ourselves in every kind of disadvantage, the exact opposite of what we expected. Yet these limits and conditions do not cancel or destroy the superiority that higher ground gives, whether in defense or attack. We will briefly show how this is true in each case.

Of the three strategic advantages of higher ground—greater tactical strength, a harder approach, and a better view—the first two really belong only to the defense. We can use them only by firmly holding a position. An attacking force, because it is moving, cannot take those advantages with it. The third advantage, however, can be used by the attacker just as well as by the defender.

It follows that higher ground is very important to the defense. And since it can be held decisively only in mountainous regions, it might seem to follow that the defense has a major advantage in mountain positions. Why this is not actually the case, because of other circumstances, we will explain in the chapter on the defense of mountains.

We must first make a distinction. If the question concerns commanding ground at a single point—for example, an army's position—then the strategic advantages largely merge into the tactical advantage of fighting a battle under favorable conditions. But if we imagine a large stretch of country—say, an entire province—as a steady slope, like the descent from a main watershed, so that we can make several marches and still keep the upper ground, then the strategic advantages become greater. In that case, we can use the advantages of higher ground not only in coordinating our forces for one particular battle, but also in linking several battles together. This is how it is for the defense.

The offensive also enjoys, to some extent, the same advantages from higher ground as the defensive. This is because a strategic attack is not limited to a single act in the way a tactical attack is. A strategic advance is not the continuous motion of a machine. It proceeds in separate marches, with longer or shorter intervals between them, and at each stopping point the attacker is acting just as much on the defensive as his opponent.

A higher position offers another advantage, beyond giving a better view of the surrounding country, and we should note that it helps both attack and defense: it makes it easier to operate

with forces divided into separate groups. Each part of the army gains the same benefit from the higher ground that the whole army does. Because of this, a detached corps, whether large or small, is stronger than it would be otherwise, and we can choose such a position with less risk than if it did not have the special advantage of elevation. The benefits of using troops in separate bodies belong to another discussion.

If control of higher ground is joined with other geographical advantages on our side, and if the enemy is restricted in his movements for other reasons—for example, by the nearness of a large river—then these disadvantages in his position may become completely decisive, and he may feel he cannot free himself from that position too quickly. No army can hold its ground in the valley of a great river unless it controls the heights on both sides that form the valley.

Holding the high ground can, in practice, amount to having command, and we cannot deny that this idea reflects something real. Even so, phrases like “commanding ground,” “sheltering position,” and “key of the country,” when they are based simply on the nature of heights and slopes, are empty formulas with no real substance. These grand-sounding ideas have mainly been used to dress up what would otherwise seem like ordinary military arrangements. They have become favorite topics of scholarly soldiers and the magic tools of strategy experts. Yet neither the hollowness of these fanciful notions, nor the many times experience has contradicted them, has been enough to persuade authors—or their readers—that this language is as futile as trying to draw water with the leaking vessel of the Danaides. People have mistaken the conditions for the thing

itself, the instrument for the hand. Occupying a certain position or stretch of ground has been treated as if it were an act of power in itself, like a thrust or a blow, and the ground or position has been treated as if it were a real force of its own. In fact, the first is only like raising the arm, and the second is nothing but a lifeless tool, a mere attribute that can have effect only when applied to an object, a simple sign of plus or minus that still needs actual numbers behind it. That thrust or blow, that object, that real quantity, is a victorious battle. That alone truly matters. That alone can be counted. And it is what we must always keep in view, both when judging military writing and when acting in the field.

Therefore, if war is decided only by the number and importance of victorious engagements, then it is clear that the relative quality of the opposing armies and the skill of their commanders must again be the first things considered. The influence of terrain can then rank only as a secondary factor.

BOOK VI: DEFENCE

CHAPTER I. Offence and Defence

1.—The Concept of Defence.

What does defence mean in principle? It means stopping a blow. What, then, is its defining sign? It is the state of expectation—waiting for that blow. This is the mark by which we recognize an action as defensive, and it is the only mark that distinguishes defence from offence in war. But a completely absolute defence would contradict the very idea of war, because then only one side would actually be waging it. So defence in war can only be relative, and the distinguishing signs just described apply only to the essential idea or general concept, not to every separate act that makes up a war. A limited engagement is defensive if we receive the enemy's advance or charge. A battle is defensive if we receive the attack—that is, if we wait for the enemy to appear before our position and come within range of our fire. A campaign is defensive if we wait for the enemy to enter our theatre of war. In all these cases, the idea of waiting for and repelling the attack belongs to the general concept, and this does not conflict with the idea of war. It may, after all, be to our advantage to wait for the enemy to charge onto our bayonets, or to attack our position or our theatre of war. But if we are truly to wage war ourselves, we must return the enemy's blows. For that reason, offensive action within a defensive war still falls, more or less, under the general heading of defence. In other words, the offensive

measures we use remain part of the concept of defending a position or a theatre of war. So, in a defensive campaign, we may fight offensively. In a defensive battle, we may use some divisions for offensive purposes. And even while holding our position and waiting for the enemy's assault, we still act offensively by sending balls into the enemy's ranks at the same time. The defensive form of war, then, is not a mere shield. It is a shield made up of well-delivered blows.

2.—Advantages of the Defensive.

What is the purpose of defense? It is to preserve what you have. Preserving is easier than acquiring, and from that it follows immediately that, if both sides are assumed to have equal means, defense is easier than attack. But why is it easier to preserve or hold possession? Because any time that is not used to advantage counts in favor of the defender. He gains where he has not labored. Any pause in offensive action, whether caused by mistaken judgment, fear, or laziness, benefits the side acting defensively. This advantage saved the State of Prussia from ruin more than once during the Seven Years' War. It arises from the very idea and purpose of defense and belongs to the nature of all defense. In ordinary life as well, especially in legal matters, which resemble war in many ways, this is expressed by the Latin proverb, Beati sunt possidentes. Another advantage comes from the nature of war itself and belongs to it alone: the help provided by locality or terrain. This is something the defensive form is especially able to use.

Having laid out these general ideas, we now turn more directly to the subject.

In tactics, every engagement, large or small, is defensive if we leave the initiative to the enemy and wait for him to appear in front of us. From that point on, we can use every offensive means without losing the two advantages of defense just mentioned: waiting for the enemy and making use of the ground. In strategy, the campaign at first corresponds to the battle, and the theatre of war to the position. Later, however, the whole war takes the place of the campaign, and the whole country takes the place of the theatre of war. In both cases, the defensive remains what it was in tactics.

We have already noted, in general terms, that defense is easier than attack. But defense has a negative aim: preservation. Attack has a positive aim: conquest. Attack also increases our own means of continuing the war, while mere preservation does not. So, to put the matter clearly, we must say that the defensive form of war is inherently stronger than the offensive. This is the conclusion we wanted to reach. Although it follows naturally from the subject itself and has been confirmed by experience countless times, it still runs completely against common opinion. That shows how easily superficial writers can confuse ideas.

If defense is the stronger way of waging war, but its aim is negative, then it follows that we should use it only as long as our weakness forces us to do so. We should abandon it as soon as we are strong enough to pursue the positive aim. Since our situation is usually improved when we win a victory with the help of the defensive, the natural course of war is therefore to begin with defense and end with attack. It is just as contrary to the true idea of war to treat defense as the final object of war as

it was mistaken to think that passivity belongs to every part of defense, as well as to defense as a whole. In other words, a war in which victories are used only to fend off blows, with no attempt to strike back, would be just as absurd as a battle in which complete defense, or passivity, ruled every measure everywhere.

Many examples could be offered against the fairness of this general view—cases in which the defensive remained defensive to the very end, and taking the offensive was never even considered. But that objection has force only if we forget that we are dealing here with general, abstract ideas. Any examples that seem to contradict the general concept under discussion must be regarded as cases in which the moment for a possible offensive response had not yet arrived.

During the Seven Years' War—at least in its last three years—Frederick the Great did not contemplate going on the offensive. More than that, we believe that, generally speaking, whenever he acted offensively in this war, he did so only because it was the best way to defend himself. His overall situation forced him into that course, and it is only natural that a general should focus first on what best fits the circumstances he is facing at the time. Even so, we cannot consider this example of defense on a grand scale without assuming that the possibility of a counterblow against Austria underlay the whole strategy. We are led to conclude that the right moment for that counterstroke simply had not arrived before the war ended. The peace settlement itself suggests that this idea is well founded even here. For what else could have moved the Austrians to make peace except the realization that, with their own forces

alone, they were not able to stand up to the king's skill; that preserving the balance would require greater efforts than before; and that even the slightest easing of those efforts would probably lead to further territorial losses? And indeed, who can doubt that if Russia, Sweden, and the army of the German Empire had stopped acting together against Frederick the Great, he would have tried once more to defeat the Austrians in Bohemia and Moravia?

Having now defined the true meaning of the defensive and marked out its limits, we return to our claim that the defensive is the stronger form of war.

If we look more closely at the offensive and defensive, and compare them, this will become completely clear. For now, though, we will limit ourselves to pointing out the contradiction we would fall into—with ourselves and with the evidence of experience—if we claimed the opposite were true. If the offensive form were the stronger one, there would be no reason ever to use the defensive, since it has only a negative aim. Everyone would choose to attack, and the defensive would be pointless. On the other hand, it is only natural that the higher aim should require greater sacrifice. Whoever feels strong enough to use the weaker form can set his sights on the greater aim. Whoever chooses the smaller aim can only do so in order to gain the advantage of the stronger form. Experience confirms this. No one has ever been known to wage war on two different theatres by acting offensively on one with the weaker army and defensively on the other with the stronger force. But the opposite has happened everywhere and at all times. That plainly shows that generals, although their own inclination leads them

toward the offensive, still regard the defensive as the stronger form. In the next chapters, we still have to explain some preliminary points.

CHAPTER II. The Relationship Between the Offensive and Defensive in Tactics

First, we must examine the conditions that bring victory in battle.

We will say nothing here about superiority in numbers, or about an army's bravery, discipline, or other qualities. As a rule, these depend on factors outside the art of war in the sense in which we are considering it now. They also have the same effect in attack as in defence. In addition, superiority in numbers in general cannot be considered here, because the size of the force is itself a given condition and does not depend on the general's choice. Nor do these matters have any special connection with attack or defence. But apart from these, there are three other factors that seem to us decisively important: surprise, advantage of ground, and attack from several directions. Surprise works by bringing against the enemy, at a particular point, far more troops than he expected. Superiority in numbers in this case is very different from general numerical superiority; it is the most powerful instrument in the art of war. How advantage of ground contributes to victory is clear enough in itself, and we need add only one remark: we do not mean only obstacles that hinder an enemy's advance, such as steep slopes, high hills, marshy streams, hedges, enclosures, and the like. We also mean the advantage the ground gives as cover, under which troops can be hidden from view. Indeed, even ground that seems entirely unimportant may help someone who

knows the locality well. Attack from several directions includes all tactical turning movements, large and small. Its effects come partly from the doubled use of firearms that this makes possible, and partly from the enemy's fear that his line of retreat may be cut off.

How, then, do the offensive and the defensive compare in relation to these factors?

If we keep in mind the three principles of victory just described, the answer is this: only a small part of the first and third principles favors the offensive, while most of them—and the whole of the second principle—are available to the side acting defensively.

The attacking side can benefit from only one full surprise attack, when it throws its entire force against the enemy as a whole. The defending side, however, can keep creating surprises throughout the battle by varying the strength and shape of its smaller attacks.

The attacker has more opportunities than the defender to surround and cut off the enemy's entire force, because the defender is more or less tied to a fixed position while the attacker is moving in relation to it. But this greater advantage in carrying out an enveloping movement applies only when attacking the enemy force as a whole. During the battle itself, and with separate parts of the army, it is easier for the defender than for the attacker to strike from several directions, because, as we have already said, the defender is better placed to create surprise through the strength and form of those attacks.

It is obvious that the defender benefits especially from the help the terrain provides. As for the defender's advantage in surprising the enemy through the strength and shape of his attacks, that comes from the fact that the attacker must advance along roads and paths where he can be easily seen, while the defender hides his position and remains out of sight until almost the decisive moment. Since the true method of defence was adopted, reconnaissances have largely gone out of fashion—in other words, they have become nearly impossible. Reconnaissances are still carried out from time to time, of course, but they rarely produce much. Great as the advantage is of being able to inspect a position carefully and know it thoroughly before a battle, and clear as it is that the defender, waiting near a position he has chosen, can surprise the enemy far more easily than his opponent can surprise him, the old belief still survives even now that a battle one agrees to fight is already half lost. This idea comes from the old style of defence used twenty years ago, and in part from the Seven Years' War as well. In that system, the only help expected from the ground was that the front should be hard to approach, because of steep mountain slopes and similar obstacles. But positions had so little depth, and moving the flanks was so difficult, that armies became weak and kept sidestepping each other from one hill to another, which only made matters worse. If there was some support on which to anchor the wings, then everything depended on preventing the army stretched between those points, like cloth pulled tight on an embroidery frame, from being pierced at any spot. Every part of the ground occupied had immediate value, and so every part had to be defended directly. In such conditions, no one could think of

making a movement or attempting a surprise during the battle. That was the exact opposite of what makes a good defence, and the opposite of what defence has in fact become in modern warfare.

In fact, contempt for the defensive has always arisen when some particular method of defence has become outdated and outlived its usefulness. That was exactly the case with the method just described, because in earlier times, before the period we are discussing, that very method had been superior to the offensive.

If we trace the gradual development of modern warfare, we see that at the beginning—during the Thirty Years' War and the War of the Spanish Succession—the deployment and formation of an army were among the main factors in battle. In fact, they were the most important part of the battle plan. As a rule, this gave the defender a major advantage, because his forces were already formed up and deployed. Once troops became more capable of maneuvering, that advantage disappeared, and for a time the advantage shifted to the attacker. The defender then looked for protection behind rivers, deep valleys, or high ground. In this way, the defender regained the advantage and kept it until the attacker developed such mobility and skill in maneuvering that he could move into broken terrain himself and attack in separate columns, making it possible to turn his opponent. This gradually led to longer defensive positions. As a result, the attacker naturally began concentrating at a few points in order to break through the enemy's thin line. So for the third time, the offensive gained the upper hand, and the defensive was again forced to change its system. In recent

wars, it has done so by keeping its forces concentrated in large masses, with most of them not deployed and, where possible, concealed. In this way, it simply takes up a position ready to act according to the enemy's moves as soon as those moves are clearly revealed.

This does not rule out a partly passive defense of the ground; its advantages are too great for it not to be used repeatedly in a campaign. But that kind of passive defense of the ground is usually no longer the main issue. That is the point we are dealing with here.

If the offensive were to discover some new and powerful element it could use to its advantage—something that is not very likely, given the degree of simplicity and natural order warfare has now reached—then the defensive would once again have to change its method. But the defender can always count on the help of the terrain, which generally secures its natural superiority, since the particular features of a country and its ground influence actual warfare more than ever.

CHAPTER III. The Relationship Between Offense and Defense in Strategy

Let us ask again, first of all: what conditions ensure success in strategy?

As we have said before, strategy itself does not win victories. On the one hand, strategic success means preparing the way for tactical victory; the greater the strategic success, the more likely victory in battle becomes. On the other hand, strategic success also lies in making full use of a victory once it has been won. The more events strategic planning can draw into the consequences of a battle, the more strategy can seize from the ruins of what the battle has shaken to its foundations, and the more it can gather in large masses what many individual hands had to win through hard labor in the fighting, the greater its success will be. The main factors that lead to this success, or at least make it easier, and therefore the chief principles of effective action in strategy, are these:

1. The advantage of terrain.

2. Surprise, whether in the form of an actual surprise attack or in the unexpected appearance of large forces at certain points.

3. Attack from several directions (as in tactics, so here as well).

4. Support from the theater of war through fortresses and everything connected with them.

5. The support of the people.

6. The use of powerful moral forces.

Now, how do offense and defense relate to these factors?

The defending side has the advantage of terrain; the attacking side has the advantage of surprise in strategy, just as in tactics. But we must note that surprise is far more effective and important in strategy than in tactics. In tactics, surprise rarely leads to a great victory, while in strategy it often ends the war in a single blow. At the same time, however, we must also note that using this advantage well depends on some serious, unusual, and decisive error by the enemy. Therefore, it does not greatly shift the balance in favor of the offensive.

Surprising the enemy by placing stronger forces at certain points closely resembles the same idea in tactics. If the defender had to spread his forces across several possible approaches into his theater of war, the attacker would clearly have the advantage of being able to strike one point with his full strength. But here too, the newer art of conducting a defense in a different way has gradually produced new principles. If the defender does not have to fear that the enemy will use an unguarded road to throw himself upon an important magazine or depot, an unprepared fortification, or the capital itself—and if he is not forced to choose between opposing the enemy on the road selected or having his retreat cut off—then there is no decisive reason to divide his forces. For if the attacker chooses a different road from the one on which the defender is posted, the defender can, a few days later, march against him with his whole force on that road. In most cases, he may also be content to assume that the attacker will do him the honor of seeking him

out. If the attacker must advance with his forces divided, which is often unavoidable because of supply, then the defender plainly has the advantage of being able to fall in strength upon one fraction of the enemy.

Attacks on the flank and rear, which in strategy mean attacks against the sides and back of the theater of war, are very different in nature from what those terms mean in tactics.

First, there is no way to bring the enemy under two fires, because we cannot fire from one end of a theater of war to the other.

Second, the fear of losing the line of retreat is much less, because the spaces involved in strategy are so large that they cannot be blocked as they can in tactics.

Third, in strategy, because of the wide extent of the space involved, the effectiveness of interior lines—that is, shorter lines—is much greater, and this provides strong protection against attacks from several directions.

It is obviously in the nature of things that, because strategy operates over much larger spaces, an enveloping attack—or an attack from several directions—is usually possible only for the side that has the initiative, that is, the attacker. The defender is not in a position, as in tactics, to reverse the situation during the action by surrounding the enemy. He cannot arrange his forces with the necessary relative depth, nor can he conceal them well enough. But what use is this greater ease of enveloping to the attacker if the expected advantages do not actually appear? We therefore could not present the enveloping attack in strategy as a general principle of victory unless its effect on lines of

communication were taken into account. Yet this factor is seldom very important at the first moment, when attack and defense first come into contact and still face each other in their original positions. It becomes important only as a campaign goes on, when the attacker, operating in the enemy's country, gradually finds himself in a defensive position. Then the lines of communication of this new defending party become weak, and the side that was originally on the defensive can gain an advantage by going over to the offensive. But it is clear that this incidental superiority of attack cannot be counted as a general advantage of the offensive, because it actually arises from the stronger conditions of the defensive.

The fourth principle, the assistance of the theatre of war, is naturally an advantage for the defender. When the attacking army opens the campaign, it leaves its own theatre behind and is weakened by doing so; that is, it leaves its fortresses and depots of every kind behind it. The larger the area of operations it must cross, the more it is weakened by marches and garrisons. The defending army, by contrast, remains connected with everything. It continues to benefit from the support of its fortresses, is not weakened in the same way, and stays close to its sources of supply.

Support from the population, as a fifth principle, does not appear in every defense, since a defensive campaign can be fought in the enemy's country. Even so, this principle still grows out of the very idea of defense and applies in most cases. What we chiefly mean here, though not exclusively, is the effect of calling up the last reserves and even arming the nation as a whole. The result is that friction is reduced, and resources

become available sooner and in greater abundance.

The campaign of 1812 offers an especially clear illustration, as if seen through a magnifying glass, of the effect of the means described under principles 3 and 4. Five hundred thousand men crossed the Niemen, 120,000 fought at Borodino, and far fewer reached Moscow.

We may say that the effect of this immense effort was so disastrous that, even if the Russians had launched no offensive at all, they still would have been safe from any new invasion attempt for a considerable time. It is true that, apart from Sweden, no country in Europe is situated like Russia. But the operating principle is always the same; the only difference lies in the greater or lesser degree of its strength.

If we add to the fourth and fifth principles the fact that these defensive forces belong to the original form of defense—that is, defense carried on on our own soil—and that they are much weaker when the defense takes place in the enemy's country and is mixed with an offensive operation, then this creates a further disadvantage for the offensive, much like the one noted above in connection with the third principle. For an offensive is no more made up entirely of active elements than a defense is made up only of parrying blows. In fact, every attack that does not lead directly to peace must eventually end in defense.

Now, if all the defensive elements brought into play within an attack are weakened by their very nature—that is, by being part of an attack—then this too must be counted as a general disadvantage of the offensive.

This is not just a pointless exercise in logic. On the contrary, it points to the main weakness of offensive action in general. From the very start of any strategic attack, and throughout the whole plan, the closest attention must be paid to this issue—that is, to the defensive situation that may follow, as we will see more clearly when we reach the book on campaign plans.

The great moral forces that sometimes permeate war, almost like a ferment working through it, can be assumed to exist on the defensive side just as much as on the offensive. In some cases, a commander can use them to support the other means at his disposal. At least the forces that seem especially favorable to attack—such as confusion and disorder in the enemy's ranks—usually do not appear until after the decisive blow has already been struck, and so they rarely help bring about that result beforehand.

We believe we have now sufficiently established our proposition that the defensive is a stronger form of war than the offensive. But one small factor, not yet mentioned, still remains. It is the high spirits and sense of superiority an army feels from knowing that it belongs to the attacking side. This feeling is real enough, but it soon gives way to the broader and stronger impression created by victory or defeat, and by the skill or incompetence of the general.

CHAPTER IV. Convergence of Attack and Divergence of Defence

These two ideas—these ways in which attack and defence are used—appear so often in both theory and practice that people naturally tend to treat them as essential forms, inherently tied to attack and defence. But that is not really so, as even a little reflection will show. We want to examine them at the earliest opportunity so that we can settle our ideas about them once and for all. Then, as we continue considering the relation between attack and defence, we can put these concepts aside and avoid having our attention constantly distracted by the appearance of advantage or disadvantage that they cast over the subject. Here we treat them as pure abstractions. We isolate the idea of them, as if extracting an essence, and leave our remarks on the part they play in real situations for later.

The defending side, in both tactics and strategy, is assumed to be waiting and therefore standing still, while the attacker is imagined to be moving directly against that stationary opponent. From this it necessarily follows that turning movements and envelopments are available only to the attacker, so long as the attacker keeps moving and the defender remains fixed. This freedom to choose the form of attack—whether to make it convergent or not, depending on what seems advantageous—should generally be counted as an advantage of the offensive. But this freedom exists only in tactics; in strategy it is not always possible. In tactics, the points on which the flanks rest are hardly ever completely secure. In strategy, however, they often are, as when the line to be defended runs

straight from one sea to another, or from one neutral territory to another. In such cases, the attack cannot take a convergent form, and the attacker's freedom of choice is restricted. It is restricted in an even more troublesome way when the attacker is forced to operate on converging lines. Russia and France, for example, can attack Germany only on converging lines; therefore they cannot attack with their forces united. Now if we accept that, in most cases, the concentric form in the use of forces is the weaker one, then the attacker's advantage in having greater freedom of choice may in other cases be completely offset by the disadvantage of being forced to use the weaker form.

We will now look more closely at how these forms operate, both in tactics and in strategy.

One of the main supposed advantages of giving forces a concentric direction—that is, moving from the circumference of a circle toward the center—has been thought to be that the farther the forces advance, the closer they come to one another. The fact is true, but the supposed advantage is not. The tendency toward union is happening equally on both sides; therefore the balance is unchanged. The same is true of the dispersal of force through eccentric movements.

But there is another, genuine advantage: forces moving on converging lines direct their effort toward a single common point, while forces moving on diverging lines do not. What effects does this difference produce in each case? To answer that, we must distinguish tactics from strategy.

We will not carry the analysis any further, and will limit ourselves to the following tactical advantages.

1. Crossfire, or at least greater firepower, once everything is brought within a certain range.

2. An attack on the same point from several sides.

3. Cutting off the retreat.

A retreat can also be cut off in the strategic sense, but that is obviously much harder, because large spaces cannot easily be sealed off. An attack on the same body from several directions is generally more effective and decisive the smaller that body is, the closer it comes to the lowest limit—that of a single combatant. An army can fight on several sides with relative ease; a division can do so less easily; a battalion only when formed in mass; a single man not at all. Strategy, by its nature, deals with large bodies of troops, wide spaces, and long periods of time; tactics deals with the opposite. It follows that an attack from several sides in strategy cannot produce the same results it does in tactics.

The effect of fire does not fall within the scope of strategy, but strategy has something comparable in its place. It is the shaking of an army's base that every army feels when a victorious enemy is in its rear, whether close by or far away.

It is therefore certain that the concentric action of forces has this advantage: an action or effect against a is at the same time an action against b, without reducing its force against a; and the action against b is likewise an action against a. The whole, then, is not merely a + b, but something greater. This advantage

appears in both tactics and strategy, though in somewhat different ways in each.

What, then, can the scattered or diverging use of forces set against this advantage? Clearly, it has the benefit of keeping those forces closer together and operating on interior lines. There is no need to prove at length how greatly this can multiply strength: unless the attacker has a large superiority in numbers, he cannot overcome the advantage it gives the defender. Once the defender adopts movement—movement that certainly begins later than the attacker's, but still early enough to break the deadening effects of paralysis and inaction—this advantage of tighter concentration and interior lines works far more decisively, and in most cases more effectively, toward victory than the attacker's concentric form. But victory must come before this superiority can be fully used; we must defeat the enemy before we can think of cutting off his retreat. In short, we find here a relationship like the one between attack and defence in general: the concentric form leads to striking results, while the advantages of the eccentric form are more dependable. The former is the weaker form when pursuing a positive aim; the latter is the stronger form when pursuing a negative aim. Seen in this way, the two forms appear to be nearly in balance. And if we add that defence is not always absolute, and therefore is not always prevented from using its forces on converging lines as well, then we can no longer claim that the converging form alone is enough to guarantee the offensive a universal superiority over the defensive. Once we see that, we free ourselves from the influence this opinion usually has on judgment whenever the opportunity arises.

What we have said so far applies to both tactics and strategy. But there is still one very important point to make that applies only to strategy. The advantage of interior lines grows as the distances involved grow larger. Over a few thousand yards, or half a mile, the time gained is obviously much less than it is over distances that require several days' march, or twenty or thirty miles. The shorter distances belong to tactics; the longer ones belong to strategy. Still, although it certainly takes more time to reach an objective in strategy than in tactics, and although an army is not defeated as quickly as a battalion, this difference in time can only increase up to a certain limit. It lasts only until a battle takes place, or perhaps for the few days beyond that during which battle can be avoided without serious loss. There is also a much greater difference in the actual head start gained in one case than in the other. Because tactical distances are so small, the movements of one army in battle take place almost within sight of the other. The army on the exterior line will therefore usually learn very quickly what its opponent is doing. But because strategy deals with much greater distances, it is very rare for one army's movement not to be hidden from the other for at least a day. There are many cases in which, especially when the movement is only partial, such as the dispatch of a large detachment, it remains secret for weeks. It is easy to see what a great advantage this ability to conceal movements gives to the side whose position makes secrecy especially desirable.

Here we conclude our discussion of the convergent and divergent use of forces, and of how these forms relate to attack and defence. We propose to return to the subject at another

time.

CHAPTER V. Character of the Strategic Defensive

We have already explained what the defensive is in general terms. It is simply a stronger form of conducting war, by which we seek to win a victory and then, once we have gained superiority, pass over to the offensive—that is, to the positive object of war.

Even when a war aims only to preserve the existing state of affairs, the status quo, simply blocking the enemy's blow contradicts the very idea of war, because war is clearly not just a matter of enduring attacks. Once the defender has gained an important advantage, the defensive has done its job. Protected by that success, he must strike back; otherwise he risks certain destruction. Common sense tells us to strike iron while it is hot and to use the advantage already won to prevent a second attack. Exactly how, when, and where this counterstroke should begin depends on many other conditions, which can only be explained later. For now, we should hold to this point: the shift from defense to offense is always a natural tendency of defense itself, and therefore an essential part of it. We should always conclude that something has gone wrong in the conduct of a war when a victory won through defensive action is not used to any advantage, but is simply allowed to fade away.

A swift, forceful move to the offensive—the flashing sword of vengeance—is the finest moment of the defensive. Anyone who does not think of it immediately at the right time, or rather anyone who does not include this transition in his idea of

defense from the very beginning, will never understand why defense is the stronger form of war. He will keep thinking only about the resources the enemy spends and we preserve through defensive action, though those gains depend not on tightening the knot, but on untying it. It is also a foolish confusion of ideas to treat the offensive as if it always meant a sudden attack or surprise, and therefore to imagine the defensive as nothing but difficulty and disorder.

It is true that a conqueror decides to go to war sooner than the defender, who may not yet realize the danger. And if he knows how to keep his plans secret, he may even catch the defender off guard. But that lies outside war itself, because ideally it should not happen that way. In reality, war exists more for the defender than for the conqueror, because invasion only brings resistance into being, and there is no war until there is resistance. A conqueror is always a lover of peace, or so he claims, as Buonaparte always did of himself. He would prefer to enter our state without opposition. To prevent that, we must choose war and prepare for it. In other words, it is the weaker side, the side that must defend itself, that should always remain armed so it is not taken by surprise. That is what the art of war requires.

Moreover, one side’s appearing in the theatre of war before the other usually depends on factors quite different from any intention to act offensively or defensively. But even if that intention is not the cause, it is often the result of arriving first. Whoever is ready first will, for that reason, act offensively if the advantage of surprise is great enough to make it worthwhile. And the side that is ready last can only partly make up for the

danger it faces by taking advantage of the strengths of the defensive.

At the same time, we should generally regard it as an advantage for the offensive that it can make effective use of being first in the field, as noted in the third book. Still, this general advantage does not become an absolute necessity in every case.

If, then, we picture a defence as it ought to be, we must imagine it fully prepared in every respect: with an army suited to war and hardened by it; with a general who does not wait for his opponent in anxious uncertainty, but by deliberate choice and with calm self-possession; with fortresses that do not fear a siege; and, finally, with a loyal people who fear the enemy no more than he fears them. When the defence has these qualities, it will not play any contemptible role against the offensive. Nor will attack seem such an easy and certain form of war, as it does to those gloomy minds who see only courage, determination, and energy in the offensive, and only helplessness and passivity in the defensive.

CHAPTER VI. Extent of the Means of Defence

In the second and third chapters of this book, we showed that defence has a natural advantage in using those factors which—apart from the absolute strength and quality of the fighting force—shape both tactical and strategic results. These include the advantage of terrain, surprise attack, attack from several directions (the converging form of attack), the support provided by the theatre of war, the backing of the people, and the use of powerful moral forces. We now think it useful to look again at the full range of means especially available to the defence, and to regard them as the supporting columns in the structure it builds.

1.—Landwehr (Militia).

In modern times, this force has been used to fight the enemy on foreign soil. And it cannot be denied that in some states, such as Prussia, it has been organized in such a way that it can almost be treated as part of the regular standing army. To that extent, it does not belong exclusively to defense. At the same time, we should not overlook several facts. The very large use made of it in 1813–14–15 grew out of a defensive war. In very few places has it been organized to the same degree as in Prussia. And whenever its organization falls short of full efficiency, it is better suited to defense than to offense. But beyond that, the very idea of a militia includes a broad, more or less voluntary participation by the whole people in support of

the war, with their physical strength, their feelings, and their willingness to sacrifice all they possess. The more its organization departs from this idea, the more the force created becomes a standing army under another name, and the more it gains the advantages of such a force. But in the same proportion it loses the advantages that properly belong to a militia: being a force with no clearly fixed limits, one that can be easily expanded by appealing to the people's feelings and patriotism. In these things lies the true nature of a militia. Its organization must leave room for this cooperation of the whole people. If we try to get something extraordinary from a militia apart from that, we are only chasing a shadow.

The close connection between the true nature of a militia system and the idea of defense cannot be denied. Nor can it be denied that such a militia will always belong more to the defensive form than to the offensive, and that it will show most clearly in defense those effects by which it surpasses attack.

2.—Fortresses.

The help fortresses give an attacking army is limited to those near the frontier, and even then their effect is slight. A defending army can benefit from fortresses much farther into the interior of the country, so more of them can be used, and their value also varies in strength. A fortress that becomes the target of a formal siege and continues to hold out naturally carries far more weight in war than one whose defenses are so strong that the enemy simply gives up any thought of taking it, and so commits no troops or resources against it.

3.—The People.

Although the influence of a single inhabitant of the theater of war on the course of a war is usually no more noticeable than a drop of water in a river, the combined influence of a country's inhabitants in war is anything but insignificant, even when there is no general popular uprising. Everything is easier in our own country, so long as the general feeling of the population is not against us. The enemy can obtain contributions, large or small, only by direct force. Troops must carry out that work, and it costs many men and great effort. The defender receives what he needs, if not always willingly, as in moments of passionate devotion, then at least through the long-established habit of citizens submitting to the state. That habit has become second nature, and is also backed by the fear of the law, with which the army itself has nothing to do. But the people's voluntary cooperation, when it comes from genuine attachment, is always of the greatest importance, because it never fails in all those cases where help can be given without sacrifice. We will mention only one point, though it is of the highest importance in war: intelligence. We do not mean so much major or specially important information gathered through agents, but rather the countless small matters on which the daily work of an army proceeds amid uncertainty. In all such matters, a good understanding with the inhabitants gives the defender a general advantage.

If we move from this broad and consistently helpful influence to specific cases where the population begins to take part in the war, and then to the highest level—where, as in Spain, the war

in its main events is largely fought by the people themselves—we can see that this is really a new force, not just a stronger form of popular cooperation, and therefore that—

4.—The National Armament,

or a general call to arms, may be regarded as a particular means of defence.

5.—Allies.

Finally, we may also count allies as the last support of the defensive. Naturally, we do not mean ordinary allies, which the attacker may also have. We mean those who have a fundamental interest in preserving the integrity of the country. If, for example, we look at the various states that make up Europe at the present time, we find—without referring to any systematically regulated balance of power and interests, since that does not exist and is therefore often rightly disputed—that the great and small states, and the interests of nations, are woven together in highly varied and shifting ways. Each of these points of contact forms a binding tie, because at each one the course of one gives balance to the course of another. Through all these ties, a more or less close connection of the whole is clearly formed, and every change must partly disturb that general connection. In this way, the overall relations of all states to one another tend more to preserve the stability of the whole than to bring about change; that is, this tendency toward stability exists in general.

We take this to be the true idea of a balance of power, and in this sense it will always arise on its own wherever extensive connections exist between civilised states.

How effective this general tendency of shared interests to preserve the existing order really is is another question. In any case, we can imagine some changes in the relations between individual states that strengthen the effectiveness of the whole, and others that weaken it. In the first case, such changes are attempts to improve the political balance, and because they move in the same direction as common interests, they will also be supported by most of those interests. In the second case, however, they are abnormal: excessive activity by particular states, genuine disorders. Still, it is not surprising that such disturbances should appear in a body with as little cohesion as a collection of large and small states, since we see the same thing in the wonderfully organized whole of the natural world.

If, in reply, we are pointed to examples in history where individual states brought about major changes purely for their own advantage, without any effort by the whole to stop them, or to cases where a single state rose so far above the others that it became almost the ruler of the whole, our answer is this: such examples do not at all prove that no general interest in stability exists. They show only that, at that moment, its force was not strong enough. Striving toward an object is not the same thing as actually moving toward it. Even so, that striving is far from meaningless, and we see the clearest example of this in the dynamics of the heavens.

When we say that the tendency of equilibrium is to preserve the existing state of things, we are of course assuming that rest—that is, equilibrium—existed in that state. For where that equilibrium has already been disturbed, tension has already begun, and there equilibrium may indeed also tend toward change. But if we consider the nature of the matter, that change can affect only a few separate states, never the majority. Therefore, the preservation of the majority is supported and secured by the combined interests of the whole. It is also certain that each individual state, so long as it does not face tension from the whole, will have more interest in defending itself than in opposing that preservation.

Anyone who laughs at these reflections as utopian dreams does so at the cost of philosophical truth. From philosophy, we may learn how the essential elements of things relate to one another. But it would be reckless to try to derive from it fixed laws for every individual case, without allowing for accidental and disruptive influences. By contrast, when someone, in the words of a great writer, "never rises above anecdote," and builds all history on that basis, he always starts from the most particular details, from the high points of events, and goes only as deep as he needs to find a motive. He therefore never reaches the deepest foundation of the dominant general relations. As a result, his judgment will never have value beyond the single case before him, and what philosophy shows to be true of cases in general will seem to him nothing but a dream.

Without that general tendency toward stability and preserving the existing order of things, a number of civilised states could not long continue living quietly side by side; they would

necessarily merge into one. Since Europe has existed in its present form for more than a thousand years, we can only see this as the result of that tendency within their shared interests. And if the protection offered by the whole has not always been strong enough to preserve the independence of every individual state, such exceptions should be seen as irregularities in the life of the whole. They have not destroyed that life; rather, that larger order has overcome them.

It would be unnecessary to review the many historical cases in which changes that would have upset the balance too severely were prevented or undone because other states opposed them, whether openly or not. Even a quick look at history will show them. We only want to say a few words about one case that is constantly cited by people who mock the idea of a political balance, especially because it seems particularly relevant here: a case in which an innocent state, acting defensively, was overcome without receiving any help from abroad. We mean Poland. At first glance, the disappearance of a state with eight million inhabitants, divided among three others without a single sword being drawn by the rest of Europe, seems either to prove decisively that the political balance is generally ineffective, or at least to show that in some cases it fails to a very great extent. The destruction of so large a state, swallowed up by others, including two of the strongest powers already in existence, Russia and Austria, seems so extreme that many will say this: if an event like this could not awaken the shared interests of all free states, then the effective action that this shared interest is supposed to provide for the protection of individual states is purely imaginary. But we still maintain that a single case,

however striking, does not disprove a general truth. We also argue that the fall of Poland is not as inexplicable as it may first appear. Was Poland really to be regarded as a European state, a fully integrated member of the European community of nations? No. It was a Tartar state which, instead of being situated like the Tartars of the Crimea on the Black Sea at the edge of the lands inhabited by the European community, had its home in the middle of that community on the Vistula. We do not say this out of disrespect for the Poles, nor to justify the partition of their country, but only to look at things as they actually were. For a hundred years, that country had ceased to play any independent role in European politics and had become only a source of conflict among others. It could not continue indefinitely among the other states with its political system and constitution unchanged. A fundamental change in its Tartar character would have required at least half a century, perhaps a full century, even if the leading men of the nation had supported it. But those men were far too thoroughly Tartar in character to want such a change. Their turbulent political condition and their boundless frivolity went together, and so they fell into the abyss. Long before the partition of Poland, the Russians had become entirely at home there. The idea of Poland as an independent state with its own boundaries had already faded, and nothing is more certain than that, if Poland had not been partitioned, it would have become a Russian province. If that had not been the case, and if Poland had been a state capable of defending itself, the three powers would not have moved so readily to partition it, and those powers most interested in preserving its integrity, such as France, Sweden, and Turkey, would have been able to cooperate in a very different way for

its preservation. But if the survival of a state depends entirely on outside support, then that is certainly asking too much.

People had been talking about partitioning Poland for a hundred years, and during that time the country was less like a private house than a public road, where foreign armies were constantly pushing past one another. Was it really the duty of other states to stop this? Were they supposed to keep their swords drawn at all times to preserve the political inviolability of Poland's frontier? That would have been asking for a moral impossibility. By this point, Poland was politically little better than an uninhabited steppe. And just as it is impossible to protect defenceless steppes lying among other countries from invasion forever, it was impossible to preserve the integrity of this so-called state. For all these reasons, there is no more cause for surprise in Poland's quiet collapse than in the silent conquest of the Crimean Tartars. The Turks had more reason to support the latter than any European state had to preserve the independence of Poland, yet they saw that trying to protect a defenceless steppe would be futile.—

We return to our subject, and we believe we have shown that, in general, the defensive can count more on foreign aid than the offensive. It can rely on that aid more confidently in proportion to how important its existence is to others—that is, the stronger and healthier its political and military condition is.

Of course, the factors listed here as means properly belonging to the defensive will not be available in every particular case of defence. Sometimes one will be missing, sometimes another. But all of them belong to the general idea of the defensive as a

whole.

CHAPTER VII. Mutual Action and Reaction of Attack and Defence

We will now consider attack and defence separately, as far as they can in fact be separated. We begin with the defensive for the following reasons. It is certainly natural and necessary to base the rules of defence on those of attack, and vice versa. But if the whole chain of ideas is to have a beginning—if it is to be possible at all—then one of the two must still have a third point of departure. Our first question concerns that point.

If we think about how war begins in philosophical terms, the true idea of war does not start with the offensive. The offensive aims less at fighting itself than at taking possession of something. The idea of war first appears in the defensive, because the defensive has battle as its immediate object. To ward off an attack and to fight are plainly the same thing. Warding off is directed entirely against an attack, so it necessarily assumes that an attack exists. But an attack is not directed against warding off; it is directed toward something else—the taking possession of something—and so it does not presuppose resistance. It follows, then, from the nature of the case that the side which first brings the element of war into action, the side from whose point of view two opposing parties are first conceived, also lays down the first laws of war. That side is the defender. We are not speaking of any particular case here. We are dealing only with a general, abstract case that theory constructs in order to determine the course it should take.

From this, we now know where to look for this fixed point, outside and independent of the mutual action of attack and defence: it is in the defensive.

If this follows logically, then the defensive must have motives for action even before he knows anything about the intentions of the offensive. Those motives must shape how the means of fighting are organized. On the other hand, as long as the offensive knows nothing of his opponent's plans, he has no motive for action and no basis for using his military means. He can do no more than bring those means with him—that is, take possession by means of his army. And this is how things are in fact. Simply carrying the machinery of war is not the same as using it. An offensive force that brings such things along on the general assumption that it may need them, and that takes possession of a country with an army instead of through civil officials and proclamations, has not yet, properly speaking, committed an act of war. But the defensive, who both gathers his means of war and arranges them with a view to fighting, is the first to perform an act that truly matches the concept of war.

The second question is this: in theory, what motives must first arise in the mind of the defender, before any thought of attack appears? Clearly, they begin with an advance made in order to take possession—an advance we have imagined as existing outside the war itself, but which forms the basis of the opening chapter. Defence is meant to resist that advance. So, in thought, we must connect the advance with the land or country, and from that connection come the first and most general measures of defence. Once those are established, the use of offense is built on them; and by considering the means the offense then

employs, we can derive new principles of defence in turn. Here we see the reciprocal process that theory can trace in its inquiry, so long as the new results it produces are worth examining.

This brief analysis was necessary to make what follows clearer and more firmly grounded, such as it is. It is not written for the battlefield, nor for the generals of the future. It is meant only for the army of theorists, who have so far treated the subject far too lightly.

CHAPTER VIII. Methods of Resistance

The basic idea of defence is to ward off an attack. In that act of warding off lies a state of waiting, and we have taken this state of expectation to be the chief characteristic of defence, as well as its main advantage.

But defence in war cannot be mere endurance. So this state of expectation is only relative, not absolute. The things to which this waiting is connected are, in terms of space, the country, the theatre of war, or the position; and in terms of time, the war, the campaign, or the battle. We know that these are not fixed and separate units, but only centres of limited regions that overlap and blend into one another. Still, in practical life we often have to be satisfied with grouping things together rather than separating them rigidly. And in the real world these concepts are distinct enough to serve as centres around which we can group other ideas.

The defense of a country, then, begins only when the country is attacked; the defense of a theater of war begins when that theater is attacked; and the defense of a position begins when that position is attacked. Any positive action the defender takes after this initial period of waiting—even action that is more or less offensive—does not cancel the defensive character of the operation. That is because the state of expectation, which is the main mark of defense and its chief advantage, has already been fulfilled.

When considered in relation to time, the ideas of war, campaign, and battle correspond respectively to country, theater of war, and position. For that reason, they stand in the same relation to the present subject.

The defensive, therefore, has two unlike parts: the state of expectation and the state of action. By linking the first to a definite object, and thus placing it before action, we can treat the two as parts of a single whole. But a defensive act—especially a large one, such as a campaign or an entire war—does not, in terms of time, divide into two broad halves, with mere waiting first and action afterward. Instead, it alternates between the two. Throughout the whole defensive act, the state of expectation runs through it like a continuous thread.

We assign so much importance to this state of expectation simply because the nature of the matter requires it. Earlier theories of war certainly never presented it as an independent concept, but in practice it has always served as a guide, even when people did not notice it. It is such a basic part of the whole conduct of war that one seems almost impossible without the other. We will therefore often return to it later by pointing out its effects in the dynamic interplay of the forces brought into action.

For now, we will explain how the principle of the state of expectation runs through the act of defense, and what successive stages of defense arise from it.

To establish our ideas in a simpler setting, we will postpone the defense of a country—a subject heavily shaped by many

different political influences—until we reach the Book on the Plan of War. On the other hand, defensive action in a position or in a battle belongs to tactics and serves only as a starting point for strategic action as a whole. We will therefore take the defense of a theatre of war as our subject, because it is there that we can best show the relationships involved in the defensive.

We have said that the states of waiting and acting—the latter always being a counterstroke, and therefore a reaction—are both essential parts of the defensive. Without the first, there would be no defensive; without the second, there would be no war. This view previously led us to the idea that the defensive is simply the stronger form of war, adopted in order to defeat the enemy more surely. We must hold to that idea throughout, partly because it alone ultimately saves us from absurdity, and partly because the more firmly it is impressed on the mind, the more energy it gives to the whole defensive effort.

If, therefore, we were to distinguish between the reaction that makes up the second element of the defensive and the other element, which in reality consists only in repelling the enemy—if we were to view expelling him from the country or from the theatre of war as the only necessary aim, the final object beyond which our efforts should not go, and if, on the other hand, we were to treat the possibility of a reaction carried further, passing into a true strategic attack, as something foreign to the defensive and of no importance to it—then such a view would conflict with the nature of the idea set out above. We therefore cannot accept this distinction as a real one. We must hold to our assertion that the idea of revenge must always

lie at the root of every defensive. Otherwise, however much damage a successful first reaction might inflict on the enemy, there would still be a lack of the necessary balance in the dynamic relationship between attack and defense.

So we can say that defense is the stronger way to wage war, because it makes it easier to overcome the enemy. Whether that victory is enough to achieve the aim for which the defense was begun must be decided by circumstances.

But because defense is inseparable from a state of waiting, that aim—the defeat of the enemy—exists only on condition that the enemy actually attacks. If no offensive blow follows, then defense is naturally satisfied with holding what it already possesses. In that state of waiting, preserving those possessions is therefore its immediate object. And only so long as it is content with this more limited end does it retain the advantages of war in its stronger form.

If we imagine an army and its theatre of war assigned to defense, that defense may be carried out in the following ways:

1. By attacking the enemy the moment he enters the theatre of war. (Mollwitz, Hohenfriedberg).

2. By taking up a position close to the frontier and waiting until the enemy appears with the intention of attacking it, and then attacking him instead (Czaslau, Soor, Rosbach). This second method clearly involves more endurance: we wait longer. The time gained by it, compared with the first method, may be very small—or none at all, if the enemy actually attacks. Still, the battle that was certain in the first case is much less certain in the second. The enemy may perhaps be unable to decide to

attack at all. In that case, the advantage of waiting is immediately greater.

3. By placing the army in such a position that it not only waits for the enemy to decide to fight a battle—that is, to appear in front of the position—but also waits to be actually attacked (to keep to the same general, Bunzelwitz). In that case, we fight a regular defensive battle, which, as we have already said, may still include offensive movements by one or more parts of the army. Here again, as before, the gain of time does not matter; instead, the enemy's resolve is tested once more. Many a commander has advanced to attack and then, at the last moment—or after one attempt—given it up because he found the enemy's position too strong.

4. By having the army shift its defense into the heart of the country. The purpose of retreating inland is to wear down the enemy's strength and wait until the effects are great enough that his advance stops on its own, or at least until the resistance we can offer him at the end of his march is more than he can overcome.

This situation appears in the simplest and clearest form when the defender can leave one or more fortresses behind him that the attacker is forced to besiege or blockade. It is obvious how much this weakens the attacker's forces, and how it creates a chance for the defender to strike at some point with superior strength.

But even when there are no fortresses, a retreat into the interior of the country can gradually give the defender the balance, or even the superiority, that he lacked at the frontier. Every

forward move in a strategic attack reduces its strength, partly in absolute terms and partly because it makes the division of forces necessary. We will say more about that under the heading of the “Attack.” We mention this point here in advance because it has been clearly demonstrated in all wars.

Now, in this fourth case, the main point is the time gained. If the attacker lays siege to our fortresses, we gain time until they are likely to fall, which may be a matter of weeks, or in some cases months. But if the attacking force is weakened—that is, worn down—by its advance and by the need to garrison or occupy certain points, in other words simply by the length of the attacker’s march, then the time gained is usually greater, and our freedom to act is much less limited by time.

Besides the change in the balance between attack and defense that this march produces in the end, we must also count, in the defender’s favor, a greater advantage in simply waiting. Even if the attacker has not actually been weakened so much by this advance that he is unable to attack our main force where he stops, he will probably lack the resolve to do it. In his present position, such an attack demands more determination than it would have required before operations had moved beyond the frontier. This is partly because his forces are worn down and no longer fresh, while the danger has increased. It is also partly because, for a hesitant commander, possession of the part of the country already gained is often enough to put aside any thought of battle. He either genuinely believes, or uses as an excuse, that a battle is no longer necessary. If the attacker therefore gives up the attack, the defender does not, as he would at the frontier, gain a sufficiently important negative

result; but he still gains a great deal of time.

It is clear that, in all four methods just described, the defender has the advantage of the terrain and the country. He can also use his fortresses and the population in support of his efforts. These effective principles grow stronger at each new stage of the defence, because they are among the main means of weakening the enemy's strength in the fourth stage. Since the advantages of the "state of expectation" increase in the same way, it follows that these stages should be seen as a real strengthening of the defence, and that this form of war gains power the more it differs from the offensive. We do not mean by this that the most passive defence must therefore be the best. The act of resistance does not grow weaker at each new stage; it is simply delayed or postponed. Surely it is not unreasonable to say that a firmer resistance can be made from a strong, wisely entrenched position, and that, once the enemy has worn out his strength in useless attacks on such a position, a more effective counterblow can be struck against him. Without the advantage of position, Daun would not have won the victory at Kollin. And since Frederick the Great brought only 18,000 men off the battlefield, if Daun had pursued him more vigorously, the victory might have become one of the most brilliant in military history.

We therefore maintain that, at each new stage of the defensive, the balance of advantage—or, more precisely, the counterweight—shifts further in favor of the defender, and that this also increases the power of the counterstroke.

But can these advantages of the defence's growing strength be gained without cost? Certainly not, for the sacrifice required to obtain them increases in the same proportion.

If we wait for the enemy inside our own theater of war, then even if the decisive action happens close to our border, the enemy has still entered our territory, and that alone costs us something. If we had attacked instead, that disadvantage would have fallen on him. If we do not move at once to meet the enemy and attack, our losses will be greater. The amount of country the enemy overruns will keep increasing, and so will the time he needs to reach our position. If we want to fight a defensive battle and therefore leave the decision and the timing to the enemy, he may remain for some time in possession of the territory he has taken. In that case, the time we gain because he delays his decision is paid for by us in that way. These necessary sacrifices become even heavier if we are forced to retreat into the interior of the country.

But all these sacrifices made by the defender do no more than cause, in general, a loss of strength that only reduces his military power indirectly. It does so later, not immediately, and often so indirectly that the effect is barely felt at all. The defender therefore strengthens himself for the present at the expense of the future. In other words, he borrows, as anyone must who is too poor for the situation in which he finds himself.

Now, if we want to judge the results of these different forms of resistance, we must look at the aim of the aggression. That aim is to gain control of our theatre of war, or at least of an important part of it. In terms of the whole, this means at least the

greater part, since holding a narrow strip of territory only a few miles wide is usually of no real strategic importance. So long, therefore, as the aggressor does not possess this—so long as, out of fear of our strength, he has either not yet advanced to attack the theatre of war, or has not tried to engage us in our position, or has refused the battle we offer—the purpose of the defence has been achieved, and the defensive measures have therefore succeeded. At the same time, this result is only a negative one, and it certainly cannot directly provide the strength for a real counterstroke. But it may provide that strength indirectly; that is, it moves in that direction. For the time lost by the aggression is a loss to the aggressor, and every loss of time is a disadvantage that must weaken, in some way, the side that suffers it.

Therefore, in the first three stages of the defensive—that is, when it takes place on the frontier—even an undecided outcome already counts as a result in favour of the defence.

But that is not true of the fourth stage.

If the enemy lays siege to our fortresses, we must relieve them in time. To do that, we must bring about a decision through positive action.

The same is true when the enemy pushes into the interior of the country without laying siege to any of our strongholds. In that case, we certainly have more time. We can wait until the enemy is at his weakest. Even so, one condition remains essential: sooner or later, we must act. The enemy may now hold all the territory he set out to seize, but he holds it only temporarily. The strain continues, and the final decision has not yet been made.

As long as the defense is growing stronger and the attacker is becoming weaker each day, delaying that decision works in the defender's favor. But once that growing advantage reaches its high point—as it inevitably must, if only because of the overall losses to which the offensive has exposed itself—the defender must move to action and force a resolution. At that point, the benefit of waiting has been completely used up.

Naturally, no single moment can be fixed in general for when this happens, because it depends on many different circumstances and relationships. Still, winter is usually a natural turning point. If we cannot stop the enemy from spending the winter in the territory he has seized, then, as a rule, that territory must be considered lost. Yet we need only remember Torres Vedras to see that this is not a universal rule.

What, then, is the usual form of the solution?

In our discussion, we have always assumed that it takes the form of a battle. But in reality, that is not necessary. One can imagine many combinations of engagements involving separate corps that bring about a change in the situation, either because they actually end in bloodshed or because their likely outcome makes the enemy's retreat necessary.

On the theatre of war itself, there can be no other kind of solution. That follows necessarily from our view of war. For even if the enemy's army begins to retreat simply because it lacks provisions, that retreat still happens because our sword holds it in check. If our army were not blocking the way, the enemy would soon be able to supply his forces.

So even at the end of an enemy's offensive, when he is paying heavily for his attack, when detachments, hunger, and sickness have weakened and exhausted him, it is still the fear of our sword that makes him turn back and let things return to their usual course. Even so, there is a great difference between this kind of outcome and one that occurs at the frontier.

In the latter case, only our arms stood against his, either to hold him in check or to bring destruction into his ranks. But at the end of an offensive campaign, the enemy's forces have already been half ruined by their own efforts. That gives our arms a completely different significance. So although they are the final means that produce the outcome, they are not the only means that have done so. The destruction of the enemy's forces during the advance prepares the outcome, and may do so so thoroughly that the mere possibility of a counterstroke on our part causes the retreat, and thus reverses the whole situation. In that case, we may practically attribute the outcome to nothing but the efforts made during the advance. In fact, we will find no case in which the sword of the defensive has not also played a part. But for practical purposes, it is important to distinguish which of the two principles is the dominant one.

In this sense, we may say that defence has a double kind of outcome, and therefore a double kind of reaction, depending on whether the aggressor is ruined by the sword of the defensive or by his own efforts.

It is clear enough that the first kind of outcome predominates in the first three stages of defence, and the second in the fourth. In most cases, the latter will happen only if the retreat is carried

deep into the heart of the country. And given the great sacrifices such a retreat demands, only the prospect of that result can be a sufficient reason for it.

We have therefore established that there are two distinct principles of defense. Military history offers cases in which each appears separately and as clearly as any basic idea can appear in real life. When Frederick the Great attacked the Austrians at Hohenfriedberg as they were coming down from the Silesian mountains, their army could not have been noticeably weakened by detachments or fatigue. By contrast, when Wellington remained in his fortified camp at Torres Vedras until hunger and harsh weather had reduced Massena's army to such desperate conditions that it began to retreat on its own, the defending side's sword played no part in weakening the enemy. In other cases the two principles are combined in various ways, though one still clearly dominates. That was true in 1812. In that famous campaign, so many bloody engagements took place that under other conditions they might have been enough to produce a complete decision by force of arms. Yet there is hardly any campaign in which we can see more plainly how an attacker may be ruined by his own efforts. Of the 300,000 men in the French center, only about 90,000 reached Moscow. No more than 13,000 were detached. The loss was therefore 197,000 men, and certainly not even a third of that loss can be attributed to battles.

All campaigns known for delay and caution, as in the case of the famous Fabius Cunctator, were based chiefly on destroying the enemy through his own exertions. This principle has been the main one in many campaigns, even though it is hardly ever

mentioned. Only when we set aside the plausible arguments of historians and look at events clearly for ourselves are we led to this true explanation of many outcomes.

With this, we believe we have explained clearly enough the ideas that lie at the foundation of defense. In the two great forms of defense, we have shown plainly how the principle of waiting runs through the whole system and connects with positive action in such a way that, sooner or later, action does occur. When it does, the advantage of the waiting posture appears to have been exhausted.

We now believe that, in this way, we have covered and brought into view everything included within the scope of the defensive. At the same time, some subjects are important enough to deserve separate chapters. They are matters that must be considered on their own, such as the nature and influence of fortified places, entrenched camps, the defence of mountains and rivers, operations against the flank, and so on. We will discuss them in later chapters. But none of these topics falls outside the line of thought already laid down; they should be seen only as a more precise application of it to particular places and circumstances. This order of ideas has been drawn from the concept of the defensive and from its relation to the offensive. We have linked these simple ideas to reality, and in doing so have shown the way by which we can return from reality to those simple ideas, find firm ground, and avoid being forced in our reasoning to rely on supports that themselves vanish into air.

But resistance by the sword can take on such a changed appearance, and assume such a different character, because of the many ways battles can be combined—especially when those combinations are not actually carried out, but become effective merely through the possibility of being carried out—that we might be tempted to think some other active principle must still be discovered. Between the bloody defeat of a straightforward battle and the effects of strategic combinations that do not go nearly so far as actual combat, there seems to be such a wide difference that one might feel compelled to assume some new force, much as astronomers inferred the existence of other planets from the great gap between Mars and Jupiter.

If the attacker finds the defender in a strong position that he believes he cannot capture, or behind a large river that he believes he cannot cross, or even if he fears that by advancing farther he will no longer be able to supply his army, then in all these cases it is nothing but the defensive sword that produces the effect. It is the fear of being defeated by that sword—whether in a major battle or at some especially important point—that forces the aggressor to stop. He will either refuse to admit this altogether, or at least not admit it plainly.

Now, even if we grant that when a decision is reached without bloodshed, the mere offer of battle—though not accepted—has ultimately caused that decision, people will still argue that in such cases the truly effective factor is the strategic combination of those battles, not their tactical outcome. They will also say that this superiority of strategic combination could only have been conceived because, besides an actual appeal to the

sword, there are other defensive means to consider. We admit this, and it brings us exactly to the point we want to make: if the tactical result of a battle must be the foundation of all strategic combinations, then the attacker can always seize on that principle and, above all, concentrate his efforts on being superior at the decisive moment in order to defeat the strategic combination. Therefore, strategic combination can never be regarded as something sufficient in itself. It has value only when, for one reason or another, we can look ahead to the tactical decision without misgiving. To make this clear in a few words, we need only remind our readers how a general like Buonaparte marched without hesitation through the whole web of his opponents' strategic plans in order to seek battle itself, because he had no doubt about the result. So wherever strategy had not directed all its efforts toward securing superiority over him in that battle, wherever it turned instead to subtler—and weaker—plans, it was torn apart like a cobweb. A general like Daun, however, might be checked by such measures. It would therefore have been folly to offer Buonaparte and his army what the Prussian army of the Seven Years' War dared to offer Daun and his contemporaries. Why? Because Buonaparte understood perfectly that everything depended on the tactical outcome, and he made sure of winning it; with Daun, the situation was very different in both respects.

For that reason, we think it is useful to show that every strategic combination depends entirely on tactical results, and that these results—whether the outcome is bloody or bloodless—are always the true foundation of the final decision. Only when we have no reason to fear that decision—whether because of the

enemy's character or position, because the two armies are morally and physically equal, or because we are superior—only then can we expect strategic combinations by themselves to achieve anything without battles.

Now, military history contains many campaigns in which the attacker abandons the offensive without any blood being shed in battle. In such cases, strategic combinations seem effective to that extent. This may suggest that such combinations possess great force in themselves, and that they might generally decide the matter on their own, even when the attacker does not enjoy a clear tactical advantage. Our answer is that this idea is false, at least when we are speaking of things that arise within the theatre of war and therefore belong to war itself. We would add that the failure of most attacks is actually rooted in the higher political relations of war.

The broader conditions from which a war arises, and which naturally form its foundation, also determine its character. We will say more about this later when discussing the plan of a war. But these broader conditions have turned most wars into half-measures, in which real hostility must struggle to make itself felt through such a tangle of conflicting interests that, in the end, it remains only a very weak element. This effect naturally appears most strongly on the offensive side, the side that must take positive action. So it is no surprise when such a weak, exhausted attack is brought to a halt by the slightest touch. When resolve is so weak and so constrained by a thousand considerations that it barely exists at all, even the appearance of resistance is often enough.

The many successes the defense wins on bloodless battlefields do not come from having countless impregnable positions in every direction, from the imposing sight of dark mountain ranges gathered around the theater of war, from the broad river running through it, or from how easily certain combinations of battles can completely cripple the force meant to strike at us. The real cause lies in the weakness of will with which the attacker moves forward on hesitant feet.

These opposing influences can and should be taken into account, but they must be seen for what they really are. Their effects should not be attributed to other factors—namely, the ones we alone are dealing with here. We must state as strongly as possible how easily military history, in this respect, can become a constant liar and deceiver if criticism is not careful to adopt the right point of view.

Let us now look at the many offensive campaigns that, in their usual form, have failed without ending in bloodshed.

The attacker advances into the enemy's country and pushes his opponent back a little, but then finds it too serious a matter to force a decisive battle. So he stays where he is, facing the enemy. He behaves as though he has already made a conquest and now has nothing to do but defend it; as though it is the enemy's duty to seek battle; as though he is offering battle every day, and so on. These are the claims with which the commander deceives his army, his government, the world, and even himself. But the truth is that he finds the enemy in a position too strong for him. We are not speaking here of a case in which an aggressor does not continue his attack because he

cannot make use of a victory, because after his first leap forward he no longer has enough momentum to begin another. That kind of case assumes an attack that has succeeded, a real conquest. What we mean here is the case in which an attacker gets stuck halfway to the conquest he intended.

He now waits for favorable circumstances to exploit. But in most cases there is no real chance that such circumstances will appear. The very fact that he is preparing this attack shows that the future offers no better prospect than the present. So this, too, is only another illusion. If, as often happens, the operation is tied to other actions taking place at the same time, then whatever he does not want to do himself is shifted onto others. His own inactivity is blamed on a lack of support and proper cooperation. People speak of insurmountable obstacles and invent justifications through the most confused and subtle arguments. In this way, the attacker's forces are worn down by inactivity, or rather by limited activity that serves no useful purpose. The defender gains time, which is his greatest advantage. Bad weather sets in, and the attack ends with the aggressor returning to winter quarters in his own theater of war.

A web of false explanations then passes into history in place of the simple, real reason for the lack of results: fear of the enemy's sword. When criticism examines such a campaign, it exhausts itself debating one motive and counter-motive after another. But this leads nowhere, because all of them dissolve into vapor, and we have not gone down to the real foundation of the truth. The resistance that weakens the basic energy of war, and therefore especially the offensive, usually lies in the relations and policies of states. These are always hidden from

the world, from the mass of the people in the state, from the army, and often even from the commander-in-chief. No one will explain his lack of courage by admitting that he feared he could not achieve the desired object with the forces available to him, or that new enemies might be stirred up, or that he did not want to make his allies too powerful, and so on. Such things are kept quiet. But because events must be presented to the world in an acceptable form, the commander, either for his own sake or for that of his government, is forced to offer a web of invented motives instead. This constantly repeated deception in military argument has hardened into theoretical systems that are, of course, just as untrue. Theory can never be drawn from the nature of things except by following the simple thread of cause and effect, as we have tried to do.

If we look at military history with this same skepticism, then all the grand talk about offensive and defensive warfare falls away, and the simple idea we have outlined emerges on its own. We therefore believe it applies to the entire field of defense, and that we must hold closely to it if we want a clear view of the many events from which sound judgments can be made.

We still need to examine how these different forms of defense are used.

Since these are only different degrees of the same thing, each requiring a greater sacrifice as the form becomes more intense, that alone might seem enough to tell a commander which one to choose, so long as no other factors interfere. In principle, he would choose the form that seemed sufficient to give his force the necessary degree of defensive strength, and no more, so

that none of his strength would be wasted unnecessarily. But we must not forget that the freedom to choose among these different forms is usually quite limited, because other considerations that also demand attention naturally push the decision toward one form or another. A retreat into the interior of a country requires a large extent of territory, or else conditions like those in Portugal in 1810, where one ally, England, supported from the rear, while another, Spain, with its broad territory, greatly reduced the enemy's driving force. The placement of fortresses, whether nearer the frontier or farther inland, may also argue for or against such a plan. Even more important are the nature of the country and terrain, and the character, habits, and feelings of the inhabitants. The choice between offering an offensive or a defensive battle may be decided by the enemy's plans, by the special qualities of both armies and their generals, and finally by whether one possesses an excellent position or line of defence, or lacks one. In short, even this brief list makes it clear that the choice of a defensive form must in many cases be determined more by such factors than by the mere relative strength of the armies. As we go on to discuss in greater detail the more important matters just mentioned, their influence on this choice will become clearer. In the end, the whole subject will be arranged systematically in the Book on Plans of Wars and Campaigns.

But this influence will generally not be decisive unless the difference in strength between the opposing armies is slight. In the opposite case, which is the usual one, numerical strength will decide the matter. Military history offers plenty of proof that this has been true up to now, even apart from the line of

reasoning used here. It has been recognized intuitively, through sound military judgment, as so many things in war are. The same general, commanding the same army and operating in the same theater of war, fought the battle of Hohenfriedberg and, at another time, established the camp of Bunzelwitz. So even Frederick the Great, a commander strongly inclined toward the offensive in battle, was ultimately forced by a great imbalance of forces to adopt a genuinely defensive position. And Buonaparte, who once used to throw himself on the enemy like a wild boar—did we not see him, when the balance of forces turned against him in August and September 1813, moving this way and that as if trapped in a cage, instead of charging recklessly at one of his opponents? And in October of that same year, when the imbalance reached its height, did we not see him at Leipsic seeking shelter in the angle formed by the Parth, the Elster, and the Pleiss, as though waiting for his enemy in the corner of a room, with his back to the wall?

We should also note that this chapter, more than any other in our book, shows clearly that our aim is not to set out new principles or methods of conducting war. Our purpose is simply to examine what has long existed in its deepest relationships and reduce it to its simplest elements.

CHAPTER IX. Defensive Battle

Just as the battlefield is only a single point in strategy, the duration of a battle is, from a strategic point of view, only an instant in time. What matters strategically is not the course of a battle, but its end and its result.

If it is true that a complete victory can grow out of the offensive elements present in every defensive battle, then, in terms of strategic combinations, there would be no basic difference between an offensive battle and a defensive one. We do in fact believe this is true, but it can seem otherwise at first glance. To bring the subject into clearer focus, explain our view, and remove that impression, we will briefly sketch the kind of defensive battle we have in mind.

The defender waits for the attack from a prepared position. He has chosen suitable ground and made the most of it: he knows the area well, has built strong entrenchments at key points, cleared and leveled routes of communication, constructed batteries, fortified villages, and identified places where he can assemble his main forces under cover, and so on. While the two sides wear each other down at the points where they meet, the advantage of a front made stronger by one or more parallel trenches, other obstacles, or commanding positions allows him to use a relatively small part of his force to kill large numbers of the enemy at every stage of the defense, all the way to the center of the position. The supporting points he has given to his wings protect him from any sudden attack from several directions. The covered ground he has chosen for his main bodies makes the enemy cautious, even timid, and gives the

defender a way to reduce the general backward movement that develops as the fighting gradually contracts into a narrower space, by launching limited but successful counterattacks. So the defender can look with some satisfaction at the battle as it burns before him at a moderate intensity. But he does not imagine that resistance in front can last forever. He does not believe his flanks are invulnerable. He does not expect the whole course of the battle to be changed by the successful charge of a few battalions or squadrons. His position has depth, because every level in the order of battle, from the division down to the battalion, keeps its own reserve for unexpected events and for renewing the fight. At the same time, he keeps an important mass—one fifth to one quarter of the whole force—well to the rear and entirely out of the battle, far enough back to be beyond enemy fire and, if possible, beyond the wide circuit by which the enemy might try to turn either flank. With this corps he means to protect his flanks against larger and more distant turning movements, guard himself against unforeseen events, and, in the later stage of the battle, when the attacker's plan has fully unfolded and most of his troops are already engaged, strike this mass against one part of the enemy army. There he will begin a smaller offensive battle of his own, using every element of attack—charges, surprise, turning movements—and by pressing against the battle's center of gravity, now resting on a single point, force the whole enemy line to recoil.

This is the usual view we have of a defensive battle, based on modern tactics. In such a battle, the attacker makes a broad turning movement to support the attack and also to make any

victory more decisive. The defender answers with a partial turning movement of his own, aimed at the part of the attacking force that is trying to turn his flank. We may assume that this partial movement is enough to cancel the enemy's attempt, but it cannot produce a similar general envelopment of the attacker's army. For that reason, there will always be a difference in the character of victory: the side fighting offensively surrounds the enemy's army and moves against its centre, while the side fighting defensively acts more or less from the centre outward, along the radii toward the circumference.

On the battlefield itself, and in the first stage of pursuit, an enveloping attack must always be regarded as the most effective form. We do not mean simply because of its shape in general. We mean when it is carried so far that it greatly restricts the enemy's ability to retreat during the battle. But this is exactly the point against which the enemy directs his strongest counter-effort. In many cases, even if that effort is not enough to win the battle, it will at least be enough to protect him from the extreme danger we have in mind. Still, we must always admit that this danger — the serious narrowing of the line of retreat — is especially great in defensive battles. If it cannot be prevented, the results both in the battle itself and in the first stage of the retreat are greatly increased in the enemy's favour.

But as a rule, this danger does not last beyond the first stage of the retreat, that is, until nightfall. On the next day, envelopment has come to an end, and in this respect both sides are once again on equal terms.

The defender may well have lost his main line of retreat and, as a result, be left in a strategically weaker position afterward. But in most cases the turning movement itself will already have run its course, because it was planned only for that particular battlefield and usually cannot be carried much farther. But what happens if the defender is victorious instead? The defeated force is split apart. That may make retreat easier at first, but by the next day the most urgent need is to bring all the scattered parts back together. If the victory is highly decisive, and if the defender pursues with great energy, that concentration will often become impossible. From that separation of the beaten force, the worst consequences may follow, step by step, until they end in a complete rout. If Buonaparte had won at Leipsic, the allied army would have been completely cut in two, which would have greatly weakened their strategic position relative to his. At Dresden, although Buonaparte certainly did not fight a regular defensive battle, the attack had the geometrical form we have been discussing—that is, it moved from the centre toward the circumference. The difficulties the Allies faced because of their separation are well known. They were relieved from them only by the victory on the Katzbach, news of which caused Buonaparte to return to Dresden with the Guard.

The battle on the Katzbach itself provides a similar example. There the defender, at the last moment, shifts to the offensive and therefore operates on diverging lines. The French corps were thus driven apart, and several days later, as one of the results of the victory, Puthod's division fell into the hands of the Allies.

The conclusion we draw is this: if the assailant, through the concentric form natural to his position, has the means to widen the effects of his victory, then the defender, through the divergent form natural to defence, also gains a way to make his victory produce greater results than it would from a merely parallel position and a perpendicular attack. We believe that one advantage is at least as strong as the other.

If military history gives us fewer great victories won through defensive battles than through offensive ones, that does not disprove our claim that defense can produce victory just as well as attack. The real reason lies in the defender's very different situation. The army on the defensive is usually the weaker of the two, not just in numbers but in every other respect as well. It either is, or believes itself to be, unable to turn victory into major results, and so it settles for simply driving off the danger and preserving the honor of its arms. We do not deny that inferior strength and other circumstances may force the defender into such a position. But there is no doubt that this condition, which is only the result of particular necessity, has often been mistaken for something inherent in the defender's role itself. In this way, an absurd view of defense has become widespread: that defensive battles should be limited to repelling the enemy's attacks and should not aim at destroying the enemy. We regard this as a harmful error, a case of confusing the form with the thing itself. We maintain without reservation that in the form of war we call defense, victory may not only be more likely, but may also reach the same scale and effectiveness as in attack. This can be true not only in the overall result of all the engagements that make up a campaign, but also in any single

battle, provided the necessary degree of strength and energy is present.

CHAPTER X. Fortresses

In earlier times, up until the rise of large standing armies, fortresses—castles and fortified towns—were built simply to defend and protect the people living in them. A baron who found himself under pressure on all sides would retreat to his castle to buy time and wait for a better opportunity. Towns used their walls to shield themselves from the passing storm of war. But this plain and natural purpose did not remain the only one. The relationship these strongholds developed to the surrounding country, and to armies operating across it, soon gave them a broader importance. Their influence was felt far beyond their walls. They became a major factor in conquering or holding a country, in determining whether a whole struggle ended in success or failure, and in making war more of a connected, unified enterprise. In this way, fortresses gained the strategic importance that for a time was considered so great that it shaped the main outlines of campaign plans. Campaigns were aimed more at capturing one or more fortresses than at destroying the enemy's army in the field. People went back to the source of these places' importance—the connection between a fortified point, the country around it, and the armies moving through it—and then concluded that they could hardly be too exact or too theoretical in deciding which points should be fortified. In pursuing these abstract aims, they almost lost sight of the original purpose. In the end, they even arrived at the idea of fortresses without towns or inhabitants.

On the other hand, the days are gone when simply surrounding a place with walls, without any real military preparation, could

keep it safe and untouched while war flooded across the whole country. That had once been possible partly because nations were divided into small states, and partly because invasions tended to come in regular intervals and last only for limited periods, almost like the seasons: feudal forces soon hurried home, and the money to pay the condottieri regularly ran out. Once large standing armies appeared, with powerful artillery trains that cut through walls and ramparts almost mechanically, no town or other small community could any longer be willing to risk all its resources only to be captured a few weeks or months later and then treated all the more harshly. Still less is it in an army's interest to split itself into garrisons for a number of strong places that may delay the enemy for a time but must ultimately surrender. We must always keep enough forces, beyond those tied up in garrisons, to match the enemy in the open field, unless we can rely on an ally to arrive, relieve our strong places, and free our army. As a result, the number of fortresses has necessarily declined. This, in turn, has led to the abandonment of the idea that fortifications should directly protect the people and property in towns. Instead, it has encouraged the view that fortresses protect the country indirectly, through their strategic importance as the knots that hold the strategic web together.

That has been the course of thinking not only in books but also in actual experience, though, as usually happens, books have drawn it out much more.

Natural as this development was, these ideas were still pushed too far, and mere whims and fancies displaced the sound core of a real and pressing need. We shall examine these simple and

important needs when we set out the purposes and conditions of fortresses as a whole. In doing so, we shall move from the simple to the more complex, and in the next chapter we shall see what conclusions follow for deciding the position and number of fortresses.

A fortress's effectiveness clearly depends on two distinct elements: the passive and the active. In its passive role, it protects the place and everything inside it. In its active role, it exerts a certain influence over the surrounding country, even beyond the reach of its guns.

This active element lies in the attacks the garrison can launch against any enemy that comes within a certain distance. The larger the garrison, the stronger the detachments it can send out on these operations. And the stronger those detachments are, the farther they can usually range. It follows that the active influence of a large fortress is not only stronger but also spreads over a wider area than that of a small one. But this active element itself is, to some extent, of two kinds. It includes, first, operations carried out by the garrison itself, and second, operations that other bodies of troops, large or small, can carry out in cooperation with it, even though they are not part of the garrison. For example, corps that would be too weak to face the enemy on their own may still be able to hold their ground in the country, and to some extent control it, because they can fall back on the protection the fortress walls provide when necessary.

The operations a fortress garrison can risk undertaking are always somewhat limited. Even in large fortresses with strong

garrisons, the troops available for such actions are usually small compared with the armies in the field, and their normal range of action rarely extends beyond a couple of days' march. If the fortress is small, the detachments it can send out are extremely slight, and the range of their activity will generally be limited to the nearest villages. But troops that do not belong to the garrison, and so are not required to return to the fortress, have much greater freedom of movement. Through them, if other conditions are favorable, the outer zone of a fortress's action may be extended enormously. Therefore, when we speak in general terms of the active influence of fortresses, we must keep this aspect chiefly in mind.

Even the smallest active contribution from the weakest garrison is still necessary for the different purposes a fortress is meant to serve. Strictly speaking, even the most passive function of a fortress—defending itself against attack—cannot be imagined without some active effort. At the same time, it is clear that among the various purposes a fortress may serve, whether in general or at a particular moment, the passive element will be more important at one time and the active element at another. The role a fortress is meant to play may be very simple, in which case its action is to some extent direct. Or it may be partly complex, in which case its action becomes more or less indirect. We will examine these subjects separately, beginning with the first. But at the outset we must note that a fortress may be intended to serve several of these purposes, perhaps all of them, either at the same time or at different stages of the war.

We say, therefore, that fortresses are major and highly important supports of the defensive.

1. As secure depots of stores of all kinds. The attacker, in the course of his advance, feeds his army from day to day. The defender, by contrast, usually must have prepared long in advance. He therefore does not need to draw provisions only from the district he occupies, which he naturally wishes to spare. Storehouses are therefore a great necessity for him. As the attacker advances, the supplies of every kind he possesses remain in his rear and are therefore protected from the dangers of the theatre of war, while those of the defender are exposed to them. If these supplies of all kinds are not kept in fortified places, the result is a highly damaging effect on operations in the field, and very extended and often compulsory positions become necessary in order to cover depots or sources of supply.

An army on the defensive without fortresses has a hundred vulnerable points; it is a body without armour.

2. As protection for large and wealthy towns. This purpose is closely connected with the first, because large and wealthy towns, especially commercial ones, are the natural storehouses of an army. For that reason, holding or losing them directly affects the army. Beyond that, it is always worthwhile to preserve this part of the nation’s wealth, partly because of the resources these towns provide at once, and partly because, in peace negotiations, an important place is itself a valuable weight in the balance.

This use of fortresses has received too little attention in modern times, even though it is one of the most natural uses, one of the most powerful in effect, and one of the least open to error. If

there were a country in which not only all large and wealthy cities, but all populous places as well, were fortified and defended by their inhabitants and by the people of the surrounding districts, then military operations would be slowed so greatly, and the attacked people would throw so much of their full weight into the scale, that both the skill and the determination of the enemy's general would be reduced to nothing.

We mention this ideal use of fortification throughout a country only to give full due to what we have just described as the proper use of fortresses, and to make sure that the importance of the direct protection they provide is not overlooked for a moment. In every other respect, however, this idea will not interrupt our discussion again, because among all fortresses there must always be some that are more strongly fortified than the rest, so that they can serve as the true supports of the active army.

The purposes described under 1 and 2 call for little from fortresses beyond passive action.

3. As real barriers, they block the roads, and in most cases the rivers, on which they stand.

It is not as easy as people generally suppose to find a usable side road that passes around a fortress, because the route must go not only beyond the range of its guns, but also far enough out of the way to avoid sorties from the garrison.

If the country is even slightly difficult, the smallest change in the road often brings delays that can cost a whole day's march; and if the road is heavily used, that may become very important.

How closing a river to navigation can affect military operations is obvious enough.

4. As tactical points d'appui. Because even fairly weak fortifications usually command an area several leagues across with their fire, fortresses can almost always be regarded as the best supports for the flanks of a position. A lake several miles long is certainly an excellent support for an army's wing, but a fortress of moderate size is better. The flank does not need to rest directly on it, since an attacker, for the sake of preserving his line of retreat, would not place himself between our flank and that obstacle.

5. As a station (or stage). If fortresses lie on the defender's line of communication, as they generally do, they serve as stopping places for everything moving along those routes. The main danger to lines of communication comes from irregular bands, whose attacks are always sudden and violent. If a valuable convoy, when such a threat approaches, can reach a fortress by marching faster or making a quick detour, it is saved and can remain there until the danger has passed. In addition, troops marching to or from the army, after resting there for a few days, are better able to complete the rest of the journey quickly; and a day spent halted is precisely the moment of greatest danger. In this way, a fortress placed halfway along a line of communication 30 miles long effectively cuts that line in half.

6. As places of refuge for weak or defeated corps. Under the guns of a moderately sized fortress, any corps is safe from the enemy's attacks, even if no entrenched camp has been specially prepared for it. Such a corps must no doubt give up

any further retreat if it remains there too long; but that is no great sacrifice when continuing the retreat would only lead to total destruction.

In many cases, a fortress can secure a halt of a few days without bringing the retreat to a complete stop. It is especially well suited as a refuge for the lightly wounded and for fugitives who move ahead of a defeated army, where they can wait and rejoin their corps.

If Magdeburg had stood directly on the line of the Prussian retreat in 1806, and if that line had not already been broken at Auerstadt, the army could easily have stopped for three or four days near that great fortress and pulled itself together and reorganized. Even so, it still served as a rallying point for what remained of Hohenlohe's corps, which there first began to look like an army again.

Only actual experience of war can make the value of nearby fortresses in times of disaster fully clear. They hold powder and weapons, forage and bread. They shelter the sick, protect the healthy, and help the panic-stricken recover their senses. They are like an inn in the desert.

In the last four purposes just named, it is clear that fortresses are called on to play a more active role.

7. As a real shield against the enemy's attack. Fortresses that the defender leaves in front of him break up the enemy's advance like blocks of ice breaking a current. The enemy must at least invest them, and if the garrisons are brave and energetic, he may need a force perhaps twice as large to do so. Moreover, these garrisons may often be made up partly of

troops who, though capable of garrison duty, are not fit for the field—half-trained militia, invalids, convalescents, armed citizens, landsturm, and the like. In such a case, then, the enemy may be weakened perhaps four times as much as we are.

This disproportionate reduction of the enemy's strength is the first and most important advantage that a besieged fortress provides through its resistance, but it is not the only one. From the moment the enemy crosses our line of fortresses, all his movements become much more restricted. His lines of retreat are narrowed, and he must constantly pay attention to directly covering the sieges he has undertaken.

In this way, fortresses work with the defensive effort in a broad and decisive manner, and of all the purposes they can serve, this may be regarded as the most important.

If this use of fortresses appears only rarely in military history, instead of showing up as a regular pattern, the reason lies in the character of most wars. This means is, to a certain extent, far too decisive and too effective for them. We will explain that later.

When fortresses are used in this way, what matters most is their offensive power, or at least that is what mainly makes them effective. If a fortress were nothing more to an attacker than a point he could not occupy, it would be an obstacle, but not enough to force him to besiege it. But he cannot leave six, eight, or ten thousand men free to act behind his lines. So he must surround the place with a strong enough force. And if he does not want that investment to keep tying down such a large

detachment, he must turn the investment into a siege and capture the place. Once the siege begins, the fortress's passive strength is what chiefly comes into play.

All the purposes of fortresses we have considered so far are carried out in a simple way, and mostly in a direct one. In the next two cases, however, the way they operate is more complex.

8. As protection for extended cantonments. That a fortress of moderate size blocks access to cantonments behind it across a width of three or four miles is an obvious result of its presence. But how such a place comes to be credited with covering a line of cantonments fifteen or twenty miles long—as military history often describes—needs closer examination where it has really happened, and correction where it is only an illusion.

The following points need to be considered:

(1.) The place itself blocks one of the main roads and genuinely covers a stretch of country three or four miles wide.

(2.) It may be treated as an unusually strong advanced post, or as a position that allows more complete observation of the surrounding country. To this we may add the advantages of obtaining private information through the ordinary connections of civil life between a large town and the nearby districts. Naturally, in a place with six, eight, or ten thousand inhabitants, one can learn much more about what is happening in the neighbourhood than in a mere village, where an ordinary outpost would be stationed.

(3.) Smaller corps can use it as support, drawing protection and security from it. From time to time, they can move out toward the enemy, whether to gather intelligence or, if he tries to move around the fortress, to strike at his rear. So although a fortress cannot leave its position, it can still serve much the same purpose as an advanced corps (Fifth Book, eighth Chapter).

(4.) After concentrating his corps, the defender can take up a position at a point directly behind this fortress, which the attacker cannot reach without exposing himself to danger from the fortress in his rear.

There is no doubt that every attack on a line of cantonments, as such, must be understood as a surprise attack; indeed, that is the only kind of attack we are discussing here. It is obvious that a surprise attack achieves its effect in a much shorter time than a regular attack on a theatre of war. Therefore, although in the latter case a fortress that must be passed cannot be ignored and must be invested and contained, that investment is not as essential in the case of a mere sudden attack on cantonments. To that extent, the fortress is less of an obstacle to an attack on the cantonments. That is true enough. It is also true that cantonments lying six to eight miles from the fortress cannot be protected by it directly. But the purpose of such a sudden attack is not simply to strike a few cantonments. We cannot fully explain the real object of such an attack, or what may be expected from it, until we come to the book on attack. For the present, however, we may say this much: its main results come not from the actual assault on a few isolated quarters, but from the series of combats that the aggressor forces on individual corps that are not properly formed and are more intent on

hurrying to certain points than on fighting. But this attack and pursuit will always move more or less toward the centre of the enemy's cantonments. Therefore, an important fortress lying in front of that centre will certainly be a very serious obstacle to the attack.

If we consider the full effect of these four points, we can see that an important fortress, both directly and indirectly, gives a much larger area of cantonments some degree of protection than we might suppose at first. We say "some degree of protection," because all these indirect factors do not make an enemy advance impossible. They only make it harder and more serious to attempt, and therefore less likely and less dangerous for the defender. But that is all that is required here, and all that should be meant in this case by the term covering. True, direct security must be provided by outposts and by the arrangement of the cantonments themselves.

There is, therefore, some truth in saying that a great fortress can cover a wide stretch of cantonments lying behind it. But we must also admit that, in actual campaign plans, and even more often in historical works, we encounter vague and empty language or misleading ideas on this subject. If that protection depends on the cooperation of several conditions, and even then only reduces the danger, it is easy to see that in particular cases, because of special circumstances and above all because of the enemy's boldness, the whole protection may prove illusory. Therefore, in real war, we must not be satisfied with hastily assuming the effectiveness of this or that fortress. We must carefully examine and study each case on its own merits.

9. As protection for a province that is not occupied. If, during a war, a province is either not occupied at all or held only by a force too small to control it, and is therefore more or less exposed to raids by flying columns, then a fortress—provided it is not too small or insignificant—may be regarded as protecting, or, if we prefer, securing, that province. It can certainly be considered a security, because the enemy cannot fully master the province until he has taken the fortress, and that gives us time to move to its defence. But any actual protection it provides can only be very indirect, or not properly part of that role. In other words, through active resistance the fortress can only to some extent check the incursions of hostile bands. If that resistance is limited to what the garrison alone can do, the result will be slight, since the garrisons of such places are generally weak and usually made up only of infantry, and not of the best quality. The idea becomes somewhat more real if small columns remain in communication with the place, using it as their base and as a refuge when necessary.

10. As the center of a general arming of the nation. In a People's War, provisions, arms, and munitions can never be supplied in a regular way. On the other hand, the very nature of such a war is to make the best use of whatever is available. In this way, a thousand small sources of resistance are opened up that might otherwise have gone unused. It is easy to see, then, that a strong and spacious fortress, serving as a great storehouse for these things, can give the whole defence more strength and intensity, more unity, and greater effect.

Besides, a fortress serves as a refuge for the wounded, the seat of the civil authorities, the treasury, and the gathering point for

larger undertakings, among other things. Finally, it forms a nucleus of resistance which, during a siege, places the enemy's forces in a situation that makes attacks by national levies acting together easier and more effective.

11. For the defence of rivers and mountains. A fortress can serve more purposes nowhere better than on a major river. It secures the crossing at that point at all times and prevents the enemy from crossing for several miles in either direction. It controls the river's use for trade, takes ships within its walls, blocks bridges and roads, and supports the indirect defence of the river—that is, defence from a position on the enemy's side. Clearly, because it exerts influence in so many ways, it greatly strengthens the defence of the river and may be considered an essential part of it.

Fortresses in mountainous regions are important in much the same way. There they become the central junctions of entire road systems, whose routes begin and end at that point. In this way they control the whole region crossed by those roads, and they may be regarded as the true supports of the entire defensive system.

CHAPTER XI. Fortresses (Continued)

We have discussed the purpose of fortresses; now we turn to their location. At first, the subject seems very complicated when we consider the variety of purposes involved, each of which may also be shaped by local conditions. But that impression has little basis if we keep to the heart of the matter and avoid unnecessary refinements.

It is clear that all these requirements are met at once if, in those regions that are to be treated as the theatre of war, all the largest and wealthiest towns on the main highways connecting the two countries are fortified—especially those near harbours and sea bays, or those on large rivers and in mountainous areas. Great towns and great roads usually go together, and both are also naturally connected with great rivers and the seacoast. These four conditions therefore fit together well and create no inconsistency. Mountains, however, are different, because large towns are seldom found there. If, then, the position and direction of a mountain chain make it suitable for a defensive line, its roads and passes must be closed by small forts built for that purpose alone and at the lowest possible cost, while the heavy expense of major fortifications should be reserved for the important military positions in the flat country.

We have not yet looked at the state’s frontiers, said anything about the overall geometric shape of the fortress system, or discussed the other geographical factors connected with their position. We have left these aside because we consider the

points already mentioned the most important, and in many cases—especially in small states—we believe they are enough on their own. At the same time, other considerations can be included, and in larger countries they may even be necessary. This is true whether a country has many important towns and roads, or almost none; whether it is very rich and, despite already having many fortresses, still needs new ones; or whether it is so poor that it must make a small number serve many purposes. In short, these additional considerations matter whenever the number of fortresses does not match the number of important towns and roads, whether the fortresses are far more numerous or far fewer.

We will now briefly look at the nature of these other considerations.

The main questions that remain are these:

1. Which main roads should be chosen, if the two countries are connected by more roads than we want to fortify.

2. Whether the fortresses should be placed only on the frontier, or spread throughout the country. Or,

3. Whether they should be distributed evenly, or arranged in groups.

4. What features of the country’s geography must be taken into account.

There are also various other questions about the geometric shape of a line of fortifications: whether the fortresses should be arranged in a single line or in several lines; whether they are more useful when placed one behind another or side by side;

whether they should be staggered like a checkerboard or set in a straight line; or whether the whole arrangement should itself take the form of a fortification, with salients and re-entering angles. We regard all of this as empty subtlety—in other words, as considerations so minor that, compared with the truly important points, they are not worth attention. We mention them only because many books discuss them, and because far more importance is often attached to this rubbish than it deserves.

As for the first question, we can make it clearer by looking at the relation between southern Germany and France, that is, the upper Rhine. If, without considering the number of separate states in this region, we treat it as a single whole that is to be strategically fortified, the problem at once becomes uncertain, because a great many excellent roads lead from the Rhine into the interior of Franconia, Bavaria, and Austria. There is certainly no lack of towns that stand out from the rest in size and importance, such as Nuremburg, Wurzburg, Ulm, Augsburg, and Munich. But if we are not willing to fortify them all, we have no choice but to select some and leave others. Even if, in keeping with our view, the chief aim is to fortify the largest and richest towns, it still cannot be denied that, because of the distance between Nuremburg and Munich, the former has a very different strategic importance from the latter. So the question always remains whether, instead of fortifying Nuremburg, it might not be better to fortify some other place near Munich, even if that place is less important in itself.

As for deciding such cases, that is, answering the first question, we must refer back to what was said in the chapters on the general plan of defence and on the choice of points of attack.

Wherever the most natural point of attack lies, there the defensive arrangements should preferably be made.

Therefore, among the many main roads leading from the enemy's country into our own, we should first fortify the one that leads most directly to the heart of our dominions, or the one that passes through fertile provinces or runs alongside navigable rivers and so makes the enemy's advance easier. Once that is done, we may feel secure. The attacker will then have to confront these works, or, if he decides to bypass them, he will naturally give us a favourable opportunity to operate against his flank.

Vienna is the center of southern Germany, and it is clear that Munich or Augsburg, considered only in relation to France, would serve better as a main fortress than Nuremberg or Würzburg, assuming Switzerland and Italy remain neutral. This becomes even clearer if we also consider the roads leading from Italy into Germany through Switzerland and the Tyrol. In relation to those routes, Munich and Augsburg will always matter, while Würzburg and Nuremberg, in this respect, are almost as useless as if they did not exist.

We now come to the second question: should fortresses be placed on the frontier, or spread throughout the country? First, we should note that for small states, the question hardly matters, because what are called strategic frontiers nearly coincide with the whole country. The larger the state under consideration, the more necessary it becomes to answer this question clearly.

The most obvious answer is that fortresses belong on the frontiers, since their purpose is to defend the state, and the state is defended so long as its frontiers are defended. This argument may hold true in the abstract, but the following considerations will show that it must be qualified in many ways.

Any defense that depends mainly on help from foreign allies places great importance on buying time. It is not a forceful counterattack, but a gradual method in which the main advantage lies more in delay than in any damage actually done to the enemy. Given otherwise equal conditions, fortresses spread across the whole country, enclosing a large area between them, will naturally take longer to capture than fortresses packed into a tight line along the frontier. Further, whenever the aim is to defeat the enemy by stretching his lines of communication and making it hard for him to sustain himself, it would be entirely contradictory for a country that relies chiefly on this kind of response to place defensive works only on the frontier. Finally, we should also remember that, whenever circumstances permit, fortifying the capital is of first importance. According to our principles, the chief provincial towns and commercial centers also require protection. Rivers running through the country, mountains, and other uneven features of the terrain provide advantages for new defensive lines. Many towns, because of their naturally strong positions, are well suited to fortification. In addition, certain resources of war, such as arms factories and the like, are better located in the interior than on the frontier, and their importance fully justifies protecting them with fortifications. From all this, it is clear that there is always some reason, greater or smaller, to

build fortresses in the interior of a country. For that reason, we believe that although states with many fortresses are right to place most of them on the frontier, it would be a serious mistake to leave the interior entirely without them. We think France has made this mistake to a striking extent. A serious doubt may reasonably arise when the border provinces of a country contain no important towns, while such towns lie farther back in the interior. This is especially true in South Germany, where Swabia is almost without large towns, while Bavaria has many. We do not think it necessary to settle such doubts once and for all by general principles, because in cases of this kind the decision must depend on reasons drawn from the particular situation. Still, we must draw attention to the concluding remarks of this chapter.

The third question is whether fortresses should be arranged in groups or spread more evenly. If we think about it, this issue will rarely come up. Still, we should not dismiss it as a pointless subtlety. A cluster of two, three, or four fortresses within a few days' march of a common center gives that point, and the army stationed there, such great strength that, if other conditions permitted, one might well be tempted to create this kind of strategic bastion.

The last point concerns the other geographical features of the positions chosen. We have already said that fortresses on the sea, on streams and great rivers, and in mountains are twice as effective, and that this is one of the main considerations. But there are also a number of other geographical factors connected with fortresses that must be taken into account.

If a fortress cannot stand on the river itself, it is better not to place it nearby, but rather ten or twelve miles away. Otherwise, the river cuts through the fortress's sphere of action and reduces its value in all the ways already mentioned.() *

The same does not apply in mountains, because there the movement of large or small forces toward particular points is not restricted to the same extent as it is by a river. But fortresses on the enemy's side of a mountain are badly placed, because they are hard to relieve. If they are on our side, they are very difficult to besiege, since the mountains cut across the enemy's line of communication. Olmütz in 1758 is an example.

It is easy to see that impassable forests and marshes have an effect similar to that of rivers.

The question has often been raised whether towns in very difficult country are well suited or poorly suited for fortresses. Since they can be fortified and defended at little cost, or made much stronger—often even impregnable—for the same expense, and since the role of a fortress is always more passive than active, the objection that they can easily be blockaded does not seem especially important.

If we now, in conclusion, look back at our simple system of fortifying a country, we can say that it is based on broad, enduring realities directly tied to the foundations of the state itself. It is not based on temporary ideas about war that may be fashionable for a moment, nor on imagined strategic refinements, nor on demands that are entirely exceptional in

* Philippsburg was the model of a badly placed fortress; it was like a fool standing with his nose pressed against a wall.

character—an error that could have irreparable consequences if it were allowed to shape fortresses meant to last five hundred, perhaps a thousand, years. Silberberg in Silesia, built by Frederick the Great on one of the ridges of the Sudetics, has, because circumstances have completely changed since then, almost entirely lost its importance and purpose. Breslau, by contrast, if it had been made a strong military position and had remained so, would always have kept its value against the French, as well as against the Russians, Poles, and Austrians.

The reader should note that these considerations are not put forward for the imagined case of a state equipping itself with an entirely new system of fortifications. If that were their purpose, they would be of little use, since such a case rarely, if ever, occurs. But all of them may come into play when any single fortification is being designed.

CHAPTER XII. Defensive Position

Any position in which we accept battle while also using the ground for protection is a defensive position, and in this respect it makes no difference whether we act more passively or more aggressively in the fighting. This follows from the general view of the defensive that we have already given.

We may also apply the term to any position in which an army, while marching to meet the enemy, would certainly accept battle if the enemy offered it. In fact, most battles take place in this way, and throughout the Middle Ages no other kind was even considered. That, however, is not the kind of position we are speaking of here. By far the greater number of positions are of that kind, and for them the idea of a position, as distinct from a camp taken up on the march, would be enough. A position specially called a defensive position must therefore have some other distinguishing features.

In the decisions made in an ordinary position, time clearly matters most. Armies move against each other in order to fight. The location is secondary; it only needs to be suitable enough. But in a true defensive position, place matters most. The decision is to be achieved at this spot, or rather chiefly through this spot. That is the only kind of position we mean here.

The connection to place is twofold. First, a force posted at a given point exerts a certain influence on the war as a whole. Second, the local features of the ground add to the army’s strength and provide protection. In short, there is a strategic

connection and a tactical one.

Strictly speaking, the term defensive position comes only from tactics. Its connection with strategy—namely, that an army stationed at a certain point helps defend the country simply by being there—would apply just as well to an army acting offensively.

The full strategic effect of a position cannot be shown until later, when we discuss the defense of a theater of war. So for now we will consider it only as far as we can. To do that, we must look more closely at two ideas that are similar and are often confused with each other: turning a position and passing by it.

Turning a position concerns its front. It is done either by attacking the side of the position or its rear, or by operating against its lines of retreat and communication.

The first case—an attack on the flank or rear—is tactical in nature. In our time, troop mobility is so great, and battle plans so often aim to turn or envelop the enemy, that every position must be prepared for such moves. To truly deserve to be called strong, a position must not only have a strong front; it must also allow at least sound battle arrangements on the sides and rear if those areas are threatened. If that is so, the position will not become untenable simply because the enemy turns it in order to attack the flank or rear. The battle that follows was already taken into account when the position was chosen, and it should give the defender all the advantages that could generally be expected from that position.

If the enemy turns the position in order to threaten the lines of retreat and communication, that is a strategic matter. The question then becomes how long the position can be held, and whether we can counter the enemy with a plan of the same kind. Both questions depend on the strategic situation of the place itself—that is, above all, on the relationship between the lines of communication of the two opponents. A good position should give the defending army the advantage on this point. In any case, the position is not made useless in this way, because the enemy is neutralized by the position so long as he is occupied with it in the manner described.

But if the attacker, without concerning himself with the army waiting for him in a defensive position, advances with his main force along another line in pursuit of his objective, then he passes by the position. If he can do this safely, and actually does it, he will immediately force the defender to abandon the position and thus bring its usefulness to an end.

There is almost no position in the world that cannot, in the plain sense of the term, be bypassed. Cases like the Isthmus of Perekop are so rare that they can scarcely be taken into account. So when we say a position cannot be passed, we mean only that the attacker would face serious disadvantages in trying to do so. We will have a better opportunity to explain those disadvantages in Chapter 27. Whether they are slight or severe, in every case they amount to the tactical effect the position could have produced, even though that effect has not actually been realized; together with that effect, they make up the purpose of the position.

From the observations just made, two strategic properties of the defensive position follow:

1. It cannot be bypassed.

2. In the struggle over the lines of communication, it gives the defender advantages.

To these we must add two more strategic properties:

3. The relation of the lines of communication may also favor the form of combat; and

4. The general influence of the terrain is advantageous.

The relation of the lines of communication affects not only whether a position can or cannot be bypassed, or whether the enemy's supplies can be cut off, but also the entire course of the battle. An oblique line of retreat makes a tactical turning movement easier for the attacker and hampers our own tactical movements during the battle. Yet a position that lies obliquely in relation to the lines of communication is often not a tactical mistake but the result of a flawed strategic point. For example, it cannot be avoided when the road changes direction near the position, as at Borodino in 1812. In that case, the attacker is placed so that he can turn our line without departing from his own perpendicular disposition.

The attacker also has far greater freedom of tactical movement if he controls several roads for retreat while we are confined to one. In such cases, even the defender's greatest tactical skill will be used in vain against the disadvantage created by the strategic situation.

Lastly, on the fourth point: the general character of the ground may be so unfavorable that, even with the most careful selection and the best use of tactical methods, nothing can offset its disadvantages. In such cases, the main considerations are these:

1. In defense, one should above all seek the advantage of overlooking the enemy, so that one can quickly move against him within the limits of the position. Only when the local difficulties of approach are combined with these two conditions is the ground truly favorable to the defense.

By contrast, any point dominated by higher ground is unfavorable to the defender. The same is true of most positions in mountains, which we will discuss more fully in the chapters on mountain warfare. The same applies to positions with one flank resting on mountains. Such a position certainly makes it harder for the enemy to pass by, but it makes a turning movement easier. Similar in character are all positions with a mountain immediately in front of them, and, more generally, all those related to the kind of ground described above.

As an example of the opposite of these unfavorable features, we need only mention a position with a mountain in its rear. This brings so many advantages that, in general, it may be regarded as one of the most favorable of all defensive positions.

2. A country may suit an army's character and composition to a greater or lesser degree. A very large cavalry force is a good reason for choosing open country. If this arm is lacking, and perhaps artillery as well, while we have at our disposal brave infantry hardened by war and familiar with the country, then it is

advisable to make use of difficult, enclosed terrain.

We will not go into detail here about the tactical relation between the local features of a defensive position and the force assigned to occupy it. We are speaking only of the overall result, because that alone is a strategic consideration.

A position where an army is meant to wait for the enemy's full attack should give the troops a significant advantage in terrain, one that effectively multiplies their strength. When the natural ground helps but not as much as we need, field fortifications can make up the difference. As a result, some parts of the position often become impossible to attack, and sometimes the entire position does. In that last case, the whole nature of the measure changes. We are no longer seeking a battle fought under favorable conditions, with the campaign decided by that battle. Instead, we are seeking a result without fighting one at all. By occupying a position that cannot be attacked, we directly decline battle and force the enemy to look for some other solution.

We must therefore keep these two cases entirely distinct. We will discuss the latter in the following chapter under the title of a strong position.

But the defensive position we are dealing with here is simply a battlefield with added advantages on our side. For it to remain a battlefield, those advantages must not be too great. So how strong may such a position be? Clearly, it may be stronger in proportion to how determined the enemy is to attack, and that depends on the particular case. Against a Buonaparte, we can and should retire behind stronger defenses than we would

against a Daun or a Schwartzenburg.

If certain parts of a position cannot be attacked—for example, the front—then that must be counted as a separate element of the position's overall strength, because the troops not needed there can be used elsewhere. But we must also note that when the enemy is completely shut out from such impregnable points, the character of his attack changes entirely, and we must first determine how well that change suits our own situation.

For example, when a position is taken up, as has often been done, so close behind a large river that the river effectively covers the front, this really means that the river serves as a support for the right or left flank. The enemy is naturally forced to cross farther to the right or left and cannot attack without changing his front. The main question, therefore, is what advantages or disadvantages that creates for us.

In our view, a defensive position comes closest to the ideal when its strength is less visible to the enemy and when it gives us better chances to surprise him with our arrangements during battle. Just as we wisely try to hide from the enemy the full strength of our forces and our true intentions, we should also try to hide the advantages we expect to gain from the shape of the ground. Of course, this can only be done to a limited extent, and it may require a special method that has so far rarely been attempted.

The presence of a large fortress nearby, in whatever direction, gives any position a major advantage over the enemy in moving and employing the forces connected with it. With suitable fieldworks, we can make up for a lack of natural strength at

particular points, and in this way determine the main features of the battle in advance as we choose. These are the means by which art can strengthen a position. If we combine them with a wise choice of natural obstacles in the terrain—obstacles that hinder the enemy's forces from acting effectively without making action altogether impossible—if we make the best use of our advantage in knowing the ground, which the enemy does not know, so that we can hide our movements better than he can hide his, and if we maintain a general advantage over him in unexpected movements during the battle, then all these advantages together may produce an overwhelming and decisive effect in our favor through the ground itself. Under that influence, the enemy will be defeated without even knowing the true cause of his defeat. This is what we mean by a defensive position, and we regard it as one of the greatest advantages of defensive war.

Leaving aside special circumstances, we may assume that rolling country, neither too heavily cultivated nor too barren, offers the greatest number of positions of this kind.

CHAPTER XIII. Strong Positions and Entrenched Camps

In the previous chapter, we said that a position made so strong by nature, and strengthened further by engineering, that it cannot be attacked successfully does not fall under the idea of merely favorable ground for battle. It belongs to a distinct category. In this chapter, we will examine what gives such positions their special character and, because they resemble fortresses, we will call them strong positions.

They can scarcely be created by entrenchments alone, except in the case of entrenched camps supported by fortresses. But they are even less often found already complete in nature through natural obstacles alone. Usually engineering helps nature, and for that reason they are often called entrenched camps or positions. At the same time, that term can also be used for any position strengthened to some degree by field works, even when it has nothing in common with the kind of position we are discussing here.

The purpose of a strong position is to make the force stationed there effectively impossible to attack, and in that way either to cover a certain area directly, or else to protect only the troops occupying that area so that, through them, the country can be protected indirectly in some other way. The first was the meaning of the lines of earlier times, such as those on the French frontier. The second is the meaning of entrenched camps laid out near fortresses and facing in every direction.

For example, if the front of a position is made so strong with fortifications and obstacles that a direct attack is impossible, the enemy is forced to go around it and attack from the side or rear. To make that harder, commanders looked for supporting points for these lines that would give them some protection on the flanks, just as the Rhine and the Vosges support the lines in Alsace. The longer the front of such a line, the easier it is to keep the enemy from turning it, because any attempt to do so puts the attacking force's flank at risk. That risk grows as the movement requires a greater departure from the attacker's normal line of advance. So a front of considerable length, if it can be made secure against attack, together with strong flank supports, makes it possible to protect a large stretch of territory directly from enemy invasion. At least, that was the idea behind works of this kind. That was the purpose of the lines in Alsace, with their right flank on the Rhine and their left on the Vosges, and of the lines in Flanders, fifteen miles long, with their right resting on the Scheldt and the fortress of Tournay and their left on the sea.

But if we do not have the advantages of such a long, well-defended front and strong flank supports, and if the country is to be held more generally by a heavily entrenched force, then that force and its position must be arranged so that it can face in every direction and cannot be turned. In that case, however, the idea of a fully covered stretch of country disappears, because such a position is, in strategic terms, only a point that protects the force occupying it and so enables that force to remain in the field—that is, to maintain itself in the country. Such a camp cannot be turned, meaning it cannot be

attacked on the flank or in the rear because those sides are weaker than the front, since it can face in every direction and is equally strong on all sides. But such a camp can be bypassed, and much more easily than a fortified line, because it covers almost no extent of ground.

Entrenched camps connected with fortresses really belong to this second kind, because their purpose is to protect the troops assembled in them. But their broader strategic meaning—that is, how this protected force is meant to be used—is somewhat different from that of other fortified camps.

Having explained how these three different forms of defense came about, we can now examine the value of each one separately under the headings of strong lines, strong positions, and entrenched camps supported by fortresses.

1. Lines.—These are the weakest form of cordon warfare. The obstacle they present to an attacker is worthless unless it is backed by strong fire; by themselves, they have no value. But in general, the amount of effective fire an army can provide is very small compared with the stretch of country that must be defended. So the lines must either be short, and therefore protect only a small area, or else the army will be unable to defend them properly at every point. Because of this, people proposed not occupying every point along the line, but merely watching them and defending them with strong reserves, much as one might defend a small river. But this goes against the nature of the system. If the natural obstacles of the ground are strong enough for that kind of defense, then the entrenchments are unnecessary and even dangerous, because that method of

defense is not local, while entrenchments are suited only to a strictly local defense. But if the entrenchments themselves are meant to be the main obstacles to an advance, then it is easy to see that an undefended line will offer very little resistance. What are a ditch twelve or fifteen feet deep and a rampart ten or twelve feet high against the combined efforts of many thousands, if those efforts are not checked by enemy fire? The result, then, is this: if such lines are short and fairly well defended by troops, they can be turned; but if they are extensive and not occupied strongly enough, they can be attacked from the front and taken without much difficulty.

Because lines of this kind tie troops to local defense and strip them of mobility, they are a poor and irrational way to oppose an enterprising enemy. If they continued to be used for so long in modern wars despite these objections, the reason lies entirely in the low level of energy that shaped the conduct of war. One result of that was that apparent difficulties often achieved as much as real ones. In most campaigns, moreover, these lines were used only as a secondary defense against irregular incursions. Even if they were not completely ineffective for that purpose, we must also consider how much better the troops assigned to defend them might have been used elsewhere. In the most recent wars, such lines have had no place at all, and we find no trace of them. It is doubtful that they will ever appear again.

2. Positions.—The defense of a region continues, as we will show more clearly in Chapter 27, as long as the force assigned to it remains there. It ends only when that force withdraws and gives it up.

If a force is expected to hold its ground in a district that is being attacked by far superior forces, the first concern is to protect it from destruction by finding a position that cannot be taken by assault.

As already noted, a position of this kind must be able to face attack from every direction. Given the usual size of tactical positions, if the force is not very large—and a large force would go against the nature of the case we are considering—it would occupy only a very small area. In battle, that would create so many disadvantages that even the strongest possible entrenchments would hardly make a successful defense likely. A camp that presents a front on every side must therefore have sides of considerable length. But those sides must also be nearly impossible to attack. Field fortification alone cannot provide that degree of strength over so wide an extent. So a basic requirement is that the camp must draw part of its strength from natural obstacles in the terrain, making some approaches impassable and others hard to cross. To use this kind of defensive measure, then, such a site must be found; if it is not, the objective cannot be achieved by fieldworks alone. These points concern tactical results more directly, and we state them first in order to establish that this strategic method really exists. As examples, we may cite Pirna, Bunzelwitz, Colberg, Torres Vedras, and Drissa. As for the strategic qualities and effects, the first requirement is naturally that the force occupying the camp must have its supplies secured for some time—that is, for as long as we expect the camp to be needed. This is possible only when the position has a port behind it, as at Colberg and Torres Vedras; or is connected with

a fortress, as at Bunzelwitz and Pirna; or contains large depots within the camp itself or close by, as at Drissa.

Only in the first case can supplies be guaranteed for as long as we wish. In the second and third cases, they can be secured only for a more or less limited period, so there is always some danger on this point. This shows how the difficulty of maintaining supplies rules out many strong places that would otherwise be suitable for entrenched positions, and therefore makes the positions that are truly fit for this purpose quite rare.

To judge whether a position of this kind is suitable, and to understand both its strengths and its weaknesses, we must ask what the attacker can do against it.

a. The attacker can move past this strong position, continue the operation, and keep the position under observation with a larger or smaller force.

Here we must distinguish between two cases: a position occupied by the main body, and one held only by a smaller force.

In the first case, passing by the position can help the attacker only if, besides the defender's main force, there is some other reachable and decisive target to strike, such as capturing a fortress or a capital city. But even when such a target exists, he can pursue it only if his base is strong enough, and his lines of communication are directed in such a way, that he need not fear operations against his strategic flanks.

The conclusion to draw from this, as to whether a strong position is suitable and desirable for the defender's main army,

is that it is advisable only in one of two situations. Either the chance to operate against the attacker's strategic flank is so decisive that we can be confident beforehand of keeping him fixed at a point where his army can accomplish nothing, or there is no attainable objective for the attacker that the defense has reason to worry about. If such an objective does exist, and the attacker's strategic flank cannot be seriously threatened, then this kind of position should not be occupied. If it is occupied, it should be only as a feint, to see whether the attacker can be misled about its value. That course always carries the danger that, if the attempt fails, it will be too late to reach the threatened point.

If the strong position is held only by a smaller force, then the attacker will never lack another target, because the enemy army's main body itself remains available to attack. In that case, the value of the position is limited entirely to the opportunities it gives for operating against the enemy's strategic flank, and it depends on that condition alone.

b. If the attacker does not dare to move past a position, he can surround it and force it to surrender by starvation. But that depends on two conditions: first, the position must not be open to the rear; second, the attacker must be strong enough to carry out such a siege. If both conditions are present, then the attacker's army will certainly be tied down for a time by this strong position. But the defender pays for that advantage by losing the use of his own defensive force.

From this, then, we conclude that occupying such a strong position with the main body is a step to be taken only—

aa. When the rear is completely secure (Torres Vedras).

bb. When we can see in advance that the enemy is not strong enough to invest us formally in our camp. If the enemy tries to surround us without sufficient forces, we should be able to sally out of the camp and defeat him in detail.

cc. When we can rely on relief, as the Saxons did at Pirna in 1756, and as was essentially the case at Prague, because Prague could only be considered an entrenched camp in which Prince Charles would never have allowed himself to be shut up if he had not known that the Moravian army could free him.

One of these three conditions is therefore absolutely necessary to justify choosing a strong position for the main body of an army. At the same time, we must add that the last two come very close to great danger for the defender.

But if the question is whether to expose an inferior corps to the risk of being sacrificed for the benefit of the whole, then these conditions no longer apply. The only thing to decide is whether such a sacrifice can prevent a greater evil. This will rarely happen, but it is certainly possible. The entrenched camp at Pirna prevented Frederick the Great from attacking Bohemia in 1756, as he otherwise would have done. At that time the Austrians were so unprepared that the loss of that kingdom seems beyond doubt; and perhaps that would have involved a greater loss of men than the 17,000 allied troops who capitulated in the camp at Pirna.

c. If none of the possibilities described under a. and b. favor the attacker—if, in other words, the conditions we set out there for the defense are met—then the attacker has nothing left to do

but remain in front of the position, like a setter before a covey of birds. He may spread out as widely as possible in detachments across the countryside and, satisfied with these minor and inconclusive advantages, leave the real decision over possession of the territory to the future. In that case, the position has achieved its purpose.

3. Entrenched camps near fortresses.—As already noted, they belong to the general class of entrenched positions, since their purpose is to protect not a stretch of territory but an armed force against enemy attack. They differ from other such positions mainly in this: together with the fortress, they form an inseparable whole, and that naturally gives them much greater strength.

From this, several special points also follow.

a. They may also serve the specific purpose of making the siege of the fortress either impossible or extremely difficult. That purpose may justify a great sacrifice of troops if the place is a port that cannot be blockaded. In any other case, however, we must be careful not to defend a place that can be reduced by hunger so quickly that sacrificing a large number of troops would be unjustified.

b. Entrenched camps near fortresses can be established for smaller bodies of troops than camps in the open field. Four or five thousand men may be invincible under the walls of a fortress, whereas in even the strongest camp in the open field they would be doomed.

c. They may also be used to assemble and organize forces that still lack enough firmness to be trusted in direct contact with the enemy without the support of the fortress works—for example, recruits, militia, national levies, and the like.

They could therefore be recommended as a very useful measure in many respects, if they did not have the major drawback of damaging the fortress, to a greater or lesser extent, whenever they cannot be occupied. And keeping the fortress permanently supplied with a garrison large enough to man the camp as well would be far too burdensome a requirement.

We are therefore strongly inclined to regard them as advisable only for places on the sea coast, and in all other cases as more harmful than useful.

In conclusion, if we sum up our view in general terms, then strong and entrenched positions are—

1. More necessary the smaller the country is, and the less room it offers for retreat.

2. Less dangerous the more confidently we can count on supporting or relieving them by other forces, by the severity of the season, by a rising of the nation, by scarcity, etc.

3. More effective the weaker the basic force of the enemy's attack is.

CHAPTER XIV. Flank Positions

We have given this prominent idea in ordinary military theory a separate chapter only in a dictionary-like sense, so that it can be found more easily; for we do not believe the term refers to anything truly independent in itself.

Any position that is meant to be held, even if the enemy passes it by, is a flank position; because once he does so, it can have no effect except the effect it exerts on the enemy's strategic flank. It follows that all strong positions are also flank positions; for since they cannot be attacked, the enemy is forced to pass them by, and so they can have value only through their influence on his strategic flank. The direction of the actual front of a strong position is entirely unimportant, whether it runs parallel to the enemy's strategic flank, as at Colberg, or at right angles to it, as at Bunzelwitz and Drissa, because a strong position must face in every direction.

But it may still be worth holding a position that is not completely secure, even if the enemy moves past it, if its location gives us such a decisive advantage in the relative lines of retreat and communication that we can not only launch an effective attack on the strategic flank of the advancing enemy, but also prevent the enemy, once alarmed for his own retreat, from fully cutting off ours. If that is not the case, then because our position is not a strong one—that is, not an unassailable one—we would risk being forced into battle without controlling any line of retreat.

The year 1806 provides an example that helps clarify this. The deployment of the Prussian army on the right bank of the Saal,

in relation to Buonaparte's advance by Hof, might in every respect have become a flank position if the army had been drawn up with its front parallel to the Saal and had then remained there, waiting to see how events developed.

If the gap in moral and physical strength had not been so great, and if the French army had been led only by a Daun, the Prussian position might have proved its value in a brilliant success. It was impossible simply to bypass it; Buonaparte himself admitted as much by deciding to attack it. Even in cutting it off from its line of retreat, Buonaparte did not fully succeed. And if the imbalance in material and moral forces had not been so extreme, that would have been no more feasible than bypassing the position altogether. The Prussian army was far less endangered by the possible defeat of its left wing than the French army would have been by the defeat of theirs. Even with the imbalance in physical and moral power as it actually stood, firm and intelligent command would still have offered strong hope of victory. Nothing prevented the Duke of Brunswick from making arrangements on the 13th so that, at daybreak on the 14th, he could have met the 60,000 men with which Buonaparte crossed the Saal near Jena and Dornburg with 80,000 of his own. Even if that numerical superiority, together with the steep valley of the Saal behind the French, had not been enough to secure a decisive victory, the situation was still a fortunate combination of circumstances. If no successful decision could be won with such advantages, then no decision was to be expected in that region at all. In that case, we should have retreated farther in order to gain reinforcements and wear down the enemy.

The Prussian position on the Saal, then, although open to attack, might have been considered a flank position in relation to the main road through Hof. But, like any position that can be attacked, this quality cannot be assigned to it without qualification, because it would only have become such if the enemy had chosen not to attack it.

From this it is clear that there is nothing new to establish about the properties of a flank position. Only a few words need be added here about the character of the measure itself. We will, however, leave aside strong positions in the strict sense, since we have already said enough about them.

A flank position that cannot be attacked is an extremely effective tool, but for that very reason it is also a dangerous one. If it stops the attacker, then a small use of force has produced a major result; it is like pressing with a finger on the long arm of a sharp lever. But if the result is too slight, if the attacker is not stopped, then the defender has more or less endangered his own retreat. He must then either escape quickly by a roundabout route—therefore under very unfavorable conditions—or face the danger of being forced to fight with no line of retreat open to him. Against a bold opponent who has the moral advantage and is aiming at a decisive outcome, this method is therefore extremely risky and wholly unsuitable, as the previously cited example of 1806 shows. On the other hand, when it is used against a cautious opponent in a war of mere observation, it may be counted among the best methods available to the defender. The Duke Ferdinand's defence of the Weser from his position on the left bank, and the well-known positions of Schmotseifen and Landshut, are examples of this.

The latter, however, also shows the danger of using it wrongly, through the disaster that befell Fouqué's corps in 1760.

CHAPTER XV. Defence of Mountains

Mountains have a very great influence on the conduct of war, so this is an important subject for theory. Because that influence introduces a delaying element into operations, it belongs mainly to the defensive. We will therefore discuss it here in a broader sense than the simple idea suggested by the phrase “defence of mountains.” Since our examination of the subject has led us to conclusions that differ from common opinion on many points, we will have to analyze it in some detail.

We will begin by examining the tactical character of the subject, so that we can reach the point at which it connects with strategy.

The constant difficulty of moving large columns along mountain roads, and the remarkable strength a small position gains from a steep slope in front and ravines on both sides protecting its flanks, are undoubtedly the main reasons why mountain defence has been credited everywhere with such great power. Only the particular weapons and tactics of certain periods kept large bodies of troops from fighting in this way.

When a column twists like a snake through narrow ravines, laboring up to a mountain summit and crossing it at a crawl, the scene naturally makes a strong impression. Artillerymen and wagon drivers, shouting and swearing, whip their exhausted animals along the cramped, rough roads. Every broken wagon must be dragged aside with immense difficulty, while everyone behind is forced to wait, cursing and raging. In such a moment,

anyone is likely to think, If the enemy appeared now with only a few hundred men, they could scatter the whole force. That is where the phrase used by historians comes from when they describe a narrow pass as a place where “a handful of men might keep an army in check.” At the same time, anyone with real experience of war knows, or should know, that marching through mountains has little or nothing in common with attacking those same mountains. It is therefore a mistake to conclude that because movement through mountains is difficult, attacking them must be even more difficult.

It is easy to see why an inexperienced person would reason in this way, and it is almost as easy to see why the art of war itself was, for a time, caught in the same mistake. The military reality involved was nearly as unfamiliar then to experienced soldiers as it was to those with no military knowledge at all. Before the Thirty Years’ War, deep battle formations, large numbers of cavalry, crude firearms, and other such conditions made it very uncommon to use major natural obstacles in warfare. A formal defence of mountains, at least by regular troops, was therefore almost impossible. Only when armies adopted a more extended formation, and infantry with its weapons became the main part of an army, did people begin to recognize how hills and valleys could be used. Even then, the idea did not fully mature until about a hundred years later, around the middle of the eighteenth century.

The second factor—the strong defensive power a small post could gain when placed at a hard-to-reach point—did even more to encourage an exaggerated view of mountain defences. People came to think that all one had to do was multiply such a

post enough times, and a battalion would become an army, a single mountain a whole mountain chain.

There is no denying that a small post can become extraordinarily strong if it chooses a good position in mountainous country. A small detachment that, on flat ground, would be swept away by a couple of squadrons and count itself fortunate to escape rout or capture by a hurried retreat, can in the mountains hold its ground against a whole army. One might almost say that it can, with a kind of tactical boldness, demand the military courtesy of a formal attack, of having its flank turned, and so on. How it gains this defensive power—through obstacles to approach, points d'appui for its flanks, and fresh positions available during retreat—is something tactics must explain; here we accept it as an established fact.

It was therefore very natural to believe that a number of such posts arranged in a line would create a very strong, almost unassailable front. The only remaining task seemed to be preventing the position from being turned by extending it to the right and left until either supports for the flanks were found that matched the importance of the whole, or the sheer length of the position itself provided security against turning movements. Mountainous country especially encouraged this idea, because it offered one defensive position after another, each seeming better than the last, so that it was hard to know where to stop. As a result, every approach to the mountains within a certain distance was guarded for purposes of defence, and ten or fifteen isolated posts, spread across about ten miles or more, were thought enough to defy that hated turning movement. Since the spaces between these posts were considered a

sufficiently secure connection, being ground of an impassable kind—columns at that time being unable to leave the regular roads—it was believed that a wall of brass had been presented to the enemy. As an added precaution, a few battalions, some horse artillery, and a dozen squadrons of cavalry were kept in reserve in case the line was unexpectedly broken through at any point.

No one can deny that history shows how widespread this idea was, and it is not clear that even today we have completely freed ourselves from these errors.

The development of tactics since the Middle Ages, along with the steadily growing size of armies, also helped bring mountainous regions more fully within the range of military operations.

The main feature of mountain defence is its complete passivity. Seen in that light, the tendency to rely on mountain defence was very natural before armies developed their modern mobility. But armies kept growing larger and, because of the effects of firearms, they were drawn up more and more in long, thin lines, arranged with great skill and therefore very hard—often almost impossible—to move. To deploy such an elaborate machine in battle formation often took half a day and amounted to half the battle itself. Nearly everything that is now handled in the preliminary battle plan was then bound up in this first deployment or drawing up of the troops. Once that work was finished, it was difficult to make changes to meet new circumstances as they arose. As a result, the attacker, who formed his battle line last, could naturally adapt it to the enemy's

formation, while the defender could not then adjust his own in response. In this way, attack gained a general advantage, and the defence had no way to restore the balance except by seeking protection in difficult terrain. For that purpose, nothing was generally more favorable than mountainous ground. So the aim became, as it were, to join the army to a powerful natural obstacle, so that the two would act together. The battalion defended the mountain, and the mountain defended the battalion. In this way, passive defence with the help of mountainous terrain became highly effective. The only drawback in the arrangement itself was that it involved a greater loss of freedom of movement, but at that time they did not yet understand the particular value of that quality.

When two opposing systems confront each other, the exposed point—the weak spot on one side—always attracts the other side's blows. If the defence becomes fixed, almost trapped in positions that are strong in themselves and cannot be taken, the attacker grows confident in making turning movements because he no longer fears for his own flanks. That is what happened. The turning movement, as it was called, soon became the standard method. To counter it, positions were stretched farther and farther; as a result, they grew weaker at the front, and the offensive suddenly struck there instead. Rather than trying to outflank by extending its line, the attacker now concentrated its forces on a single point, and the line was broken. This is essentially what happened with mountain defences in more recent military history.

The offensive had once again gained the advantage because troops could move more freely, and the defence could respond

only by relying on that same mobility. But mountain terrain naturally works against mobility. As a result, the whole theory of mountain defence suffered, if we may put it that way, a defeat like the one so often suffered by the armies that used it in the Revolutionary War.

But we should not throw out what is useful along with what is flawed, or let ourselves be swept along by commonplace opinions into claims that real experience would disprove again and again under the pressure of actual circumstances. We must distinguish the effects of mountain defence according to the nature of each case.

The main question to decide here—and the one that sheds the most light on the whole subject—is whether the resistance intended in mountain defence is to be relative or absolute: whether it is meant only to hold out for a time, or to end in a decisive victory. For resistance of the first kind, mountain terrain is highly suitable and adds a very powerful element of strength. For resistance of the second kind, by contrast, it is generally not suitable at all, except in a few special cases.

In the mountains, every movement is slower and harder. It takes more time and, if the troops are within range of danger, more men as well. But the defender's resistance is measured by the time and manpower the attacker loses. As long as all movement is on the attacker's side, the defender has a clear advantage. But as soon as the defender also begins relying on movement, that advantage disappears. By its nature—that is, for tactical reasons—a resistance meant only to delay or wear down the enemy can remain far more passive than one meant to produce

a decisive result. It can even stay passive to the very end of the fight, which is never possible in the other case. Mountain terrain hinders movement; as a denser medium, it weakens all positive action. It is therefore perfectly suited to passive defence.

We have already said that the nature of the ground can give a small post extraordinary strength. Although this tactical point generally needs no further proof, we should add a little explanation. We must carefully distinguish here between what is relatively small and what is absolutely small. If a body of troops, whatever its size, detaches part of itself to hold a position, that detached part may be attacked by the enemy's whole force and therefore by a superior force. In that case, it is small only in relation to what opposes it. There, as a rule, the aim cannot be absolute defence, but only relative defence. The smaller the post is in relation both to the force from which it is detached and to the enemy's whole body, the more true this becomes.

But a post may also be small in an absolute sense—that is, it may face no enemy stronger than itself and may therefore hope for absolute defence, for a real victory. Even then, it will be far better placed in the mountains than a large army, and it can gain more advantage from the ground, as we shall show later.

Our conclusion, then, is that a small post in the mountains has great strength. How this can be decisively useful in all cases that depend entirely on relative defence is obvious enough. But will it be equally decisive for the absolute defence of a whole army? That is the question we now intend to examine.

First, we must ask whether a front line made up of several posts has the same proportional strength as each post considered on

its own, as has usually been assumed. It certainly does not, and to assume that it does leads to one of two mistakes.

To begin with, people often confuse a country without roads with one that is completely impassable. Even where a column cannot move, or where artillery and cavalry cannot march, infantry can generally still get through. Artillery, too, can often be brought across, because the movements made in battle through short bursts of extreme effort cannot be measured by the same standard as ordinary marches. The supposed secure connection between the individual posts therefore rests on an illusion, and the flanks are in fact exposed to danger.

Or else it is assumed that a line of small posts, though very strong to the front, is just as strong on the flanks, because a ravine, a precipice, and similar features provide excellent support for a small post. But why do they do so? Not because they make it impossible to turn the post, but because they force the enemy to spend time and strength, which gives the post a real chance to act effectively. An enemy who, despite the difficulty of the ground, wants—and is in fact compelled—to turn such a post because its front cannot be attacked directly may need half a day to do it, and even then cannot succeed without some loss of men. If that post can be reinforced, or if it is meant only to hold out for a certain time, or finally if it is strong enough to deal with the enemy on its own, then those flank supports have served their purpose, and we may say that the position had not only a strong front but strong flanks as well. But the situation is different when we are dealing with a line of posts forming part of an extended mountain position. In that case, none of these three conditions exists. The enemy attacks

one point with overwhelming force, support from the rear may be slight, and yet the post is expected to resist absolutely. In such circumstances, the flank supports of these posts are of no value.

An attack usually strikes at a weak point like this. A concentrated assault, using forces that are therefore much stronger, against one point on the front can certainly be met with fierce resistance at that spot. But in terms of the whole position, that resistance matters little. Once it is overcome, the line is broken and the attacker achieves the objective.

It follows that, in general, resistance in mountain warfare is greater than it is on flat ground. It is relatively strongest in small posts, and it does not increase at the same rate as the size of the forces increases.

Let us now turn to the true aim of great battles in general: positive victory, which may also be the aim in defending mountains. If the whole force, or its main part, is used for that purpose, then the defence of mountains eo ipso becomes a defensive battle in the mountains. In other words, battle—the use of all our strength to destroy the enemy—now becomes the form, and victory the aim of the fight. In this kind of combat, the defence of mountains becomes a secondary consideration, because it is no longer the object but only the means. Seen in this light, how well does mountain terrain serve that aim?

The nature of a defensive battle is passive at the front and more active in the rear. But in mountain country, the terrain works against that principle. There are two reasons for this. First, there are too few roads to allow forces to move quickly in every

direction from the rear to the front, and even sudden tactical attacks are hindered by the rough ground. Second, it is impossible to get a clear view of the country and of the enemy's movements. In this situation, mountain terrain gives the enemy in the rear the same advantages it gave us at the front, and weakens the more effective half of our resistance. A third objection must also be added: the danger of being cut off. Mountainous country is certainly favorable for a retreat when pressure is applied along the whole front, and an enemy trying to turn a position in such terrain may lose a great deal of time. But these are only advantages of relative defence, and they have nothing to do with the decisive battle, with resistance carried to the last extreme. That resistance will certainly last somewhat longer, but only until the enemy has reached a point with his flank columns that threatens our retreat or blocks it completely. Once he has gained such a point, relief is hardly possible. No offensive action we can launch from the rear will drive him from the positions that threaten us. No desperate assault by our whole force will reopen the passage he has blocked. Anyone who sees a contradiction here, and thinks that the advantages the attacker has in mountain warfare must also belong to the defender trying to cut his way through, forgets the difference in circumstances. The corps blocking the passage is not engaged in an absolute defence; a few hours of resistance will probably be enough. It is therefore in the position of a small outpost. Besides, its opponent no longer has the full use of all his fighting power; he is in disorder, short of ammunition, and so on. So, from every point of view, the chance of cutting through is small, and this is the danger the defender fears above all. That fear is already at work during the battle, draining strength

from every part of the struggling force. A nervous sensitivity develops on the flanks, and every small detachment the attacker displays on some wooded height in our rear becomes for him another lever pushing the victory forward.

Most of these disadvantages disappear, while the advantages remain, if a mountain district is defended by concentrating the army on a broad mountain plateau. In that case, we can imagine a very strong front, flanks that are extremely hard to approach, and complete freedom of movement both within the position and behind it. Such a position would be among the strongest possible. But it is largely an illusion. Although mountains are usually easier to cross along their crests than on their slopes, most mountain plateaux are either too small for this purpose, or they are not really plateaux in the proper sense and are called so more in a geological than a geometrical one.

As we have already noted, the disadvantages of a defensive position in mountains become less serious for smaller bodies of troops. The reason is that smaller forces occupy less ground and need fewer roads for retreat, and so on. A single hill is not a mountain system and does not bring the same disadvantages. The smaller the force, the more easily it can establish itself on a single ridge or hill, and the less likely it is to become entangled in the complexities of countless steep mountain gorges.

CHAPTER XVI. Defence of Mountains (Continued)

We now turn to the strategic use of the tactical results developed in the preceding chapter. We distinguish the following points:

1. A mountainous district as a battlefield.

2. The influence that possession of it has on other parts of the country.

3. Its effect as a strategic barrier.

4. The attention it requires with regard to supplying the troops.

The first and most important of these headings must again be divided as follows:

a. A general action.

b. Lesser combats.

1. A mountain system as a battlefield.

In the previous chapter, we showed how unfavorable mountain terrain is for the defender in a decisive battle and, conversely, how much it benefits the attacker. This directly contradicts the usual view. But common opinion confuses many things, and rarely distinguishes between matters that are actually complete opposites. Because small bodies of troops can often put up strong resistance in mountainous country, people come away with the impression that all mountain defence is exceptionally

strong. They are then surprised when anyone denies that this same strength carries over to the highest form of defence, the defensive battle. On the other hand, whenever the defender loses a battle in mountain warfare, people are quick to point to the supposedly obvious mistake of a cordon system, without considering that, by the nature of the terrain, such a system is unavoidable in mountain warfare. We do not hesitate to oppose this opinion directly. At the same time, we should note, with great satisfaction, that we have found our view supported in the work of an author whose judgment ought to carry great weight on this subject: the Archduke Charles, in his history of the campaigns of 1796 and 1797. He was not only a good historical writer and a good critic, but above all a good general.

We can describe it only as a miserable situation when the weaker defender, after gathering all his forces through the greatest effort, hoping to make the attacker feel the force of his love of Fatherland, his enthusiasm, and his skill in a decisive battle, then withdraws into the obscurity of heavily shrouded mountains. There, hindered in every movement by stubborn terrain, he is exposed to the thousand possible forms of attack that his stronger opponent can bring against him. Only one field remains open to his intelligence: making the fullest possible use of every obstacle the ground provides. But that brings him close to the ruinous system of cordon war, which should be avoided in all circumstances. So far, then, from seeing mountainous country as a refuge for the defender when a decisive battle is intended, we would instead advise a general in such a case to avoid such ground by every possible means.

This is true, however, only up to a point, because it is sometimes impossible. But when that happens, the battle must necessarily take on a very different character from one fought on flat ground. The troops will usually have to be spread out much more widely—often over a front two or three times as long. The resistance will be more passive, and any counterstroke will be far less effective. These are unavoidable effects of mountain terrain. Even so, such a battle must not be allowed to turn into nothing more than a simple defence of the mountains. Its dominant character must still be that of a concentrated battle fought in the mountains, in which everything comes together into one battle, passes as far as possible under the eye of one commander, and includes enough reserves to make the decision something more than merely parrying blows, something more than simply holding up the shield. This condition is indispensable, but hard to achieve. Since the slide into a purely mountain defence comes so naturally, we cannot be surprised that it happens so often. The danger is so great that theory cannot warn against it too strongly.

So much for a decisive battle fought by the main body of the army.

For smaller engagements of lesser significance, however, mountainous country may be very favorable, because the main issue in them is not absolute defence, and because they are not tied to decisive results. We can make this clearer by listing the purposes of this kind of reaction.

a. Simply to gain time. This motive arises constantly: always in the case of a defensive line established for observation, and also whenever reinforcements are expected.

b. To repel a mere demonstration or some minor enterprise by the enemy. If a province is protected by mountains and those mountains are defended by troops, then that defence, however weak, will still always be enough to prevent partisan attacks and expeditions meant to plunder the country. Without the mountains, such a weak chain of posts would be useless.

c. We may also use them to make demonstrations of our own. It will still be some time before general opinion about mountains reaches the proper view. Until then, we may at any moment face an enemy who fears them and draws back from operating in them. In that case, the main body can also be used to defend a mountain system. In wars conducted with little energy or movement, this situation will often arise. But it must always be on the condition that we do not mean to accept a general battle in this mountain position, and cannot be forced to do so.

d. In general, mountainous country suits any position in which we do not intend to fight a major battle. There, each separate part of the army is stronger, even though the army as a whole is weaker. Also, in such a position, it is harder for the enemy to strike suddenly and force us into a decisive battle.

e. Lastly, mountainous country is the natural setting for the efforts of an armed people. National uprisings should always be supported by small bodies of regular troops. But the presence of a large army nearby seems to have an unfavorable effect on movements of this kind. For that reason, this consideration will

generally never justify moving the whole army into the mountains.

So much for mountains in relation to the positions that may be taken there for battle.

2. The Influence of Mountains on Other Parts of the Country.

As we have seen, in mountainous terrain it is easy to hold a fairly large area with small outposts. In country that is easy to move through, those same weak forces could not hold their ground and would be in constant danger. In mountains, too, every advance through ground already occupied by the enemy has to be made much more slowly than on flat land, so it cannot keep pace with him. For these reasons, the question of who actually holds the ground matters far more in mountains than in any other area of the same size. In open country, possession may change from day to day. The simple advance of strong detachments forces the enemy to abandon the ground we want to occupy. In mountains, however, that is not the case. There, even much smaller forces can offer very stubborn resistance. For that reason, if we need to take a region that includes mountains, we always need operations specially designed for that purpose, and these often require a considerable investment of both time and men before possession can be secured. Therefore, if the mountains of a country are not the main theatre of the war, we cannot treat possession of them as something that automatically follows from our success elsewhere, as we could in a flat district.

A mountainous region therefore has much more independence, and possession of it is far more secure and less likely to change hands. Add to this the fact that a mountain ridge gives a clear view from its heights over the neighboring open country while remaining hidden itself, and it becomes clear that when we are near mountains without actually holding them, they must be regarded as a constant source of disadvantage—a kind of workshop for hostile forces. This is even more true when the mountains are not only occupied by the enemy but also lie within his own territory. The smallest bands of daring partisans can always find shelter there when pursued, and then emerge again safely at other points. Larger forces, protected by the mountains, can also approach without being seen. Our own troops, therefore, must always keep far enough away to avoid falling under that commanding influence, and to avoid being drawn into unfavorable engagements and sudden attacks to which they cannot effectively respond.

In this way, every mountain system exerts a strong influence, up to a certain distance, on the lower, flatter country beside it. Whether that influence is felt at once—for example, in a battle, as at Maltsch on the Rhine in 1796—or only later through its effect on lines of communication depends on local conditions. Whether it can be overcome by some decisive event in the valley or open country depends on the relative situation of the opposing armed forces.

In 1805 and 1809, Buonaparte advanced on Vienna without paying much attention to the Tyrol. Moreau, however, had to abandon Swabia in 1796, mainly because he did not control the higher parts of the country, and too many troops were needed

to keep watch over them. In campaigns marked by a fairly even back-and-forth of success on both sides, we should not leave ourselves exposed to the constant disadvantage of the mountains staying in the enemy's hands. We therefore need only try to seize and hold the part of them required by the direction of our main lines of attack. This generally makes the mountains the scene of the smaller, separate engagements between the forces on each side. But we must be careful not to exaggerate the importance of this factor and assume that a mountain chain is always the key to the whole situation, or that holding it is always the main objective. When the aim is victory, then victory is the chief object. If that victory is won, other matters can be arranged according to the overriding demands of the situation.

3. Mountains considered as a strategic barrier.

We must divide this subject into two parts.

The first case is, again, that of a decisive battle. We may, for example, treat a mountain range like a river: a barrier with certain crossing points. This can give us a chance to win a battle, because the enemy will be forced to divide his forces as he advances and to keep to particular roads. That allows us, with our forces concentrated behind the mountains, to strike separate parts of his army. An attacker moving through mountains, whatever the other circumstances, cannot safely advance in a single column, because he would risk being drawn into a decisive battle with only one line of retreat. For that reason, the defensive method clearly has solid advantages. But mountains and their passes vary so much that the decision to

adopt this plan depends entirely on the character of the country. It can only be presented as a possible course, and it comes with two disadvantages. First, if the enemy suffers a serious defeat, he can quickly find shelter in the mountains. Second, he holds the higher ground, which, though not decisive, must still always be counted as a disadvantage for the pursuer.

We know of no battle fought under such conditions, unless the battle with Alvinzi in 1796 is to be placed in that category. Still, that such a case can occur is clear from Buonaparte's passage of the Alps in 1800, when Melas might and should have attacked him with his whole force before he had united his columns.

The second way mountains may act as a barrier is through their effect on lines of communication when they cut across them. Even without considering what might be done by building forts at the passes and arming the people, the poor mountain roads, at certain seasons of the year, may by themselves be enough to ruin an army. They have often forced a retreat after first draining an army of all its strength. If, in addition, bands of active partisans hover around, or a national rising adds to the difficulty, then the enemy's army is forced to make large detachments. In the end, it is driven to establish strong posts in the mountains, and so becomes entangled in one of the most disadvantageous situations possible in an offensive war.

4. Mountains and their role in supplying an army.

This is a very simple subject and easy to understand. The best chance to use mountains effectively in this way comes when the attacker is forced to stay in the mountains, or at least to keep them close behind him.

These observations on defending mountains, which broadly cover all mountain warfare and, by contrast, also shed the necessary light on offensive war, should not be dismissed as wrong or impractical simply because we cannot turn mountains into plains or plains into hills, and because the choice of a theater of war depends on so many other factors that it may seem there is hardly any room left for considerations like these. In matters of great importance, that room will be found not to be so small. If the question concerns the placement and effective use of the main force, and if, even at the moment of a decisive battle, a few marches forward or backward can move an army out of mountainous ground and into open country, then a determined concentration of the main masses on the plain will cancel out the effect of the neighboring mountains.

We will now gather together what this discussion has shown and bring it into one clear picture.

We maintain, and believe we have shown, that mountains are generally unfavorable to the defense, both tactically and strategically. By this we mean the kind of defense that is decisive, the kind on which the question of holding or losing the country depends. Mountains restrict visibility and hinder movement in every direction. They force an army into a passive

posture and make it necessary to block every road or pass, which always leads, more or less, to a cordon war. We should therefore, if possible, avoid placing the main body of our force in the mountains, and instead leave them to one side or keep them in front of us or behind us.

At the same time, we believe that mountain terrain offers greater strength for small-scale operations and limited objectives. So, after what we have already said, we cannot fairly be accused of inconsistency when we argue that this kind of country is the true refuge of the weak—that is, of those who no longer dare to seek a decisive result. On the other hand, the advantages that mountains give to troops in a subordinate role cannot be shared by large bodies of troops.

Even so, all these arguments will hardly overcome the impression made on the senses. In any actual case, the imagination—not only of the inexperienced, but also of all those used to poor methods of war—will still be so overwhelmed by the difficulties that the rigid, delaying nature of mountain terrain places in the way of an attacker's movements that they will find our view almost impossible to see as anything but a very strange paradox. Then there are those who think in broader terms. For them, the history of the last century, with its particular style of warfare, will replace immediate sensory impressions. As a result, few of them will give up the belief that Austria, for example, ought to be better able to defend its states on the Italian side than on the side of the Rhine. The French, however, who waged war for twenty years under a leader who was both energetic and unconcerned with minor considerations, and who have had the successful results of that approach

constantly before them, will for some time continue to stand out in this matter, as in others, for the sure instinct of practiced judgment.

Does this mean, then, that a state would be better protected by open country than by mountains? That Spain would be stronger without the Pyrenees, Lombardy harder to reach without the Alps, and a flat country like North Germany harder to conquer than a mountainous one? We will devote our concluding remarks to these mistaken conclusions.

We are not claiming that Spain would be stronger without the Pyrenees than with them. What we are saying is that if a Spanish army felt strong enough to fight a decisive battle, it would be better off concentrating behind the Ebro than scattering itself across the fifteen passes of the Pyrenees. That does not mean the Pyrenees have little effect on war. We would say the same of an Italian army. If it split its forces in the High Alps, any determined commander it faced would defeat it piece by piece, without even giving it the real chance of either victory or defeat in a major engagement. In the plains of Turin, by contrast, it would have the same chance as any other army. Still, no one should conclude from this that it is desirable for an attacker to have to cross huge mountain barriers like the Alps and then leave them in the rear. And deciding to accept a major battle on the plains does not at all rule out an initial defense of the mountains by secondary forces; in fact, that is a very sensible arrangement in the case of ranges like the Alps and the

Pyrenees. Finally, we are far from arguing that conquering a mountainous country is easier than conquering a level one, unless a single victory is enough to crush the enemy completely. After such a victory, the conqueror must then go over to the defensive, and during that period the mountainous terrain will be as unfavorable to the attacker as it was to the defender, and even more so. If the war continues, if foreign aid arrives, or if the people rise in arms, that reaction will draw added strength from a mountainous country. *

The situation here is like what happens in dioptrics: the image grows brighter as it is moved in a certain direction, but not indefinitely. It does so only until it reaches the focus; beyond that point, the effect is reversed.

If defense is weaker in the mountains, that might seem like a reason for an attacker to choose a line of operations there. But that will rarely happen. The difficulty of supplying an army, the problems caused by the roads, the uncertainty of whether the enemy will agree to fight in the mountains, and even whether he will place his main force there, all tend to cancel out that possible advantage.

* It is thought that in this passage of the original, the words “ebenen” and “gebirgigen” were somehow reversed. Their equivalents here—“level” and “mountainous”—have therefore been placed in the order the translator believes the author intended.—Tr.

CHAPTER XVII. Defense of Mountains (continued)

In the fifteenth chapter, we discussed the nature of fighting in the mountains, and in the sixteenth, how strategy can make use of it. In doing so, we often touched on the idea of mountain defense without pausing to examine the form and details of such a measure. We will now look at it more closely.

Mountain ranges often stretch across the earth in long belts or bands. They divide rivers and streams that flow in different directions, and so they separate entire drainage systems. The same pattern appears in the smaller parts of a range as well: ridges and branches spread out from the main chain and divide smaller water systems. Because of this, the idea of a system of mountain defence naturally began, and later developed, from seeing mountains in their broadest form as obstacles—great barriers that are much longer than they are wide. Geologists still do not agree on how mountains originated or on the laws that govern their formation. Even so, the course of rivers and streams shows the general shape of a mountain system in the quickest and surest way, whether water helped create that shape, as the aqueous theory holds, or whether the water simply follows the shape the mountains already have. It was therefore natural, when designing a system of mountain defence, to use the course of the waters as a guide. These watercourses create a natural series of levels from which we can judge both the general height and the overall profile of a mountain. The valleys cut by streams also provide the best routes up to the heights, because the wearing and depositing

action of water has such lasting effects that it smooths the uneven mountain slopes into a more regular incline. From this came the idea that when a mountain ran roughly parallel to the front that had to be defended, it should be treated as a major obstacle to any approach—a kind of rampart, with the valleys serving as its gates. The actual defence would then be made along the crest of this rampart—that is, along the edge of the plateau crowning the mountain—and would cut across the valleys. If the main mountain chain lay at something like a right angle to the defensive front, then one of its main branches would be chosen instead. In that case, the selected line would run parallel to one of the principal valleys and extend up to the main ridge, which could be regarded as its endpoint.

We have noted this plan for mountain defense, based on the earth's geological structure, because for a time it genuinely appeared in theory. In the so-called "theory of ground," the laws governing the action of water were mixed together with the conduct of war.

But all of this rests so heavily on false assumptions and mistaken substitutions that, once those are removed, nothing real is left to support any kind of system.

The main ridges of actual mountain ranges are far too difficult and barren to station large bodies of troops on them. The same is often true of the neighboring ridges, which are frequently too short and uneven. Plateaux are not found on every mountain ridge, and where they do exist they are usually narrow, so they cannot hold many troops. In fact, if you examine mountains closely, you will find that few are topped by one continuous

ridge, or have sides sloped in such a way as to create reasonably passable inclines, or even a series of terraces. The main ridge twists, turns, and divides. Huge offshoots run out into the surrounding country in curved lines, and often rise at their ends to a greater height than the main ridge itself. Then promontories connect with them and create deep valleys that do not fit the general pattern. So when several mountain lines cross one another, or at the points where they branch out, the idea of a narrow strip or belt disappears completely. In its place, mountain and water lines spread outward from a center like the points of a star.

From this it follows—and it will be even clearer to anyone who has examined mountain masses in this way—that the idea of arranging them according to a system is impossible. To hold to such an idea as a basic principle for our measures would be entirely impracticable. One important point still remains to be noticed in the realm of practical application.

If we look closely at the tactics of mountain warfare, we can see that it falls into two main types: defending steep slopes and defending narrow valleys. This second kind is often—indeed, almost always—very favorable to the defender. But it does not fit well with placing forces on the main ridge. Defending a valley often requires occupying the valley itself, and doing so at its outer end nearest the open country, not at its upper entrance, because the sides are steeper there. Valley defence also makes it possible to defend mountainous regions even when the ridge itself offers no position that can be held. Its importance therefore generally increases as the mountain masses become higher and more inaccessible.

The result of all these considerations is that we must completely abandon the idea of a more or less regular defensive line that matches one of the geological lines. Instead, we must see a mountain range simply as a surface cut up and broken by uneven ground and obstacles scattered across it in endlessly varied ways. We must make the best use of these features that circumstances allow. So, although knowledge of the geological structure of the ground is essential for forming a clear idea of the shape of mountain masses, it is of little practical value when organizing defensive measures.

In neither the War of the Austrian Succession, nor the Seven Years' War, nor the wars of the French Revolution do we find military arrangements that took in an entire mountain system and organized the defence according to its main features. Nowhere do we find armies consistently posted on the principal ridges or always positioned on the slopes. Sometimes they stood higher, sometimes lower; sometimes facing one way, sometimes another; parallel, perpendicular, or oblique; with the watercourse or against it. In high mountain ranges such as the Alps, they were often spread along the valleys. In lower ranges like the Sudetics—and this is the strangest anomaly—they were placed midway down the slope as it descended toward the defender, with the principal ridge therefore in front, as in the position from which Frederick the Great, in 1762, covered the siege of Schwednitz, with the "hohe Eule" before the front of his camp.

The well-known positions at Schmotseifen and Landshut during the Seven Years' War were, for the most part, located on valley floors. The same was true of the position at Feldkirch in the

Vorarlsberg. In the campaigns of 1799 and 1800, the main posts of both the French and the Austrians were always placed squarely in the valleys. They were not just drawn across them to block passage, but also arranged along them, while the ridges were either left unoccupied or held only by a few isolated posts.

The crests of the higher Alps especially are so hard to reach, and offer so little room for troops, that it would be impossible to station any large force there. So if armies must hold mountain country in order to control it, there is no choice but to place them in the valleys. At first this seems mistaken, because accepted military theory says that the heights dominate the valleys. But in reality that is not so. Mountain ridges can be reached only by a few paths and rough tracks, and with few exceptions these are passable only for infantry, while the usable roads run through the valleys. The enemy can therefore appear on the heights only at certain points and only with infantry. In such great mountain masses, the distances are too long for small-arms fire to be truly effective, so a position in the valleys is less dangerous than it looks. At the same time, defending a valley faces another serious danger: being cut off. It is true that the enemy can descend into the valley only with infantry, only at certain points, and only slowly and with great effort; he cannot therefore catch us by surprise. But none of our positions in the valley can block the exits where such paths come down into it. The enemy can therefore bring down large bodies of troops little by little, then deploy them, and break through the thin line, which from that moment becomes weak and may have no protection except the rocky bed of a shallow mountain stream. Once that happens, retreat is impossible for many parts of the

line, because in a valley any withdrawal must be made in sections until the mountain outlet is reached. That is why the Austrians in Switzerland almost always lost a third or even half their troops as prisoners.

Now a few words about the usual way of dividing troops in this kind of defence.

Each secondary position is tied to a position held by the main body of troops, usually placed near the center of the whole line on the main road of approach. From this central position, other corps are sent out to the right and left to hold the most important approach points. In this way, the whole force is arranged in a line of three, four, five, six posts, and so on. How far this division and extension of the line should go depends on the needs of each particular case. A span of a couple of marches, or six to eight miles, is a moderate length, though we have seen it extended to twenty or thirty miles.

Between these separate posts, which stand one or two leagues apart, there will probably be other approaches of lesser importance that must later be dealt with. Suitable positions are chosen for a couple of battalions each, creating a solid link between the main posts, and these are occupied. It is easy to see that the distribution of the force can be carried even further, down to posts held by single companies or squadrons; and this has often happened. So there are no fixed general limits to how far this division can go. On the other hand, the strength of each post must depend on the strength of the whole force, and so we cannot say anything definite about the possible or natural strength that should be assigned to the main posts. We will only

add a few guiding maxims drawn from experience and from the nature of the case.

1. The higher and more inaccessible the mountains are, the farther this separation of the force not only may be carried, but must be carried. The less a region can be secured by combinations that depend on troop movements, the more its security must be achieved by direct coverage. Defending the Alps requires a much greater division of force, and therefore comes closer to the cordon system, than defending the Vosges or the Giant Mountains.

2. Up to now, wherever mountain defence has been undertaken, the force has usually been divided so that the main posts consisted of only a single line of infantry, with some cavalry squadrons in a second line. In any case, only the central main post may perhaps have had some battalions in a second line.

3. A strategic reserve, kept to reinforce any point under attack, was very rarely held back behind the line, because the wide front already made every part of the line seem too weak. For that reason, when an attacked position received support, it was usually drawn from other positions in the line that were not themselves under attack.

4. Even when the forces were divided only moderately, and each individual post was fairly strong, the main resistance was still limited to local defense. And once the enemy managed to seize a post, it was impossible to retake it with supports arriving afterward.

Given this, how much can be expected from mountain defense, in what situations it should be used, and how far we can or should go in spreading out and dividing our forces—these are all questions that theory must leave to the general's judgment. It is enough for theory to show him what these means really are and what role they can play in the army's active operations.

A general who lets himself be defeated in an extended mountain position deserves to face a court-martial.

CHAPTER XVIII. Defence of Streams and Rivers

Streams and large rivers, when we consider their defense, belong, like mountains, to the class of strategic barriers. But they differ from mountains in two ways. One difference concerns their relative defense; the other concerns their absolute defense.

Like mountains, they strengthen relative defense. But one of their distinctive features is that they resemble tools made of hard, brittle metal: they either withstand every blow without giving way, or their defense breaks and then ends completely. If a river is very large and the other conditions are favorable, crossing it may be absolutely impossible. But if the defense of a river is forced at a single point, then, unlike in mountain warfare, no lasting defense can continue afterward. The matter is settled by that one event, unless the river itself runs between mountains.

The other special feature of rivers in war is that, in many cases, they allow very strong combinations for a decisive battle, and generally better ones than mountains do.

Both share the same trait: they are dangerous and tempting features that have often led to bad decisions and put generals in difficult positions. We will see this more clearly when we look more closely at the defence of rivers.

History offers relatively few examples of rivers being defended successfully. So the view is justified that rivers and streams are

not the formidable barriers they were once thought to be, especially in periods when rigid defensive systems tried to use every feature of the landscape to strengthen themselves. Even so, their value in battle, and in the defence of a country more broadly, cannot be denied.

To consider the subject as a whole, we will set out the different points of view from which we mean to examine it.

The defence itself can also take three different forms:

1. An absolute defence by the main body.

2. A mere show of resistance.

3. A relative resistance by subordinate bodies of troops, such as outposts, covering lines, flanking corps, and so on.

Lastly, in each of these forms we must distinguish three different degrees or kinds of defence:

1. A direct defence by opposing the crossing.

2. A more indirect defence, in which the river and its valley are used only as a means of achieving a better battle arrangement.

3. A completely direct defence, by holding an unassailable position on the enemy's side of the river.

We will divide our observations according to these three degrees. After examining each of them in relation to the first form, which is the most important, we will then do the same for their relation to the other two. We begin, then, with direct defence—that is, a defence intended to prevent the enemy army itself from crossing.

This applies only to large rivers, that is, to great bodies of water.

The way space, time, and force work together in this theory of defense makes the subject fairly complex, so it is hard to find a firm starting point. What follows is the conclusion anyone will reach after thinking it through carefully.

The time needed to build a bridge determines how far apart the corps assigned to defend the river should be stationed. If we divide the full length of the defensive line by that distance, we get the number of corps needed for the defense. If we then divide the total troops available by that number, we get the strength of each corps. Next, if we compare the strength of each corps with the number of enemy troops that can be brought across by every means available while the bridge is being built, we can judge how much success we may expect in resisting the crossing. We can assume that forcing the passage is impossible only when the defender can attack the troops that have crossed with a clear numerical advantage—say, twice their number—before the bridge is finished. An example will make this clearer.

If the enemy needs twenty-four hours to build a bridge, and if by other means he can bring across only 20,000 men in those twenty-four hours, while the defender can reach any point within twelve hours with 20,000 men, then the passage cannot be forced. The defender will arrive when the enemy, still occupied with the crossing, has brought over only half of those 20,000 men. Now, since in twelve hours, including the time needed to send the news, we can march four miles, 20,000 men would be needed every eight miles. That would require

60,000 men to defend a stretch of river twenty-four miles long. This force would be enough to bring 20,000 men to any point, even if the enemy tried to cross at two places at once. If he attacked at only one point, then two bodies of 20,000 could be brought against him there.

So there are three factors that have a decisive effect here: (

1. the width of the river; (

2. the available means of crossing, since these two factors determine both how long it takes to build the bridge and how many troops can cross while it is being built; and (

3. the strength of the defending army. At this stage, the enemy army's overall strength does not yet enter into the calculation. On this view, we may say that there is a point beyond which crossing becomes completely impossible, and no amount of numerical superiority on the enemy's part would allow him to force a passage.

This, then, is the basic theory of the direct defence of a river—that is, a defence meant to stop the enemy from completing his bridge and from making the crossing itself. So far, it does not take into account the effect of demonstrations the enemy may employ. We will now look at the specific details and the measures required for such a defence.

Leaving geographical peculiarities aside for the moment, we need only say that, under the present theory, the corps should be stationed close to the river, and each corps should remain concentrated. They should be close to the river because any position farther back needlessly increases the distance that must be covered to reach any threatened point. Since the river

itself protects against any major movement by the enemy, there is no need for a reserve in the rear, as there would be in an ordinary defensive line with no river in front. In addition, roads that run parallel to and near a river are generally better than cross-roads leading from the interior to particular points on the river. Finally, the river is clearly watched more effectively by corps placed in this way than by a mere chain of posts, especially since the commanders are all close at hand. Each of these corps must also remain concentrated, because otherwise every calculation of time would have to be changed. Anyone who understands how much time is lost in bringing scattered forces together will easily see that the great strength of this defence lies precisely in that concentrated position. At first glance, it is certainly tempting to make crossing impossible for the enemy, even by boat, by establishing a line of posts. But except at a few points especially favorable for crossing, such a measure would be extremely harmful. Quite apart from the fact that the enemy can usually drive off such a post by bringing superior force against it from the opposite bank, this method is generally a waste of strength. At best, such a post can only force the enemy to choose another crossing point. Therefore, unless we are strong enough to treat and defend the river like the ditch of a fortress—a case that needs no new rule—this method of directly defending the riverbank necessarily leads away from the intended object. Along with these general principles for positions, we must also consider three further matters: first, examining the river's special peculiarities; second, removing all means of passage; and third, the influence of any fortresses situated on the river.

If a river is to serve as a defensive line, its two ends must have secure supports—on the right and left—such as the sea or neutral territory. Otherwise, there must be some other reason why the enemy cannot outflank the position by crossing beyond either end. But since such flank supports or obstacles are usually absent except at great distances, it is immediately clear that defending a river means covering a considerable stretch of it. That means the idea of defending the river by placing a large body of troops behind only a relatively short section does not belong to the realm of practical possibility, to which we must always limit ourselves. By a relatively short section of the river, we mean one that does not greatly exceed the frontage the same number of troops would normally occupy in an ordinary line without a river. Cases of that kind, we say, do not occur. Every direct defence of a river therefore becomes, in some degree, a cordon system, at least in the way the troops must be spread out. For that reason, it is not at all suited to resisting an enemy turning movement in the way an army in a concentrated position naturally can. Wherever such a turning movement is possible, a direct defence of the river, however promising it may seem in other respects, is an extremely dangerous measure.

As for the stretch of river between its two extreme points, we may of course assume that not every point along it is equally suitable for crossing. This can be defined somewhat more precisely in theory, but it can never be settled with certainty, because the smallest local detail often matters more than everything that appears grand and important in books. In any case, it is unnecessary to lay down rules on this subject. The

look of the river itself, together with information from people who live near it, will always be more than enough, without any need to consult books.

As for specific details, we can note that the places most likely to favor a crossing are roads that lead down to a river, its tributaries, the major towns it passes through, and, above all, its islands. By contrast, factors that often play such a large role in books—like one bank being higher than the other, or a bend in the river at the crossing point—rarely matter much. The reason is that the supposed importance of those two features depends on the narrow idea of defending the riverbank absolutely, which is a situation that seldom, if ever, arises with great rivers.

Whatever the particular conditions are that make some points easier to cross than others, they will affect how troops are positioned and will modify the general geometrical rule. Even so, it is unwise to depart too far from that rule on the assumption that crossing will be difficult at many points. If the enemy knew those were the places where we were least likely to be found, he would choose precisely the spots that nature makes least favorable for crossing.

In any case, it is strongly advisable to occupy islands as firmly as possible, because a serious attack on an island is the clearest sign of the intended crossing point.

Since the corps stationed near a river must be able to move either upstream or downstream along its banks as circumstances demand, one of the most important preparations for defending the river is this: if there is no road running parallel to the river, the nearest smaller roads in that direction should be

put into good condition, and whatever short connecting roads are needed should be built.

The second point we must discuss is removing the means of crossing. On the main river itself, this is not easy and at the very least takes considerable time. But on the tributaries that flow into it, especially those on the enemy's side, the difficulties are almost impossible to overcome, since these smaller rivers are generally already in the enemy's hands. For that reason, it is important to block the mouths of such rivers with fortifications.

The equipment an enemy brings for crossing rivers—mainly pontoon bridges—is rarely enough to get across major rivers. So a great deal depends on what can be found on the river itself, on its tributaries, and in the large nearby towns. It also depends on the timber available in forests near the river for building boats and rafts. In some cases, these conditions are so unfavorable that crossing the river becomes almost impossible.

Finally, fortresses on both banks, or on the enemy's side of the river, help prevent any crossing at points near them, whether upstream or downstream. They can also block the mouths of tributaries and provide places to secure any boats or other craft that are captured at once.

That is enough on the direct defense of a river, assuming it carries a large volume of water. If the river is also bordered by a deep valley with steep sides or by marshy banks, then crossing becomes even harder and the defense grows stronger. But obstacles like these do not make up for a lack of water volume, because they do not create a complete separation of the country, and that is an essential condition of direct defense.

If we ask what role this kind of direct river defense can play in the strategic plan of a campaign, we must admit that it can never produce a decisive victory. That is partly because the aim is either to keep the enemy from crossing to our side at all or to destroy only the first sizeable force that gets across. It is also because the river keeps us from turning any advantage we gain into a decisive victory by advancing in strength.

On the other hand, defending a river in this way can buy a great deal of time, and for the defender that is often what matters most. Gathering the means to cross often takes a long time, and if several attempts fail, even more time is gained. If the enemy changes the direction of his forces entirely because of the river, that can bring further advantages as well. Finally, whenever the enemy is not fully determined to advance, a river will interrupt his movements and so provide lasting protection to the country.

A direct defense of a river, then, can be a very effective form of defense when large bodies of troops are involved, the river itself is substantial, and other conditions are favorable. It can produce results that modern commanders have too often overlooked, influenced mainly by failed attempts to defend rivers that collapsed because the defenders lacked adequate resources. If, as we have just supposed—a situation that could easily arise on rivers like the Rhine or the Danube—60,000 men can effectively defend 24 miles of river against a much stronger force, then that is clearly a result worth serious attention.

We say against a much stronger force, and we must return to that point. According to the theory we have put forward, everything depends on the means of crossing, and not at all on

the numerical strength of the force trying to cross, provided it is at least not smaller than the force defending the river. This may seem very strange, yet it is true. But we must be careful not to forget that most river defenses—or rather all of them—lack absolute points d'appui, and therefore can be turned. And such a turning movement becomes much easier when the enemy has greatly superior numbers.

If we also consider that a direct defense of a river, even when the enemy overcomes it, is in no way comparable to losing a battle, and is even less likely to end in a complete defeat, since only part of our force has been engaged, while the enemy, delayed by the slow passage of his troops over a single bridge, cannot immediately press his success, we will be less inclined to dismiss this method of defense.

In every practical part of life, it matters to judge a situation correctly. The same is true when defending a river. It makes a great difference whether we understand our position in all its connections and conditions. A detail that seems trivial can completely change the situation, and a measure that is wise and effective in one case may be a disastrous mistake in another. The difficulty of judging correctly, and of avoiding the simplistic idea that "a river is a river," is perhaps greater here than anywhere else. So we must be especially careful to avoid false applications and mistaken interpretations. But once we have done that, we can say plainly that it is not worth listening to those who, driven by a vague feeling and without any clear idea, expect everything from attack and movement, and imagine that the truest image of war is a hussar at full gallop waving his sword above his head.

Ideas and feelings of that kind are not always enough; we need only mention the once-famous dictator Wedel at Züllichau in 1759. Worst of all, such impulses rarely last. They abandon a general at the decisive moment, when large and complicated situations, spreading into a thousand connections, press heavily on him.

We therefore believe that, under favorable conditions, a direct defense of a river by large bodies of troops can succeed, if we are satisfied with a limited negative result. But this is not true of smaller forces. If 60,000 men held a certain stretch of river, they might prevent an army of 100,000 or more from crossing. But a corps of 10,000 on that same stretch would not be able to stop another corps of 10,000 from crossing. In fact, it probably could not stop even a force half that size, if that smaller body were willing to accept the risk of ending up on the same side of the river as an enemy so much stronger in numbers. The reason is clear: the means of crossing do not change.

So far, we have said little about feints or mock attempts to cross, because they are not especially important in the direct defense of a river. In this kind of defense, the army is not concentrated at a single point; instead, each corps is assigned a specific stretch of the river to defend. At the same time, the kind of deceptive crossing attempts we are discussing are also very hard to carry out under the conditions we have assumed. For example, if the means of crossing are already limited—that is, if the attacker does not have as many as he would want to ensure success—he will hardly be able or willing to devote a large portion of them to a mere demonstration. In any case, the troops available for the real crossing point would then be reduced by

that amount, and the defender would regain in time what uncertainty may have cost him.

As a rule, this direct form of defense seems suitable only for large rivers, and only along the latter half of their course.

The second form of defense is suited to smaller rivers with deep valleys, and often also to rivers of very little importance. It involves taking up a position some distance back from the river, far enough away that the enemy army can either be struck in separate parts after crossing, if it crosses at several points at once, or, if the whole army crosses at a single point, then attacked near the river while crowded onto one bridge and one road. An army with its rear pressed up against a river or a deep valley, and restricted to a single line of retreat, is in a very unfavorable position for battle. Making proper use of this fact is precisely what makes the defense of rivers of moderate size, especially those running through deep valleys, so effective.

Positioning an army in large formations close to a river is, in our view, the best arrangement for a direct defense—but only if the enemy cannot cross unexpectedly and in great strength. Otherwise, such a deployment creates a serious risk that the army will be defeated piece by piece. So if the conditions favoring the defense are not strong enough—if the enemy already has ample means of crossing, if the river has many islands or fords, if it is not wide enough, if our forces are too weak, and so on—then that method should be abandoned. For better security and closer mutual support, the troops must be pulled back a little from the river. The remaining task is then to ensure the fastest possible concentration at whatever point the

enemy tries to cross, so that he can be attacked before he has advanced far enough to control several crossing points. In that case, the river or its valley must be watched and partly defended by a chain of outposts, while the army is stationed in several corps at suitable points some distance—usually a few leagues—from the river.

The greatest difficulty here lies in moving through the narrow passage created by the river and its valley. We are no longer dealing only with the volume of water in the river, but with the entire defile; and in general, a deep rocky valley is a greater obstacle to cross than a fairly wide river. The difficulty of marching a large body of troops through a long defile is actually much greater than it first appears. It takes a great deal of time, and there is the troubling danger that, during the march, the enemy may seize the surrounding heights. If the troops in front push too far ahead, they meet the enemy too soon and risk being overwhelmed. If they stay near the crossing point, they are forced to fight in the worst possible position. Crossing such terrain in order to test strength against an enemy on the far side is therefore a bold operation, unless one has greatly superior numbers and complete confidence in the commander.

A defensive line like this cannot be stretched as far as one used for the direct defense of a major river. The whole idea is to fight with the entire force concentrated, and however difficult these crossings may be, they are not as formidable as crossings over a large river. Because of that, it is much easier for the enemy to outflank us. At the same time, such a move takes him away from his natural line of advance, since we are assuming, as is obvious, that the valley cuts across that direction at roughly a

right angle. And the disadvantage of having a restricted line of retreat does not vanish all at once; it fades only gradually. So the defender still keeps some advantage over the advancing enemy, even if that enemy is not caught at the exact crisis of the crossing, but gains a little more freedom of movement by making a detour.

Since we are not speaking of rivers only in terms of the volume of water they carry, but are thinking more of the deep cut or channel formed by their valleys, we should explain what we mean. We do not mean a regular mountain gorge, because in that case everything already said about mountains would apply. But, as everyone knows, there are many flat regions where even the smallest streams run in channels with deep, steep sides. Along with these, we include rivers with marshy banks, or banks that are otherwise hard to approach.

Under these conditions, then, an army on the defensive, positioned behind a large river or a deep valley with steep sides, holds an exceptionally strong position, and this kind of river defense is one of the best strategic measures.

Its weakness—and the point on which the defender is especially likely to go wrong—is stretching the defending force too far. In such a situation, it is only too easy to be pulled from one crossing point to another and fail to see where we ought to stop. But if we do not manage to fight with the whole army united, we lose the very effect we were aiming for. A defeat in battle, the need to retreat, confusion of many kinds, and heavy losses can bring the army close to ruin, even if the resistance has not been carried to the utmost limit.

In saying that, under these conditions, the defender should not spread his forces too widely, and that he should always be able to concentrate all of them by the evening of the day the enemy crosses, we have said enough. That principle can stand in place of all calculations about time, strength, and space, which in this case must depend on many local circumstances.

The battle these circumstances produce must have a special character: the defender must act with the utmost speed and force. The enemy's feigned crossings, which will keep him uncertain for a time, will generally prevent him from discovering the true crossing point even a moment too early. The defender's particular advantage lies in the exposed and unfavorable position of the enemy corps directly in front of him. If other corps, having crossed at other points, threaten his flank, he cannot respond as he might in an ordinary defensive battle by striking them hard from the rear, because that would mean giving up the advantage just described. He must therefore settle the fight in his front before those other corps can arrive and become dangerous. In other words, he must attack the force before him as quickly and powerfully as possible, and decide the whole matter by defeating it.

But the aim of this form of river defense can never be to drive back a vastly superior force, as might be possible in the direct defense of a large river. As a rule, we are really dealing with the main body of the enemy's army, and although we face it under favorable conditions, it is still easy to see that the difference in strength will soon make itself felt.

This is how the defense of medium-sized rivers and deep valleys works when the main bodies of the armies are involved. For them, the strong resistance that can be made on the ridges or steep sides of the valley does not make up for the disadvantages of being spread out, and for them a decisive victory is essential. But if the aim is only to strengthen a secondary line of defense that is meant to hold for a short time and can expect support, then a direct defense of the valley sides, or even of the river bank, can certainly be attempted. And although the same advantages cannot be expected here as in mountain positions, resistance will still always last longer than in ordinary country. Only one factor makes this measure very dangerous, if not impossible: when the river has many bends and sharp turns, as often happens when a river runs through a deep valley. One need only look at the course of the Mosel. In such a defense, the corps posted forward on the outward curves of the bends would almost inevitably be lost if a retreat became necessary.

It is self-evident that a great river allows the same defensive methods, and the same form of defense, that we have identified as best for rivers of moderate size when the main body of an army is involved, and it does so under much more favorable conditions. This will be used especially when the defender's aim is to win a decisive victory (Aspern).

The case of an army positioned with its front close to a river, stream, or deep valley—so as to use that feature as a tactical barrier to an attack, or to strengthen its front—is quite different, and a full discussion of it belongs to tactics. Here we will say only this: it rests on a mistaken idea. If the break in the ground is

very great, the front of the position becomes completely impossible to attack. But since such a position is no harder to go around than any other, the result is much the same as if the defender had simply stepped out of the attacker's path—and that can hardly be the purpose of taking up the position. A position of this kind is therefore advisable only when, because of where it stands, it threatens the attacker's lines of communication, so that any move away from the direct road would expose him to consequences too serious to risk.

In this second kind of defence, feigned crossings are much more dangerous, because the attacker can carry them out more easily, while the defender's task is to concentrate his whole army at the right point. Still, the defender is not under quite the same pressure for time here, because the advantage of his position lasts until the attacker has brought together his full force and secured several crossings. In addition, a simulated attack does not have quite the same effect here as it does in the defence of a cordon, where every point must be held. In that case, using the reserve depends not simply, as in the case before us, on identifying where the enemy's main force is, but on answering the much harder question: at which point will he first try to break through?

As for both forms of defence on large and small rivers, one general point must be made: if they are attempted in the haste and confusion of a retreat, without preparation, without removing all means of crossing, and without exact knowledge of the country, they certainly cannot produce the results assumed here. In most such cases, nothing of the sort can be expected. It is therefore always a serious mistake for an army to

spread itself out over extended positions.

In war, almost everything goes wrong if it is not carried out with clear judgment and full determination. The same is generally true of a river defence. It usually ends badly when it is adopted only because we lack the courage to face the enemy in the open field and hope that a wide river or a deep valley will stop him. In that case, confidence in the situation is so weak that both the general and the army are usually full of anxious expectations, and those fears are almost certain to come true soon enough. A battle in the open field does not require perfectly equal conditions beforehand, as a duel does. If the defender does not know how to win advantages for himself—whether from the special character of the defence, from rapid marches, or from knowledge of the country and freedom of movement—then nothing can save him, and a river or its valley will help him least of all.

The third form of defence—a strong position taken up on the enemy's side of the river—draws its effectiveness from the danger it creates for the enemy of having his communications cut by the river and thus being confined to a few bridges. It follows naturally that we are speaking only of great rivers with a large volume of water, since only these can produce such results. A river that merely runs through a deep ravine usually offers so many crossing places that this danger disappears.

The defender's position must be extremely strong—almost impossible to take. Otherwise, he would be better off meeting the enemy partway and giving up those advantages. But if the position is so strong that the enemy decides not to attack it,

then under certain conditions the attacker may be forced to remain on the same bank as the defender. If the attacker crosses the river, he puts his own lines of communication at risk; but at the same time, he threatens ours. As in every case where one army moves past another, the central question is this: whose communications are better protected, considering their number, location, and other conditions? Which side has more to lose, and can therefore be pressured more by its opponent? And finally, which side still has more real striking power in its army to rely on in an extreme situation? The river's effect is simply to increase the danger of such a move for both sides, since both depend on bridges. Now, to the extent that we may assume—as usually happens—that the defender's crossings, as well as those of his depots of every kind, are better protected by fortresses than those of the attacker, this kind of defence is possible. It may even be used instead of direct defence when circumstances do not favor that form. So in truth, the river is not defended by the army, nor the army by the river. Rather, it is the connection between the two that defends the country, and that is the main point.

At the same time, it must be admitted that this kind of defence, which does not aim at a decisive blow and resembles the tension between two electric currents whose atmospheres have only just come into contact, cannot withstand any very powerful driving force. It may work even against a much stronger enemy if that enemy is led by a cautious commander who lacks resolution and is never inclined to press forward energetically. It may also succeed when the struggle has already settled into a kind of balance between the two sides, and neither expects

more than small advantages. But if we are facing superior forces under a bold commander, then we are following a dangerous course, very near the edge of disaster.

This kind of defence appears so bold and, at the same time, so methodical that it might be called elegant. But elegance easily slips into folly, and in war that is far less forgivable than in society. As a result, there have so far been only a few examples of this elegant art. From this third method, a particular means of supporting the first two also emerges: the permanent occupation of a bridge and a tête du pont to maintain a constant threat of crossing.

Along with the aim of an absolute defence by the main body, each of the three methods of defence may also serve the purpose of a feigned defence.

This appearance of resistance, which is not actually meant to be carried out, is something that can be combined with many other measures, and indeed with any position that is more than simply a marching camp. But the feigned defence of a great river becomes a full stratagem because it requires the actual adoption of at least some detailed measures, and because it usually operates on a larger scale and for a longer time than any other such deception. Passing a great river in full view of an army is always a major step for the attacker, one he often considers for a long time or delays until a more favourable moment.

For this kind of feigned defence, the main army must therefore divide and station itself along the river, much as it would for a real defence. But since the intention is only to make a

demonstration, that itself shows that circumstances are not favourable enough for an actual defence. Because this arrangement always produces a deployment that is more or less extended and scattered, there is an obvious danger of serious loss if the corps become involved in real fighting, even if the resistance is not pushed to the limit. In that case, it would truly be a half measure. In a defensive demonstration, therefore, provision must be made for the army to concentrate securely at a point well to the rear, perhaps several days' march away, and the defence must not be carried beyond what is compatible with that arrangement.

To make our point clearer and show why this kind of defensive demonstration matters, let us look at the end of the campaign of 1813. Buonaparte crossed back over the Rhine with forty or fifty thousand men. Trying to defend the river at every point where the Allies might easily cross, anywhere between Manheim and Nimeguen, would have been impossible with a force of that size. The only practical course open to him was to make his first serious stand somewhere on the French Meuse, where he could appear with an army that had been reinforced to some extent. If he had withdrawn to that point at once, the Allies would have followed right behind him. If he had instead put his army into cantonments to rest behind the Rhine, much the same thing would have happened almost as quickly. At the first sign of discouraged caution on his part, the Allies would have sent swarms of Cossacks and other light troops across in pursuit, and if that worked well, other corps would have followed. The French corps therefore had no choice but to take real measures to defend the Rhine. Since Buonaparte could foresee that this

defence would come to nothing as soon as the Allies seriously attempted to cross the river, it should be viewed as a mere demonstration. In carrying it out, the French corps ran very little risk, since their point of concentration lay on the Upper Moselle. Only Macdonald, who, as is known, was at Nimeguen with twenty thousand men, made a mistake by delaying his retreat until he was actually forced to withdraw. That delay kept him from joining Buonaparte before the battle of Brienne, because the retreat was not forced on him until after the arrival of Winzurgerode's corps in January. This defensive demonstration on the Rhine therefore had the effect of checking the Allied advance and persuading them to postpone crossing the river until their reinforcements arrived, which did not happen for six weeks. Those six weeks were of immense value to Buonaparte. Without this defensive demonstration on the Rhine, Paris would have become the immediate objective after the victory of Leipsic, and it would have been impossible for the French to fight a battle on that side of their capital.

In a second-class river defence, then—that is, on smaller rivers—such demonstrations can also be used, but they are usually less effective. Attempts to cross are easier in that case, so the illusion is broken more quickly.

In the third type of river defence, a demonstration would most likely be even less effective, and would achieve no more than occupying any other temporary position.

Lastly, the first two forms of defence are very well suited to giving a chain of outposts, or any other defensive line (cordon) set up for a secondary purpose, or a corps of observation, far

greater and more dependable strength than it would have without the river. In all these cases, the issue is one of relative resistance, and that must naturally be strengthened a great deal by so large a natural obstacle. At the same time, we should not think only about the relative amount of time gained through resistance in combat in such a case. We must also consider the many anxieties that such operations usually stir up in the enemy's mind, and which, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, lead him to abandon his plans unless necessity drives him on.

CHAPTER XIX. Defence of Streams and Rivers (continued)

We still have something to add about the influence of streams and rivers on the defence of a country, even when they are not defended themselves.

Every important river, together with its main valley and the neighboring valleys, forms a very substantial obstacle within a country. In that way, it benefits defence in general; but its particular influence can be described more precisely through its main effects.

First, we must distinguish whether it flows parallel to the frontier—that is, to the general strategic front—or whether it runs at an oblique angle or a right angle to it. If it runs parallel, we must note the difference between having our own army behind it or the enemy's army behind it, and in both cases we must also consider the distance between the river and the army.

A defending army is clearly in a much stronger position if it has a large river behind it within easy reach, though not closer than a day's march, and if that river has enough secure crossing points. Without the river, it would be weaker. True, the army gives up some freedom of movement because it must take care to protect those crossings. But it gains far more from the safety of its strategic rear, above all its lines of communication. Here we are speaking of defence in our own country. In an enemy's country, the situation is different. Even if his army stands in front of us, we must still expect that he may appear behind us on the far side of the river. In that case, the river, because it

forces movement through narrow road defiles, would do more harm than good. The farther the river lies behind the army, the less useful it becomes, and beyond a certain distance its effect disappears altogether.

If an advancing army has to leave a river behind it, that river can only hinder its movements, because it confines the army's communications to a few isolated crossing points. When Prince Henry marched against the Russians on the right bank of the Oder near Breslau, he clearly had a point d'appui in the Oder, which flowed behind him at a day's march. By contrast, when the Russians under Cznernitschef later crossed the Oder, they found themselves in a very difficult position, precisely because they risked losing their line of retreat, which depended on a single bridge.

If a river runs across the theater of war at roughly a right angle to the strategic front, the advantage again lies with the defender. First, there are usually several strong positions anchored on the river and protected in front by the cross-valleys that feed into the main valley, as with the Elbe for the Prussians in the Seven Years' War. Second, the attacker must either leave one bank or the other unoccupied, or divide his forces. That kind of division almost always helps the defender, because the defender controls more secure crossing points than the attacker. A quick look at the whole Seven Years' War is enough to show how useful the Oder and the Elbe were to Frederick the Great in defending his theater of war—Silesia, Saxony, and the Mark—and how greatly they hindered the Austrians and Russians in trying to conquer those provinces. This was true even though there was no actual defense of those

rivers during the war, and even though, in relation to the enemy, their course generally lay oblique to the front or at a right angle to it rather than parallel with it.

In general, a river helps the attacker only when it runs more or less at right angles to the line of advance and can be used for transport. In that case, it can be useful because the attacker has the longer line of communication and therefore greater difficulty moving everything he needs; water transport can ease much of that burden. The defender, of course, can shut down navigation within his own frontier by using fortresses. Even so, that does not cancel the advantages the river gives the attacker along the part of its course before it reaches that frontier. But we should also remember several things. Many rivers are not navigable, even when they are wide enough to matter in other military respects. Others are navigable only at certain seasons. Moving upstream is slow. A river's bends often make the route twice as long. The main connections between countries are now roads. And, more than ever, armies get their supplies from the area near the theater of operations rather than having them hauled from far away. Once we consider all this, it becomes clear that rivers generally do not play as large a role in supplying troops as books often suggest, and their effect on the course of events is therefore distant and uncertain.

CHAPTER XX. A. Defence of Swamps

Very large, broad swamps, like the Bourtang Moor in North Germany, are so rare that they are hardly worth discussing at length. But we should not forget that low-lying ground and the marshy banks of small rivers are much more common, and they create significant natural obstacles that can be, and often have been, used for defense.

Measures for defending a marsh are in many ways much like those used to defend a river, but there are some important differences that need special attention. The first and most important is that a marsh, which infantry cannot cross except by a causeway, is far harder to get across than any river. To begin with, a causeway cannot be built as quickly as a bridge. And there are no ready means of sending troops across to cover the construction of the dyke or causeway. No one would start building a bridge without first using some boats to carry over an advance guard. But in a morass, no such help is available. The simplest way to make an infantry crossing over a marsh is with planks, but if the marsh is at all wide, that is a much slower process than getting the first boats across a river. If, in addition, there is a river in the middle of the marsh that cannot be crossed without a bridge, then getting the first detachment of troops across becomes even harder. Individual men may be able to cross on boards, but the heavy materials needed for bridge building cannot be moved that way. In many cases, this difficulty may be impossible to overcome.

A second distinctive feature of a swamp is that the means used to cross it cannot be removed as completely as those used to cross a river. Bridges can be broken up or destroyed so thoroughly that they can never be used again. With dykes, the most that can be done is to cut them, and that does not achieve very much. If there is a river in the middle, the bridge can of course be removed, but even then the whole passage is not destroyed to the same extent as the crossing of a large river would be if its bridge were destroyed. The natural result is that existing dykes must always be strongly occupied and firmly defended if we want to gain any broad advantage from the marsh.

On the one hand, then, we are forced to rely on local defence; on the other, that kind of defence is helped by the difficulty of crossing anywhere else. The result of these two features is that the defence of a swamp must be more local and more passive than the defence of a river.

It follows that we must be relatively stronger here than in the direct defence of a river. The defensive line therefore must not be too long, especially in cultivated regions, where there are still many crossing points even under the most favourable defensive conditions.

In this respect, then, swamps are inferior to great rivers, and that is a very important point, because all purely local defence is deceptive and extremely dangerous. But if we remember that such swamps and low grounds are generally far broader than even the largest rivers in Europe, several consequences follow. A force posted to defend a crossing is never in danger of being

overwhelmed by fire from the opposite side. Its own fire along a long, narrow dyke is greatly strengthened. And the time needed to pass such a defile, perhaps a quarter or half a mile long, is far greater than the time required to cross an ordinary bridge. If we take all this into account, we must admit that such low lands and morasses, provided the means of crossing are not too numerous, rank among the strongest defensive lines that can be formed.

An indirect defence, like the one we examined in the case of streams and rivers, in which obstacles of terrain are used to bring on a major battle under favourable conditions, generally applies just as well to morasses.

The third method of defending a river by taking up a position on the enemy's side would be too hazardous here because the crossing is so difficult and exhausting.

It is extremely dangerous to try to defend morasses, soft meadows, bogs, and similar ground if they are not completely impassable beyond the dykes. A single crossing route discovered by the enemy is enough to break through the entire defensive line, and if the defender offers serious resistance, the result is always heavy loss.

B. Inundations

We must now consider inundations. As defensive means, and also as natural phenomena, they unquestionably most closely resemble morasses.

They are certainly not common. Holland may be the only country in Europe where they appear on a scale significant enough to deserve notice for our purposes. But that country, because of the notable campaigns of 1672 and 1787, and because of its important position in relation to both France and Germany, requires us to give the matter some attention.

These Dutch inundations differ from the usual marshy, impassable lowlands in the following ways:

1. The ground itself is dry, consisting either of dry meadows or cultivated fields.

2. For irrigation or drainage, the land is crossed by many small ditches of varying depth and width, which can be seen running in parallel lines.

3. Larger canals, enclosed by dykes and used for irrigation, drainage, and boat traffic, run through the country in every direction. They are large enough that they can be crossed only by bridges.

4. Throughout the whole district liable to inundation, the ground level lies noticeably below sea level, and therefore, of course, below the level of the canals.

5. As a result, by cutting the dams and opening or closing the sluices, the whole country can be flooded. Then no roads remain dry except those along the tops of the dykes. All the others are either completely underwater or at least so waterlogged that they can no longer be used. Even if the flood is only three or four feet deep, so that it might perhaps be waded through for short stretches, that too becomes impossible because of the smaller ditches mentioned under No. 2, which cannot be seen. Only where these ditches run in a matching direction, so that one can move between two of them without crossing either, does the inundation fail to form an absolute barrier to movement. It is easy to see that this exception to the general obstruction can apply only over short distances and therefore can be useful only for very specialized tactical purposes.

From all this we conclude

1. The attacker can move only along a relatively small number of usable routes. These run on very narrow dykes, usually with a wet ditch on both sides, and therefore create very long defiles.

2. Any defensive work on such a dyke can easily be reinforced until it becomes impregnable.

3. But because the defender is so tightly confined, he must limit himself to the most passive kind of resistance at each separate point, and so must rely entirely on passive resistance for safety.

4. In such a country, defence does not consist of a single line that closes the land like a simple barrier. Instead, because the same obstacles to movement exist in every direction, and the same protection for the flanks can be found, new positions can

constantly be established. In this way, if one part of the first defensive line is lost, a new section can replace it. We may say that the number of possible combinations here, as on a chessboard, is infinite.

5. But this general condition of a country can be imagined only where there is a high degree of cultivation and a dense population. It therefore follows that the number of passages, and thus the number of posts needed for their defence, must be very large compared with other strategic arrangements. From this it follows again that such a defensive line must not be long.

The main line of defence in Holland runs from Naarden on the Zuyder Zee, for most of the distance behind the Vecht, to Gorcum on the Waal, or more properly to the Biesbosch, and it extends for about eight miles. A force of 25,000 to 30,000 men was used to defend this line in 1672, and again in 1787. If we could count with certainty on an invincible resistance, the results would certainly be very great, at least for the provinces of Holland lying behind that line.

In 1672, the line actually held against much stronger forces led by great commanders—first Condé and later Luxembourg—who had 40,000 to 50,000 men under them. Even so, they would not attack it directly, choosing instead to wait for winter, which turned out not to be severe enough. By contrast, the resistance offered on this first line in 1787 was negligible. Even the defence of a second, much shorter line between the Zuyder Zee and the lake of Haarlem, though somewhat more effective, was broken by the Duke of Brunswick in a single day through a highly skilful tactical arrangement well suited to the ground. This was so

even though the Prussian force actually engaged in the attack was little, if at all, larger than the troops defending the lines.

The different outcome in these two cases must be explained by the difference in the supreme command. In 1672, Louis XIV. caught the Dutch by surprise while everything was still on a peacetime footing, and, as is well known, there was very little military spirit in the land forces. As a result, most of the fortresses lacked the necessary supplies and equipment. They were garrisoned only by small bodies of hired troops and commanded by governors who were either incompetent natives or treacherous foreigners. Thus all the Brandenburg fortresses on the Rhine that were garrisoned by Dutch troops, as well as all the Dutch strongholds east of the defensive line described above, except Groningen, quickly fell into French hands, mostly without any real defence. The capture of this large number of places formed the main effort of the French army of 150,000 men at that time.

But after the murder of the brothers De Witt in August 1672, the Prince of Orange took control of affairs and brought unity to the measures for national defence. There was still time to close the defensive line mentioned above, and the measures then adopted worked together so effectively that neither Condé nor Luxembourg, who commanded the French armies left in Holland after the departure of the two armies under Turenne and Louis in person, dared to attempt anything against the separate posts.

In 1787, the situation was completely different. It was no longer the Republic of seven united provinces resisting invasion, but Holland alone. So the issue was not, as it had been in 1672, the

capture of all the fortresses; the defense was immediately limited to the line we have described. But this time the attacker had only 25,000 men instead of 150,000, and he was not a powerful sovereign from a great neighboring country, but a subordinate general serving a distant prince who was himself far from fully independent. The people of Holland, as elsewhere at that time, were divided into two parties. But in Holland the republican spirit clearly prevailed, and had even risen to a kind of passionate enthusiasm. Under these conditions, the resistance in 1787 should have produced results at least as great as those of 1672. But there was one important difference: in 1787 there was no unity of command at all. What had been entrusted in 1672 to the wise, skillful, and energetic leadership of the Prince of Orange was placed in 1787 in the hands of a so-called Defence Commission. Although it included some energetic men, it was not able to give its work the necessary unity of action or inspire the confidence needed to keep the whole machinery from becoming flawed and ineffective in practice.

We have paused briefly over this example to make this defensive measure clearer, and at the same time to show how different the results can be depending on whether the overall direction is marked by greater or lesser unity and consistency.

Although the organization and method of defending such a defensive line belong to tactics, we still cannot avoid making, in connection with the latter subject, which is most closely related to strategy, an observation suggested by the campaign of 1787.

We believe that although defense along a line of this kind must naturally be passive at each individual point, an attack launched from one point on the line is still possible. It may even produce good results if the enemy, as in 1787, is not overwhelmingly superior. Such an attack would have to move along dykes, so it would not have much freedom of movement or great driving force. Even so, the attacker cannot occupy every dyke and road he does not need for his own operations. The defender, with better knowledge of the terrain and control of the strong points, should therefore be able to use some of the unoccupied dykes to make a genuine flank attack on the attacking columns, or to cut them off from their sources of supply. If, on the other hand, we consider for a moment the restricted position of the attacker, and how much more dependent he is on his lines of communication here than in almost any other case, we can easily see that any sortie by the defenders that has even the slightest chance of success would be highly effective, if only as a demonstration. We strongly doubt that the prudent and cautious Duke of Brunswick would have dared to advance on Amsterdam if the Dutch had made even such a demonstration, from Utrecht for example.

CHAPTER XXI. Defence of Forests

Above all, we must distinguish between thick, tangled, impassable forests and extensive wooded areas that have been somewhat cultivated, with some open ground and many roads running through them.

Whenever the aim is to establish a defensive line, the latter kind should be kept to the rear or avoided as much as possible. The defender needs a clear view more than the attacker does, partly because he is usually the weaker side, and partly because the natural advantages of his position cause him to develop his plans later than the attacker. If he places a wooded district in front of him, he would be fighting like a blind man against someone who can see. If he places himself in the middle of the woods, then both sides would be blind. But that kind of equality does not suit the defender’s natural needs.

A heavily wooded region can therefore be used to advantage in defence only if it lies behind the defender’s army. In that position, it hides from the enemy everything happening behind the army, while also helping to screen and ease a retreat.

For the moment, we are speaking only of forests in flat country. When clearly mountainous terrain is involved, its effects outweigh other tactical and strategic considerations, and we have already discussed those matters elsewhere.

But impassable forests—that is, forests that can be crossed only by certain roads—offer the defender indirect advantages

much like those mountains provide when making it possible to fight a battle under favorable conditions. The army can wait behind the forest in a position that is more or less concentrated, ready to strike the enemy as soon as he emerges from the road defiles. In its effects, such a forest resembles a mountain more than a river. It does indeed create only one very long and difficult defile, but as far as retreat is concerned, that is more an advantage than a disadvantage.

But trying to defend a forest directly, no matter how difficult it is to pass through, is extremely risky even for the thinnest line of outposts. Abatis are only notional barriers, and no forest is so completely impassable that small detachments cannot get through it in a hundred places. In relation to a chain of defensive posts, these detachments are like the first drops of water seeping through a roof, soon followed by a general flood.

Far more important is the role of great forests of every kind when combined with the arming of a nation. They are undoubtedly the natural environment for such levies. If, therefore, the strategic plan of defence can be arranged so that the enemy's lines of communication pass through great forests, then another powerful lever is brought into play to support the work of defence.

CHAPTER XX. The Cordon

The term cordon refers to any defensive system meant to protect an entire region directly by means of a connected line of posts. We say directly because several corps of a large army, stationed in line with one another, might also shield a wide area from invasion without forming a cordon. In that case, however, the protection would not be direct; it would result from their combined operations and movements.

It is obvious that a defensive line long enough to cover a large district directly can have only limited staying power. That would still be true even if very large bodies of troops held the line, provided they were attacked by equally large forces. A cordon, therefore, can only be meant to withstand a weak attack, whether that weakness comes from a lack of determination or from the small size of the force employed.

The wall of China was built with this in mind: to protect against Tartar incursions. The same purpose lies behind all the lines and frontier defenses of the European states bordering on Asia and Turkey. Used in this way, the cordon system is neither absurd nor unsuited to its purpose. It is certainly not enough to stop every incursion, but it does make them harder and therefore less frequent. That is an important advantage in dealing with peoples like those of Asia, whose passions and habits tend constantly toward war.

After this kind of cordon come the lines that, in modern wars, have been established between European states, such as the French lines on the Rhine and in the Netherlands. These lines

were originally created simply to protect a country from incursions meant to extract contributions or live off the enemy's land. They were therefore intended only to stop minor operations, and for that reason they were meant to be held by small bodies of troops. But if the enemy's main force turns against these lines, the defender must also commit his main force to hold them, and that is plainly not a sound defensive arrangement. Because of this drawback, and because protection against such incursions in a temporary war is only a secondary concern, these lines are now regarded as a harmful measure, especially since their very existence can easily lead to an excessive use of troops. The more force and energy a war demands, the more useless and dangerous this method becomes.

Finally, all very extended lines of outposts that cover an army's quarters and are meant to offer some degree of resistance also fall under the category of cordons.

This defensive measure is mainly intended to obstruct raids and other small expeditions aimed at individual cantonments, and for that purpose it may be entirely adequate, especially when the terrain favors it. Against an advance by the enemy's main body, however, the resistance it offers can only be relative—that is, it can only buy time. But since the time gained will usually be slight, this purpose should be treated as only a minor consideration when such lines are established. The assembly and advance of the enemy's army can never happen so unnoticed that the defender first learns of it from his outposts; if that does happen, his situation is truly miserable.

So in this case as well, the cordon is meant only to resist an attack by a weak force, and therefore the object here, as in the other two cases, remains in keeping with the means.

Still, the idea that an army organized to defend a country should spread itself across a long chain of defensive posts facing the enemy, and break itself up into a cordon, seems so unreasonable that we have to ask what circumstances and motives could lead to such a course, and what conditions usually go along with it.

Any position in mountainous country, even when it is taken with the intention of fighting a battle with the whole force concentrated, is necessarily more spread out than a position on flat ground. This may be because the terrain greatly increases the strength of the defence. It must be because a broader line of retreat is needed, as we showed in the chapter on mountain defences. But if there is no immediate prospect of battle, and if it is likely that the enemy will stay in his position opposite us for some time without attempting anything, unless some especially favorable opportunity tempts him to do so—which was the usual situation in most wars in earlier times—then it is also natural not to confine ourselves to occupying only as much ground as is absolutely necessary. Instead, we may hold as much ground to the right or left as the army can safely cover, and this brings many advantages, as we will soon show. In open country with many lines of communication, this can be done to a greater extent through mobility, and for that reason such extension and dispersion of troops is less necessary there than in the mountains. It would also be far more dangerous in open country, because each part is less capable of resisting on its

own.

But in mountains, holding ground depends much more on local defense. Reinforcements cannot reach a threatened point as quickly, and once the enemy has taken a position, it is harder to drive him out even with a somewhat stronger force. In these conditions, we inevitably arrive at a kind of position that, while not exactly a cordon, comes very close to one: a line of defensive posts. There is still, of course, a significant step from this arrangement of several separate posts to the full cordon system. Yet generals often make that move without realizing it, drawn forward little by little. At first, they spread out their forces in order to cover and hold the country. Later, the aim becomes the security of the army itself. Each commander of a post weighs the advantage that this or that point may offer along the approaches to his position on the right or left, and in this way the whole system gradually and almost unnoticed passes from one level of subdivision to the next.

A cordon war, then, when it is carried on by an army's main force, should not be seen as a deliberately chosen form of warfare meant to block every move the enemy might make. Rather, it is a position an army drifts into while pursuing a very different aim: holding and protecting the country against an enemy who has no decisive operation in mind. Such a position should always be regarded as a mistake. The reasons that lead generals, little by little, to maintain one small post after another are petty when measured against the purpose of a large army. At the very least, this shows how such an error can arise. Yet people do not always recognize that it really is an error—that is, a misjudgment of both our own position and the enemy's.

Instead, they speak of it as an erroneous system. But when the same system is used successfully, or at least without harm, it is quietly accepted. Everyone praises the flawless campaigns of Prince Henry in the Seven Years' War because the king declared them so, even though those campaigns contain the clearest and most puzzling examples of lines of posts stretched so far that they could just as rightly be called cordons as any others ever could. We can fully justify these positions by saying that the prince knew his opponent. He knew he had no decisive enterprise to fear from that direction, and since his position also aimed to occupy as much territory as possible at all times, he pursued that aim as far as circumstances allowed. If the prince had once been unlucky with one of these cobweb-like arrangements and suffered a serious loss, we would not say that he had followed a faulty system of warfare. We would say instead that he had misjudged a particular measure and applied it to a case for which it was not suited.

As we try to explain how the so-called cordon system may be used by the main force in a theater of war, and how it can even be a sensible and useful measure rather than an absurd one, we must also admit that there seem to have been cases in which generals or their staffs failed to understand its real purpose. They treated its limited value as if it were universal, imagining that it could protect against every kind of attack. In such cases, the problem was not simply a mistaken use of the measure, but a complete misunderstanding of its nature. We may further concede that this particular absurdity, among others, appears to have occurred in the defence of the Vosges by the Austrian and Prussian armies in 1793 and 1794.

CHAPTER XXIII. Key to the Country

No theoretical idea in the art of war has played so large a role in criticism as the one we are about to discuss. It is the "great warhorse" of battle and campaign narratives, the most common standpoint in argument, and one of those scraps of scientific language critics use to display their learning. And yet the idea behind it has never been firmly established or clearly explained.

We will try to determine what it really means, and then see how far it can be put to practical use.

We discuss it here because the defence of mountains, river defences, and the ideas of strong and entrenched camps, to which it is closely related, had to be considered first.

The vague and confused idea hidden behind this old military metaphor has sometimes meant the most vulnerable part of a country, and at other times the strongest.

If there is any place without whose possession no one would dare to advance into an enemy's country, that place may properly be called the key of the country. But this simple idea, though certainly a barren one, did not satisfy theorists. They expanded it and, under the term key of a country, imagined points that determine possession of the whole country.

When the Russians wanted to push into the Crimean peninsula, they had to take control of the Isthmus of Perekop and its defensive lines. This was not so much because it was the only way in—for Lascy outflanked it twice, in 1737 and 1738—but

because holding it was necessary if they wanted to establish themselves in the Crimea with any reasonable security. That is straightforward enough, but the idea of a key-point tells us very little here. But suppose someone were to say, "Whoever holds the district of Langres commands all France as far as Paris"—that is, it would then be entirely up to him to take possession of it. That is obviously a very different claim, and one of far greater importance. In the first sense, possession of the country cannot be imagined without possession of the point we have called key; even the simplest mind can understand that. But in the second sense, possession of the point we have called key is treated as if possession of the country must necessarily follow from it. That is plainly something extraordinary. Ordinary common sense is no longer enough to make sense of it; one would have to call in the magic of occult science. This kind of mystification first appeared in books published fifty years ago and reached its height at the end of the last century. And despite the overwhelming force, certainty, and clarity with which Buonaparte's way of waging war convinced people in general, this doctrine has still somehow managed to keep itself alive in books, spinning out the thread of its stubborn existence.

Setting our idea of the key-point aside for a moment, it is obvious that every country has places of great importance: places where several roads come together, where supplies can be gathered easily, and that lie in a central position in relation to other important places. In short, holding such a place satisfies many needs and offers many advantages. If generals, wanting a single word to express the importance of such a place, have

called it the key of the land, it would be pedantic to object to that term. On the contrary, we should say it is vivid and effective. But if we try to turn this simple figure of speech into the basis of a whole system, branching out in many directions, common sense objects and insists that the expression be kept within its proper limits.

To build a system from that expression, it was necessary to rely on something more precise and absolute than the practical but admittedly vague meaning the term had in generals' accounts of their military operations. And among its many possible connections, elevation was chosen.

When a road crosses a mountain ridge, we thank heaven when we reach the top and only have to go down. A lone traveler naturally feels this way, and an army feels it even more strongly. It seems as if every difficulty has been overcome, and in most cases that is true. We find the descent easy. We also feel a certain superiority over anyone who might try to stop us. From there we can see far across the country and, at a glance, seem to command it in advance. For that reason, the highest point on a mountain road is always treated as having decisive importance, and in most cases it does. But that is by no means always true. In generals’ dispatches, such places are often described as key-points, though usually in a somewhat different and more limited sense. This idea became the starting point of a false theory, of which Lloyd may perhaps be considered the founder. As a result, high points from which several roads descend into the surrounding country came to be regarded as the key-points of the country—as points that command the country. It was natural for this view to merge with the closely

related idea of a systematic defense of mountains, and in that way the whole matter was pushed even further into illusion. Many tactical considerations connected with mountain defense were then added, and so the idea of the highest point on the road was soon abandoned. In its place, people substituted the highest point of the entire mountain system—that is, the watershed—as the key of the country.

But a high point in a country, from which all its waters flow, is usually nothing more than a high point. Everything written at the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth about its influence on military events — through exaggeration and the false application of ideas that were true in themselves — is pure invention. If the Rhine, the Danube, and all six rivers of Germany had a common source on the summit of a single mountain, that mountain would still have no greater military value than its usefulness as the site of a trigonometrical point. As a place for a signal tower, it would be less useful; for a vidette, less useful still; and for a whole army, of no use at all.

So looking for a "key position" in the so-called "key country"—meaning the place where different mountain branches spread out from a common point and where the rivers rise highest—is really just a textbook idea. Nature itself disproves it. Mountain ridges and valleys are not laid out in the simple, passable way assumed by the older theories of terrain. Instead, nature scatters peaks and gorges in highly irregular ways, and not uncommonly the lowest water level is enclosed by the highest mountain masses. Anyone who turns to military history on this question will soon see that the main geological features of a country have very little consistent influence on

how that country can be used in war. Whatever influence they do have is so outweighed by other local conditions and other military needs that a line of positions may often run very near one of these points without having been drawn there by it in the least.

We have spent this much time on this mistaken idea only because an entire—and very self-important—system has been built on it. We now leave it and return to our own view.

We say, then, that if the expression "key-position" is to stand for a distinct idea in strategy, it can only mean a place whose possession is indispensable before one dares enter the enemy's country. But if we use the term for every convenient point of entry into a country, or every advantageous central point within it, then it loses its true meaning—and therefore its value. It comes to mean something that can be found almost anywhere, to a greater or lesser degree. In that case, it becomes nothing more than an attractive figure of speech.

But positions of the kind this term suggests are in fact very rare. In general, the best key to a country lies in the enemy's army. And when the importance of the country outweighs that of the armed force, some very unusual advantages must be present. In our view, these can be recognized by their leading to two main results. First, the force holding the position gains, with the help of the terrain, an exceptional power of tactical resistance. Second, from that position it can threaten the enemy's lines of communication effectively sooner than the enemy can threaten ours.

CHAPTER XXIV. Operating Against a Flank

We hardly need to point out that we are speaking here of the strategic flank—that is, one side of the theater of war. This should not be confused with an attack from one side in battle, or with a tactical move against a flank. Even when a strategic operation against a flank ends, in its final stage, in a tactical one, the two can still be clearly distinguished, because one does not necessarily follow from the other.

These flanking movements, and the flanking positions associated with them, also belong to the kind of theoretical display that is rarely seen in actual war. This does not mean the method itself is ineffective or imaginary. Rather, both sides usually try to protect themselves against its effects, and situations in which that cannot be done are uncommon. In those rare cases, however, this method has often proved highly effective. For that reason, and also because war requires constant vigilance against it, theory must explain it clearly. Although a strategic operation against a flank can naturally be conceived not only by the defensive side but also by the offensive, it is much more closely connected with the former, and therefore belongs under the heading of defensive measures.

Before we turn to the subject itself, we must establish a simple principle and keep it constantly in view: troops used to act against the enemy’s rear or flank cannot be used against his front. Therefore, whether in tactics or strategy, it is entirely

mistaken to assume that getting to the enemy's rear is automatically an advantage in itself. By itself, it is nothing yet. It becomes something only in combination with other factors, and it may turn out either advantageous or the opposite, depending on the nature of those factors, which we must now examine.

First, in operations against the strategic flank, we must distinguish between two possible aims of this measure: action directed merely against communications, and action directed against the line of retreat, which may at the same time also affect communications.

When Daun sent a detachment in 1758 to capture the convoys on their way to the siege of Olmütz, he clearly did not mean to block the king's retreat into Silesia. On the contrary, he wanted to bring about that retreat, and he would gladly have left the route open for it.

In the campaign of 1812, all the expeditionary corps detached from the Russian army during September and October were meant only to cut the lines of communication, not to halt the retreat. But stopping the retreat was plainly the aim of the Moldavian army, which marched under Tschitschagof toward the Beresina, and also of the attack General Wittgenstein was ordered to make on the French corps stationed on the Dwina.

These examples are given only to make the explanation clearer.

Action against the lines of communication is aimed at the enemy's convoys, at small detachments following behind the army, at couriers and travelers, at small depots, and so on. In short, it targets all the means the enemy needs to keep his army strong and in good condition. Its purpose, therefore, is to

weaken the enemy in this respect and thereby force him to retreat.

Action against the enemy's line of retreat aims to cut his army off from that route. It cannot achieve this unless the enemy actually decides to retreat. Still, by threatening his line of retreat, it may help bring about that decision. In that way, it can produce the same effect as action against the line of communication, by serving as a demonstration. But as already said, none of these effects should be expected from the mere turning movement itself, or from the purely geometric arrangement of the troops. They result only from the conditions that make such a movement effective.

To understand these conditions more clearly, we must treat the two kinds of action against the flank as entirely separate. We will first consider the one directed against communications.

Here we must first lay down two main conditions, one or the other of which must always be present.

The first is that the forces used for this action against the enemy's flank must be so small that their absence is not noticed at the front.

The second is that the enemy's army has already exhausted its momentum. As a result, it can neither take advantage of a fresh victory over our army nor pursue us if we avoid battle by moving away.

This last case is by no means as uncommon as one might think. For the moment, however, we will set it aside and turn to the secondary conditions of the first case.

The first of these is that the lines of communication must have some length and cannot be secured by just a few strong positions. The second is that the line must be situated in a way that leaves it open to our attack.

This weakness in the line may arise in two ways: either from its direction, if it is not perpendicular to the strategic front of the enemy's army, or because the enemy's lines of communication pass through our territory. If both conditions are present, the line is even more exposed. These two relationships require closer examination.

You might think that if the issue is protecting a line of communication forty or fifty miles long, it can hardly matter whether an army posted at one end of that line stands at an oblique angle or a right angle to it. After all, the width of the army's position is little more than a point compared with the whole line. Yet the difference matters more than it first appears. When an army is posted at a right angle to its communications, it is hard, even for a much stronger enemy, to cut those communications by sending out detachments or partisan bands for that purpose. If we considered only the abstract difficulty of covering a given space, we would not expect this. We might instead assume that an army would find it very hard to protect its rear—that is, the country behind it—against all the raids a numerically superior enemy might attempt. That would be true if we could see everything in war as clearly as on a sheet of paper. In that case, the force guarding the line, uncertain where enemy light troops or partisans might appear, would be partly blind, while only the partisans would be able to see. But once we take into account the uncertainty and inadequacy of

intelligence in war, and remember that both sides are constantly feeling their way in the dark, the matter looks different. A detached force sent around the enemy's flank to reach his rear is like a man fighting several opponents in a dark room. In the end, he must go down. The same is true of bands that get around an army holding a perpendicular position. They place themselves close to the enemy while remaining far from their own side. This not only risks heavy losses; it can also quickly dull the whole weapon. The first setback suffered by one such party will make all the others cautious. Instead of bold attacks and audacious evasions, all that remains is continual flight.

Because of this difficulty, an army in a perpendicular position protects the nearest points on its line of communications for a distance of two or three marches, depending on its strength. And those nearest points are exactly the ones most exposed to danger, because they lie closest to the enemy.

On the other hand, if the position is sharply oblique, no part of the line of communication is protected. The slightest pressure, even the enemy's most minor move, immediately threatens a vulnerable point.

But what determines the front of a position, if not the direction at right angles to the line of communication? The enemy's front. Yet that, in turn, can just as easily be seen as depending on our own front. The two act on each other, and we must look for the source of that mutual effect.

Suppose the attacker's lines of communication, a b, are placed in relation to the enemy's, c d, so that the two lines meet at a considerable angle. It is clear that if the defender wants to take

up a position at e, where the two lines intersect, the attacker from b, simply because of the geometric relationship, could force him to face in that direction and thus expose his communications. The situation would be reversed if the defender took up his position on this side of the junction point, near d. In that case, the attacker would have to face toward him, provided that his line of operations, which is closely tied to geographical conditions, cannot be changed at will and shifted, for example, to the direction a d. From this, it might seem that the defender has the advantage in this system of mutual action, because he only needs to take up a position on this side of the intersection of the two lines. But we attach no real importance to this geometric factor. We introduced it only to make the point clearer. In fact, we believe that local conditions, and particular circumstances in general, play a much greater role in determining the defender's position. It is therefore quite impossible to state as a general rule which of the two belligerents will be forced first to expose his communications.

If both sides' lines of communication run in the same direction, then whichever side takes up an oblique position will certainly force the other to do the same. But geometrically nothing is gained by this, and both sides end up with the same advantages and disadvantages.

In what follows, therefore, we will limit ourselves to the case in which only one side's line of communication is exposed.

Now consider the second kind of disadvantage affecting a line of communication: when it passes through enemy territory. It is obvious how much this weakens the line if the local population

has taken up arms. In that case, we must treat the situation as though enemy forces were posted all along the route. Such a force may be weak in itself, lacking cohesion and concentrated strength. Even so, we must consider what a hostile presence in such close contact can achieve through the many successive points exposed along a long line of communication. That needs no further explanation. But even if the enemy's subjects have not taken up arms, and even if there is no militia or other military organization in the country—indeed, even if the people are not warlike at all—the simple fact that they are subjects of a hostile government still creates a constant disadvantage for the other side's lines of communication. The help that expeditionary forces and partisans gain simply from being better understood by the people, from knowing the country and its inhabitants, from receiving good information, and from getting support from public officials, is of clear value to them. And every such force will enjoy that support without any special effort of its own. In addition, within a certain distance there will usually be fortresses, rivers, mountains, or other places of refuge that naturally belong to the enemy, unless our troops have formally seized and occupied them.

In a case like the one supposed here, especially when other favorable circumstances are present, it is possible to act against an army's communications even when those communications run perpendicular to the army's position. The detachments used for this purpose do not then need always to fall back on their own army, because, being in their own country, they are safe enough if they can simply get away.

We have therefore established that—

1. A considerable length,

2. An oblique direction,

3. Enemy territory,

These are the main circumstances in which an army's lines of communication can be disrupted by a comparatively small enemy force. But for that disruption to be truly effective, a fourth condition is still necessary: it must last for a certain amount of time. On this point, we ask the reader to refer to what was said in the fifteenth chapter of the fifth book.

But these four conditions are only the main points connected with the subject. Many local and special circumstances are tied to them, and these often become even more decisive and important than the principal ones themselves. To mention only the most essential, we would include the condition of the roads; the character of the country through which they run; the protection provided by rivers, mountains, and marshes; the season and the weather; the importance of particular convoys, such as siege trains; and the number of light troops, among others.

The effect with which a general can act against his opponent's communications will therefore depend on all these circumstances. By comparing the combined result of all these factors on one side with their combined result on the other, we can form a fair estimate of the relative advantages of the two systems of communication. On that estimate depends which of the two generals can play the bolder game.

What seems so drawn out in explanation here is often settled at a glance in an actual case. Even so, that requires the instinct of an experienced judgment, and a person must have thought through each of the cases just discussed in order to see clearly how absurd those critical writers are who imagine they have settled anything by using the words “turning” and “acting on a flank” without giving their reasons.

We now come to the second main condition under which strategic action against the enemy’s flank may take place.

If the enemy is prevented from advancing by some cause other than the resistance of our army, whatever that cause may be, then our army need not fear weakening itself by sending out detachments to harass him. If the enemy tries to punish us by attacking, we need only give up some ground and avoid battle. This is what the main Russian army did at Moscow in 1812. But a case like this does not require everything to happen again on the same vast scale as in that campaign. In the First Silesian War, Frederick the Great found himself in this position each time on the frontiers of Bohemia and Moravia. And in the complicated dealings of generals and armies, we can easily imagine many causes of different kinds, especially political ones, that make any further advance impossible.

In the situation just described, we can spare more forces to act against the enemy’s flank, so the other conditions do not need to be quite so favorable. Even the character of our communications, compared with the enemy’s, need not give us an advantage. An enemy who is in no position to make much use of our further retreat is unlikely to exercise his right to

retaliate. Instead, he will be more concerned with directly protecting his own line of retreat.

This kind of situation is therefore well suited to gaining for us, by means less dazzling and less complete than a victory, but also less dangerous, the results that it would be too risky to seek through battle.

In such a case, we feel little concern about exposing our own line of communications by taking up a position on one flank or the other. And by doing so, we can always force the enemy to face obliquely to his own line of communications. For that reason, this one of the conditions named above will seldom be absent. The more the other conditions, along with other circumstances, work in our favor, the more certain success by these means becomes. But the fewer favorable circumstances there are, the more everything will depend on superior skill in planning, and on speed and precision in execution.

This is the right setting for strategic maneuvers of the kind seen so often in the Seven Years' War, in Silesia and Saxony, and in the campaigns of 1760 and 1762. When this kind of strategic maneuvering appears so often in wars where only a moderate degree of basic force is in play, it is not because the commander happened to be nearing the end of his career each time. It is because lack of resolve, courage, and enterprise, along with fear of responsibility, has often taken the place of real obstacles. Field Marshal Daun is an obvious example.

To sum up the results of our discussion, action against a flank is most effective—

1. On the defensive;

2. Toward the end of a campaign;

3. Above all, during a retreat into the interior of the country; and

4. In connection with a general arming of the people.

We have only a few words to add about how to carry out this action against the communications.

These operations must be led by skilled commanders of detachments. At the head of small forces, they should use bold marches and attacks to strike the enemy's weak garrisons, convoys, and small detachments on the move in various places. They should encourage the national levies (landsturm), and at times join them in particular operations. There should be many of these parties, rather than each one being strong by itself, and they should be organized so that several can be brought together for any larger operation without being hindered by the vanity or whims of individual leaders.

We must now speak of action against the enemy's line of retreat.

Here, above all, we must keep in mind the principle with which we began: forces assigned to operate in the rear cannot be used in front. Action against the rear or flanks, therefore, does not in itself increase strength. It should be seen only as a more powerful use of the same forces—one that raises the level of success that may be expected, but also increases the level of risk.

Any resistance offered by force of arms that is not direct and straightforward tends to promise a bigger result, but with less certainty. An operation against the enemy's flank—whether

carried out by one concentrated force or by separate forces converging from several directions—belongs to this kind.

But if cutting off the enemy's retreat is meant seriously and not just as a demonstration, then the true answer is a decisive battle, or at least the combination of all the conditions needed for one. And in that solution we again find the two elements already mentioned: a greater result and a greater danger. Therefore, for a general to be justified in adopting this course of action, he must have favorable conditions on his side.

In this method of resistance, we must distinguish between the two forms already mentioned. The first is when a general, with his whole force, intends to attack the enemy in the rear, either from a position taken on the flank for that purpose or by a formal turning movement. The second is when he divides his forces and, by taking an enveloping position with one part, threatens the enemy's rear while threatening his front with the other.

In both cases, the result is intensified in the same way. Either the retreat is truly cut off, and the enemy's army is captured or mostly scattered, or the enemy is forced into a long, hurried retreat to escape the danger.

But the increased risk is different in the two cases.

If we turn the enemy with our whole force, the danger is that we expose our own rear. So once again, the question depends on the relationship between the two sides' lines of retreat, just as, in operations against lines of communication, it depended on the relationship between those lines.

Certainly, if the defender is in his own country, he is less constrained than the attacker, both in his lines of retreat and in his communications. To that extent, he is in a better position to turn his opponent strategically. But this general fact is not decisive enough to serve as the basis for a practical method. Therefore, only the full set of circumstances in each individual case can decide the matter.

We can add only this: favorable conditions naturally occur more often in broad theaters of action than in narrow ones. They are also more common for independent states than for weak states that depend on foreign support, since such states must keep their armies constantly focused on linking up with the allied force. Finally, these conditions become most favorable to the defender near the end of a campaign, when the attacker's driving force has begun to fade—much as happens with lines of communication.

A flank position like the one the Russians used so effectively on the road from Moscow to Kaluga, once Buonaparte's attacking strength had been exhausted, would have landed them in serious trouble at the start of the campaign at the camp of Drissa if they had not been wise enough to change their plan in time.

The other way of turning the enemy and cutting off his retreat by dividing our force carries the danger that always comes with splitting our own army. The enemy, with the advantage of interior lines, keeps his forces together and can therefore act with superior numbers against one of our divisions. Nothing can eliminate this disadvantage, and we are justified in accepting it

only for one of three main reasons:

1. The force was originally divided in a way that makes this method necessary, unless we are willing to lose a great deal of time.

2. A great moral and physical superiority that justifies using a decisive method.

3. The enemy's loss of driving force once he has reached the culminating point of his career.

When Frederick the Great invaded Bohemia in 1757 on converging lines, he was not aiming to combine an attack in front with one against the strategic rear; at any rate, that was certainly not his main object, as we will explain more fully elsewhere. In any case, it is clear that there could never have been any question of concentrating his forces in Silesia or Saxony before the invasion, because that would have sacrificed every advantage of surprise.

When the allies drew up their plan for the second phase of the 1813 campaign, their great numerical advantage gave them good reason to consider striking Buonaparte's right flank on the Elbe with their main force. That would have shifted the theatre of war from the Oder to the Elbe. Their failure at Dresden should be blamed not on this overall plan, but on poor strategic and tactical arrangements. They could have concentrated 220,000 men at Dresden against Buonaparte's 130,000, a highly favourable balance of forces. At Leipsic, at least, the proportion was 285 to 157. It is true that Buonaparte had spread his forces too evenly for this particular kind of defence along a single line: in Silesia, 70,000 against 90,000; in the Mark—Brandenburg,

70,000 against 110,000. Even so, without completely giving up Silesia, it would have been difficult for him to gather on the Elbe a force strong enough to face the allies' main army in a decisive battle. The allies could also easily have summoned Wrede's army to the Maine and used it in an attempt to cut Buonaparte off from the road to Mayence.

Lastly, in 1812, the Russians could have sent their army of Moldavia into Volhynia and Lithuania, and then advanced it against the rear of the main French army. This was possible because it was entirely clear that Moscow would be the furthest point of the French line of operations. In that campaign, Russia had nothing to fear beyond Moscow, so the Russian main army had no reason to think itself too weak.

This same idea was part of the deployment set out in General Phul's first defensive plan. Under it, Barclay's army was to hold the camp at Drissa, while Bragathion's army was to move forward against the rear of the main French force. But the circumstances in the two cases were completely different. In the first, the French were three times stronger than the Russians; in the second, the Russians were clearly superior. In the first, Buonaparte's great army had a driving momentum that carried it to Moscow, 80 miles beyond Drissa; in the second, it was not fit to march even a day beyond Moscow. In the first, the line of retreat to the Niemen was no more than 30 miles; in the second, it was 112. So the same move against the enemy's retreat, which was so successful in the second case, would in the first have been sheer madness.

If an operation against the enemy's line of retreat goes beyond a mere demonstration, it becomes a formal attack from the rear. There is therefore still much to say about it, but that belongs more properly in the book on attack. We will stop here, then, and be satisfied with having stated the conditions under which this kind of response can take place.

Very often, the idea of forcing the enemy to retreat by threatening his line of retreat is understood to mean only a demonstration, not the actual carrying out of the threat. At first sight, it may seem obvious that every effective demonstration must rest on the real possibility of taking action, and that it would therefore follow the same principles in every respect. But that is not so. On the contrary, as we shall see in the chapter on demonstrations, they depend on somewhat different conditions, at least in some respects. We therefore refer the reader to that chapter.

CHAPTER XXV. Retreat into the Interior of the Country

We have considered a voluntary retreat into the heart of the country as a particular indirect form of defence. Its purpose is to destroy the enemy less by direct fighting than by wearing him down through the strain of his own efforts. In such a case, either no great battle is expected, or it is assumed that one will take place only after the enemy's forces have been considerably reduced.

Every attacker loses military strength as he advances. We will examine this more closely in Book Seven. For now, we can take it as established, especially since military history clearly shows it in every campaign that has involved a major advance.

That loss during an advance becomes even greater when the enemy has not been defeated but falls back by choice, keeping his forces intact and maintaining steady, continuous resistance. In that case, he makes the attacker pay dearly for every step of ground, so the advance becomes a constant fight for territory rather than a simple pursuit.

On the other hand, a defending force suffers far heavier losses in retreat when that retreat follows a defeat in battle than when it is voluntary. If it could offer the pursuer the same daily resistance that we would expect in a voluntary retreat, then its losses in retreat would be at least the same, with the losses from the battle added on top. But nothing could be more contrary to the nature of the situation. Even the best army in the world, if forced to withdraw deep into the country after losing a

battle, will suffer losses on the retreat that are wildly out of proportion. And if the enemy is much stronger, as we are assuming here, and pursues with great energy, as has almost always happened in modern wars, then there is every reason to expect that the retreat will turn into a rout, by which the army is usually completely destroyed.

A carefully controlled daily resistance—that is, resistance that lasts only as long as the outcome of the fighting remains uncertain, and that avoids defeat by giving up the contested ground at the right moment—will cost the attacker at least as many men as the defender in these engagements. The defender does inevitably lose some men as prisoners when falling back from time to time, but that is balanced by the attacker's losses under fire, since the attacker must always fight against the advantages of the ground. It is true that the retreating side loses all of its badly wounded men entirely, but for the time being the attacker loses his badly wounded as well, since they usually remain in hospitals for several months.

The result is that, in these constant clashes, the two armies wear each other down at almost the same rate.

The pursuit of a defeated army is very different. Losses suffered in battle, general disorder, shattered morale, and anxiety about the retreat make it very hard—often impossible—for the retreating army to resist. In the first situation, the advancing force moves with extreme caution, almost hesitantly, like a blind man feeling his way forward. In the second, the pursuer advances with the steady step of a victor, with the excessive confidence that success brings, and with the

self-assurance of a demigod. The more boldly he drives the pursuit, the faster he pushes events further in the direction they have already taken. This is the true field of moral forces, which grow and multiply freely instead of being confined by the fixed numbers and limits of the physical world.

It is therefore very clear how different the relationship between two armies will be, depending on whether they reach that point—which may be seen as the end of the attacker's advance—by the first of these two paths or by the second.

This is only the result of their mutual destruction. To it we must add the further losses the advancing side suffers from other causes, which, as already noted, we discuss in the seventh book. On the other side, we must also consider the reinforcements the retreating force receives in most cases, whether from outside assistance or from continued efforts at home.

Lastly, there is often such an imbalance in supplies between the retreating side and the advancing side that the former may live in abundance while the latter is reduced to hardship.

The retreating army can gather provisions from all sides, and it is moving toward them. The pursuer, by contrast, must have everything brought up behind him. As long as he is on the move, this is difficult even with the shortest lines of communication, and for that reason scarcity arises from the very beginning.

Everything the land produces will first be taken for the retreating army's use, and most of it will be consumed. What is left behind is ruined villages and towns, fields where the crops have already been harvested or trampled flat, empty wells, and

muddy streams.

The pursuing army, therefore, often has to face severe shortages from the very first day. It cannot count on capturing the enemy's supplies; only by chance, or through some inexcusable mistake by the enemy, does a small amount here and there fall into its hands.

So there can be no doubt that in countries of great size, and where there is no extraordinary imbalance between the warring powers, this can create a relationship between the military forces that gives the defender a far greater chance of ending the war in his favor than he would have had if a major battle had been fought at the frontier. This shift in the balance between the opposing armies not only increases the defender's chances of winning a battle, but also improves the chances of achieving major results from that victory because of the change in position. There is a great difference between losing a battle near our own frontier and losing one deep in the enemy's country. In fact, by the end of his initial advance, the attacker is often in such a position that even a battle won may force him to retreat, because he no longer has enough driving force left to complete and exploit the victory, and he is not in a condition to replace the forces he has lost.

There is, therefore, an enormous difference between delivering a decisive blow at the beginning of an attack and delivering one at its end.

Set against the great advantage of this method of defense are two drawbacks. The first is the damage the country suffers from the enemy's advance; the second is the moral effect.

Protecting the country from damage can never be regarded as the sole purpose of defense. Its purpose is to secure a favorable peace. The aim is to achieve that as surely as possible, and for that end no temporary sacrifice should be considered too great. At the same time, the losses just mentioned, though they may not be decisive, still have to be weighed, because they always affect our interests.

This loss does not affect our army directly. It influences the army only indirectly, while the retreat itself directly strengthens it. That makes it hard to weigh the advantage against the disadvantage here, because they are different kinds of effects and do not work toward the same end. So we can only say that the loss is greater when we have to give up productive, heavily populated provinces and large commercial towns. It reaches its highest point when, at the same time, we also lose military resources that are either ready for use or still being prepared.

The second counterweight is the moral effect. In some cases, a commander must rise above such considerations. He must calmly carry out his plans and accept the objections that narrow-minded discouragement may raise. Even so, this effect is no illusion to be dismissed. It does not act like a force concentrated at one point. It acts more like a force that, with lightning speed, spreads through every part and paralyzes all the powers that should be fully active, both in the nation and in its army. There are certainly cases in which both the nation and the army quickly understand why the retreat into the interior of the country is necessary, and in which that step actually strengthens trust and hope. But such cases are rare. More often, the people and the army cannot tell whether it is a

deliberate movement or a hasty retreat. Still less can they tell whether the plan was wisely chosen to secure later advantages or was simply the result of fear of the enemy's sword. The people feel both sympathy and dissatisfaction when they see the provinces sacrificed to their fate. The army easily loses confidence in its leaders, or even in itself. And the constant rear-guard fighting during the retreat always tends to deepen its fears. We must never deceive ourselves about these consequences of retreat. And, considered in itself, it is certainly more natural, simpler, nobler, and more in keeping with the moral life of a nation to take the field at once, so that the enemy cannot cross its frontiers without meeting its spirit and being made to pay in blood.

These are the advantages and disadvantages of this kind of defence. Now a few words about the conditions it requires and the circumstances that favor it.

A country with great depth—or at least a long route for retreat—is the first and most basic requirement. If the enemy advances only a few days' marches, that will not seriously weaken him. In 1812, Buonaparte's center numbered 250,000 at Witepsk, 182,000 at Smolensk, and only 130,000 at Borodino. In other words, it had fallen to roughly the same strength as the Russian center. Borodino was ninety miles from the frontier. But it was not until the armies approached Moscow that the Russians gained the clear numerical superiority that completely reversed the position of the two sides, so decisively that the French victory at Malo Jaroslewetz could no longer materially change it.

No other European state has the size of Russia, and in very few could one even imagine a line of retreat 100 miles long. But a power like that of the French in 1812 would also be unlikely to appear under other conditions, and still less such an overwhelming numerical advantage as existed at the start of the campaign, when the French army had more than twice the numbers of its opponent, along with its unquestioned moral superiority. Therefore, what was achieved here only after 100 miles might, in other cases, be reached after 50 or even 30 miles.

The conditions that favor this kind of defence are as follows—

1. A country that is only lightly cultivated.

2. A loyal and warlike people.

3. A harsh season.

All these factors make it harder to keep an army supplied. They make large convoys necessary, require many detachments and exhausting duties, encourage the spread of sickness, and make it easier for the defender to operate against the enemy's flanks.

Lastly, we still have to speak of the sheer total size of the armed force by itself, as a factor influencing the result.

By the nature of the case, regardless of how the opposing forces compare with each other, a small force wears out sooner than a larger one. For that reason, it cannot remain in action as long or operate over as wide a theater of war. So there is, to a certain extent, a fixed relationship between the absolute size of an army and the amount of space it can occupy. There is no point in trying to express that relationship in exact numbers, and

in any case other circumstances will always affect it. For our purpose, it is enough to say that this connection necessarily follows from the nature of things. We may be able to march on Moscow with 500,000 men, but not with 50,000, even if in the latter case the invader's army had a much more favorable numerical ratio against the defender.

Now if we assume that this relationship between absolute strength and space exists in two different cases, then it follows that the effect of our retreat into the interior in weakening the enemy will grow greater as the masses increase.

1. Supplying and housing the troops becomes more difficult. Even if we assume that the area an army covers increases in proportion to its size, the army will still never be able to draw all its subsistence from that area alone. Everything that has to be brought up behind the army is also exposed to greater loss. And the whole area occupied is never used for sheltering the troops: only a small part is needed for that purpose, and that part does not increase in the same proportion as the masses.

2. In the same way, an advance becomes slower and more cumbersome as the masses increase. As a result, it takes longer before the offensive has run its course, and the total of the daily losses becomes greater.

If three thousand men are driving two thousand ahead of them through ordinary country, they cannot expect the enemy to move only 1, 2, or at most 3 miles a day, with occasional halts of several days. Catching up with them, attacking them, and forcing them to retreat again may be the work of only a few hours. But if both forces are a hundred times larger, the

situation changes. Operations that took only a few hours in the first case now take a full day, perhaps two. The opposing armies cannot stay concentrated near a single point. As a result, their movements and combinations become more varied, and that in turn increases the time required. This puts the attacker at a disadvantage, because his supply difficulties are greater. He must spread his forces out more than the army in retreat, and is therefore always in danger of being overwhelmed by it at some particular point, as the Russians tried to do at Witepsk.

3. The larger the armies, the greater the strain on each individual in carrying out the daily duties required by strategy and tactics. A hundred thousand men who must march to and from the assembly point every day, halt, then move again, be called to arms, then cook or receive their rations—a hundred thousand who cannot go into bivouac until the necessary reports have come in from every quarter—will generally need twice as much time for all these efforts connected with the march itself as 50,000 men would need. Yet both have only twenty-four hours in the day. How greatly the time and fatigue of the march itself vary with the size of the force being moved was shown in the ninth chapter of the preceding book. The army in retreat, it is true, shares these hardships as well as the advancing army, but they weigh much more heavily on the latter:

1. because, under the superiority we have assumed, his mass of troops is greater,

2. because the defender, by constantly giving up ground, buys with that sacrifice the advantage of the initiative, and therefore

the right to dictate terms to the other side. He makes his plan in advance and, in most cases, can carry it out without alteration. The aggressor, by contrast, can only shape his plans in response to those of his opponent, which he must first discover.

We must, however, remind our readers that we are speaking about pursuing an enemy who has not been defeated and has not even lost a battle. This needs to be stated so that we are not thought to be contradicting what was said in the twelfth chapter of our fourth book.

But this advantage of being able to dictate terms to the enemy matters because it saves time and effort, along with providing other smaller benefits that become very important over time.

3. because the retreating force, on the one hand, does everything it can to make its own retreat easier: it repairs roads and bridges, chooses the most convenient places for encampment, and so on. On the other hand, it does everything it can to obstruct the pursuer: it destroys bridges, makes bad roads even worse simply by marching over them, and denies the enemy good places for encampment by occupying them first.

Lastly, we must add one more especially favorable circumstance: war carried on by the people. This does not need further examination here, since we will devote a separate chapter to the subject.

So far, we have discussed the advantages such a retreat provides, the sacrifices it requires, and the conditions that must be present. We will now say something about how it should be carried out.

The first question we must ask is what direction the retreat should take.

If possible, it should be made into the interior of the country, toward a point where the enemy will be surrounded on all sides by our provinces. There he will be exposed to their influence, and we will not risk being cut off from the main body of our territory. That might happen if we chose a line too close to the frontier, as would have happened to the Russians in 1812 if they had retreated south instead of east.

This is the condition implied by the very purpose of the measure itself. Which point in the country is best, and how far the choice of that point will fit with the plan of directly covering the capital or some other important place, or of drawing the enemy away from the direction of such important places, depends on circumstances.

If the Russians had carefully planned their retreat in 1812 in advance, and had carried it out according to a clear, regular strategy, they could easily have taken the road to Kaluga from Smolensk—the same road they only chose after leaving Moscow. Under those conditions, it is quite possible that Moscow would have been saved entirely.

In other words, the French had about 130,000 men at Borodino, and there is no reason to think they would have been any stronger if the Russians had fought that battle halfway to Kaluga instead. The question, then, is how many of those men the French could have spared to send to Moscow. Clearly, only a small number. But a small force could not have been sent fifty miles—the distance from Smolensk to Moscow—against a city

like Moscow.

Suppose that when Buonaparte was at Smolensk, with 160,000 men, he had decided he could risk sending a force against Moscow before fighting a major battle, and had detached 40,000 men for that purpose, leaving 120,000 to face the main Russian army. In that case, those 120,000 would have amounted to no more than 90,000 in the actual battle—that is, 40,000 fewer than fought at Borodino. The Russians, therefore, would have had a numerical advantage of 30,000 men. If we take the course of the battle of Borodino as our guide, we may reasonably assume that with such an advantage they would have won. At the very least, the relative position of the two sides would have been more favorable to the Russians than it was at Borodino. But the Russian retreat was not the result of a carefully developed plan. They fell back as far as they did because, each time they were close to giving battle, they still did not think themselves strong enough for a major engagement. All their supplies and reinforcements were coming along the road from Moscow to Smolensk, and no one at Smolensk could have imagined abandoning that road. Besides, even a victory between Smolensk and Kaluga would never have justified, in Russian eyes, the offense of leaving Moscow undefended and exposing it to the risk of capture.

In 1813, Buonaparte could have protected Paris more securely from attack if he had taken up a position some distance to the side, somewhere behind the Burgundy Canal, and left only a few thousand regular troops in Paris along with the large force of National Guard. The allies would never have dared to send a corps of 50,000 or 60,000 men against Paris while Buonaparte

was still in the field at Auxerre with 100,000 men. If we imagine the situation reversed, with the allies in Buonaparte's position, no one would have advised them to leave the road to their own capital open with Buonaparte as their opponent. With such an advantage, he would not have hesitated for a moment to march on the capital. That is how differently the same circumstances can work when the moral conditions are different.

We will return to this subject later when discussing the plan of a war. For now, we need only add that when such a lateral position is taken, the capital or place being protected must always be able to offer some resistance. Otherwise, any flying column or irregular band could occupy it and force contributions from it.

But there is still another special feature to consider in the direction of such a line of retreat: a sudden change of direction. After the Russians had kept to the same line as far as Moscow, they abandoned the route that would have taken them to Wladimir. They first followed the road to Riazan for some distance, and then shifted their army onto the Kaluga road. If they had been forced to continue their retreat, they could easily have done so in this new direction, which would have led them to Kiew and therefore brought them much nearer again to the enemy's frontier. It is obvious that, under such conditions, the French could not have maintained their line of communication through Moscow, even if they had still kept a large numerical superiority over the Russians. They would have had to give up not only Moscow but, in all likelihood, Smolensk as well. In other words, they would once again have had to abandon conquests won with so much effort and confine themselves to a theatre of

war on this side of the Beresina.

In that case, the Russian army would indeed have faced the same problem it would have faced if it had first moved toward Kiew: it would have been cut off from the main body of its own territory. But by then that drawback would have mattered very little, because the French army's situation would have been entirely different if it had marched straight on Kiew instead of making the detour through Moscow.

It is clear that such a sudden change in the direction of a retreating line, which is quite feasible in a large country, offers major advantages.

1. It makes it impossible for the enemy, the advancing force, to keep using his old line of communication. Setting up a new one is always difficult. On top of that, the shift happens gradually, so he will probably have to test more than one new line.

2. If both sides thus move back toward the frontier, the aggressor's position no longer protects his conquests, and he will most likely have to abandon them.

With its vast size, Russia is a country in which two armies could, in this way, almost literally keep playing prisoners' base (Zeck jagen).

But this kind of change in the line of retreat is also possible in smaller countries when other conditions are favorable. Whether it is so can only be judged case by case, according to the particular circumstances involved.

Once the direction in which the enemy is to be drawn into the country has been decided, it follows that our main army must

take that same direction. Otherwise, the enemy would not advance that way; and even if he did, we would not be able to impose all the conditions assumed above. The only remaining question, then, is whether our forces should move in that direction as a single body, or whether large portions should spread out to the sides and thus give the retreat a divergent (eccentric) form.

Our answer is that this second form should be rejected in itself.

1. Because it splits our forces, even though concentrating them at one point is one of the enemy's main difficulties.

2. Because the enemy has the advantage of operating on interior lines, he can stay more concentrated than we can and therefore can appear with much greater strength at any one point. This superiority is certainly less dangerous if we follow a policy of constantly giving ground. But the essential condition of such a withdrawal is that we must always remain dangerous to the enemy and never let him defeat us piece by piece, which could easily happen. Another purpose of this kind of retreat is gradually to bring our main force to a numerical superiority and then use that superiority to deliver a decisive blow. If our forces are divided, that result becomes uncertain.

3. Because, as a general rule, concentric (converging) action against the enemy does not suit the weaker force.

4. Because many of the disadvantages that come from the weak points of an offensive disappear when the defender's army is split into separate parts.

The weakest features of a long advance by the attacker are, for example, the length of his lines of communication and the exposure of his strategic flanks. A divergent retreat forces the attacker to turn part of his force toward the flank. That part, which should properly be used only to neutralize our force directly in front of him, is now made to do something more as well, by covering part of the lines of communication.

So, for the purely strategic effect of the retreat, the divergent form is not favorable. But if it is meant to prepare a later action against the enemy's line of retreat, then we must refer to what was said about that in the last chapter.

There is only one object that can justify a divergent retreat: when it allows us to protect provinces that the enemy would otherwise occupy.

We can judge with reasonable accuracy which areas the advancing enemy will occupy to the right and left of his line of march by looking at where his forces are assembling, the directions they have been given, and how his own provinces, fortresses, and other positions relate to ours. To station troops in areas he will most likely leave untouched would be a dangerous misuse of our strength. But deciding whether any arrangement of our forces can prevent him from occupying the areas he will probably want to seize is much harder. That question depends greatly on sound judgment and military instinct.

When the Russians retreated in 1812, they left 30,000 men under Tormassow in Volhynia to oppose the Austrian force expected to invade that province. The size of the province, the

many natural obstacles the country presented, and the fairly even balance between the forces likely to meet there justified the Russians in expecting that they could keep the advantage in that region, or at least hold their ground near their frontier. Very important advantages might later have followed from this, though we will not stop here to discuss them. Besides, it would have been almost impossible for these troops to join the main army in time even if they had wanted to. For these reasons, the decision to leave these troops in Volhynia to conduct a separate war there was correct. On the other hand, if, according to the proposed plan of campaign submitted by General Phul, only Barclay's army of 80,000 men had retired to Drissa while Bragathion's army of 40,000 men remained on the right flank of the French with the intention of later striking their rear, it is immediately clear that this force could never have held its position in South Lithuania so close to the rear of the main French army, and would soon have been destroyed by their overwhelming numbers.

It is easy enough to understand why a defender wants to surrender as few provinces as possible to the attacker, but that is always a secondary concern. It is also obvious that an attack becomes harder when we can confine the enemy to a smaller, or rather narrower, theatre of war. But both points are subordinate to one condition: by doing so, we must have a reasonable chance of a favorable result, and the main defensive force must not be weakened too much. That force is what we must chiefly rely on for the final decision, because the hardships and strain suffered by the enemy's main body are what first drive him to retreat and most greatly increase the loss

of physical and moral strength that comes with it.

As a rule, then, the retreat into the interior of the country should be carried out directly in front of the enemy, and as slowly as possible, by an army that has not been defeated and remains united. Through constant resistance, it should force the enemy to stay continually ready for battle and to waste his strength on costly tactical and strategic precautions.

Once both sides have in this way reached the limit of the aggressor's initial advance, the defender should place his army, if a suitable position can be found, at an oblique angle to the enemy's line of march and strike at the enemy's rear with every means available.

The Russian campaign of 1812 shows all these measures on a grand scale, and shows their effects as if under a magnifying glass. Although the retreat was not voluntary, we can easily view it from that perspective. If the Russians, with the experience they now have of the results such measures can produce, had to defend their country again under exactly the same circumstances, they would voluntarily and systematically do what in 1812 was done largely without a definite plan. But it would be a serious mistake to assume that this kind of action has no example elsewhere, or can have none, simply because other countries lack the vast size of the Russian empire.

Whenever a strategic offensive collapses before it ever reaches a decisive battle, simply because of the difficulties it encounters, and the attacker is forced into a retreat that is more or less disastrous, the main conditions and chief effects of this kind of defence are present, whatever other circumstances may

have modified the case. Frederick the Great's campaign of 1742 in Moravia, his campaign of 1744 in Bohemia, the French campaign of 1743 in Austria and Bohemia, the Duke of Brunswick's campaign of 1792 in France, and Massena's winter campaign of 1810–11 in Portugal all show this, though on a smaller scale and in different forms. There are also countless smaller operations of the same kind whose results can be attributed, at least in part, to the principle we are defending here. We do not cite them, because doing so would require a full explanation of the circumstances and would carry us too far afield.

In Russia, and in the other cases just mentioned, the crisis or turning point came without a successful battle deciding matters at the culminating point. But even when such an outcome cannot be expected, it is still of immense importance in this kind of defence to create a balance of forces that makes victory possible. Then that victory, like an initial blow, can set off a movement that usually grows more and more disastrous in its effects, according to the laws that govern falling bodies.

CHAPTER XXVI. Arming the Nation

A people’s war in civilized Europe is a phenomenon of the nineteenth century. It has both supporters and critics. The critics object to it in two ways: some see it politically, as a revolutionary method, a legalized form of anarchy that threatens domestic social order as much as a foreign enemy does; others object on military grounds, arguing that the results do not justify the drain on the nation’s strength. The first objection does not concern us here, because we are considering a people’s war only as a means of fighting, that is, in relation to the enemy. As for the second objection, we must note that a people’s war is generally a result of the way the military element in our age has burst beyond its old formal limits. It is an expansion and strengthening of the whole fermenting process we call war. The requisition system, the enormous growth in the size of armies made possible by that system, universal military service, and the use of militia all move in the same direction, if we take the limited military system of earlier times as our starting point. The levée en masse, or arming of the people, now belongs in that same development as well. If the first of these new instruments of war are the natural and necessary results of barriers being broken down, and if they have so greatly increased the power of those who first adopted them that their enemies were swept along by the same current and forced to adopt them too, then the same will also be true of people’s wars. In most cases, the people who use this means wisely will gain a corresponding advantage over those who scorn it. If that is so, then the only

remaining question is whether this modern intensification of the military element is, on the whole, beneficial or harmful to the interests of humanity. That question is about as easy to answer as the question of war itself, so we leave both to philosophers. Still, one might argue that the resources consumed in people's wars could be used more effectively to provide other military means. Yet no very deep inquiry is needed to see that these resources are, for the most part, not freely available and cannot be directed at will in any arbitrary way. One essential part of them—the moral element—does not come into being until this particular kind of use calls it forth.

So we no longer ask how much it costs a nation to resist when the whole people take up arms. We ask instead: what effect can that kind of resistance produce? Under what conditions can it work, and how should it be used?

The conditions under which a people's war can be effective are as follows—

1. The war must be fought in the heart of the country.

2. It must not be something that can be decided by a single disaster.

3. The theatre of war must cover a large area of the country.

4. The national character must be suited to such a measure.

5. The country must be broken and difficult in character, whether because it is mountainous, or because of woods and marshes, or because of the particular way the land is cultivated.

Whether the population is dense or sparse matters little, since a shortage of men is less likely than almost any other problem. Whether the inhabitants are rich or poor is also far from decisive, or at least it ought not to be. Still, it must be admitted that a poor population, used to hard work and privation, usually proves more vigorous and better fitted for war.

One feature of a country that strongly favors war carried on by the people is when rural dwellings are scattered, as they are in many parts of Germany. The land is then more cut up and more covered. The roads are worse, though more numerous. Housing troops becomes endlessly difficult. Above all, this arrangement reproduces on a small scale the same quality that a people's war has on a large one: the principle of resistance exists everywhere, but is nowhere easy to seize. If the inhabitants are gathered into villages, the most troublesome villages can have troops quartered on them, or be plundered as punishment, and their houses burned, and so on. Such a system could not be carried out nearly so easily with a peasant community of Westphalia.

National levies and armed peasants cannot and should not be used against the enemy army's main force, or even against any large detachment of it. They must not try to crack the nut; they should only gnaw at the shell and the edges. They should rise in provinces on one side of the theater of war, where the attacker is not present in strength, so that those provinces are removed entirely from his control. Where there is no enemy in sight, people do not lack the courage to resist him, and the example once set gradually inflames the surrounding population. In this way the fire spreads like it does through heather, until it finally

reaches the part of the country on which the aggressor depends. Then it strikes at his lines of communication and feeds on the vital thread that sustains him. We do not hold any exaggerated view of the all-powerful nature of a people's war. We do not imagine it to be an endless, unconquerable force over which an army has no more control than human will has over wind or rain. In short, our view is not based on flowery, short-lived literature. Still, we must admit that armed peasants cannot be driven before us in the same way as a body of soldiers, who stay together like a herd of cattle and usually move straight ahead. Armed peasants, by contrast, when scattered, break apart in every direction, and they need no formal plan to do so. Because of this, the march of every small body of troops through mountainous, heavily wooded, or even rough country becomes extremely dangerous. Fighting may break out at any moment along the route. Even if no armed bands have been seen for some time, the very peasants driven off by the head of a column may reappear at any hour in its rear. If the aim is to destroy roads or block a defile, the means available to outposts or army detachments bear about the same relation to those of insurgent peasants as the action of an automaton does to that of a human being. The enemy has no way to answer national levies except by sending out many detachments to escort convoys and occupy military posts, defiles, bridges, and the like. Because the first efforts of the national levies are usually small, the detachments sent against them will also be weak, since commanders are reluctant to scatter their forces too widely. It is against these weak bodies that the fire of national war usually first begins to burn in earnest. They are overwhelmed by superior numbers at certain

points, courage rises, the taste for fighting grows stronger, and the intensity of the struggle increases until the crisis approaches that will decide the outcome.

According to our idea of a people's war, it should never harden into one solid force. It should remain more like a diffuse, shifting vapor. If it does gather into a single body, the enemy can send enough troops against that center, crush it, and take large numbers prisoner. Then morale collapses. Everyone assumes the main issue has been settled, that any further resistance is pointless, and the people let their weapons fall. At the same time, this mist must gather in some places into denser masses, forming threatening clouds from which a powerful stroke can suddenly break out. As already noted, these points should be mainly on the flanks of the enemy's theatre of war. There, the people's armed forces should be organized into larger and more systematic bodies, supported by a small number of regular troops. That gives them the appearance of a regular force and makes them capable of undertaking larger operations. From these points, the irregular character of their organization should decrease in proportion as they are used more toward the enemy's rear, where he is most vulnerable to their heaviest blows. These better-organized forces are meant to attack the larger garrisons the enemy leaves behind. They also create uneasiness and fear, strengthening the overall moral effect. Without them, the whole effort would lack force, and the enemy's position, taken as a whole, would not be made uncomfortable enough.

The easiest way for a general to create this more effective kind of national defense is to support the movement with small

detachments sent out from the army. Without the encouragement of a few regular troops, the inhabitants usually lack both the push and the confidence to take up arms. The stronger these detachments are, the more they attract support, and the larger the avalanche they can set in motion. But there are limits to this. First, breaking the army into detachments for this secondary purpose would harm it. It would, in effect, dissolve the army into a mass of irregulars and spread it in every direction as a weak defensive line. In that case, both the regular army and the national levies would almost certainly be ruined. Second, experience seems to show that when too many regular troops are stationed in a district, the people's war loses strength and effectiveness. This happens, first, because it draws too many of the enemy's troops into the district; second, because the inhabitants begin to rely on their own regular troops; and third, because the presence of such large bodies of troops places too many other demands on the people, such as providing quarters, transport, contributions, and so on.

Another way to keep the enemy from mounting any serious response to this popular movement is also a basic rule for using such levies: as a rule, this great strategic form of defense should rarely, if ever, be used in a tactical defensive battle. Combat involving national levies has the same character as any fight involving large numbers of lower-quality troops: they begin with great force and fiery enthusiasm, but if the fighting drags on, they show little steadiness or endurance. Also, the defeat and scattering of a body of national levies is not in itself very important, because they expect that possibility. What must be avoided is having such a force broken up by heavy losses in

killed, wounded, and prisoners; that kind of defeat would quickly destroy their spirit. But both of these characteristics run directly against the nature of tactical defense. A defensive battle requires steady, prolonged, methodical action, and it demands that great risks be accepted. A mere attempt, which can be abandoned whenever we choose, can never produce real results in defense. Therefore, if national levies are assigned to defend a particular part of the country, care must be taken that this does not turn into a large, formal defensive battle. Even if conditions seem highly favorable to them, they would certainly be defeated. They may, and should, defend mountain approaches, dykes, marsh crossings, and river passages for as long as they can. But once they are forced back, they should disperse and continue the defense through sudden attacks, rather than regroup and let themselves be trapped in some narrow final refuge in a regular defensive position. No matter how brave a nation is, how warlike its habits are, how intense its hatred of the enemy may be, or how favorable the country is by nature, one fact remains undeniable: a people's war cannot be sustained in an atmosphere overloaded with danger. Therefore, if its combustible material is to be stirred into a substantial flame, that must happen at distant points where there is more air and where it cannot be put out by a single heavy blow.

After these reflections—which are more personal impressions than a fully objective analysis, since the subject is still relatively uncommon and has been treated only imperfectly even by those with long practical experience—we need only add that a defensive strategy can make use of a general arming of the people in two different ways: either as a last resort after a lost

battle, or as a natural support before a decisive battle has been fought. The second case assumes a retreat into the interior of the country, and that indirect kind of reaction discussed in the eighth and twenty-fourth chapters of this book. Here, therefore, we need say only a few words about the role of national levies after a battle has been lost.

No state should think that its fate—its very existence—depends on a single battle, even the most decisive one. If it is defeated, new strength may still be raised, and the natural weakening that every offensive force undergoes over time may reverse its fortunes; help may also come from abroad. There is no need for such desperate haste to die. Just as a drowning man instinctively clutches at a straw, so a people, in the natural course of the moral world, should try its last means of deliverance when it sees itself being driven to the edge of an abyss.

No matter how small and weak a state may be compared with its enemy, if it gives up without making one final supreme effort, we must say that no spirit remains in it. This does not rule out the possibility that it may save itself from complete destruction by buying peace at a sacrifice. But even if that is its aim, the value of new defensive measures remains. They will not make peace harder or more costly; they will make it easier and better. They are even more necessary if help is expected from those who have an interest in preserving our political existence. Any government, therefore, that after losing a great battle thinks only of how quickly it can lay the nation in the lap of peace, and, broken by disappointed hopes, no longer has the courage or the will to rouse every source of strength to the utmost, makes itself

utterly foolish through weakness. It shows itself unworthy of victory and, perhaps for that very reason, was incapable of winning one.

So even if a state suffers a crushing defeat, it can still make use of several means of resistance: the army can withdraw into the interior, the fortresses can still serve their purpose, and the population can be armed. This is especially advantageous when the flank of the main theatre of war is protected by mountains or other terrain that is very hard to cross. Such regions stand like natural bastions, and their strategic position can help slow the enemy's advance.

When the victorious enemy is tied down by siege operations, has left strong garrisons behind at many points to protect his lines of communication, or has detached forces to give himself more room and keep the neighboring provinces under control, the right moment has come. If he has also already been weakened by losses in troops and war material, then the defending army should re-enter the struggle and, with a well-aimed blow, make the attacker reel in his exposed and unfavorable position.

CHAPTER XXVII. Defence of a Theatre of War

After discussing the most important means of defence, we might perhaps have been satisfied to leave the question of how these means fit into the overall defensive plan for the last Book, which will deal with the Plan of a War. It is from that larger plan that every secondary scheme, whether of attack or defence, arises and takes its main shape. In many cases, the plan of the war itself is simply the plan for attacking or defending the principal theatre of war. But we have not been able to begin with war as a whole, even though in war, more than in any other area of human activity, the parts are formed by the whole, filled with its spirit, and fundamentally changed by its character. Instead, we have had to begin by becoming thoroughly familiar with each subject separately. Without moving in this way from the simple to the complex, we would have been overwhelmed by vague ideas, and the many forms of mutual interaction in particular would constantly have confused our thinking. We will therefore continue to move toward the whole one step at a time. That means we will now consider the defence of a theatre of war in itself, and look for the thread that connects the subjects already discussed with it.

In our view, defense is simply the stronger form of fighting. The immediate aim in this struggle is to preserve our own forces and destroy the enemy’s—in short, to win. But that is not the final object.

The final object is to preserve our own political state and bring the enemy's under our control; or, in a word, to secure the peace we want, because only peace settles the conflict and brings it to a common outcome.

But what parts of the enemy's state matter in war? First of all, its military power matters most, and then its territory. Yet there are certainly many other factors that, under particular circumstances, can become especially important. Chief among these are foreign and domestic political relations, which sometimes decide more than everything else. Still, although the enemy's military power and territory are not the state itself, and are not the only ways in which the state is connected to the war, these two factors always outweigh the others, usually by a very wide margin. Military power exists to defend the state's territory or to conquer an enemy's. Territory, in turn, continually sustains and renews military power. The two therefore depend on each other, support each other, and are equal in importance. Even so, their relationship is not exactly the same in both directions. If the military force is destroyed—completely defeated and made incapable of further resistance—then the loss of territory follows by itself. But the reverse is not true: the destruction of military force does not necessarily follow from the conquest of a country, because that force may deliberately withdraw from the territory in order to retake it more easily later. In fact, not only the complete destruction of an army decides a country's fate; every serious weakening of its military power regularly leads to the loss of territory. On the other hand, every serious loss of territory does not produce a proportional reduction in military power. In the long run it will, but not always within the

time in which a war is brought to an end.

It follows, then, that preserving our own military strength and reducing or destroying the enemy's must take priority over occupying territory. That, therefore, is the first objective a general should pursue. Holding territory becomes an important objective only if that primary means—the reduction or destruction of the enemy's military force—has not already achieved it.

If all the enemy's military strength were concentrated in a single army, and if the whole war were decided by a single battle, then possession of the country would depend on the outcome of that battle. The destruction of the enemy's military forces, the conquest of his country, and the security of our own would all follow from that result and would, to some extent, amount to the same thing. The question, then, is this: what could lead the defender to depart from this simplest form of war and spread his forces across different places? The answer is that even a victory won with all his forces united may not be sufficient. Every victory has a limited range of effect. If that effect extends over the whole of the enemy's state—over all his military forces and all his territory—so that every part is carried along by the same blow we have struck at the center of his power, then that victory is all we need, and dividing our forces would have no adequate justification. But if there are parts of the enemy's military strength, and parts of the territory belonging to either side, that our victory would not affect, then we must pay special attention to those areas. And since territory cannot be concentrated at a single point in the way military force can, we must divide our forces in order to attack or defend those parts.

Only in small, compact states is it possible to achieve this kind of unity of military force, where everything may depend on victory over that force. Such unity is practically impossible when larger stretches of territory are involved, especially when they share long borders with our own, or when several neighboring states are allied against us. In such situations, forces must necessarily be divided, and that gives rise to different theatres of war.

The impact of a victory naturally depends on how great it is, and that in turn depends on the size of the enemy force defeated. So the blow that will have the greatest effect, if it succeeds, must be aimed at the part of the country where the largest number of enemy troops is concentrated. And the larger the mass of our own forces used for that blow, the more certain our success will be. This line of thought leads to an illustration that makes the point clearer: the nature and effect of the center of gravity in mechanics.

Just as the center of gravity is always found where the greatest mass of matter is gathered, and just as a blow against a body's center of gravity produces the greatest effect, and the strongest blow is delivered with the center of gravity of the force being used, so it is in war. The armed forces of every belligerent, whether a single state or an alliance of states, possess a certain unity and therefore a certain connectedness. Wherever such connection exists, the analogy of the center of gravity applies. These armed forces therefore have certain centers of gravity whose movement and direction determine other points, and these centers of gravity are located where the largest bodies of troops are assembled. But just as, in the

physical world, action against the center of gravity is measured and limited by the connection of the parts, so it is in war. Here too, the force applied can easily exceed what the resistance requires; when that happens, the blow falls into empty air and force is wasted.

What a difference there is between the solidity of an army serving under one standard and led into battle under the personal command of one general, and that of an allied army spread over 50 or 100 miles, or even operating from entirely different sides of the theatre of war. In the first case, coherence is at its strongest and unity is complete. In the second, unity exists only in a very distant sense, often only in a shared political view, and even that is usually weak and inadequate. The cohesion of the parts is mostly very slight, and often only an illusion.

So, while the force of the blow we want to strike demands the greatest possible concentration of strength, we must also guard against any excessive concentration as a real danger. It wastes power, and that in turn leaves us short of power elsewhere.

Identifying these “centra gravitatis” in the enemy’s military power, and understanding the range of their influence, is therefore one of the highest acts of strategic judgment. We must constantly ask what effect the advance or retreat of part of either side’s forces will have on the rest.

We are not claiming to have discovered a new method. We have only tried to explain the basis of the method used by generals in every age, in a way that makes its connection to the nature of things clearer.

We will consider in the last book how this idea of the center of gravity of the enemy's force shapes the entire plan of a war, because that is its proper place. We have only borrowed it here so that the sequence of ideas would not be interrupted. By introducing this view, we can see the motives that generally lead to a division of forces. At bottom, these arise from two opposing interests: possession of territory tends to divide forces, while the application of force against the center of gravity of the enemy's military power draws them together again, up to a certain point.

This is how theatres of war, or particular army regions, come into being. They are the areas of territory, and of the forces distributed across them, within which every decision made by the principal force in such a region directly affects the whole and carries the whole along in its direction. We say directly because a decision in one theatre of war will naturally also have some degree of influence on neighboring ones.

Although this follows naturally from the subject itself, we must again remind our readers that here, as everywhere else, our definitions are aimed only at the central points of certain theoretical regions, whose boundaries we neither wish to define, nor can define, with sharp precision.

We therefore see a theatre of war, large or small, together with whatever military force belongs to it, as a single whole that can be reduced to one centre of gravity. The decision must be made at that centre of gravity, and to prevail there means securing the theatre of war in the broadest sense.

CHAPTER XXVIII. Defence of a Theatre of War—(continued)

Defence, however, has two distinct elements: the decision and the state of expectation. This chapter deals with how those two elements work together.

First, we must note that the state of expectation is not, in fact, the whole of defence. It is only the phase of defence through which it moves toward its objective. As long as a military force has not given up the territory entrusted to its protection, the tension between the two sides created by the attack continues, and it lasts until a decision is reached. That decision can be said to have truly taken place only when either the attacker or the defender has left the theatre of war.

As long as an armed force holds its position within its theatre, the defence of that theatre continues, and in this sense the defence of the theatre of war is the same as defence within it. Whether the enemy has meanwhile taken possession of much or little of that territory is not the essential point, because he holds it only on loan until the decision is made.

But this way of defining how a state of expectation relates to the whole is correct only when a decision is actually about to occur, and both sides see it as unavoidable. Only that decision truly strikes the centers of gravity of the opposing forces and, through them, the theater of war they determine. Whenever the idea of a decisive outcome disappears, those centers of gravity are neutralized; in a sense, the armed forces as a whole are neutralized as well. Then possession of territory, which makes

up the second main part of the entire theater of war, comes forward as the direct objective. In other words, the less both sides aim at a decisive blow in war, and the more they merely watch each other, the more important possession of territory becomes. The defense then tries to cover everything directly, while the attacker tries to spread out his forces as he advances.

Now we cannot ignore the fact that most wars and campaigns come much closer to a state of mutual observation than to a life-and-death struggle—that is, a contest in which at least one of the combatants uses every effort to force a complete decision. This latter character appears in the wars of the nineteenth century to such an extent that a theory based on that point of view can be applied to them. But future wars are unlikely all to have that character, and it is more reasonable to expect that they will again tend toward the character of observation. Therefore, any theory that is to be practically useful must take that into account. For that reason, we will begin with the case in which the desire for a decision runs through and directs the whole—real, or, if we may use the term, absolute war. Then, in another chapter, we will examine the changes that arise as war moves, to a greater or lesser degree, toward the condition of a war of observation.

In the first case—whether the attacker or the defender is seeking a decision—the defence of the theatre of war must consist in the defender establishing himself there in such a way that, whenever a decision comes, he has the advantage. That decision may take the form of a battle or a series of major engagements. But it may also result simply from the relationship created by the positions of the opposing forces—that is, from

possible combats.

Even if battle were not the strongest, most common, and most effective means of reaching a decision in war—as we believe we have already shown several times—the simple fact that it is generally one of the means of doing so would still be enough to require the greatest concentration of our forces that circumstances allow. A great battle in the theatre of war is a blow from the centre of force against the centre of force. The more forces that can be gathered on either side, the more certain and greater the effect will be. Therefore, any division of forces that is not required by a specific objective—either one that cannot be achieved through a victorious battle, or one that is itself necessary for winning the battle—is a mistake.

But the greatest concentration of forces is not the only basic condition. It is also necessary to place them in such a position that the battle can be fought under favourable circumstances.

The different stages of defence that we examined in the chapter on methods of defence fit entirely with these basic conditions. So there should be no difficulty in relating them to those conditions according to the particular needs of each case. But there is one point that at first seems to contain a contradiction, and because it is one of the most important elements in defence, it requires even more explanation. This is the problem of identifying the exact centre of gravity of the enemy's force.

If the defender learns in time which roads the enemy will use to advance, and especially which road will certainly carry the main body of his forces, he can march to meet him on that road. This is the situation that will arise most often. In broad matters, the

defense acts before the attack does: it establishes fortresses, major arsenals, and depots, and shapes the army in peacetime, thereby giving the attacker a general direction for his preparations. Even so, once the campaign actually begins, the defender usually has the distinct advantage of making the last move in response to the aggressor.

A large army cannot invade a foreign country without extensive preparation. Food, supplies, and every kind of equipment must be gathered, and that takes time. While this is happening, the defender also has time to prepare. We should also remember that defense generally takes less time, because most states are organized more for defense than for attack.

Even though this is true in most cases, the defender may still sometimes be uncertain about the main line on which the enemy intends to advance. This is especially likely when the defense depends on measures that themselves take a great deal of time, such as preparing a strong position. And even if the defender places himself on the line along which the aggressor is advancing, the aggressor can still avoid that position by changing his line of march slightly, unless the defender is ready to seize the initiative and attack. In the settled regions of Europe, there are always roads to the right or left by which a position can be bypassed. In such a case, the defender clearly cannot simply wait for the enemy in one position, or at least cannot remain there expecting a battle.

But before we discuss the means available to the defense in such a case, we must look more closely at the nature of the situation and how likely it is to occur.

Naturally, every state—and every theater of war, which is all we are discussing here—contains certain objectives and points where an attack is likely to be more effective than elsewhere. We think it is better to discuss that fully when we come to the subject of attack. For now, we will only note this: if the most advantageous objective and point of attack determine the direction of the attacker's blow, that same consideration also affects the defender. It must guide him whenever he does not know his opponent's intentions. If the attacker does not choose the direction that favors him, he gives up part of his natural advantage. It is clear that if the defender has taken up a position in that direction, the attacker cannot avoid that position or move around it without cost; doing so requires a sacrifice. It follows that the defender runs less risk of missing the enemy's line of advance. On the other hand, it is not as easy for the attacker to move around his opponent as it may seem at first. One direction or another will already have a clear, and in most cases stronger, advantage. As a result, even though the defender's preparations are fixed at one spot, he will in most cases still come into contact with the main body of the enemy's forces. In other words, if the defender has placed himself well, he can be almost certain that the attacker will come to him.

But this does not mean—and cannot mean—that the defender will never fail to meet the attacker despite all these arrangements. The question, then, is what he should do in that case, and how much of the real advantage of his position still remains available to him.

If we ask what options generally still remain to the defender when the attacker passes his position, they are these:

1. He can immediately divide his forces, so that one part is certain to find the attacker, and then support that part with the other.

2. He can keep his force united in one position, and if the attacker passes by, move quickly ahead of him by a sideways march. In most cases there will not be enough time to make this move directly toward a flank, so it will be necessary to take up the new position somewhat farther back.

3. Attack the enemy's flank with his full force.

4. Move against his lines of communication.

5. By launching a counterattack in his theatre of war, do exactly what the enemy has done by passing us by.

We include this last measure because one can imagine a case in which it might be effective. But it runs against the very purpose of defence—the reasons for choosing that form in the first place. It should therefore be seen as an exceptional departure, possible only because the enemy has made some major mistake or because some other special circumstances exist in the particular case.

Acting against the enemy's communications assumes that our own communications are better, and that is also one of the basic requirements of a strong defensive position. But even though this may give the defender some advantage, in the defence of a theatre of war it is rarely the kind of operation that can bring about a decision, which we have assumed to be the aim of the campaign.

The size of a single theatre of war is rarely so great that the line of communications is seriously endangered by its length. And even when it is endangered, the attacker usually needs so little time to deliver his blow that the slow effects of operations against his communications will not stop his advance.

Therefore this method—that is, action against the communications—will in most cases prove entirely ineffective against an enemy determined to force a decision, and likewise when the defender is seeking such a result.

The purpose of the three remaining methods available to the defender is to bring about a direct decision—a clash of the main force against the main force. They therefore fit the need better. But we will say at once that we strongly prefer the third to the other two, and while we do not entirely reject the latter, we regard the former as, in most cases, the true method of defence.

When our forces are split up, there is always a danger of being drawn into a war of positions. If the enemy is determined, then even in the best circumstances this can lead only to a large-scale but merely partial defence, never to the decisive result we want. Even if superior skill lets us avoid that mistake, the fact remains that any initial resistance made by divided forces weakens the first blow noticeably. We can never be sure that the advanced corps engaged first will not suffer excessive losses. In addition, the stand made by this corps, which usually ends with its falling back on the main body, looks to the troops like a lost battle or a failed plan, and morale suffers as a result.

The second method, placing our whole force in front of the enemy whichever way he turns his march, carries the risk that we may arrive too late and, by wavering between two courses, accomplish neither. A defensive battle also demands calm judgment and careful thought, as well as a thorough, indeed intimate, knowledge of the country. We cannot expect these in a hurried sideways movement toward a flank. Finally, positions well suited for a strong defensive battlefield are too rare for us to count on finding one at every point along every road.

The third method, by contrast, is to attack the enemy in flank and thus fight a battle after changing front; this offers major advantages.

First, as we know, this always exposes the lines of communication—here, the lines of retreat. In that respect, the defender has one advantage simply from his general position as defender. Beyond that, and more importantly, he has the advantage we have already claimed for the strategic qualities of his position in the present case.

Second—and this is the main point—any attacker who tries to move past his opponent is caught between two opposing pressures. He wants to keep advancing toward his objective. But because he may be struck in the flank at any moment, he must also be ready at any moment to hit in that direction, and to do so with the bulk of his forces. These two demands conflict with each other. They create such confusion in the army's internal arrangements, and make it so hard to choose measures that will fit every possible development, that there is hardly a more uncomfortable strategic position. If the attacker knew

exactly when the enemy would strike, he could prepare to meet him with skill and judgment. But because he is uncertain about that moment, and at the same time under pressure to keep advancing, it is almost certain that when battle finally comes, he will be caught in the middle of rushed and incomplete preparations, and therefore in no favorable position against his enemy.

If there are favorable moments for the defender to fight offensively, this is surely one of the best. And if we add that the defender knows the country, can choose the ground, can prepare his movements, and can time them as he wishes, then no one can doubt that in such a situation he holds a clear strategic advantage over his opponent.

We therefore believe that a defender holding a well-chosen position, with his forces concentrated, may calmly wait while the enemy passes by his army. If the enemy does not attack him in that position, and if an operation against the enemy's communications does not fit the circumstances, he still has an excellent way to force a decision: a flank attack.

If examples of this kind are hard to find in military history, the reason is partly that defenders have seldom had the nerve to stand firm in such a position. Instead, they have either divided their forces or rashly thrown themselves in front of the enemy by a cross or diagonal march. Or else no attacker has dared to move past the defender under such conditions, and so the movement has usually come to a halt.

In this case, the defender is forced to fight offensively. He must give up the added advantages of waiting in a strong position,

behind solid entrenchments, and so on. In most cases, the situation in which he catches the advancing enemy does not fully make up for losing those advantages, because the attacker has put himself in that position precisely to avoid their effect. Even so, it still gives the defender some compensation. Theory, therefore, is not simply forced to strike one factor out of the calculation altogether, as if the pros and cons automatically cancel each other out, as often happens when critical historians sprinkle in a little theory.

This should not be dismissed as mere logical hair-splitting. The more closely it is examined in practice, the more clearly it appears as an idea that reaches into the whole nature of defensive war, shaping and directing it at every point.

Only if the defender is resolved to strike his opponent with his full strength the moment that opponent passes by can he avoid two traps to which the defensive form naturally draws him. One is dividing his forces. The other is making a hurried flank march to cut off the attacker in front. In both cases, he submits to the attacker's terms. In both, he tries to save himself by highly risky measures carried out in dangerous haste. And whenever a determined enemy, eager for victory and a decisive result, has met this kind of defensive system, he has crushed it. But if the defender has concentrated his forces at the right point for a general battle, and is firmly resolved, whatever happens, to attack the enemy on the flank with that force, then he has acted correctly and is following the right course. He is then backed by all the advantages the defensive can offer in his situation. His actions will bear the mark of good preparation, calmness, security, unity, and simplicity.

Here we must mention a remarkable event in history that closely parallels the ideas just developed. We do so in order to prevent it from being applied incorrectly.

In October 1806, while the Prussian army waited in Thuringia for the French under Buonaparte, it was stationed between the two main roads by which the French were expected to advance: the road to Berlin through Erfurth, and the road through Hof and Leipsic. This position resulted first from the plan to break directly into Franconia through the Thuringian Forest, and later, after that plan was dropped, from uncertainty about which road the French would take. Given that situation, it naturally pointed to the measure we have been discussing: a hurried attempt to intercept the enemy in front by moving sideways across his line of advance.

This was in fact the plan if the enemy marched by Erfurth, because the roads in that direction were good. But a movement of that kind toward the Hof road could not really be considered, partly because the army was two or three marches away from it, and partly because the deep valley of the Saale stood in the way. Nor did this plan ever form part of the Duke of Brunswick's thinking, so no preparations of any kind were made to carry it out. Prince Hohenlohe, however—or rather Colonel Massenbach—constantly had it in mind and used all his influence to draw the Duke into it. Even less could they think of leaving the position on the left bank of the Saale in order to fight an offensive battle against Buonaparte as he advanced—that is, to launch the kind of flank attack we have been considering. If the Saale was already an obstacle to intercepting the enemy at the last moment, then it would be an even greater obstacle to

taking the offensive when the enemy would at least partly hold the opposite bank. The Duke therefore decided to wait behind the Saale and see what happened—if we can even call it a decision, since it came from this many-headed headquarters staff in a time of confusion and complete indecision.

Whatever the real state of affairs may have been during this period of waiting, the army's resulting position was as follows:

1. The enemy could be attacked if he crossed the Saale in order to attack the Prussian army.

2. If he did not march against that army, operations could be begun against his lines of communication.

3. If it proved practical and wise, he could be intercepted near Leipsic by a swift march against his flank.

In the first case, the Prussian army held a major strategic and tactical advantage in the deep valley of the Saale. In the second, the strategic advantage was equally great, because the enemy had only a very narrow base between our position and the neutral territory of Bohemia, while ours was extremely broad. Even in the third case, our army, shielded by the Saale, was still far from being in a disadvantageous position. All three of these courses were in fact discussed, despite the confusion and lack of clear understanding at headquarters. But we can hardly be surprised that, even if the right idea had been grasped, it failed completely in execution because of the total lack of resolve and the general confusion that prevailed.

In the first two cases, the position on the left bank of the Saale must be seen as a true flank position, and as such it

undoubtedly had great strengths. But in reality, against a much stronger enemy, against a Buonaparte, a flank position is a very daring choice when the army itself is not at all sure of what it is doing.

After a long period of hesitation, the Duke adopted the last of the proposed plans on the 13th, but it was too late. Buonaparte had already begun crossing the Saale, and the battles of Jena and Auerstadt could no longer be avoided. Through his indecision, the Duke had ended up between two courses. He left his first position too late to move his army in ahead of the enemy, and too early to fight a battle suited to his purpose. Even so, the natural strength of the position showed itself to this extent: at Auerstadt the Duke was able to destroy the right wing of the enemy's army, while Prince Hohenlohe, through a bloody retreat, was still able to get out of the predicament. But at Auerstadt they did not dare to press the victory, though it was certain; and at Jena they believed they could count on a victory that was entirely impossible.

In any event, Buonaparte felt the strategic importance of the position on the Saale so strongly that he did not dare to bypass it, but instead decided to cross the Saale in full view of the enemy.

We believe we have now explained clearly enough how defence and attack relate to each other when the aim is a decisive course of action. We also believe we have shown the main lines along which the different parts of a defensive plan connect, depending on their position and their relation to one another. Going into the various arrangements in greater detail does not

suit our purpose here, because it would draw us into an endless range of particular cases. Once a general has fixed on a clear guiding point, he will judge how far it fits the geographical, statistical, and political conditions, as well as the material and personal circumstances of his own army and that of the enemy, and how far these may require him to modify his plan in carrying it out.

But to connect more clearly the different degrees of defence described in the chapter on the various kinds of defence, and to examine them more closely, we will set out here what seems to us most important about the subject in general.

1. The reasons for marching against the enemy with the intention of forcing an offensive battle may be the following:

(a) If we know that the enemy is advancing with his forces badly divided, we may then have reason to expect victory, even though we are much weaker overall.

But such an advance by the attacker is in itself highly unlikely. Therefore, unless we know it from reliable information, the plan is unsound. To count on it, and base all our hopes on a mere assumption without sufficient grounds, usually leads to a very dangerous position. We then fail to find matters as we expected. We are forced to give up the offensive battle. We are not prepared to fight defensively. We must begin a retreat against our will, and leave almost everything to chance.

This is much the same as what happened in the defence conducted by Dohna's army against the Russians in the campaign of 1759, which, under General Wedel, ended in the unfortunate battle of Züllichau.

This measure simplifies matters so much that planners are only too ready to recommend it, without taking the trouble to examine how well founded the assumption behind it really is.

(b) If we are generally strong enough for battle, and—

(c) If a clumsy, indecisive opponent especially invites an attack.

In that case, the effect of surprise may be worth more than any help the terrain can give through a strong position. The true essence of good generalship lies in bringing the power of moral forces into play in this way. But theory can never repeat too often, or too strongly, that these assumptions must have an objective foundation. Without such a foundation, constantly talking about surprise and the superiority of new or unusual forms of attack, and then building plans, judgments, and criticism on them, is groundless and wholly objectionable.

(d) When the character of our army makes it especially well suited for offensive action.

It was certainly neither a fanciful nor a mistaken idea when Frederick the Great concluded that his mobile, courageous army—full of confidence in him, obedient through habit, trained to precision, inspired and elevated by pride, and perfected in the oblique attack—gave him an instrument that, in his firm and daring hands, was far better suited to attack than to defence. His opponents lacked all these qualities, and in that respect he held a clear superiority. In most cases, making use of that superiority was worth more to him than relying on entrenchments and obstacles of terrain. But such an advantage will always be rare. Even a well-trained army, thoroughly practised in large movements, possesses only some of these

strengths. If Frederick the Great claimed that the Prussian army was especially fitted for attack—and that claim has been repeated endlessly ever since—we still should not give too much weight to such statements. In war, most of us feel more energized and more courageous when acting offensively than defensively. But that is a feeling common to all troops, and there is hardly an army about which its generals and leaders have not said the same thing, as Frederick did. We must not, therefore, trust too quickly in an apparent superiority and, because of it, neglect real advantages.

A very natural and important reason for choosing an offensive battle may lie in the army's composition among the three arms—for example, having a large cavalry force and little artillery.

We continue the list of reasons.

(e) When we cannot find a good position anywhere.

(f) When we must reach a decision quickly.

(g) Finally, when several or all of these reasons apply together.

2. Waiting for the enemy in a place where we intend to attack him (Minden, 1759) naturally follows from—

a, when the imbalance of forces is not so much against us that we must seek a strong position and reinforce it with entrenchments.

b, when a place has been found that is especially well suited to this purpose. The qualities that determine this belong to tactics; we will only note that they mainly consist of easy access for the

defender from his own side, and every kind of obstacle on the side facing the enemy.

3. A position will be taken with the specific intention of waiting there for the enemy's attack—

a. If the imbalance of forces forces us to seek protection behind natural obstacles or fieldworks.

b. When the terrain provides an excellent position for our purpose.

The two forms of defence, 2 and 3, become more important the less we seek a decisive result and the more we are satisfied with a negative one, especially when we have reason to think that our opponent is hesitant and irresolute, and will ultimately fail to carry out his plans.

4. An entrenched camp that cannot be assaulted serves its purpose only—

a. If it is located at an extremely important strategic point.

The nature of such a position is that we cannot be driven from it. The enemy is therefore forced to try some other method: either to pursue his objective without engaging this camp, or to blockade it and starve it into surrender. If neither of these is possible for him, then the position must have very great strategic value.

b. If we have reason to expect help from outside.

That was the situation of the Saxon army at Pirna. Despite everything said against this decision because it ended badly in this particular case, one fact is clear: 17,000 Saxons could not

have tied down 40,000 Prussians in any other way. If the Austrians failed to make better use of the advantage they gained at Lowositz, that only shows how poor their whole way of making war was, along with the weakness of their military organization. There can be no doubt that if the Saxons, instead of taking position in the camp at Pirna, had withdrawn into Bohemia, Frederick the Great would have driven both the Austrians and the Saxons back beyond Prague and captured that city in the same campaign. Anyone who refuses to recognize the value of this advantage and looks only at the capture of the entire Saxon army shows that he cannot weigh all the circumstances involved in a case like this; and without that kind of calculation, no sound conclusion can be reached.

But since cases a and b occur only rarely, an entrenched camp is a measure that must be considered very carefully and is only seldom suitable in practice. To hope that such a camp will overawe the enemy and reduce him to complete inactivity is too dangerous, because it may force us to fight without any possibility of retreat. If Frederick the Great achieved his aim in this way at Bunzelwitz, we should admire the accuracy of his judgment about his opponent. But we should also give unusual weight to the resources he would have had at the last moment to open a route for what remained of his army, and also to the freedom from responsibility that belongs to a king.

5. If there is one fortress, or several fortresses, near the frontier, then the great question is whether the defender should seek battle in front of them or behind them. The latter course recommends itself—

a, when the enemy has superior numbers, which makes it necessary for us to wear down his strength before the final struggle.

b, when these fortresses are close by, so that the territory sacrificed is no greater than what we are forced to give up.

c, when the fortresses are well suited for defense.

One main purpose of fortresses is, or ought to be, to break up the enemy's strength as he advances and greatly reduce the part of his force that we mean to fight in battle. We so rarely see fortresses used this way because situations in which one side is seeking a decisive battle are themselves very uncommon. But that is the only kind of situation we are dealing with here. We therefore regard it as a principle, both simple and important, that whenever the defender has one or more fortresses nearby, he should keep them in front of him and fight the decisive battle behind them. We admit that if a battle is lost within the line of our fortresses, we will be forced to retreat farther into the interior of the country than if it had been lost on the far side of them, even though the tactical results are the same in both cases; the reason for the difference lies more in imagination than in reality. Nor do we overlook that a battle may be fought beyond the fortresses in a well-chosen position, whereas within them the battle will in most cases have to be an offensive one, especially if the enemy is besieging a fortress that is in danger of being lost. But what do these fine distinctions matter compared with the advantage that, in the decisive battle, we face an enemy already weakened by a fourth or a third of his force, and perhaps by half if there are many fortresses?

We therefore believe that in every case where a decision is unavoidable, whether the offensive or the defensive side is seeking it, and where the defender is not reasonably sure of victory, or where the nature of the country does not provide some very strong reason for fighting farther forward—in all such cases, if there is a fortress nearby that can be defended, the defender should at once withdraw behind it and let the decision be made on that side of it, with the fortress supporting him. If he takes up a position so close to the fortress that the assailant cannot besiege or blockade it without first driving him away, he forces the assailant to attack him, the defender, in his chosen position. To us, then, in a critical situation, no defensive measure seems simpler or more effective than choosing a good position near and behind a strong fortress.

At the same time, the question looks different if the fortress lies far to the rear. In that case, we would have to give up a considerable part of our theatre of war, and, as we know, that is a sacrifice that should be made only in cases of great urgency. Under those conditions, the measure would more closely resemble a retreat into the interior of the country.

Another condition is whether the place is actually suitable for defence. It is well known that some fortified places, especially large ones, are not fit to be exposed directly to an enemy's army, because they could not withstand a sudden assault by a powerful force. In that case, our position must in any event be close enough behind it for us to support the garrison.

Lastly, a retreat into the interior of the country is a natural course only under the following circumstances:

a, when, because of the physical and moral relation in which we stand toward the enemy, the idea of successful resistance on the frontier or near it cannot be seriously considered.

b, when gaining time is a principal object.

c, when there are special features of the country that favor such a measure, a subject we have already discussed in the twenty-fifth chapter.

With this, we conclude the chapter on the defence of a theatre of war in cases where one side or the other seeks a decisive outcome, and where such a result is therefore unavoidable. But it must be kept clearly in mind that events in war do not appear in so pure and abstract a form. Therefore, if our maxims and arguments are used in reasoning about actual war, our thirtieth chapter must also be considered. We must assume that, in most cases, the general stands between two opposing tendencies and is driven more toward one or the other according to circumstances.

CHAPTER XXIX. Defence of a Theatre of War (continued) Successive Resistance.

In the twelfth and thirteenth chapters, we showed that in strategy, successive resistance is contrary to the nature of the matter, and that all available forces should be employed at the same time.

As for forces that can move, this needs no further proof. But when we consider the theater of war itself—its fortresses, the natural divisions of the land, and even its sheer size—as elements of war, the situation is different. Because these things cannot be moved, we can either bring them into use gradually, or else withdraw at once to a position far enough back that all the forces of this kind we want to activate lie in front of us. In that case, everything in the occupied territory that can help weaken the enemy begins working immediately. The attacker must at least blockade the defender's fortresses. He must hold the country down with garrisons and other posts. He must make long marches, and everything he needs has to be brought from far away, and so on. All these factors begin to operate whether the attacker advances before or after a decision, but in the first case their effect is somewhat greater. It follows, then, that if the defender chooses to postpone the decision to a point farther back, he gains the means of bringing all these fixed elements of military strength into action at once.

On the other hand, it is clear that shifting the point at which the issue is decided does not change how far the attacker can

benefit from a victory. When we discuss attack, we will look more closely at the reach of a victory's effects. Here, we need only note that those effects last until the attacker's superiority is used up—that is, until the combined physical and moral advantage is exhausted. That superiority is worn down, first, by the demands placed on the forces in the theatre of war, and second, by losses in battle. The reduction in strength caused by these two factors is not fundamentally changed by whether the fighting happens at the beginning or the end of the campaign, near the frontier or deeper inside the country. We believe, for example, that if Buonaparte had won over the Russians at Wilna in 1812, that victory would have carried him just as far as Borodino did—assuming it was equally great—and that a victory at Moscow would not have carried him any farther. In either case, Moscow was the limit of that victory's reach. To be sure, there is no doubt that a decisive battle on the frontier would, for other reasons, have produced much greater results if won, and its sphere of influence might then have been wider. Even so, from this point of view as well, pushing the decision farther back is not necessary for the defence.

In the chapter on the various means of resistance, we encountered the method of postponing the decision in its most extreme form under the name retreat into the interior, presented as a particular method of defence. In this method, the aim is less to destroy the attacker by force of arms on the battlefield than to let him wear himself out. But only when that intention is the main one can delaying the decisive battle be treated as a distinct method of resistance. Otherwise, it is obvious that this approach allows for endless degrees, and that these can be

combined with every other means of defence. We therefore regard the greater or lesser assistance provided by the theatre of war not as a special form of defence, but simply as a flexible use of the fixed means of resistance, introduced into the defence to whatever extent circumstances and the nature of the situation seem to require.

But if the defender decides he does not need help from these fixed forces for the action he intends to take, or if using them would require too great an additional sacrifice, then he keeps them in reserve for later. They then become a kind of successive reinforcement. This may make it possible to preserve the mobile forces well enough to follow a first favorable decision with a second, and perhaps even a third. In other words, it makes a successive use of his forces possible.

If the defender loses a battle on the frontier, but not in a way that amounts to total defeat, we can easily imagine him taking position behind the nearest fortress and being ready to accept battle again. Indeed, if he faces an opponent who lacks much determination, then perhaps even a serious natural obstacle may be enough to stop the enemy.

So in strategy, as in the use of the theater of war and in everything else, there is an economy of force: the less one can make do the better. But it still has to be enough, and here, as in commerce, one must think of more than mere stinginess.

But to avoid a serious misunderstanding, we must make one point clear. What we are considering here is not how much resistance an army can offer, or what operations it can undertake after losing a battle. We are considering only the

result we can reasonably expect in advance from this second stage of defense, and therefore how highly we can value it in our plan. Here the defender has almost only one thing to consider: the character and situation of his opponent. An enemy who is weak in character, has little self-confidence, lacks noble ambition, and is heavily constrained will, even when successful, be satisfied with a moderate advantage. He will also shrink back timidly from each new opportunity for a decision that the defender dares to offer. In that case, the defender may count on making beneficial use of all the means of resistance in his theater of war one after another, in constantly renewed, though individually small, engagements, in which the prospect of an ultimate decision in his favor steadily grows brighter.

But who does not see that we are now moving toward campaigns with no decisive outcome, campaigns shaped much more by the repeated application of force. We will discuss these in the next chapter.

CHAPTER XXX. Defence of a Theatre of War (continued) When No Decision Is Sought

We will consider in the last book whether a war is possible, and to what extent, when neither side takes the offensive and therefore neither combatant has a positive aim. Here we do not need to dwell on the contradiction this seems to involve, because within a single theatre of war we can easily imagine reasons for both sides to remain on the defensive, based on how each part relates to the whole.

Besides the historical examples of particular campaigns that unfolded without any central need for a decisive resolution, history also gives us many others in which there was indeed an attacker, and therefore a positive will on one side, but that will was so weak that, instead of trying to reach its objective at any cost and forcing the necessary decision, it settled for whatever advantages circumstances happened to offer. Or the attacker pursued no self-chosen objective at all, but let circumstances determine the aim, while meanwhile collecting whatever gains presented themselves from time to time.

Although this kind of offensive departs a great deal from the strict logic of marching straight toward the objective, and though it differs only slightly from the defensive itself—almost like a idler wandering through a campaign and glancing right and left for easy chances to profit from opportunity—we will still examine it more closely, in philosophical terms, in the book on attack. Here we will limit ourselves to one conclusion: in a

campaign of this kind, neither the attacker nor the defender expects the whole issue to be settled by a decisive battle. As a result, the great battle is no longer the keystone of the arch, the point toward which every line of strategy is directed.
Campaigns of this sort, as the history of every age and country shows, are not just common; they make up such a large majority that the other kind appears only as an exception. Even if that proportion changes in the future, there will certainly still be many campaigns of this kind. For that reason, any theory of the defence of a theatre of war must take them into account. We will try to describe the features that distinguish them. Actual war usually falls somewhere between these two tendencies, sometimes leaning more toward one, sometimes toward the other. So we can only understand the practical effect of these features by seeing how they modify the absolute form of war through their interaction. We have already said in the third chapter of this book that the state of expectation is one of the greatest advantages the defensive has over the offensive. As a general rule, it rarely happens in life—and least of all in war—that everything circumstances lead us to expect actually comes to pass. Human understanding is imperfect. People fear bad outcomes. Accidents disrupt plans in the course of carrying them out. For these reasons, many actions that circumstances seem to require are never actually carried through. In war, where lack of knowledge, the danger of catastrophe, and the number of accidents are incomparably greater than in any other area of human activity, these failures—if we may call them that—must naturally be far more numerous as well. This is the rich field in which the defensive gathers fruit that grows for it on its own. If we add to this the fundamental importance in war of

possessing the surface of the ground, then the proverb beati sunt possidentes holds true here just as it does in peace. This maxim takes the place of decision, that central focus of all action in every war aimed at mutual destruction. Its value is immense, not because of the actions it produces, but because of the motives it creates for not acting, and for every action taken in the service of inaction. When no decision is being sought or expected, there is no reason to give up anything, since that would only make sense if some advantage were to be gained in the decisive struggle. The result is that the defender keeps everything, or at least as much as he can—that is, as much as he can cover. The attacker, meanwhile, takes possession of as much as he can without forcing himself into a decision; that is, he spreads himself sideways as far as possible. Here we are concerned only with the first of these.

Wherever the defender is not present with military forces, the attacker can move in and take possession. Once that happens, the advantage of being ready and waiting shifts to the attacker. That is why defenders try to cover the whole country directly, posting troops throughout it and accepting the risk that the attacker may strike those forces.

Before we examine the special features of defense more closely, we must draw from the book on attack the objectives an attacker usually pursues when he is not seeking a decision through battle. They are as follows:

1. Seizing a substantial stretch of territory, so far as this can be done without a decisive engagement.

2. Capturing an important magazine under the same condition.

3. Capturing an uncovered fortress. A siege is certainly, to a greater or lesser extent, a major operation and often demands great effort. But it is still an undertaking that does not contain the elements of catastrophe. If matters go badly, the siege can be lifted without causing any great positive loss.

4. Lastly, winning a successful combat of some importance, but one in which little is risked and therefore little can be gained. Such a combat is fought not as the central knot in an entire strategic design, but for its own sake, for trophies or for the honor of the troops. For an object of this kind, of course, a combat is not fought at any cost. We either wait for a favorable opportunity or try to create one through skill.

These four offensive objectives lead to the following defensive efforts:

1. To protect the fortresses by keeping them behind us.

2. To protect the country by spreading the troops across it.

3. Where that spread is not enough, to move the army quickly in front of the enemy by a flank march.

4. To avoid unfavorable combats.

The purpose of the first three measures is clearly to force the enemy to take the initiative and to gain as much as possible from the uncertainty they are left in. This aim is so deeply grounded in the nature of war that it would be foolish to dismiss it at first glance. It naturally becomes more important when no decisive outcome is expected, and it governs all campaigns of that kind, even when there seems to be a good deal of activity in minor actions that cannot lead to a decision.

Hannibal and Fabius alike, as well as both Frederick the Great and Daun, followed this principle whenever they neither sought nor expected a decisive result. The fourth measure acts as a correction to the first three; it is the indispensable condition for them.

We will now look at these matters more closely.

At first glance, it may seem rather absurd to protect a fortress from enemy attack by stationing an army in front of it. The measure can look redundant, since fortifications are built to withstand attack on their own. And yet it is something we see done again and again. Such is the nature of war: the most familiar practices often seem the hardest to explain. Who would dare call these thousands upon thousands of cases mere mistakes because of this apparent contradiction? The fact that the measure is used so constantly shows that it must rest on some deep underlying reason. That reason, however, is simply the one already mentioned above, arising from moral sluggishness and inactivity.

If the defender positions his army in front of the fortress, the enemy cannot attack the fortress until he has first defeated that army. But a battle is a decisive step. If that is not the enemy's aim, then no battle will take place, and the defender will keep the fortress without firing a shot. Therefore, whenever we do not think the enemy means to fight a battle, we should be willing to take the chance that he will not suddenly decide to do so. This is especially reasonable because, in most cases, we still have the option of withdrawing behind the fortress at once if, contrary to our expectations, the enemy advances to attack us.

In this way, a position in front of the fortress is free from danger, and the likelihood of preserving the status quo without any sacrifice is not accompanied by even the slightest risk.

If the defender positions himself behind the fortress, he gives the attacker exactly the kind of objective that suits the attacker's situation. If the fortress is not especially strong, and the attacker is not wholly unprepared, he will begin a siege. To prevent that siege from ending in the fall of the place, the defender must march to relieve it. The positive action, the initiative, now falls to him, while the enemy, who moves toward his objective through the siege, is effectively in the position of the occupier.

Experience shows that events almost always develop in this way, and for good reason. As we have said before, a siege does not necessarily involve a catastrophe. Even a general who lacks both enterprise and energy, and who would never bring himself to fight a battle, will still undertake a siege—perhaps with nothing more than field artillery—if he can approach a fortress without danger. At worst, he can give up the attempt without suffering any definite loss. There is also the danger, to which most fortresses are more or less exposed, of being taken by assault or by some other irregular means, and the defender should certainly take this into account when weighing the probabilities.

When weighing the different possibilities, it makes sense that a defender would see the chance of not having to fight at all as more advantageous than the chance of fighting, even under favorable conditions. That is why it seems both natural and

understandable to us that an army should be placed in the field in front of its fortress. Frederick the Great, for example, almost always did this at Glogau against the Russians, and at Schwednitz, Neiss, and Dresden against the Austrians. This measure, however, brought misfortune to the Duke of Bevern at Breslau. If he had positioned himself behind Breslau, he could not have been attacked there. The Austrians' superiority during the king's absence would soon have ended, since Frederick was already on his way. So by taking a position behind Breslau, a battle might have been avoided until Frederick arrived. No doubt the Duke would have preferred that course, if it had not exposed that important place to bombardment—something the king, who was anything but tolerant in such matters, would have strongly resented. Even so, the Duke's attempt to protect Breslau by taking up an entrenched position for that purpose cannot really be condemned. It was entirely possible that Prince Charles of Lorraine, satisfied with the capture of Schwednitz and threatened by the king's advance, might have been prevented by that position from moving any farther. The best course would have been to refuse battle at the last moment by withdrawing through Breslau just as the Austrians moved to attack. In that way, he would have gained all the advantages of keeping the enemy in suspense without having to pay for them by running such a great risk.

If we have explained the position in front of a fortress by higher and decisive reasons, and defended it on that basis, we still need to note a secondary motive. It is more obvious, but by itself it is not enough, because it is not decisive. We mean the use armies make of the nearest fortress as a depot for

provisions and munitions. This is so convenient, and offers so many advantages, that a general will not readily choose to draw all supplies from more distant places or store them in open towns. But when a fortress serves as the army's main magazine, taking up a position before it often becomes absolutely necessary, and in most cases is entirely natural. Still, it is easy to see that this obvious motive—one that people who are not used to looking far ahead are especially likely to overvalue—cannot explain every case, nor are the circumstances connected with it important enough to settle the question by themselves.

Capturing one or more fortresses without risking a battle is such a natural objective in any offensive that does not aim at a decision in open battle that the defender makes it his chief concern to frustrate that plan. That is why, in theatres of war containing many fortresses, these places become the pivots of nearly all movements. We see the attacker trying to approach one of them by surprise and using various feints to help achieve that end, while the defender at once tries to stop him with carefully prepared movements. This is the general character of almost all the campaigns of Louis XIV in the Netherlands up to the time of Marshal Saxe.

So much for the protection of fortresses.

Covering a country with a widely spread line of forces is only possible when the terrain itself offers major obstacles. The large and small posts needed for this kind of defense can resist attack only if they occupy strong positions. Because natural obstacles are rarely enough on their own, field fortifications are

used to reinforce them. But one point must be kept in mind: the resistance gained at any one post is always relative (see the chapter on the meaning of combat), never absolute. A particular post may, in some cases, withstand every attack made against it, so that in that one instance the result is absolute. But when there are many posts, each individual one is weak in relation to the whole system and vulnerable to attack by an overwhelming force. It would therefore be unreasonable to rely for safety on the resistance of any single post. In such an extended position, then, we can count only on resistance for a certain length of time, not on victory in the full sense. At the same time, the value of individual posts is enough for the purpose at hand and for general calculation. In campaigns where no great decision is expected, where there is no danger of an irresistible advance aimed at the complete destruction of the whole force, there is little risk in a war of posts, even if it ends with the loss of one. Usually the only result is the loss of the post itself and a few trophies. The effect of victory goes no further into the general situation. It does not pull down one part of the foundation and bring the whole structure crashing after it. Even in the worst case—if, for example, the entire defensive system is thrown into disorder by the loss of a single post—the defender still has time to concentrate his corps and offer battle with his full force, which, under our assumption, the attacker does not want. That is why matters usually end once this concentration of force takes place, and the attacker's further advance is halted. The defender loses a strip of land, a few men, and some guns, and with that result the attacker is satisfied.

A defender may reasonably accept that risk if, on the other side, the odds are in his favor—or rather, if there is a strong chance—that the attacker, being overly cautious, will stop in front of his positions instead of attacking them. But we must keep one point clearly in mind: we are assuming an attacker who is unwilling to attempt any bold move. Against such an opponent, a moderately sized but strong position can be enough to stop him. He can no doubt capture it, but the real question is what it would cost him, and whether that cost would be too high for any advantage he could gain from the victory.

This shows how the strong relative resistance a defender can gain from an extended arrangement of several positions placed side by side may produce a satisfactory result in the overall calculation of his campaign. To guide the reader at once to the right examples in military history, we should note that such extended positions appear most often in the later half of a campaign. By then, the defender has become thoroughly familiar with his opponent, his plans, and his situation; and the small amount of enterprise with which the attacker began is usually spent.

In this kind of defense, based on an extended position intended to cover the country, the supplies, and the fortresses, all major natural obstacles—such as streams, rivers, mountains, woods, and marshes—naturally play a large part and take on special importance. For their use, we refer to what has already been said on these subjects.

Because the topographical element matters so much here, the kind of knowledge and work usually seen as the special domain

of an army's general staff is especially in demand. And since the staff is usually the branch that does most of the writing and publishing, these aspects of campaigns tend to be recorded most fully in history. From that, it is only natural that people try to turn them into a system, and to draw from the historical solution of one case a general solution for all that follow. But that effort is useless, and therefore mistaken. In this more passive kind of war, in this form tied to particular places, every case differs from the next and must be handled differently. So even the best critical memoirs on these subjects can only help us become familiar with the facts; they can never serve as rules.

This diligence, which in the general view we have attributed especially to the staff, is natural and at the same time deserving of praise. Even so, we must warn against the overreach that often grows out of it, to the harm of the whole. The authority gained by those who lead this branch of military service and know it best often gives them a kind of broad control over people's thinking, beginning with the general himself. From this comes a habitual way of thinking that bends the mind too far in one direction. In the end, the general sees nothing but mountains and passes, and what ought to remain a matter of free choice guided by circumstances turns into mere habit, into second nature.

So, in 1793 and 1794, Colonel Grawert of the Prussian army—the driving force of the staff at that time, and well known as a man always focused on mountains and passes—persuaded two generals of completely opposite personal character, the Duke of Brunswick and General Mollendorf, to conduct the war in exactly the same way.

It is easy to see that a defensive line running parallel to a strong natural barrier can lead to a cordon war. In many cases, it must do so if the whole theatre of war could actually be covered directly in that way. But most theatres of war are so extensive that the normal tactical deployment of the troops assigned to defend them would be far from sufficient for such a task. At the same time, the attacker is usually limited by his own arrangements and by other circumstances to certain main directions and major roads. Any major departure from those routes, even against a very passive defender, would bring serious difficulty and disadvantage. So, in general, the defender only needs to cover the country for a certain number of miles or marches to the right and left of the enemy's main lines of advance. Even then, this coverage can be achieved by holding defensive posts on the main roads and approaches, while the country between them is simply watched by small observation posts. The obvious result is that the attacker may pass a column between two such posts and then launch the intended attack on one post from several directions at once. These posts are arranged, to some extent, to deal with that danger: partly through supports on their flanks, partly through flank defences called crochets, partly through help from a reserve stationed in the rear, or from troops detached from neighboring posts. In this way, the number of posts can be reduced still further, and the usual result is that an army conducting this kind of defence divides itself into four or five main posts.

For important approaches that lie beyond a certain distance but are still somewhat threatened, special central points are established. These, to some extent, create small theatres of war

within the main one. In this way, during the Seven Years' War, the Austrians generally placed the main body of their army in four or five posts in the mountains of Lower Silesia, while a small, almost independent corps set up for itself a similar defensive system in Upper Silesia.

The farther a defensive system moves away from directly covering what it is meant to protect, the more it has to rely on mobility—active defence—and even on offensive action. Some units are kept in reserve, and each position quickly sends whatever troops it can spare to support another. That support can take several forms: troops may rush forward from the rear to reinforce a position and restore its passive defence; they may strike the enemy in the flank; or they may even threaten his line of retreat. If the attacker threatens a position's flank not by a direct assault, but by taking up a position from which he can interfere with that post's communications, then either the force advanced for that purpose must be seriously attacked, or retaliation must be used by threatening the enemy's communications in turn.

We see, then, that although this kind of defence is passive in its basic idea, it still has to include many active measures, and its organization can be prepared in many ways for complex situations. Defences of this kind are usually thought best when they make the greatest use of active, or even offensive, methods. But that depends largely on the nature of the terrain, the qualities of the troops, and the skill of the general. More generally, we are also too inclined to expect too much from movement and other supporting measures of an active kind, and to put too little trust in the local defence provided by a

strong natural obstacle. We believe we have now explained clearly enough what we mean by an extended line of defence, and we can turn to the third supporting method: placing ourselves on the enemy's flank by a rapid march.

This method is necessarily one of those used in the kind of national defense we are considering. First, even when the defender holds a very wide position, he often cannot protect every route by which the enemy may enter the country. Second, in many cases he must be ready to move the main body of his forces quickly to any point where the enemy is about to concentrate his main strength; otherwise those positions would be too easily overwhelmed. Finally, a general who does not want to tie his army down to passive resistance across a broad front must try to achieve his aim—the protection of the country—through rapid, carefully planned, and well-executed movements. The more ground he leaves exposed, the greater the skill required in planning those movements so that he arrives at the right place at the right time.

The natural result of trying to do this is that the defender looks for and prepares positions in every direction that offer enough advantage to make the enemy abandon any thought of attack as soon as our army, or even part of it, reaches them. Because these positions are occupied again and again, and everything depends on reaching them in time, they are, in a sense, the basic elements of this whole method of warfare. For that reason it has been called a war of posts.

Just as an extended position, and the limited resistance seen in a war without great decisions, do not involve all the dangers

that seem inherent in their original nature, so too blocking the enemy in front by marching to a flank is not as dangerous as it would be when a major decision is expected at once. To try at the last moment, in the greatest haste, to throw an army in front of a resolute opponent by a sideways movement—an opponent both able and willing to strike hard, and not reluctant to spend his forces freely—would be halfway to a disastrous defeat. Against a bold attack delivered with the enemy's full strength, such a hurried and awkward rush into position would be useless. But against an opponent who does not act with his whole strength, who works only with the tips of his fingers, who does not know how to exploit a great success—or even the opportunity for one—and who seeks only a small advantage at little cost, this kind of resistance can certainly be used effectively.

A natural result is that this usually happens more often in the second half of a campaign than at the beginning.

Here too, the general staff has a chance to show its knowledge of the terrain by working out a coordinated plan tied to the choice and preparation of positions and the roads leading to them.

When one side's entire aim is ultimately to reach a certain point, while the other side's entire aim is to prevent it, both are often forced to move under each other's direct observation. For that reason, these movements must be carried out with a level of caution and accuracy that would not otherwise be necessary. In earlier times, before the main body of an army was organized into independent divisions, and when even on the march it was

still treated as a single indivisible whole, this caution and accuracy involved much more formality and a much heavier use of tactical skill. In such situations, individual brigades certainly often had to leave the main line of battle to secure particular points and act independently until the army arrived. But these were, and remained, exceptional measures. In general, the aim in the order of march was to move the army as a whole from one point to another, preserving its usual formation and avoiding such exceptions as much as possible. Now, however, the parts of an army's main body are themselves divided into independent formations, and those formations can risk engaging the main mass of the enemy's army, provided the rest of the force to which they belong is close enough to support the action and bring it to a conclusion. As a result, a flank march under the enemy's eye is now less difficult. What once could be accomplished only through the strict mechanics of the marching order can now be done by sending individual divisions out earlier, speeding up the march of others, and making freer use of the army as a whole.

With the defensive measures just described, the attacker can be stopped from taking any fortress, occupying any important stretch of territory, or capturing supply depots. He will also be held back if, wherever he moves, he is met with battles in which he sees little chance of success, too much risk of a setback if he fails, or, more generally, a cost in strength out of proportion to his objective and circumstances.

If the defender achieves this through skill and sound judgment, and the attacker, wherever he looks, finds careful preparations that leave him no real hope of gaining even his limited aims,

then the offensive side often tries to escape the difficulty by settling for the mere honor of its arms. Winning a battle of some significance gives the victor's forces an appearance of superiority. It soothes the vanity of the general, the court, the army, and the people, and in that way partly satisfies the expectations that naturally arise whenever an offensive is undertaken.

A favorable battle of some importance, sought simply for the sake of victory and a few trophies, therefore becomes the attacker's last hope. No one should think we are contradicting ourselves here, because we still remain within our original assumption: that the defender's good measures have deprived the attacker of any expectation of reaching those other objectives through a successful battle. For such an expectation to be justified, two conditions are necessary: first, the battle must end favorably; second, that result must actually lead to the attainment of one of those objectives.

The first condition may very well occur without the second. Therefore, the defender's individual corps and positions are much more often in danger of being drawn into unfavorable battles when the attacker is aiming only at the honor of the battlefield than when he is also seeking further advantages.

If we put ourselves in Daun's position and think as he did, his decision to attempt the surprise at Hochkirch does not seem out of character, so long as we assume he was aiming at nothing more than the trophies of the day. But a victory with major consequences—one that would have forced the king to give up Dresden and Neisse—was a completely different matter, and

not one he would have been inclined to take on.

These are not minor or pointless distinctions. On the contrary, they bring us to one of the most fundamental principles of war. In strategy, the meaning of a battle is its very soul, and it cannot be said too often that strategic events arise from the ultimate aims of the two sides—from the end point, as it were, of their whole chain of thought. That is why one battle can differ so greatly from another in strategic terms that they can hardly be regarded as the same kind of means.

Now, although a fruitless victory by the attacker can hardly be counted as any serious harm to the defence, the defender will still not willingly give up even this advantage, especially since we can never know what chance event may be tied to it. The defender therefore has to keep constant watch over the position of all his corps and posts. Much, no doubt, depends on the commanders of those corps making proper arrangements; but any one of them may still be driven into an unavoidable disaster by unwise orders from the commander-in-chief. Who is not reminded here of Fouqué's corps at Landshut and Fink's at Maxen?

In both cases Frederick the Great relied too heavily on established assumptions. He could not really have believed that 10,000 men could successfully resist 30,000 at Landshut, or that Fink could hold out against a stronger force closing in and crushing him from every side. But he thought the strength of the position at Landshut would be accepted, as before, almost like a bill of exchange, and that Daun would see the demonstration against his flank as reason enough to leave his uncomfortable

position in Saxony for the more comfortable one in Bohemia. In the one case he misjudged Laudon, and in the other Daun; that is where the error in these measures lay.

But even setting aside such mistakes—mistakes that even generals less proud, bold, and stubborn than Frederick the Great could make in some of his actions—there is still, in the matter we are considering, a serious difficulty. A commander-in-chief cannot always count on getting from his corps commanders all the judgment, goodwill, courage, and firmness of character he would like. He therefore cannot leave everything to their discretion. On many points, he must lay down rules, and once their freedom of action is limited in that way, their conduct may easily clash with the demands of the moment. Yet this is an unavoidable drawback. Without a strong commanding will, whose influence runs through the whole army, war cannot be conducted well. And any man who made it his practice always to expect the best from his subordinates would, for that very reason, be quite unfit to command an army.

Therefore, the position of every corps and every post must always be kept clearly in view, so that none of them is unexpectedly drawn into disaster.

The purpose of all these efforts is to preserve the status quo. The more fortunate and successful they are, the longer the war remains fixed at the same point. But the longer the war continues in one place, the greater the difficulties of supplying the troops.

Instead of gathering supplies and levying contributions from the surrounding country, a system of supply from magazines

begins at once, or very soon. Instead of collecting local wagons whenever needed, a more or less regular transport service is established, made up either of vehicles from the country or of those belonging to the army. In short, there is a move toward that regular system of feeding troops from magazines which we have already discussed in the fourteenth chapter (On Subsistence).

At the same time, this is not what most strongly shapes this kind of warfare. Because this form of war, by its purpose and nature, is already confined to a limited area, the question of supplies can certainly help determine how operations are carried out—and in most cases it will—without changing the war's overall character. By contrast, attacks by each side against the other's lines of communication become much more important, for two reasons. First, in campaigns of this kind, since there are no large, far-reaching operations, generals must focus their efforts on smaller matters. Second, there is enough time here to wait for the effects of this method. The defender's line of communication is therefore especially important to secure. Although interrupting it may not itself be the direct aim of the enemy's operations, such an interruption might still force the defender to retreat, and so leave other objectives exposed to attack.

All measures intended to protect the area of the theatre of war itself must naturally also help cover the lines of communication. Their security is therefore partly provided for in that way, and we need only add that this is one of the main conditions in choosing a position.

One special means of security is to use bodies of troops, both small and large, to escort convoys. Even the widest positions are not enough to secure the lines of communication, and such an escort is especially necessary when the general wants to avoid spreading his position too far. Accordingly, in Tempelhof's History of the Seven Years' War, we find countless examples of Frederick the Great having his bread and flour wagons escorted by single regiments of infantry or cavalry, and sometimes by whole brigades. On the Austrian side, we find no mention of the same practice. That may partly be explained by the fact that they did not have such a detailed historian on their side, but it is also partly due to the simple fact that they always occupied much more extended positions.

Having now discussed the four forms of effort that make up a defensive strategy which does not aim at a decisive result, and which, taken as a whole, are entirely free of offensive elements, we must now say something about the offensive means that may be mixed with them to a greater or lesser degree. These offensive means are chiefly:

1. Operations against the enemy's communications, including attacks on his supply points.

2. Diversions and incursions into the enemy's territory.

3. Attacks on the enemy's corps and posts, and even on his main body when circumstances are favorable, or simply the threat of such attacks.

The first of these means is constantly at work in all campaigns of this kind, though often so quietly that it is hardly visible. Every good defensive position owes much of its effectiveness to the

uneasiness it creates for the attacker about his communications. And since, as we have already observed, the question of subsistence in this kind of warfare becomes vitally important and affects the attacker just as much, this fear of possible offensive action arising from the enemy's position helps determine a large part of the strategic pattern, as we shall see again when we discuss attack.

Raids into enemy territory meant to carry out reprisals or collect contributions cannot properly be counted as defensive measures. They are really offensive actions. Still, they are often combined with the aim of creating a genuine diversion, which can be treated as a true defensive measure because it is meant to weaken the enemy force facing us. But since the attacker can use these same methods just as easily, and since such an operation is in itself a real attack, it is better to leave further discussion of it for the next book. We mention it here only to give a complete account of the defender's stock of minor offensive means in a theatre of war. For now, we need only add that it can grow so large and important that it gives the whole war the appearance, and with it the credit, of being offensive. Frederick the Great's operations in Poland, Bohemia, and Franconia before the campaign of 1759 were of this kind. The campaign itself was clearly a pure defence. Yet these incursions into enemy territory made it look like an act of aggression, which may have had particular value because of its moral effect.

An attack on one of the enemy's corps, or on his main body, must always be kept in mind as a necessary complement to the whole defence whenever the aggressor grows too careless

and, as a result, leaves himself poorly protected at certain points. This unspoken condition underlies the whole action. But here too, just as when operating against the enemy's communications, the defender may go a step further into the realm of offense and, like his opponent, make it his business to wait for a favourable opportunity to strike. To secure success in this area, he must either be clearly superior in force to his opponent—which is certainly not consistent with the defensive in general, though it may still occur—or he must know how, and have the skill, to keep his forces more concentrated and make up through activity and mobility for the danger he runs in other respects.

The first example was Daun in the Seven Years' War; the second was Frederick the Great. Even so, we hardly ever see Daun take the offensive unless Frederick the Great practically invited it through excessive boldness and open contempt for him, as at Hochkirch, Maxen, and Landshut. By contrast, we see Frederick the Great almost constantly on the move, trying to strike one or another of Daun's corps with his main force. He certainly did not succeed often, and the results were rarely significant, because Daun not only had a great numerical advantage but also possessed an unusual degree of prudence and caution. But we should not conclude from this that the king's efforts were useless. In fact, those efforts amounted to a very effective form of resistance. The care and strain his opponent had to endure in order to avoid fighting at a disadvantage cancelled out forces that might otherwise have helped push the offensive forward. We need only recall the campaign of 1760 in Silesia, where Daun and the Russians,

simply from fear of being attacked and defeated by the king first in one place and then in another, were never able to make a single step forward.

We believe we have now covered all the subjects that make up the leading ideas, the main objectives, and therefore the chief support of all defensive action in a theatre of war when no decisive battle is intended. Our main, indeed our only, purpose in bringing them together in one place was to show the whole structure of strategic action at a glance. The specific measures through which these ideas take practical form—marches, positions, and so on—we have already examined in detail.

Looking again at the subject as a whole, one point becomes unmistakably clear: when the offensive principle is so weak, when neither side strongly seeks a decisive result, when there is so little positive motive, and when so many subjective influences hold each side back, the essential difference between attack and defence naturally tends to fade. At the start of a campaign, one side will of course enter the other's theatre of war, and to that extent it takes on the appearance of the offensive. But it can easily happen—and often does—that it must soon use all its strength to defend its own country while still on enemy territory. In that case, both sides are really facing each other in mutual observation. Both are intent on losing nothing, and perhaps both are equally intent on gaining some positive advantage. It may even happen, as with Frederick the Great, that the true defender aims higher in this way than his opponent.

The more the attacker gives up the role of an advancing enemy, the less the defender is threatened by him and forced, out of concern for mere safety, into a strictly defensive posture. As that happens, the relationship between the two sides grows more alike. The activity of both then turns toward gaining an advantage over the opponent while guarding against any disadvantage to themselves—in other words, toward genuine strategic manoeuvring. Indeed, this is more or less the character that all campaigns take on when the position of the combatants or political considerations do not allow for any major decision.

In the next book, we have set aside a chapter specifically for strategic manoeuvres. But because theory has often given this balanced play of forces an importance it does not deserve, we must examine the subject more closely here while discussing defence. It is especially in this form of warfare that strategic manoeuvres are wrongly credited with such exaggerated importance.

We call this an evenly balanced play of forces, because when the body as a whole does not move, it is in equilibrium. If no major objective is driving events, then the whole does not move. So in that case, the two sides, however unequal they may be, must still be seen as being in a state of balance. Out of this overall equilibrium come the particular motives behind lesser actions and secondary objectives. These can now develop, because they are no longer held down by the pressure of a great decision or a great danger. As a result, what could be lost or won in the war as a whole is reduced to small stakes, and the war’s overall action is broken into smaller transactions. With

these smaller operations aimed at smaller gains, the two generals now engage in a contest of skill. But because chance—and therefore good luck—can never be excluded from war, this contest can never be anything other than a game. At this point, two further questions arise: first, whether in this kind of manœuvring chance has a smaller share in the outcome; and second, whether superior intelligence has a greater share than it does when everything is concentrated in one single great act. The second question must be answered yes. The more fully the whole is organised, the more often time and space come into play—time in particular moments, space at particular points. Clearly, this enlarges the field for calculation, and therefore increases the influence of superior intelligence. What superior understanding gains is taken in part from chance, though not necessarily all of it, so we are not required to answer the first question yes. We must also remember that superior understanding is not the only mental quality a general needs. Courage, energy, resolution, presence of mind, and similar qualities become even more valuable when everything depends on one single great decision. They therefore carry somewhat less weight when forces are evenly balanced, and the growing dominance of shrewd calculation increases not only at the expense of chance, but also at the expense of these qualities. On the other hand, at the moment of a great decision, these brilliant qualities may strip chance of much of its power and thus, to some extent, secure what calculating intelligence in such cases would have to leave to chance. From this we can see that several forces are in conflict here, and that we cannot state with certainty that a great decision leaves more room for chance than the final result does when there is an evenly

balanced play of forces. So if we describe this play of forces more specifically as a contest of mutual skill, that should be understood as referring only to skill in shrewd calculation, not to the full sum of military genius.

It is mainly from this angle of strategic maneuvering that the whole subject has been given the false importance we mentioned above. First, people have assumed that a general's entire genius consists in this kind of skill. But that is a serious mistake. As we have already said, in moments of great decision, other moral qualities in a general can have the power to shape events. Even if that power comes less from long chains of reasoning and more from the impulse of noble feeling and those flashes of genius that arise almost unconsciously, it is still no less a legitimate part of the art of war. For war is not merely an exercise of the intellect, nor are intellectual powers its chief element. It has also been assumed that every active campaign that ends without results must be due to this kind of skill on the part of one general, or even both. In reality, however, such campaigns have always had their main and general cause in the broader conditions that turned war into this kind of game.

Because most wars between civilized states aimed more at watching the enemy than destroying him, it was only natural that most campaigns took on the character of strategic maneuvering. Campaigns that did not bring any famous generals into view attracted little attention. But when there was a great commander on whom all eyes were fixed, or two facing each other, like Turenne and Montecuculi, then this whole art of maneuvering was stamped with the mark of perfection through the fame of their names. A further result was that this game

came to be seen as the highest point of the art of war, its most perfect expression, and therefore the chief source from which the art of war should be studied.

So far, we have been dealing with the general nature of strategic maneuvering. We must now turn to one specific effect it has on the conduct of war: it often draws the opposing sides away from the main roads and important places into remote, or at least less important, areas. When minor interests that matter only for a moment become dominant, the major features of a country have less influence on how the war is fought. As a result, we often find troops moving to places where, if we judged only by the broad and obvious needs of the war, we would never expect to see them. For the same reason, the shifts and variety in the details of the struggle as it unfolds are much greater here than in wars aimed at a single great decision. We need only look at the last five campaigns of the Seven Years' War. Although the general relationships remained essentially the same, each campaign took a different shape, and, on close examination, not a single measure appears twice. Yet in these campaigns the offensive principle shows itself much more clearly on the side of the allied army than in most earlier wars.

In this chapter on defending a theatre of war, when no major decision is intended, we have only outlined the tendencies of the action, how they combine, and their relationships and character. The specific measures involved were described in detail earlier in this work. The question now is whether any fully general and comprehensive principles, rules, or methods can be laid down for these different tendencies of action. Our answer is no. History has not led us to such conclusions through any

constant recurrence of fixed forms. And in a subject so varied and changeable by nature, we could hardly accept any theoretical rule unless it were grounded in experience. A war aimed at great decisions is not only much simpler, but also much more in keeping with nature. It is freer from contradictions, more objective, and more tightly governed by an inner necessity. For that reason, the mind can more easily prescribe forms and laws for it. But in a war that does not seek decision as its object, this seems to us far more difficult. Even the two basic principles of the earliest strategic theories published in our time—the Breadth of the Base in Bulow, and the Position on Interior Lines in Jomini—have never proved absolute or reliably effective when applied to the defence of a theatre of war. Yet these are merely forms, and if forms were ever to show their full power, it should be here. Forms are always most effective, and gain the greatest weight over the other elements involved, the more action is spread across time and space. Even so, we find that they are only particular parts of the subject, and certainly nothing like decisive advantages. It is very clear that the special nature of the means available, and the relations between them, must from the outset strongly oppose all general principles. What Daun achieved through the extent and careful choice of his positions, the king achieved by always keeping his army concentrated, always staying close to the enemy, and always being ready to act on the spot with his whole army. Each general’s method arose not only from the nature of the army he commanded, but also from the circumstances in which he found himself. Improvising movements is always much easier for a king than for any commander acting under responsibility. Here we must once again stress that the critic has no right to treat the

different styles and methods that appear as if they were different stages on the road to perfection, one lower and another higher. They must be regarded as equal in standing, and judgment alone must decide how fit each is for use in any particular case.

Our purpose here is not to list all the different ways of acting that may arise from the particular character of an army, a country, or a given set of circumstances. We have already noted the general influence of such factors.

So, in this chapter, we cannot offer maxims, rules, or fixed methods, because history does not provide the basis for them. On the contrary, at almost every turn, history confronts us with particular features that are often impossible to explain and often striking in their oddity. Yet it is still worthwhile to study history in relation to this subject. Even where no system or body of doctrine can be found, truth may still be present. In most cases, that truth can be discovered only through trained judgment and the tact that comes from long experience. So even if history gives us no formula here, we may be sure that, here as everywhere else, it will sharpen the judgment.

We will state only one broad general principle. Or rather, we will restate the natural assumption underlying everything that has just been said, and set it out more clearly as a separate principle.

All the means described here have only a relative value. They all exist under the limitation that both sides are subject to a certain disability. Beyond that sphere, a higher law governs, and an entirely different world of phenomena appears. The general

must never forget this. He must never move with imagined confidence within this narrower sphere, as though it were an absolute medium. He must never treat the means he uses here as necessary or as the only means, and then cling to them even when he himself already feels how inadequate they are.

From the point of view we have adopted here, such an error may seem almost impossible. But in the real world it is not impossible, because there things do not appear in such sharply defined contrast.

We must again remind our readers that, to make our ideas clear, precise, and forceful, we have always considered only the complete opposition—that is, the two extremes of the question. In actual war, however, the real case usually falls somewhere between those extremes, and is shaped by either one only to the extent that it comes closer to it.

So, in many cases, everything depends on the general deciding first whether his opponent has both the will and the means to surpass him by using stronger and more decisive measures. As soon as he has reason to fear this, he must abandon minor steps meant only to avoid minor losses. The only course left is to place himself in a better position by making a voluntary sacrifice, so that he can meet a greater crisis on equal terms. In other words, the first requirement is that the general choose the right scale when planning his operations.

To make these ideas even clearer through actual experience, we will briefly look at a series of cases in which, in our view, a false standard was used. That is, one of the generals greatly underestimated the decisive action his opponent intended when

calculating his operations. We begin with the opening of the campaign of 1757. The Austrians showed, by the way they deployed their forces, that they had not expected an offensive as thorough as the one Frederick the Great adopted. The delay of Piccolomini's corps on the Silesian frontier, while Duke Charles of Lorraine was in danger of being forced to surrender with his whole army, is another example of a complete misunderstanding of the situation.

In 1758, the French were first completely misled about the effects of the convention of Kloster Seeven—a fact, however, that does not concern us here. Two months later, they again badly misjudged what their opponent might attempt, and this soon cost them the country between the Weser and the Rhine. It has already been mentioned that Frederick the Great, in 1759 at Maxen and in 1760 at Landshut, completely misjudged his enemies by not believing them capable of such decisive measures.

Yet in all of history, it is hard to find a greater error of judgment than the one made in 1792. People then believed it was possible to reverse the course of a national war with a moderately sized auxiliary army. Instead, that attempt brought the full, overwhelming force of the French people down upon them—a people then thoroughly thrown off balance by political fanaticism. We call this a great error only because later events proved it to be one, not because it would have been easy to avoid at the time. As for the conduct of the war itself, it cannot be denied that the basis of all the disastrous years that followed was laid in the campaign of 1794. On the allied side, they completely misunderstood the power of the enemy's method of

attack, and answered it with a miserable system of scattered positions and strategic maneuvering. The political lack of unity between Prussia and Austria, along with the foolish abandonment of Belgium and the Netherlands, also shows how little the cabinets of that day foresaw the force of the torrent that had just burst loose. In 1796, the isolated attempts at resistance at Montenotte, Lodi, and elsewhere show clearly enough how little the Austrians understood the central issue when faced with a Buonaparte.

In 1800, Melas was ruined not by the direct effect of the surprise itself, but by the mistaken view he took of its possible consequences.

Ulm, in 1805, was the final knot in a loose web of learned but extremely weak strategic combinations—good enough to stop a Daun or a Lascy, but not a Buonaparte, the Revolution's Emperor.

The Prussians' hesitation and confusion in 1806 came from mixing outdated, miserable, unworkable ideas and measures with a few clear insights and a genuine sense of the immense importance of the moment. If they had clearly understood and fully grasped the country's position, how could they have left 30,000 men in Prussia? How could they then have imagined creating a separate theatre of war in Westphalia, or hoped to gain anything from the petty offensive for which Ruchel's corps and the Weimar corps were intended? And how, in the last moments still left for decision, could they have been talking about danger to magazines and the loss of this or that strip of territory?

Even in 1812, during that greatest of all campaigns, there was at first no shortage of misguided aims based on a false scale of judgment. At headquarters in Wilna, a group of prominent men insisted on fighting a battle at the frontier so that no enemy foot could set itself on Russian soil without punishment. They certainly admitted that this frontier battle might be lost—indeed, that it would be lost. For although they did not know that 300,000 French would face 80,000 Russians, they did know that the enemy was much stronger in numbers. Their main mistake lay in the importance they assigned to this battle. They treated it as if it would be one lost battle among many others. Yet it may be stated with certainty that this great battle on the frontier would have set off a chain of events entirely different from what actually happened. Even the camp at Drissa was based on a completely mistaken estimate of the enemy. If the Russian army had been forced to remain there, it would have been totally isolated and cut off on every side, and the French army would have had no difficulty finding ways to force the Russians to lay down their arms. The man who designed that camp never imagined power and resolve on such a scale.

But even Buonaparte sometimes judged by a false standard. After the armistice of 1813, he believed he could hold back the allies' secondary armies under Blücher and the Crown Prince of Sweden with corps that were certainly too weak to offer real resistance, but that might still overawe cautious opponents and keep them from risking anything, as had so often happened in earlier wars. He did not think enough about the force of the deep resentment that drove both Blücher and Bulow, or about the immediate danger they were in.

More generally, he underestimated old Blücher's aggressive spirit. At Leipsic, Blücher alone tore the victory from him. At Laon, Blücher might have destroyed him completely, and if he did not, the reason lay in circumstances that Buonaparte had not reckoned with at all. Finally, at Belle-Alliance, the punishment for this mistake struck him like a thunderbolt.

SKETCHES FOR BOOK VII THE ATTACK

CHAPTER I. The Attack in Relation to the Defence

If two ideas are exact logical opposites—in other words, if each completes the other—then each is really contained in the other. Our minds are often too limited to grasp both at the same time and, simply from their opposition, to see that a full understanding of one also includes the whole of the other. Even so, each idea still sheds strong, and often sufficient, light on the other. We therefore believe that the first chapter on defence gives enough light on the parts of attack that it touches. But this is not true of every point. The line of thought could not be carried through to a complete conclusion everywhere. It is therefore natural that, where the opposition between the ideas is not as directly rooted in the concept as it is in the first chapters, everything that can be said about attack does not follow straight from what has been said about defence. When we shift our point of view, we come closer to the subject. From that closer position, it is natural to notice things that escaped us from the earlier one. What we see in this way will therefore complete our earlier line of thought. And it will often happen that what is said about attack will cast new light on defence.

In discussing the attack, we will of course often return to the same subjects we considered in the defence. But we do not intend—and the subject itself would not allow it—to follow the usual method of engineering manuals. We will not treat attack

by undoing everything of real value we found in defence, as if every defensive measure could always be defeated by some certain method of attack. Defence has both strengths and weaknesses. Even when its strengths are not impossible to overcome, they can still be overcome only at an excessive cost. That remains true from every point of view; otherwise we fall into contradiction. Nor do we mean to examine in full the back-and-forth action of every opposing method. Every means of defence suggests a corresponding means of attack, and this is often so obvious that there is no need to shift from the defensive point of view to a separate offensive one in order to see it. One naturally follows from the other. Our aim, in each subject, is to explain the distinctive features of attack wherever they do not already arise directly from the discussion of defence. This approach will naturally lead us to many chapters that have no matching chapters in the section on defence.

CHAPTER II. The Nature of Strategic Attack

We have seen that defense in war in general—and therefore strategic defense as well—is not simply a matter of waiting, shielding oneself, and doing nothing. It is not completely passive. It is a relative condition, and so it always contains, to some degree, offensive elements. In the same way, offense is not a single, uniform thing either, but is constantly mixed with defense. The difference is this: defense cannot even be imagined without a counterblow. That counterstroke is an essential part of defense. In attack, by contrast, the blow or action is, in itself, a complete idea. Defense is not necessarily part of attack in itself. But the conditions of time and space, to which attack is inseparably tied, bring defensive elements into it as a necessary evil. First, an attack cannot continue without interruption all the way to its end; it must pause at certain stages, and during those pauses, when its action is suspended, a state of defense arises on its own. Second, as a military force advances, it leaves space behind it, and that space is essential to its existence. The attack itself cannot always protect it, so it must be guarded separately.

In war, and especially in strategy, an attack is always a shifting mix of attack and defence. But this defensive element should not be seen as an effective preparation for attack, or as something that increases its power. It is not an active force. It is simply a necessary burden, like the drag caused by the weight of a mass. It is the attack’s original flaw, the seed of its mortality. We call it a retarding weight because, if defence does

not help strengthen the attack, then by the very time it consumes it must reduce the attack's effect. But can this defensive element, which exists within every attack, also have a directly harmful influence on it? If we assume that attack is the weaker form of war and defence the stronger, it would seem that defence cannot positively damage attack. For if we have enough strength for the weaker form, we should have more than enough for the stronger one. In general—that is, in the main—this is true. In detail, we will examine it more closely in the chapter on the culminating point of victory. But we must not forget that the superiority of strategic defence rests partly on the fact that no attack can take place without some mixture of defence, and a very weak kind of defence at that. What the attacker must carry along in this form are its weakest elements. In regard to these, what is true of the whole in a general sense no longer holds. So it is entirely possible for the defensive element to act on the attack as a direct source of weakness. It is precisely at these moments, when the attack contains this weak defensive element, that the offensive principle within defence should come into play. Consider the twelve hours of rest that usually follow a day's fighting. What a difference there is between the defender, settled in a chosen, familiar, and prepared position, and the attacker, camped in a bivouac he has reached almost like a blind man feeling his way forward. Or think of a longer pause, needed to gather provisions and wait for reinforcements. The defender is near his fortresses and supplies, while the attacker's position is like that of a bird perched on a tree. Every attack must end in a defence. What comes of that defence depends on circumstances. Those circumstances may be very favorable if the enemy's forces

have been destroyed. But they may be very unfavorable if they have not. Although this defensive phase is not part of the attack itself, its nature and effects react back upon the attack and help determine its value.

The conclusion to draw from this is that every attack includes a defensive element, and that element must always be taken into account. Only then can we clearly see the disadvantages it brings and be ready for them.

In another respect, however, an attack is always fundamentally the same. Defence, by contrast, has different stages, depending on how close the principle of waiting is to its end. This gives rise to forms that differ essentially from one another, as explained in the chapter on the forms of defence.

Because the principle of attack is strictly active, while the defensive element connected with it is only a burden, it does not show the same kind of variation. The energy used in an attack, and the speed and force of the blow, may certainly vary greatly, but that is only a difference of degree, not of form. It is even possible to imagine a case in which the attacker adopts a defensive form in order to achieve his aim more effectively—for example, by choosing a strong position so that he will be attacked there. But such cases are so rare that we do not think it necessary to dwell on them in our arrangement of ideas and facts, which is always based on practical experience. We may therefore say that attack does not have gradations like those found in defence.

Lastly, as a general rule, the means of attack consist only of armed force. We must, of course, add fortresses when they are

near the theatre of war, because in that case they can strongly affect an offensive. But their influence steadily decreases as the attack moves forward. It is also clear that, in an offensive campaign, a nation's own fortresses can never matter as much as they do in defence, where they often become matters of first importance. The support of the people may also assist an attack in cases where the inhabitants are more favorably disposed toward the invader than toward their own army. Finally, the attacker may have allies, but these arise only from particular or accidental circumstances, not from anything inherent in the nature of aggression. Therefore, although in discussing defence we have counted fortresses, popular uprisings, and allies among the available means of resistance, we cannot do the same for attack. In defence they belong to the nature of the situation; in attack they appear only rarely, and mostly by chance.

CHAPTER III. The Objects of Strategical Attack

The aim of war is the overthrow of the enemy, and the means in both attack and defence is the destruction of the enemy's military forces. By destroying the enemy's military force, defence is driven toward the offensive, while the offensive is led toward the conquest of territory. Territory, therefore, is the object of attack. But this does not have to mean an entire country; it may be only a part of one, a province, a strip of land, or a fortress. Any of these may have real value because of their political importance in peace negotiations, whether they are kept or exchanged.

The aim of a strategic attack can vary almost without limit, from conquering an entire country to taking some minor place. Once that aim has been achieved and the attack stops, defence begins. In that sense, we can think of a strategic attack as a clearly bounded whole. But in practice—when we look at what actually happens—it is not so clear-cut. In real war, the phases of attack, meaning its intentions and measures, often pass into defence just as gradually and almost imperceptibly as defensive plans pass into offense. A general rarely decides in advance, with complete precision, exactly what he will conquer; he usually leaves that to be shaped by events. His attack often carries him farther than he meant to go. After a shorter or longer pause, he may recover strength and continue, without our having to treat this as two entirely separate actions. At other times, he is brought to a halt sooner than he expected, yet without abandoning his aims or truly shifting to a defensive

posture. We see, then, that just as a successful defence can gradually turn into offense, an attack can in the same way turn into defence. We must keep these gradations in mind so that we do not misapply what we have to say about attack in general.

CHAPTER IV. The Declining Strength of the Attack

This is one of the main issues in strategy: unless we judge it correctly in each concrete case, we cannot accurately determine what we are capable of doing.

The decline in absolute strength comes from the following causes—

1. From the very aim of the attack: occupying the enemy's country. This usually begins only after the first decision has been reached, but the attack does not end with that first decision.

2. From the need for the attacking army to secure the territory behind it, so that it can protect its lines of communication and its sources of supply.

3. From losses in battle and from sickness.

4. From the increasing distance of the various depots for supplies and reinforcements.

5. From sieges and blockades of fortresses.

6. From a slackening of effort.

7. From the loss of allies.

But alongside these weakening factors, there are often others that help strengthen the attack. In any case, the true result can only be found by weighing these different factors against each other. For example, the weakening of the attack may be partly

or fully offset, or even outweighed, by a weakening of the defense. This last case is rare. In making such a comparison, we cannot always include more forces than those directly in front or at decisive points; we cannot include all the forces in the field. Different examples: the French in Austria and Prussia, in Russia; the allies in France; the French in Spain.

CHAPTER V. Culminating Point of the Attack

The success of an attack comes from a present superiority of force, including both moral and physical forces. In the preceding chapter, we showed that the strength of an attack gradually wears out. It is possible that superiority may increase at the same time, but in most cases it declines. The attacker is, in effect, purchasing future advantages to be used later in peace negotiations. But in the meantime, he must pay for them immediately with a certain amount of his military strength. If the attacker's advantage, though shrinking day by day, is still preserved until peace is concluded, then the objective has been achieved. Some strategic attacks have brought about an immediate peace, but such cases are rare. Most, on the contrary, reach only a point where the forces that remain are just enough to hold a defensive position and wait for peace. Beyond that point, the balance shifts and a reaction begins. The force of that reaction is usually much greater than the force of the original blow. This is what we call the culminating point of the attack. Since the object of an attack is the possession of the enemy's territory, the advance naturally continues until superiority is exhausted. This pressure therefore drives us toward the ultimate objective, and can easily carry us beyond it. If we consider how many elements make up the balance of forces in action, we can understand how difficult it often is to decide which of two opponents truly has the advantage. Often everything hangs by the slender thread of imagination.

Everything, then, depends on identifying the culminating point through keen judgment. At first, this seems contradictory. Defense is stronger than attack, so we might assume the attack can never carry us too far. If the weaker form remains strong enough for what is needed, then the stronger form should surely be even more capable.

CHAPTER VI. Destruction of the Enemy's Armies

The destruction of the enemy's armed forces is the means to the end—what this means, what it costs, and the different ways the subject can be viewed.

1. To destroy only as many of the enemy's forces as the object of the attack requires.

2. Or to destroy as many as possible overall.

3. To make the preservation of our own forces the main consideration.

4. This can be taken so far that the attacker does nothing to destroy the enemy's forces except when a favorable opportunity presents itself. The same may also apply to the object of the attack, as already noted in the third chapter.

The only way to destroy the enemy's armed forces is through combat, but this can happen in two ways: first, directly; second, indirectly, through a combination of combats. So although battle is the chief means, it is not the only one. Capturing a fortress or a piece of territory is, in itself, a real reduction of the enemy's strength, and it may also lead to even greater destruction. In that sense, it too can be an indirect means.

Occupying an undefended stretch of territory, then, besides having value as a direct achievement of the objective, may also count as a reduction of the enemy's strength. Maneuvering in order to draw an enemy out of a district he has occupied is somewhat similar. It should therefore be judged from the same

point of view, and not treated as a military success in the strict sense. These methods are generally valued more highly than they deserve. They rarely equal the value of a battle. Besides, there is always a risk that the unfavorable position they create will be overlooked. They are tempting because they seem to come at a low cost.

We should always treat measures of this kind as small investments, from which only small returns can be expected. They suit only very limited relations between States and weak motives. Even so, they are certainly better than battles fought without a clear purpose—better than victories whose results cannot be fully put to use.

CHAPTER VII. The Offensive Battle

What we have said about the defensive battle also sheds a strong light on the offensive battle.

There we focused on the kind of battle in which the defensive character is most clearly marked, so that we could give a more vivid sense of its nature. But only a smaller number of battles are of that kind. Most are demirencontres, in which the defensive character largely fades away. The offensive battle is different: it keeps its character in every circumstance, and can assert that character all the more boldly because the defender is out of his proper element. For that reason, even in battles that are not purely defensive, and in real rencontres, some difference in character still remains between the battle on one side and the battle on the other. The main distinguishing feature of the offensive battle is the manoeuvre to turn or surround the enemy, and therefore the initiative as well.

A battle line arranged to envelop the enemy clearly offers major advantages, though that belongs to tactics. An attacking force should not give up those advantages just because the defender has some way to counter them. The attacker cannot usually use that same method in return, because it depends too much on conditions that belong to the defence. To strike successfully at the flanks of an enemy trying to turn our line, we need a well-chosen, well-prepared position. More important still, however, is the fact that the defender often cannot make full use of the advantages of defence. Most defensive positions are

poor expedients. Most defenders find themselves in a strained and dangerous situation, and, expecting the worst, move forward to meet the attack halfway. As a result, battles fought with enveloping lines, or even with an oblique front, which ought properly to arise from a favourable relationship between the lines of communication, usually come instead from moral and physical superiority, as at Marengo, Austerlitz, and Jena. Besides, in the first battle of a campaign, the attacker's base, even if it is not better than the defender's, is still usually very broad because of its closeness to the frontier. He can therefore afford to take some risks. The flank attack, that is, a battle fought with an oblique front, is also generally more effective than the enveloping form. It is a mistake to think that it must always be linked, from the very beginning, with an enveloping strategic advance, as at Prague. That strategic measure has rarely had much to do with it, and it is very risky. We will discuss this further when we come to the attack on a theatre of war.

Because the defender's aim in battle is to delay a decision as long as possible and gain time—and because a defensive battle that is still undecided at sunset is usually counted as a success—the commander on the offensive must try to force a decision quickly. But too much speed brings serious danger, because it wastes strength. One distinctive feature of offensive battle is that, in most cases, the enemy's position is uncertain; the whole operation becomes a matter of feeling one's way through the unknown (Austerlitz, Wagram, Hohenlinden, Jena, Katzbach). The more this uncertainty exists, the more important it is to concentrate forces, and the more preferable it is to turn a flank rather than attempt an encirclement. We have already

seen in Chapter XII of Book IV that the main gains of victory are first secured in the pursuit. By its very nature, pursuit is a more essential part of the whole action in offensive battle than in defensive battle.

CHAPTER VIII. Passage of Rivers

1. A large river crossing the line of attack is always a serious obstacle for the attacker. Once he has crossed it, he is usually tied to a single crossing point, and unless he stays close to the river, his movements become heavily restricted. Whether he intends to force a decisive battle after crossing, or expects the enemy to attack him, he puts himself in great danger. For that reason, no general would willingly take up such a position without a clear superiority in both moral and physical force.

2. Simply because having a river behind an army is such a disadvantage, a river is far more defensible than it might otherwise seem. If we assume that defending the river is not treated as the only means of safety, but is arranged so that, even if that defence fails, a stand can still be made near the river, then the attacker must include in his calculations not only the resistance he may meet at the river itself, but also all the advantages listed in No. 1 that favor the defender. The combined effect of these factors is that generals usually approach a defended river with great caution before attacking it.

3. But in the previous book we saw that, under certain conditions, a river can in fact be defended with very good results. And if we look at experience, we must admit that such results occur in practice far more often than theory suggests. In theory, we calculate only from the actual conditions as we understand them. In execution, however, things usually seem much harder to the attacker than they really are, and so they hinder his action more than expected.

Suppose, for example, an attack is not meant to bring matters to a decisive conclusion and is not carried out with full energy. Then we may be sure that, in the course of it, many small obstacles and accidents will arise that no theory could have foreseen, and these will work against the attacker. He is the side taking action, and so he is the first to run into such difficulties. Just think how often even the small rivers of Lombardy have been defended successfully. If, on the other hand, military history also offers cases in which river defence failed to achieve what was expected, that is because people sometimes expected extravagant results from it—results based in no way on its tactical character, but only on its well-known effectiveness, which they imagined had no limits.

4. A river defence can be regarded as a form of defence that favors the attacker only when the defender makes the mistake of relying on it entirely, so that if the river line is forced he falls into great difficulty, almost a catastrophe. For it is certainly easier to force a river crossing than to win an ordinary battle.

5. What has just been said makes it clear that river defence may be of great value when no decisive result is sought. But where such a result is to be expected, whether because of the enemy's superior numbers or greater energy, then this method, if used wrongly, may actually work to the attacker's clear advantage.

6. Very few river defensive lines cannot be outflanked, either along their full length or at some particular point. So an attacker with superior numbers and a serious intention to strike hard can feint at one place and cross at another. Then, by pushing

forward with greater numbers and ignoring local resistance, he can correct any unfavorable situation created by the first clashes, because his overall superiority allows him to do so. It is very uncommon for a river crossing to be forced in the strictly tactical sense—that is, by overwhelming the enemy's main position through stronger fire and greater bravery in the troops. The phrase forcing a passage should therefore be understood mainly in a strategic sense: the attacker crosses at an undefended or only lightly defended point within the defensive line and accepts all the dangers that, in the defender's view, ought to follow from such a crossing. But the worst mistake an attacker can make is to attempt a true crossing at several separate points, unless those points are close enough for all the troops to unite in the fight. Since the defender must divide his forces, the attacker throws away his natural advantage if he divides his own in the same way. That is how Bellegarde lost the battle on the Mincio in 1814, when by chance both armies crossed at different points at the same time, and the Austrians were more scattered than the French.

7. If the defender stays on this side of the river, there are necessarily two ways to gain a strategic advantage over him: either cross at some point despite his position, and so beat him at his own method, or offer battle. In the first case, the relationship between bases and lines of communication should be the main consideration. But special circumstances often matter more than these general conditions. The side that can choose the better positions, arrange its forces more skillfully, secure better obedience, move its army faster, and so on, may still gain an advantage despite unfavorable general

circumstances. The second method assumes that the attacker has the means, the right conditions, and the resolve to fight. But when those conditions are present, the defender will not willingly choose this way of defending a river.

8. In conclusion, our view is this: crossing a river by itself rarely creates major difficulties. But in any situation not directly tied to a decisive action, it brings with it so many fears about the consequences and later complications that the attacker's advance can easily be checked. He may either leave the defender on the near side of the river, or cross and then stay close to the river. It is rare for two armies to remain for long facing each other from opposite banks.

But even when a decisive outcome is at stake, a river remains an important factor. It always weakens and disrupts an offensive. In such a case, the best outcome for the attacker is if the defender is led to treat the river as a tactical barrier and makes the defense of that barrier the main part of his resistance. Then the attacker immediately gains the advantage of being able to deliver a decisive blow with relative ease. Certainly, at first this blow will never amount to the enemy's complete defeat. Instead, it will take the form of several favorable engagements, and these create an overall situation highly unfavorable to the enemy, as happened to the Austrians on the Lower Rhine in 1796.

CHAPTER IX. Attacking Defensive Positions

In the book on defence, we have already explained how far defensive positions can force an attacker either to assault them or abandon his advance. Only positions that can do this serve our purpose. They are the ones suited to wearing down or neutralizing the aggressor's forces, wholly or in part. Against such positions, the attacker can do nothing to offset that advantage. But not all defensive positions are really of this kind. If the attacker sees that he can achieve his objective without attacking such a position, then attacking it would be a mistake. If he cannot reach his objective, then the question becomes whether he can force the enemy out of the position by maneuvering and threatening the flank. Only when such methods fail does a commander decide to attack a strong position. In that case, an attack aimed at one side usually presents fewer difficulties. But the choice of side must depend on the position and direction of both armies' lines of retreat. It therefore depends on threatening the enemy's retreat while protecting our own. A conflict may arise between these two aims. When it does, the first deserves preference, because it is offensive in nature and therefore fits the attack, whereas the other is defensive in character. But one point is certain, and it may be taken as a truth of the highest importance: attacking an enemy thoroughly hardened by war and holding a strong position is a critical undertaking. There is no shortage of examples of such battles, including successful ones, such as Torgau and Wagram. We do not include Dresden, because we

cannot call the enemy there fully battle-hardened. But in general the danger is slight, and beside the countless cases in which even the boldest commanders have bowed before such positions, it disappears altogether. (Torres Vedras.)

We must not, however, confuse the subject before us with ordinary battles. Most battles are true “rencontres,” in which one side does occupy a position, but not one that has been prepared in advance.

CHAPTER X. Attack on an Entrenched Camp

For a time, it became fashionable to speak contemptuously of entrenchments and deny their usefulness. People pointed to the cordon lines on the French frontier, which had often been broken through; to the entrenched camp at Breslau, where the Duke of Bevern was defeated; to the battle of Torgau; and to several other examples. These cases led many to dismiss their value. Frederick the Great's victories, won through mobility and offensive action, also cast new light on every kind of defensive warfare, especially fighting from fixed positions and behind entrenchments, and pushed them further into disrepute. Certainly, if a few thousand men are expected to defend several miles of ground, and the entrenchments are nothing more than reversed ditches, they are worthless. Worse, they become a dangerous trap because of the false confidence placed in them. But is it not inconsistent—indeed absurd—to extend that judgment to the whole idea of field fortification, merely in a spirit of bravado, as Templehof does? What is the general purpose of entrenchments, if not to strengthen the defence? No: both reason and experience, in hundreds and thousands of cases, show that a well-designed, adequately manned, and properly defended entrenchment should, as a rule, be regarded as an impregnable point, and the attacker usually sees it that way as well. If we begin with the proven strength of a single entrenchment, then there can be no doubt that attacking an entrenched camp is an extremely difficult operation, and one in which the assailant will generally be unable to succeed.

It belongs to the nature of an entrenched camp that it may be held by only a small garrison; yet with strong natural obstacles and solid field works, it can still resist superior numbers. Frederick the Great considered an attack on the camp of Pirna impracticable, even though he had twice the strength of its garrison at his disposal. It has since been claimed in some quarters that the camp could in fact have been taken. But the only evidence offered for that view rests on the poor condition of the Saxon troops—an argument that does nothing to lessen the value of entrenchments themselves. The real question is whether those who later argued not only that the attack was possible, but easy, would actually have been willing to carry it out at the time.

We therefore regard an attack on an entrenched camp as a highly exceptional measure for an army on the offensive. It can be advisable only when the entrenchments have been thrown up hastily and remain unfinished; still more so if they have not been reinforced with obstacles to prevent an approach; or when, as often happens, the camp as a whole is only a rough sketch of what was intended—a half-finished ruin. In that case, attacking it may be wise, and may also offer a straightforward path to an easy victory over the enemy.

CHAPTER XI. Attack on a Mountain

From the fifth and following chapters of the sixth book, the general strategic importance of a mountain, both for defence and attack, can be understood well enough. There we also tried to explain the role a mountain plays as a defensive line in the proper sense. From that, it naturally follows how it should be viewed in that same role from the attacker's side. There is therefore little left for us to add here on this important subject. Our main conclusion there was that the defender must adopt either the perspective of a secondary engagement or the entirely different one of a great general battle. In the first case, an attack on a mountain can be seen only as a necessary evil, because every circumstance works against it. In the second case, the advantages lie with the attacker.

An attacker, therefore, equipped with the means and the determination to fight a battle, will meet the enemy in the mountains and will certainly benefit from doing so.

But we must repeat once again that this conclusion will be hard to make acceptable, because it goes against appearances and, at first glance, also seems to conflict with the experience of war. In most cases up to now, it has been observed that an army advancing to attack—whether it was seeking a great general battle or not—has counted itself unusually fortunate if the enemy had not occupied the mountains in between, and has then hurried to occupy them first. No one will find this attempt to get ahead of the enemy in any way inconsistent with the

attacker's interests. In our view, it is also entirely permissible. We need only point out clearly that there is a subtle distinction here between different circumstances.

When an army advances against the enemy intending to force a decisive battle, and it must cross an unoccupied mountain range, it naturally has to fear that the enemy may, at the last moment, block the very passes it plans to use. In that case, the attacker would not enjoy the same advantages he would have if the enemy merely held an ordinary mountain position. The defender would not, for example, be stretched too far out, nor would he be uncertain about which road the attacker would take. The attacker, meanwhile, would not have been able to choose his route with the enemy's position in mind. So this mountain battle would not come with all the advantages on the attacker's side that we discussed in the sixth book. In such circumstances, the defender might even be found in a position that cannot be carried. From this it follows that the defender might, in some cases, have the means to use the mountains to advantage in a major battle. That is certainly possible. But if we consider the difficulties the defender would face in establishing himself in a strong mountain position at the very last moment—especially if he had previously left it completely unoccupied—we must regard this method of defence as one that cannot be relied on. The attacker therefore has little reason to fear it as a likely event. Still, however unlikely it may be, it is natural to fear it. In war, many things are perfectly natural to fear, even when that fear is, to some extent, unnecessary.

But there is another measure the attacker must fear here: an initial defence of the mountains by an advance guard or a chain

of outposts. This method, too, will rarely suit the defender's interests. But the attacker has no way of judging how far it may or may not benefit the defender, and so he can only prepare for the worst.

Our view does not at all rule out the possibility that a position may be extremely hard to attack because of mountainous terrain. Some such positions are not actually in the mountains themselves—Pirna, Schmotseifen, Meissen, and Feldkirch. In fact, they are so well suited for defence precisely because they are not in the mountains. It is also easy to imagine positions within the mountains where the defender could avoid the usual disadvantages of mountain positions—for example, on high plateaux. But such cases are uncommon, and we can consider only the general rule.

Military history clearly shows how poorly mountain positions suit decisive defensive battles. Great generals, when they meant to fight a major battle, have always preferred positions on the plains. Across the whole of military history, there are no examples of decisive battles in the mountains except during the Revolutionary Wars. Even there, mountain positions were used because of a mistaken analogy and a false application of principle in situations where a decisive battle had to be fought—such as in 1793 and 1794 in the Vosges, and in 1795, 1796, and 1797 in Italy. Melas has often been criticized for not occupying the Alpine passes in 1800, but such criticism is nothing more than an immature judgment based on appearances—what we might call an early, childlike view. Buonaparte, in Melas's place, would have been no more likely to occupy the passes.

The arrangements for attacking mountain positions are mostly tactical in nature. Still, we think it necessary to add the following remarks about the general outline of such operations, and therefore about the aspects that directly touch on strategy and overlap with it.

1. In the mountains, we cannot move far away from the roads as we can in other kinds of country, nor can we easily split one body into two or three columns whenever circumstances require the main force to be divided. On the contrary, we are usually restricted to long defiles. For that reason, an advance in the mountains must generally be made along several roads, or at least across a somewhat broader front.

2. When attacking a mountain defensive line spread over a wide area, the assault must naturally be made with concentrated forces. Trying to envelop the whole line is out of the question. If victory is to produce an important result, it must come less from surrounding the enemy and cutting him off than from breaking through his line and separating the two wings. The attacker's natural aim, then, is to push forward rapidly and continuously toward the enemy's main line of retreat.

3. But if the enemy holds a position that is more concentrated, turning movements become an essential part of the attack, because frontal attacks strike the main body of the defender's forces. Even then, however, these turning movements should be directed less toward tactically rolling up a flank or attacking the rear than toward cutting off the enemy's retreat. Mountain positions can continue to resist for a long time, even when attacked from behind, if enough troops are available. The

quickest result is always to be expected only when the enemy fears losing his line of retreat. That anxiety arises sooner and works more strongly in the mountains, because, in the worst case, it is not so easy to force a way through by sheer fighting. A mere demonstration is not enough here. It might induce the enemy to leave his position, but it would not guarantee any particular result. The aim, therefore, must be to cut him off from his line of retreat in reality.

CHAPTER XII. Attack on Cordon Lines

When a position's defense and attack depend on a single decisive outcome, lines put the attacker at an advantage. Their great length conflicts even more with the conditions needed for a decisive battle than the straightforward defense of a river or a mountain range does. Eugene's lines at Denain in 1712 show this clearly: losing them was almost the same as suffering a complete defeat, yet Villars would probably not have won such a victory over Eugene if Eugene had been in a concentrated position. If the attacking side does not have the means needed for a decisive battle, then even lines are treated with respect, provided they are occupied by the main body of an army. The lines of Stollhofen, held by Louis of Baden in 1703, were respected even by Villars. But if they are held only by a secondary force, then the issue is simply how strong a corps we can spare to attack them. In such cases the resistance is usually slight, but the value of the victory is usually slight as well.

The circumvallation lines of a besieging army have a distinctive character, which we will discuss in the chapter on attacking a theatre of war.

All cordon-type positions—for example, entrenched outpost lines and the like—share one characteristic: they can be broken through easily. But when they are not forced in order to push farther and bring about a decision, an attack usually gains so little that it is hardly worth the effort.

CHAPTER XIII. Manoeuvring

1. We have already touched on this subject in the thirtieth chapter of the sixth book. It concerns both defense and attack, but it always has something more of the offensive than the defensive about it. We will therefore examine it more closely now.

2. Manoeuvring is not just the opposite of carrying out an offensive by force through major battles. It also stands in contrast to every kind of offensive action that proceeds directly from offensive means, whether an operation against the enemy's communications or line of retreat, a diversion, and so on.

3. If we keep to the usual meaning of the word, manœuvring involves creating an effect that at first comes, to some extent, out of nothing—that is, out of a state of rest or balance—by drawing the enemy into mistakes. It is like the opening moves in a game of chess. It is therefore a contest between evenly matched powers, seeking to gain results from favorable opportunities and then turn those results into an advantage over the enemy.

4. But the interests that must be considered here—partly as the final objective, partly as the main supports or pivot of action—are chiefly these:

(a.) The supplies from which our aim is to cut off the enemy, or to hinder him from obtaining.

(b.) The junction with other corps.

(c.) The threat to other lines of communication with the interior of the country, or with other armies or corps.

(d.) Threatening the retreat.

(e.) Attacking isolated points with superior forces.

These five interests may show themselves in the smallest details of any particular situation, and when they do, such an object becomes the point around which everything temporarily turns. A bridge, a road, or an entrenchment often takes on the leading role in this way. In every case, it is easy to show that such an object matters only because of its connection to one of the interests listed above.

(f.) The result of a successful manœuvre, then, for the offensive—or rather for the active party, which may just as well be the defensive—is a piece of territory, a magazine, and so forth.

(g.) In a strategic manœuvre, two opposing propositions appear. They may look like different kinds of manœuvres, and they have sometimes been used to derive false maxims and rules. They have four branches, but in reality all four are necessary parts of the same thing and should be understood as such. The first opposition is between surrounding the enemy and operating on interior lines; the second is between concentrating forces and spreading them over several positions.

(h.) As for the first antithesis, we certainly cannot say that one side generally deserves preference over the other. In part, that is because one kind of action naturally calls forth the other as its

counterbalance and proper remedy. In part, it is because the enveloping form suits the attack, while the use of interior lines suits the defence. Therefore, in most cases, the first is better suited to the offensive, and the second to the defensive. The one that prevails will be the one employed with the greater skill.

(i.) The two sides of the other antithesis cannot be ranked one above the other either. The stronger force can choose to spread itself across several positions. By doing so, it gains a convenient strategic situation, greater freedom of action in many respects, and some relief for the physical strength of its troops. The weaker force, by contrast, must remain more concentrated and try to offset the disadvantage of smaller numbers through speed of movement. This greater mobility requires greater readiness in marching. The weaker side must therefore place a heavier strain on both its physical and moral forces—a final result to which we naturally arrive everywhere if we wish to remain consistent, and which we therefore regard, to a certain extent, as the logical test of the argument. The campaigns of Frederick the Great against Daun in 1759 and 1760, and against Laudon in 1761, as well as Montecuculis against Turenne in 1673 and 1675, have always been regarded as the most scientific combinations of this kind, and it is chiefly from them that we have derived our view.

(j.) Just as the four parts of the two antitheses discussed above must not be misused as the basis for false maxims and rules, we must also warn against giving other general relationships—such as base, ground, and similar ideas—more importance and decisive influence than they really have. The smaller the interests involved, the more important the details of time and

place become. At the same time, what is broad and significant recedes into the background and, to some extent, has no place in small calculations. Looked at in general terms, could there be a more absurd position than Turenne's in 1675, when he stood with the Rhine close behind him, his army stretched over a line three miles long, and his bridge of retreat at the far end of his right wing? Yet his arrangements achieved their purpose, and with good reason they are recognized as showing a high degree of skill and intelligence. We can understand this outcome, and the skill behind it, only if we look more closely at the details and judge them by the importance they must have had in that particular case.

We are convinced that there are no rules of any kind for strategic manoeuvring. No method or general principle can determine how one must act. Instead, superior energy, precision, order, obedience, and intrepidity—even in the most specific and seemingly trivial circumstances—can find ways to secure striking advantages. Victory in this kind of contest therefore depends chiefly on those qualities.

CHAPTER XIV. Attack on Morasses, Inundations, Woods

Morasses—that is, impassable swamps that can be crossed only by a few raised embankments—create special problems for an attacking force, as we noted in discussing defence. They are usually too wide for artillery to drive the enemy from the far bank, and too wide as well for building a road across. The strategic result is that attackers usually try to avoid assaulting them directly and instead go around them. Where cultivation is so advanced, as in many low-lying countries, that there are countless ways to cross, the defender's resistance is still relatively strong, but it is weakened in proportion when it comes to producing a decisive result, and is therefore wholly unsuited for that purpose. On the other hand, if the low ground, as in Holland, is reinforced by deliberate inundations, the resistance can become absolute and withstand every attack. This was shown in Holland in 1672. After all the fortresses outside the edge of the inundation had been conquered and occupied, 50,000 French troops became available. Yet first under Condé and then under Luxemburg, they could not force the inundation line, although it was defended by only about 20,000 men. It is true that the Prussian campaign of 1787, under the Duke of Brunswick, against the Dutch ended very differently. On that occasion, these lines were carried by a force only slightly stronger than the defenders, and with little loss. But the reason lay in divisions among the defenders caused by political hostility and in the lack of unified command. And nothing is more certain than that the success of the campaign—that is, the advance

through the last inundation line to the walls of Amsterdam—depended on a circumstance so delicate and exceptional that no general conclusion can be drawn from it. The point in question was that the Sea of Haarlem was left unguarded. Because of this, the Duke was able to turn the inundation line and get into the rear of the post of Amselvoen. If the Dutch had had a couple of armed vessels on this lake, the Duke would never have reached Amsterdam, for he was "au bout de son latin." What effect that might have had on the peace settlement does not concern us here. But it is certain that any further attempt to carry the last line of inundation would then have been completely stopped.

Winter is, of course, the natural enemy of this method of defence, as the French showed in 1794 and 1795; but it must be a severe winter.

We should also count woods that are hard to pass through among the features that can strongly support a defense. If a wood is not very deep, an attacker can still push through it by using several nearby roads and then reach better ground. In that case, no single point can have much tactical strength, because we can never treat a wood as completely impassable in the way a river or a marsh might be. But when, as in Russia and Poland, a vast stretch of country is covered with forest almost everywhere, and the attacker cannot get around it, his position becomes extremely difficult. We need only consider how hard it is for him to supply his army, and how little he can do deep in the forest to make his ever-present enemy feel the weight of his superior numbers. This is certainly one of the worst situations in which an offensive force can find itself.

CHAPTER XV. Attack on a Theatre of War with the View to a Decision

Most of these subjects have already been touched on in Book VI, and simply reflecting on them sheds enough light on the attack.

The idea of an enclosed theatre of war is also more closely connected with defense than with attack. Many of the main points—the object of attack, the sphere of action of victory, and so on—have already been discussed in that book. And what is most decisive and essential in the nature of attack cannot really be made clear until we come to the plan of war. Still, there is a good deal left to say here, and we will begin again with the campaign in which a major decision is deliberately intended.

1. The first goal of an attack is victory. Against all the advantages the defender gains from his position, the attacker can set only superior numbers and, perhaps, the small advantage an army feels from being the side that is advancing and taking the offensive. Even so, the importance of that feeling is usually exaggerated. It does not last long, and it will not survive real obstacles. Of course, we assume that the defender acts with the same skill and sound judgment as the aggressor. Our purpose here is to dismiss those vague notions of sudden attack and surprise that are often treated as rich sources of victory in offensive war, though in reality they arise only under special circumstances. We have already discussed elsewhere the true nature of strategic surprise. If, then, the attacker is

weaker in physical strength, it must be stronger in moral force in order to offset the disadvantages built into the offensive form. If that superiority is lacking as well, then there are no solid grounds for the attack, and it will fail.

2. Just as prudence is the defender's true genius, boldness and self-confidence must drive the attacker. We do not mean that the opposite qualities may be entirely absent in either case, but rather that the qualities named are most naturally connected with attack and defence respectively. These qualities are truly necessary because action in war is not a matter of pure mathematical calculation. It is an activity carried on, if not in complete darkness, then at least in dim twilight, where we must place our trust in the leader best suited to achieve the aim before us. The weaker the defender proves morally, the bolder the attacker should become.

3. To win, our main force must fight the enemy's main force. This is more certain in attack than in defence, because the attacker goes looking for the defender in his position. But, as we argued in discussing defence, an attacker should not go after a defender who has taken up a faulty position. He can be confident that the defender will come looking for him instead, and then the attacker will have the advantage of fighting on ground the defender has not prepared. Everything here depends on the road and direction of advance, which are of the greatest importance. We did not examine this point in the chapter on defence, because we reserved it for the present chapter. We will therefore say here what is necessary on the subject.

4. We have already identified the objects at which an attack should be aimed most directly, and which victory is meant to secure. If those objects lie within the theatre of war under attack, and within the likely reach of victory, then the road leading to them is the natural direction for the blow. But we must not forget that the object of an attack usually gains its real importance only after victory has been won. The mind must therefore always keep victory in view along with the object itself. For the attacker, the main concern is not simply to reach the object, but to reach it as a conqueror. So the direction of his blow should be aimed less at the object itself than at the route the enemy's army must take to get there. That route is the immediate object of the attack. If he can meet the enemy before the enemy reaches that object, cut him off from it, and defeat him there, he gains a more decisive victory. For example, if the enemy's capital is the object of the attack, and the defender has not placed himself between the capital and the attacker, the attacker would be wrong to march straight on the capital. He would do much better to move toward the line connecting the defender's army with the capital, and seek there the victory that will put the capital into his hands.

If there is no major objective within the attacker's reach after a victory, then the enemy's line of communication with the nearest major objective becomes the most important point. So every attacker should ask: if I win this battle, what will be the first use I make of that victory? The answer shows the natural direction of the attack. If the defender has taken up position in that direction, he has chosen well, and the attacker has no choice but to go and meet him there. If that position is too

strong, then the attacker must try to outflank it and make the best of necessity. But if the defender has not placed himself at this key point, then the attacker should move in that direction. As soon as he comes level with the defender, if the defender has not meanwhile shifted sideways and placed himself across the attacker's path, the attacker should turn toward the defender's line of communication and seek battle there. If the defender remains completely still, then the attacker must wheel around toward him and strike him from the rear.

Of all the roads open to the attacker, the main roads used for the country's commerce are always the best and most natural choice. Still, to avoid very large detours, more direct roads should be taken even when they are smaller, because a line of retreat that strays too far from a straight course is always dangerous.

5. When an attacker sets out aiming for a decisive result, he rarely has any good reason to divide his forces. If he does divide them, it usually comes from confused thinking. He should therefore advance with his columns spread only across a front narrow enough to let them all come into action together. If the enemy has divided his own forces, so much the better for the attacker. To keep that advantage, he should make small demonstrations against the enemy corps that have separated from the main body; these are the strategic fausses attaques. A detachment of forces for that purpose would then be justified.

Any division into several columns that is absolutely necessary should be used to arrange a tactical attack in an enveloping form, because that form is natural to attack and should not be

set aside without good reason. But this should remain purely tactical. A strategic envelopment when delivering a major blow is a complete waste of strength. It can be justified only when the attacker is so much stronger that there is no doubt at all about the outcome.

6. An attack also requires caution, because the attacker has a rear as well, and lines of communication that must be protected. As far as possible, this protection should come from the way the army advances—that is, eo ipso, from the army itself. If a separate force has to be assigned to this duty, and the army's strength must therefore be divided, that can only weaken the force of the blow itself. Since a large army usually advances on a front at least a day's march wide, if its lines of retreat and communication do not depart much from the perpendicular, those lines are in most cases covered by the army's front.

Dangers of this kind, to which the attacker is exposed, must be judged mainly by the situation and character of the enemy. When everything is under the pressure of an approaching great decision, the defender has little room to undertake operations of this sort. The attacker therefore usually has little to fear. But once the advance is over, and the attacker is gradually passing into the defensive, protecting the rear becomes more necessary at every moment and more a matter of first importance. Because the attacker's rear is naturally weaker than the defender's, the defender may begin operating against the attacker's communications long before passing to a real offensive, and even while still giving ground.

CHAPTER XVI. Attack on a Theatre of War without the Aim of a Great Decision

1. Even when there is neither the will nor the strength needed for a major decision, an army may still undertake a purposeful strategic attack, though it is aimed at some secondary objective. If the attack succeeds, then once that objective is gained, the whole situation settles back into rest and balance. If serious difficulties arise, the general advance of the attack stops before the objective is reached. In that case, it gives way to nothing more than occasional offensive action or strategic maneuvering. This is the character of most campaigns.

2. The objectives that may be pursued in an offensive of this kind are as follows:

(a.) A strip of territory. The advantages of this course may include greater means of subsistence, perhaps contributions, relief for our own territory, and bargaining equivalents in peace negotiations. Sometimes it is also connected with the army’s prestige, as was constantly the case in the wars fought by the French Marshals under Louis XIV. It makes a great difference whether the territory can be held or not. In general, it can be held only when it lies on the edge of our own theatre of war and naturally completes it. Only such territories can be considered as equivalents in negotiating peace. Others are usually occupied only for the duration of a campaign and abandoned when winter begins.

(b.) One of the enemy's principal magazines. If it is not of considerable importance, it can hardly be regarded as the objective of an offensive that shapes an entire campaign. Its capture is certainly a loss to the defender and a gain to the attacker. The greater advantage for the attacker, however, is that this loss may force the defender to withdraw somewhat and surrender a strip of territory that he would otherwise have kept. The capture of a magazine is therefore really more a means than an end. It is mentioned here as an objective only because, until it is taken, it serves for the moment as the immediate and definite aim of action.

(c.) The capture of a fortress.—We discuss the siege of fortresses in a separate chapter, to which we refer the reader. For the reasons explained there, it is easy to see why fortresses are always the best and most desirable objectives in offensive wars and campaigns when the aim is not the enemy's complete destruction or the conquest of a major part of his territory. It is also easy to understand why, in the wars in the Low Countries, where fortresses were so numerous, everything always depended on possession of one fortress or another. So much so, the successive conquest of entire provinces never appears as the main feature. Instead, each of these strongholds was treated as a separate object, with value in itself, and more attention was given to how conveniently and easily it could be attacked than to the value of the place itself.

At the same time, attacking a place of any importance is always a major undertaking, because it involves very great expense. In wars where everything is not risked at once, that is a consideration that should carry great weight. For that reason,

such a siege ranks here as one of the most important objectives of a strategic offensive. The less important the place, or the less serious the intention behind the siege, the smaller the preparations will be. The more it is done in passing, the smaller the strategic objective becomes, and the more it turns into an operation suited to small forces and limited aims. In that case, the whole affair often declines into a kind of mock fight, undertaken to end the campaign with honor, because the attacker is expected to do something.

(d.) A successful fight, engagement, or even battle may be undertaken for the sake of trophies, or simply for the honor of the arms, and sometimes even out of the commanders' sheer ambition. No one can doubt that this happens unless he knows nothing at all about military history. In the French campaigns during the reign of Louis XIV, most offensive battles were of this kind. But what matters more for our purposes is that such actions do have objective value; they are not merely the playthings of vanity. They have a very definite influence on peace, and therefore lead, in a sense, directly toward the ultimate object. Military reputation, and the moral superiority of the army and its general, are forces whose influence, though invisible, never stops affecting the whole course of war.

The aim of such a battle naturally assumes: (a.) that there is a sufficient prospect of victory, and (b.) that not too much depends on the outcome. A battle fought under constrained circumstances and for a limited purpose must not, of course, be confused with a victory that is left without useful results merely because of moral weakness.

3. With the exception of the last of these objectives (d), all of them can usually be achieved without a major battle, and the attacker generally gains them in that way. The means available to the attacker, short of forcing a decisive engagement, arise from the interests the defender must protect in his theatre of war. They therefore consist in threatening his lines of communication—through targets connected with supply, such as magazines, fertile provinces, water routes, and the like; through important points such as bridges, defiles, and similar places; or by placing other corps in strong positions uncomfortably close to him, positions from which he cannot drive us out again. They also include seizing important towns, fertile districts, and disturbed parts of the country that may be stirred to rebellion, as well as threatening weak allies, and so on. If the attack effectively cuts the defender's communications, and does so in a way that he cannot restore them except at great cost, it forces him to shift to another position farther back or on a flank in order to cover those objects, while at the same time giving up others of secondary importance. In this way, a strip of territory is left open, or a magazine or fortress left uncovered: the first exposed to invasion, the second to investment. Larger or smaller combats may grow out of this, but in that case they are not deliberately sought or treated as an objective of the war. They are regarded as a necessary evil, and they can never exceed a certain level of size and importance.

4. Defensive action against the attacker's lines of communication is a form of counteraction that, in wars fought for a decisive result, can usually occur only when those lines of operation are very long. In wars not aimed at a decisive result,

however, this kind of counteraction fits more naturally with the situation. In such cases, the enemy's lines of communication are rarely very long; but then the point is not so much to inflict major losses of this kind on him. Simply obstructing his supplies and cutting short his means of subsistence often has an effect. What these lines lack in length is partly made up for by the length of time that can be spent in this kind of struggle with the enemy. For that reason, protecting his strategic flanks becomes an important concern for the attacker. If, therefore, a contest or rivalry of this kind arises between attacker and defender, the attacker must make up for his natural disadvantages by superior numbers. If he still has enough strength and determination to risk a decisive blow against one of the enemy's corps, or even against the enemy's main body itself, then the threat he holds over his opponent is his best means of protecting himself.

5. In conclusion, we must note another major advantage the attacker clearly has over the defender in wars of this kind: he is better able to judge his opponent's intentions and strength than the defender is to judge his. It is much harder to tell how enterprising and bold an attacker is than to recognize when a defender has something important in mind. In practical terms, the very choice of the defensive form of war usually already gives some assurance that nothing positive is intended. In addition, the preparations for a major counterstroke differ far more from ordinary defensive preparations than the preparations for a major attack differ from those aimed at smaller objectives. Finally, the defender is the one who must act first, and that gives the attacker the advantage of making the last move.

CHAPTER XVII. Attack on Fortresses

We cannot, of course, deal here with attacks on fortresses as part of the technical science of fortification or military engineering. We only need to consider the subject in three ways: first, in relation to the strategic objective it serves; second, in choosing among several fortresses; and third, in deciding how a siege should be covered.

The loss of a fortress weakens the defence, especially when it is an essential part of that defence. Its capture also gives the attacker many advantages: he can use it for magazines and depots, and through it he can protect districts used for cantonments, and so on. If his offensive later has to turn into a defensive, a fortress provides the best possible support for that defence. All these ways in which fortresses affect theatres of war during a campaign are already clear enough from what was said about fortresses in the book on Defence, and that discussion sheds all the light needed on their relation to the attack.

There is also a major difference, when it comes to taking strong places, between campaigns aimed at a great decision and campaigns of another kind. In the first kind, a conquest of this sort must always be regarded as an unavoidable evil. As long as a decisive result still lies ahead, we undertake no sieges except those that are absolutely necessary. Once the decision has already been reached, however—once the crisis, the highest strain of forces, has passed and a period of relative rest has

begun—the capture of strong places helps consolidate the conquests already made. Then such operations can generally be carried out, if not without effort and expenditure of force, at least without danger. During the crisis itself, the siege of a fortress increases the strain of the crisis to the disadvantage of the offensive. Nothing weakens an offensive so much, and nothing is more certain to deprive it, for a time, of its superiority. But there are cases in which the capture of one fortress or another is entirely unavoidable if the offensive is to continue. In that case, a siege must be regarded as an intensified continuation of the attack. The crisis will be greater in proportion to how little has already been decided. Everything else that remains to be said on this subject belongs to the book on the plan of the war.

In campaigns with a limited objective, a fortress is usually not a means to some further end but the end in itself. It is treated as a small, self-contained conquest, and in that role it has the following advantages over any other objective:

1. A fortress is a small, clearly defined conquest that does not require any further use of force, and therefore gives little reason to fear a counteraction.

2. In peace negotiations, its value can be used as an equivalent.

3. A siege is a genuine step forward in the attack, or at least appears to be, without steadily reducing the army’s strength in the way every other offensive advance does.

4. A siege is an operation that does not end in catastrophe.

The result is that the capture of one or more of the enemy's strong places is very often the objective of those strategic attacks that cannot aim at anything higher.

When there is any doubt about which fortress should be attacked, the choice is generally decided by the following considerations:

(a) Whether it is a fortress that can be easily held and therefore has high value as an equivalent in peace negotiations.

(b) Whether the means of taking it are available. Limited means are enough only for small places; but it is better to take a small one than to fail before a large one.

(c) Its engineering strength, which is obviously not always proportional to its importance in other respects. Nothing is more absurd than wasting forces before a very strong place of little importance when a weaker place could be chosen instead.

(d) The strength of its armament and its garrison as well. If a fortress is poorly armed and inadequately garrisoned, it will naturally be easier to capture. But we must note here that the strength of the garrison and armament should be counted among the elements that make up the total importance of the place, because the garrison and armament are directly parts of the enemy's military strength, which cannot be said to the same extent of the fortifications themselves. The capture of a fortress with a strong garrison can therefore much more readily repay the cost of the sacrifice than the capture of one with very strong works.

(e) The ease of moving the siege train. Many sieges fail because the necessary resources are lacking, and those resources are often lacking because they are so hard to transport. Eugene's siege of Landreci in 1712 and Frederick the Great's siege of Olmütz in 1758 are especially striking examples of this.

(f) Finally, we must consider how easily the siege can be covered.

There are two fundamentally different ways to cover a siege: by entrenching the besieging force, that is, with a line of circumvallation, or by using what are called lines of observation. The first method has gone completely out of use, although one important argument clearly supports it: with this method, the attacker's force does not suffer from being divided in the very way that is usually seen as such a serious disadvantage in sieges. Still, we must admit that it is weakened in another way, and to a very great extent, because—

1. As a rule, the position around the fortress covers too wide an area for the strength of the army.

2. In these circumstances, the garrison—whose strength, when added to that of the relieving army, would only equal the force originally opposed to us—must be regarded as an enemy corps in the middle of our camp. Protected by its walls, it is invulnerable, or at least cannot be overpowered, and this greatly increases its power.

3. Defending a line of circumvallation allows for only the strictest kind of defense. Because the line is circular and faces outward, it is the weakest and least favorable of all battle

formations, especially if you want to launch effective counterattacks. In practice, there is no choice but to hold the entrenchments to the very end. It is easy to see that under these conditions the army might suffer losses greater than the one-third that might perhaps result from using an army of observation instead. If we also consider the general preference, since the time of Frederick the Great, for what is called the offensive—though in reality it is not always truly offensive—for movement and manoeuvre, along with the dislike of entrenchments, then it is no surprise that lines of circumvallation have completely fallen out of use. But this weakening of tactical resistance is far from their only disadvantage. We have mentioned the prejudices that most strongly shaped opinion against lines of circumvallation immediately after that drawback because they are closely related to it. In reality, a line of circumvallation protects only the part of the theatre of war that it actually encloses. Everything else is more or less left to the enemy unless special detachments are sent out to cover it. But then the very division of forces that the line was meant to avoid takes place after all. As a result, the besieging army is always troubled and constrained by the need to secure its convoys. Trying to protect those convoys with lines of circumvallation is out of the question when the army and the siege supplies are large and the enemy has a strong force in the field, except under conditions like those in the Netherlands, where a whole system of fortresses stands close together, with connecting intermediate lines that protect the rest of the theatre of war and greatly shorten the transport routes. In the time of Louis the Fourteenth, the idea of a theatre of war was not yet closely tied

to the position of an army. During the Thirty Years' War in particular, armies moved about irregularly, appearing before one fortress or another, often in places where there was no enemy corps nearby at all. They besieged a place for as long as the siege equipment they had brought lasted, and until an enemy army came up to relieve it. Under those conditions, lines of circumvallation naturally arose from the circumstances.

In the future, they are not likely to be used often again, except when the enemy in the field is very weak, or when the whole campaign is effectively reduced to the siege itself. In that case, it is natural to keep all forces concentrated on the siege, because doing so unquestionably gives the siege much greater force and energy.

The lines of circumvallation used under Louis XIV at Cambray and Valenciennes were of little value, since Turenne stormed the former while facing Condé, and Condé stormed the latter while facing Turenne. But we should not ignore the countless other cases in which such lines were respected, even when the need to relieve the place was extremely urgent, and even when the defending commander was highly enterprising. For example, in 1708 Villars did not dare attack the allies in their lines at Lille. Frederick the Great at Olmütz in 1758, and at Dresden in 1760, had no formal lines of circumvallation, but he used a system that was essentially the same. He employed the same army both to conduct the siege and to serve as a covering force. At Olmütz, the distance of the Austrian army led him to adopt this plan, but the loss of his convoy at Domstädtel made him regret it. At Dresden in 1760, he followed this course because he despised the imperial army of the German States

and wanted to take Dresden as quickly as possible.

Finally, one disadvantage of lines of circumvallation is that, if things go badly, it becomes harder to save the siege train. If a defeat is suffered one or more days' march from the besieged place, the siege can be lifted before the enemy arrives, and the heavy train can meanwhile gain a day's march as well.

When choosing a position for an army of observation, one important question is how far it should be placed from the besieged place. In most cases, this will be decided by the nature of the country or by the position of other armies or corps with which the besiegers must keep in communication. Apart from that, the point is easy to understand: the greater the distance, the better the siege is covered; but if the distance is smaller, and does not exceed a few miles, the two armies can support each other more effectively.

CHAPTER XVIII. Attack on Convoys

The attack and defense of a convoy belongs to tactics. So, strictly speaking, we would have nothing to add here if it were not necessary first to show, in general terms, that such an operation is possible at all. That can only be explained through strategic considerations and relationships. We ought to have discussed this earlier in connection with defense, but the little that can be said applies just as easily to both attack and defense, while attack is the more important side of the subject.

A moderate convoy of three or four hundred wagons, whatever it is carrying, stretches for half a mile; a large convoy runs for several miles. How, then, can we expect the small body of troops usually assigned to a convoy to be enough to defend it? The difficulty becomes even greater when we consider the clumsy nature of such a mass. It can move only at the slowest pace, and it is always liable to fall into disorder. In addition, every part of a convoy must be protected equally, because the moment the enemy attacks one section, the whole line comes to a halt and falls into confusion. So we may well ask: how can the escort and defense of such a train be possible at all? Or, to put it another way, why is it that not every convoy is captured when attacked, and why are not all convoys that need an escort—that is, all those within the enemy's reach—actually attacked? Clearly, all tactical devices, such as Tempelhof's highly impractical scheme of repeatedly halting the convoy at short intervals, forming it up, and then moving on again, or Scharnhorst's much better plan of dividing the convoy into

several columns, do no more than slightly correct a fundamental problem.

The explanation is this: most convoys are protected less by their own defenses than by the overall strategic situation, which makes their limited means of defense far more effective than they would otherwise be. Convoys usually move somewhat behind their own army, or at least far from the enemy's. As a result, only small detachments can be sent against them, and even those must be supported by strong reserves. The wagons themselves are also cumbersome, which makes them very hard to carry off. So an attacker usually has to settle for cutting the traces, taking away the horses, and blowing up powder-wagons. That can certainly delay the convoy and throw it into confusion, but it does not destroy it completely. All this shows that the safety of such trains depends more on these general conditions than on the defensive strength of their escort. If we add the escort's defense to this, the convoy becomes safer still. The escort may not be able to protect the convoy directly by boldly advancing against the enemy, but it can still disrupt the enemy's plan of attack. In the end, an attack on a convoy, instead of seeming easy and certain to succeed, appears rather difficult and highly uncertain in its outcome.

But one main point still remains: the danger that the enemy army, or one of its corps, may strike back at the force attacking its convoy and, in the end, punish the attempt by defeating it. Fear of this stops many operations before they even begin, without the real reason ever being visible. As a result, people credit the convoy's safety to its escort, and wonder why such a poor arrangement as an escort is treated with so much respect.

To see how true this is, we need only think of Frederick the Great's famous retreat through Bohemia after the siege of Olmütz in 1758, when half his army was broken up into a column of companies to cover a convoy of 4,000 carriages. What kept Daun from attacking this absurd formation? He feared that Frederick would throw the other half of his army against him and draw him into a battle Daun did not want. And what kept Laudon, who stayed constantly alongside that convoy, from attacking it at Zischbowitz earlier and more boldly than he did? He feared he would get a sharp blow in return. Ten miles from his main army, and completely cut off from it by the Prussian army, he believed he was in real danger of a serious defeat if the king, who at that moment had no reason to concern himself with Daun, suddenly fell on him with the bulk of his forces.

A convoy is truly in great danger only when an army's strategic position forces it into the unnatural necessity of keeping contact with its convoys on its flank or in front. In that case, the convoy becomes an attractive target for the enemy, if his position allows him to detach troops for the attack. The same campaign of 1758 provides an example of the fullest success in an operation of this kind: the capture of the convoy at Domstädtel. The road to Neiss lay on the left flank of the Prussian position, and the king's forces were so tied down by the siege and by the corps observing Daun that the partisans had no reason to worry about their own safety and were able to carry out their attack entirely at their ease.

When Eugene besieged Landrecy in 1712, he brought in supplies for the siege from Bouchain by way of Denain, and so in fact from the front of his strategic position. It is well known what

measures he had to take to overcome the difficulty of protecting his convoys on that occasion, and how deeply he entangled himself in difficulties, ending in a complete reversal of circumstances.

Our conclusion, then, is this: however easy an attack on a convoy may seem from a tactical point of view, it offers little advantage on strategic grounds. It promises important results only in the exceptional cases where the lines of communication are very exposed.

CHAPTER XIX. Attack on the Enemy's Army in its Cantonments

We did not discuss this subject under defence, because a line of cantonments should not be treated as a defensive measure. It is simply the army existing in a condition that implies little readiness for battle. As far as that readiness for battle is concerned, we therefore said no more than was necessary when discussing this condition of an army in Chapter 13 of Book V.

But here, in considering attack, we must treat an enemy army in cantonments as a distinct object in every respect. First, an attack of this kind has a very special character of its own. Second, it may be regarded as a strategic measure of particular effectiveness. What we are considering here, then, is not an attack on a single cantonment or on a small corps scattered among a few villages, since the arrangements for that are entirely tactical. We mean an attack on a large army spread across cantonments of greater or lesser extent—an attack whose aim is not merely to surprise one cantonment, but to prevent the army from assembling.

An attack on an enemy army in cantonments is therefore a surprise attack on an army that has not yet assembled. If the surprise succeeds completely, the enemy army is prevented from reaching its designated assembly point and is therefore forced to choose another farther to the rear. Since shifting the assembly point backward in such an emergency can rarely be

done in less than a day's march, and will generally take several days, the loss of ground this causes is by no means trivial. That is the first advantage gained by the attacker.

But this kind of surprise, which affects the enemy's overall situation, may also begin with attacks on some of the enemy's individual cantonments. It cannot, of course, fall on all of them, or even on a great many, because that would require the attacking army to spread itself out far more than would ever be wise. So only the most advanced quarters, those lying in the path of the attacking columns, can be surprised. Even then, this will rarely happen to many of them, since large forces cannot easily approach without being noticed. Still, this part of the attack should not be overlooked. We count the gains that can be made in this way as the second advantage of surprise.

A third advantage lies in the smaller engagements forced on the enemy, in which his losses are likely to be heavy. A large army does not gather all at once, battalion by battalion, at the point chosen for its general concentration. It usually forms first in brigades, divisions, or corps, and these larger bodies cannot then rush at full speed to the rendezvous. If one of them meets an enemy column on the way, it must fight. It may indeed win, especially if the attacking column is not strong enough. But even in victory it loses time, and in most cases, as is easy to see, a corps in such a situation, with its attention fixed on reaching a point in the rear, will gain little real benefit from that victory. On the other hand, it may be defeated, and that is in itself the more likely outcome, because it has no time to prepare a solid defense. We may therefore assume that, in a well-planned and well-executed attack, the assailant will collect

a considerable number of trophies from these partial combats, and these become an important part of the overall result.

Lastly, the fourth advantage, and the keystone of the whole, is the enemy's temporary disorder and loss of confidence. When his force has finally assembled, this condition seldom allows it to be thrown into action at once. It generally forces the side attacked to give up still more ground to the assailant and to alter its plan of operations more broadly.

These are the proper results of a successful surprise attack on an enemy in cantonments—that is, one in which the enemy is stopped from concentrating his army at the point laid down in his plan without suffering losses. But success naturally comes in many degrees, so the results may be very great in one case and barely worth mentioning in another. Even when the operation succeeds completely and the results are substantial, they will rarely compare with the gains of a major battle. That is partly because the material trophies are usually smaller, and partly because the moral effect is never as deep.

We must always keep this general conclusion in mind, so that we do not expect more from an operation of this kind than it can actually deliver. Many regard it as the highest form of offensive action, but that is by no means true, as both this analysis and military history show.

One of the most brilliant surprise attacks in history was the Duke of Lorraine's attack in 1643 on the French cantonments under General Ranzan at Duttlingen. The corps numbered 16,000 men, and it lost its commanding general along with 7,000 men; it was a complete defeat. The disaster was caused by the lack of

outposts.

The surprise of Turenne at Mergentheim (Mariendal, as the French call it) in 1644 must likewise be considered equal in its effects to a defeat, for he lost 3,000 men out of 8,000. This was mainly because, after getting his men together, he was drawn into making a premature stand. We therefore cannot often count on such results. They came less from the surprise itself, properly speaking, than from a badly judged action, for Turenne could easily have avoided the engagement and rallied his troops on those stationed in more distant quarters.

A third well-known surprise was the one Turenne carried out against the Allies in Alsace in 1674, when they were under the command of the great Elector, the Imperial General Bournonville, and the Duke of Lorraine. The material gains were slight. The Allies lost no more than 2,000 or 3,000 men, which was not enough to determine the fate of an army of 50,000. But the Allies concluded that they could not safely continue resisting in Alsace, and they withdrew across the Rhine once more. This strategic outcome was exactly what Turenne wanted. Still, we should not explain it entirely by the surprise itself. Turenne disrupted his opponents' plans more than he caught their troops off guard; the lack of unity among the allied generals, together with the nearness of the Rhine, did the rest. The whole episode deserves closer examination, because it is generally understood in the wrong way.

In 1741, Neipperg caught Frederick the Great by surprise in his quarters. The only result was that the king had to fight the battle of Mollwitz before he had gathered all his forces, and after

changing his front.

In 1745, Frederick the Great surprised the Duke of Lorraine in his cantonments in Lusatia. The main success came from the genuine surprise of one of the most important quarters, Hennersdorf, where the Austrians lost 2,000 men. The overall result was that the Duke of Lorraine retreated into Bohemia through Upper Lusatia. But this did not prevent him from returning into Saxony by the left bank of the Elbe, so without the battle of Kesselsdorf, there would have been no important result.

In 1758, Duke Ferdinand surprised the French in their quarters. The immediate result was that the French lost several thousand men and were forced to take up a position behind the Aller. The moral effect may have mattered even more, and it may have helped bring about the later evacuation of Westphalia.

If we try to draw a conclusion from these different examples about how effective this kind of attack is, only the first two can really be compared to a victory in battle. But those corps were small, and the lack of outposts in the warfare of that period strongly favored operations of this kind. Although the other four cases must be counted as completely successful enterprises, it is clear that, in terms of results, not one of them can be compared with a battle won. In none of them could the broader result have occurred except against an opponent weak in will and character, and for that reason it did not occur at all in the case of 1741.

In 1806, the Prussian army considered surprising the French in this way in Franconia. The situation seemed to offer a good

chance of success. Buonaparte was absent, and the French corps were spread out in widely separated cantonments. In those circumstances, if the Prussian army had acted with great determination and speed, it might well have expected to drive the French back across the Rhine, with greater or lesser losses. But that was all. If they expected more—for example, to press their advantage beyond the Rhine, or to gain such moral superiority that the French would not dare to appear again on the right bank of the river during the same campaign—there were no adequate grounds for such hopes.

At the beginning of August 1812, the Russians at Smolensk considered attacking the French cantonments when Napoleon halted his army near Witepsk. But they lacked the nerve to carry out the plan, and that was fortunate for them. The French commander's center was not only more than twice as strong as theirs, but he himself was the most determined commander who ever lived. A gain of a few miles would have decided nothing. There was also no natural obstacle nearby that would have let them press any success far enough to make it even somewhat secure. Finally, the war of 1812 was not the kind of campaign that drifts slowly toward a conclusion. It was the serious design of an attacker who had resolved to conquer his opponent completely. For all these reasons, the small results likely from surprising the enemy in his quarters were plainly out of proportion to what the situation required. They could not justify any hope of overcoming the great inequality of forces and the other disadvantages involved. But the scheme does show how a confused idea of the effect of this method can lead to a completely mistaken use of it.

What has been said so far presents the subject as a strategic means. But by its nature, carrying it out is not purely a tactical matter. It also belongs partly to strategy, especially because such an attack is usually made across a fairly wide front, and the army carrying it out can, and generally will, come into action before it has fully concentrated. The whole operation therefore becomes a collection of separate engagements. We must now add a few words about the most natural way to organize such an attack.

The first condition is:

(1.) We must attack the front of the enemy's quarters across a certain width, because that is the only way to truly surprise several cantonments, cut off others, and generally create the disorder in the enemy's army that is intended. The number of columns, and the distances between them, must depend on circumstances.

(2.) The different columns should move in directions that converge on the point where they are meant to join, because the enemy will also end up concentrating his forces to some degree, and we must do the same. If possible, this point of concentration should be the enemy's own assembly point, or a place on his line of retreat. Naturally, the best position is where that line crosses an important obstacle in the terrain.

(3.) When the separate columns come into contact with the enemy's forces, they must attack with great determination, energy, and boldness, since the overall situation is in their favor, and audacity is especially appropriate in such a case. It follows that the commanders of the separate columns must be given

freedom of action and full authority in this respect.

(4.) The tactical plan for attacking those enemy corps that are the first to take up position must always aim at turning a flank, because the greatest results are achieved by separating those corps and cutting them off.

(5.) Each column must include elements of all three arms, and none should be short of cavalry. In some cases, it may even be wise to divide the entire reserve cavalry among them, for it would be a serious mistake to imagine that this cavalry force could play any major role if kept together in one mass during an operation of this kind. The first village, the smallest bridge, or the most insignificant thicket would stop it.

(6.) Although the nature of a surprise attack means that the attacker should not send the advanced guard too far ahead, that rule applies only to the first approach to the enemy's quarters. Once fighting has begun in the enemy's quarters, and everything that could be gained from the initial surprise has already been gained, the advanced-guard columns of all arms should push forward as far as possible, because their speed can greatly increase the enemy's confusion. Only in this way is it possible to capture, here and there, the mass of baggage, artillery, non-effectives, and camp-followers that must be dragged along after a cantonment has been suddenly broken up. These advanced guards must also be the main instruments for turning and cutting off the enemy.

(7.) Finally, the possibility of retreat in case of failure must be considered, and a rallying point must be chosen in advance.

CHAPTER XX. Diversion

In ordinary usage, a diversion means an incursion into the enemy's territory that pulls part of his forces away from the main point. It counts as a distinct kind of operation only when that is the main purpose, and not the capture of the place being attacked. Otherwise, it is simply a normal attack.

A diversion must, of course, still have a target. Only the value of that target will persuade the enemy to send troops to protect it. And if the operation fails as a diversion, the target itself serves as compensation for the forces spent on the attempt.

These targets may be fortresses, important magazines, or large and wealthy towns, especially capital cities. They may also include contributions of every kind. Finally, support may be given in this way to the enemy's discontented subjects.

It is easy to see that diversions can be useful, but they are certainly not always so. On the contrary, they are just as often harmful. The main condition is that they must draw more of the enemy's troops away from the principal theatre of war than we commit to the diversion. If they draw off only an equal number, then they no longer function as diversions in the proper sense, and the operation becomes merely a secondary attack. Even when circumstances lead us to seek a very great result with a very small force—for example, the easy capture of an important fortress—and another attack is made beside the main one to support it, that is no longer a diversion. When two states are at war and a third attacks one of them, this is very often called a diversion. But such an attack differs from an ordinary attack in

nothing except its direction. There is therefore no need to give it a special name, since theory should reserve special terms for things that are truly distinct in nature.

But if small forces are to draw large ones after them, there must plainly be some special reason for it. It is therefore not enough, as the object of a diversion, simply to detach some troops to a point that has not previously been occupied.

If an attacker, with a small force of 1,000 men, overruns one of the enemy's provinces outside the main theatre of war and exacts contributions, it is easy to see in advance that the enemy cannot stop this simply by detaching 1,000 men. If he wants to protect the province from invasion, he must in any case send a much larger force. But one might ask whether the defender could restore the balance by doing the same thing—sending a similar detachment to plunder a province in our own country instead of protecting his own. So, if an aggressor is to gain an advantage in this way, it must first be clear that there is more to seize or threaten in the defender's provinces than in his own. If that is so, then a small diversion will indeed tie down an enemy force larger than the one carrying it out. On the other hand, this advantage naturally shrinks as the forces involved grow larger, because 50,000 men can defend a province of moderate size not only against an equal force but even against one somewhat larger. For that reason, the value of large diversions is very doubtful. The larger they become, the more decisive the other favourable circumstances must be if the enterprise is to produce any overall benefit.

These favourable circumstances may be as follows:

a. Forces that the attacker can use for a diversion without weakening the main body of his army.

b. Points belonging to the defender that are vital to him and can be threatened by a diversion.

c. Discontented subjects of the defender.

d. A rich province that can provide a considerable supply of munitions of war.

If diversions are undertaken only when, judged by these different considerations, they promise results, it will be found that opportunities for carrying out a diversion do not arise very often.

But there is another important point. Every diversion brings war into an area that the war would not otherwise have reached. For that reason, it will always, to some degree, call up military forces that would otherwise have remained inactive. This effect will be especially noticeable if the enemy has an organized militia and the means to arm the population more broadly. It is entirely natural, and experience shows it clearly, that when a district is suddenly threatened by an enemy force, and nothing has been prepared in advance for its defense, the most capable officials immediately seize on and put into action every extraordinary measure they can think of to meet the danger. In this way, new powers of resistance arise, almost like a people’s war, and they may easily stir one up.

This is a point that must be kept firmly in mind in every diversion, so that we do not dig our own graves.

The expeditions to North Holland in 1799 and to Walcheren in 1809, considered as diversions, can be justified only to the extent that there was no other way to use the English troops. But there is no doubt that they increased the total means of French resistance, and any landing in France would have the same effect. Threatening the French coast certainly offers major advantages, because it ties down an important body of troops to watch the coast. But a landing with a large force can never be justified unless we can count on support from a province opposed to the Government.

The less war is expected to lead to a great decision, the more allowable diversions become; but the gain to be had from them will also certainly be smaller. They are only a means of setting stagnant masses in motion.

Execution.

1. A diversion may itself include a real attack; in that case, its execution has no special character of its own except boldness and speed.

2. It may also aim to seem greater than it really is, serving in fact as a demonstration as well. In such a case, the specific methods to use can only be devised by a subtle mind with a deep understanding of people and of the current situation. By the nature of the matter, forces must be divided to a considerable extent on such occasions.

3. If the forces employed are not insignificant, and the retreat is limited to certain points, then a reserve on which the whole can rally is essential.

CHAPTER XXI. Invasion

Almost everything we have to say on this subject amounts to explaining the term. Modern authors use the expression very frequently, and they also claim that it refers to something distinct. French writers constantly use guerre d'invasion as a term for any attack that pushes deep into the enemy's country, and perhaps sometimes mean it as the opposite of a methodical attack—that is, one that only nibbles at the frontier. But this is a very unphilosophical confusion of language. Whether an attack should remain near the frontier or be carried into the heart of the country, whether its main object should be the capture of the enemy's strongholds or the pursuit of the center of the enemy's power without pause, depends on circumstances, not on any fixed system. In some cases, advancing may be more methodical and at the same time more prudent than lingering on the frontier. But in most cases, it is simply the fortunate result of a vigorous attack, and therefore does not differ from it in any essential respect.

CHAPTER XXII. On the Culminating Point of Victory(*)

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The victor in a war is not always in a position to subdue his opponent completely. Often—in fact, almost always—there is a culminating point of victory. Experience shows this clearly enough. But because this subject is especially important to the theory of war, and because it is the pivot of almost all campaign plans, while at the same time seeming on the surface to contain contradictions that shimmer in constantly changing forms, we want to examine it more closely and look for its essential causes.

As a rule, victory comes from having greater overall physical and moral strength than the enemy. It clearly adds to that advantage as well; otherwise no one would seek it or pay such a high price for it. Victory itself certainly has this effect, and so do its consequences. But those consequences usually do not go to the furthest possible extent; they generally reach only a certain limit. Sometimes that limit lies very close, so close that the results of a victorious battle amount to little more than an increase in moral superiority. We must now examine how that happens.

As war unfolds, a fighting force is constantly encountering factors that strengthen it and others that weaken it. The issue, then, is which side has the advantage. Since any loss of power on one side must be treated as a gain for the other, it follows

* See Chapters IV. and V.

that this two-way movement, this ebb and flow, continues whether troops are advancing or retreating.

It is therefore necessary to identify the main cause of this change in one case, because that will also determine the other.

When an army advances, the main reasons its strength increases are these:

1. The enemy army suffers losses, and those losses are usually greater than the attacker's.

2. The enemy loses inactive military assets, such as magazines, depots, bridges, and the like, losses that the attacker does not share.

3. From the moment the attacker enters enemy territory, the defender loses provinces and therefore loses sources of new military forces.

4. The advancing army gains part of those resources; in other words, it gains the advantage of living at the enemy's expense.

5. The enemy suffers a breakdown of internal organization and of the regular functioning of everything.

6. The enemy's allies break away from him, while others join the conqueror.

7. Finally, the enemy becomes discouraged and, to some extent, lets his weapons fall from his hands.

The causes that reduce the strength of an advancing army are:

1. It may be forced to besiege the enemy's fortresses, blockade them, or keep them under observation; or the enemy, who had

been doing the same before the victory, may draw those corps back during the retreat and reunite them with the main body.

2. From the moment the attacker enters enemy territory, the character of the theatre of war changes. It becomes hostile ground. We have to occupy it, because we cannot treat any part of it as our own unless we actually hold it. And everywhere it creates difficulties for the whole military machine, which must inevitably weaken its effect.

3. We move farther away from our own resources, while the enemy moves closer to his. As a result, it takes longer to replace the strength that has been spent.

4. The danger threatening the state stirs other powers to come to its protection.

5. Lastly, the adversary makes greater efforts because the danger has increased, while on the side of the victorious state effort tends to relax.

All these advantages and disadvantages may exist at the same time, intersect to some extent, and move in opposite directions. Only the last pair are true opposites: they cannot coexist and therefore cancel each other out. This alone shows how enormously the effect of a victory can differ, depending on whether it leaves the defeated side stunned or drives it to greater exertion.

We will now try to describe each of these points briefly, one by one.

1. After the enemy is defeated, his losses may be greatest at the first moment of defeat and then decrease day by day until the

balance with our own strength is restored. But they may also continue to increase each day at a growing rate. The situation and the relations between the two sides determine which happens. In general, we can only say that with a good army the first case is more likely, and with an inferior army the second. After the spirit of the army, the spirit of the Government is the most important factor here. In war, it is extremely important in practice to distinguish between these two cases, so that we do not stop at exactly the point where we ought to begin in earnest, and vice versa.

2. The enemy's losses in the non-active part of the war machine may also rise and fall in the same way, depending on the chance location and character of the depots from which supplies are drawn. In the present day, however, this matter cannot be ranked with the others in importance.

3. The third advantage must naturally grow as the army moves forward. In fact, it can hardly be counted at all until the army has pushed deep into the enemy's country—that is, until a third or even a fourth of the country lies behind it. Along with this, the inherent value of a province in relation to the war also becomes a factor.

In the same way, the fourth advantage ought to grow as the advance continues.

But in regard to these last two advantages, we must also note that the forces actually fighting rarely feel their effects at once. They work slowly and indirectly. We should not, therefore, strain too far for their sake—that is, we should not put ourselves in a dangerous position.

The fifth advantage, again, comes into play only after we have advanced a considerable distance, and only if the shape of the enemy's country allows some provinces to be cut off from the main body. When that happens, those provinces usually soon wither away, like limbs tightened by ligatures.

As for the sixth and seventh, it is at least likely that they increase as the advance continues. We will return to them later. For now, let us turn to the causes of weakness.

1. As an army moves forward, the need to besiege, blockade, and invest fortresses usually grows. This drain by itself can affect the fighting force so strongly that it may soon outweigh all the advantages already won. In modern times, armies have certainly adopted the practice of blockading places with only a small number of troops, or merely observing them with an even smaller force; and the enemy, too, must keep garrisons in them. Even so, these places remain a major source of security. Their garrisons often consist largely of people who had taken no previous part in the war. For places near the line of communication, the attacker must leave behind a force at least twice as strong as the garrison. And if he wants to conduct a formal siege or starve out even one important place, he needs a small army for the task.

2. The second cause, establishing a theatre of war in the enemy's country, also necessarily increases as the advance continues. Even if it does not immediately weaken the fighting force, it certainly does so in the long run.

We can count as our theatre of war only that part of the enemy's country which we actually hold—that is, places where we either

have small corps in the field, or where we have left strong garrisons in large towns, stations along the roads, and so on. However small these detached garrisons may be, they still significantly reduce the fighting force. But that is the least of the problem.

Every army has strategic flanks—that is, the country on both sides of its lines of communication. The weakness of these areas is not strongly felt as long as the enemy is in the same position with regard to his own. But that can only be true while we are in our own country. As soon as we enter the enemy's country, the weakness of these areas becomes very clear, because even the smallest operation can promise results when aimed at a long line that is only thinly covered, or not covered at all; and in an enemy's country, such attacks may come from any direction.

The farther we advance, the longer these flanks become, and the danger they create grows even faster. They are not only hard to protect; they also encourage the enemy to act boldly, especially when our lines of communication are long and insecure. And if a retreat becomes necessary, the consequences of losing those lines are a serious concern.

All of this places a new burden on an advancing army with every step it takes. So if it did not begin with more than the usual superiority, it will find its plans becoming more and more restricted, its driving force gradually weakened, and at last it will be left uncertain and anxious about its position.

3. The third cause is that, as the army advances, it moves farther from the source that must constantly replace its steadily

shrinking fighting strength. In this respect, a conquering army is like the light of a lamp: the farther the oil that feeds it sinks in the reservoir and withdraws from the flame, the dimmer the light becomes, until at last it goes out completely.

The wealth of the conquered provinces can certainly reduce this problem a great deal, but it can never remove it entirely. Some things can only be supplied to the army from its own country, especially men. The support provided by the enemy's country is usually neither as prompt nor as reliable as what comes from our own. Resources for unexpected needs cannot be obtained as quickly, and misunderstandings and mistakes of every kind cannot be discovered and corrected as soon.

If a prince does not lead his army in person, as became common in the last wars, and is nowhere near it, then another very serious problem arises: the loss of time caused by messages going back and forth. However full the powers given to an army commander may be, they are never enough to deal with every situation across so wide a field of action.

5. The increased resistance the enemy may put up. Sometimes the enemy drops his weapon in terror and shock. At other times, a burst of enthusiasm takes hold, everyone rushes to arms, and resistance becomes much stronger after the first defeat than it was before. To judge the likely effect, we must look at the character of the people and the Government, the nature of the country, and its political alliances.

These last two points alone can make an enormous difference in the plans that may and should be made in war from one case to another. One commander, through excessive caution and

what is called methodical procedure, wastes his good fortune. Another, for lack of sound reflection, rushes into ruin.

We must also remember the sluggishness that often comes over the victorious side once the danger has passed. Yet that is exactly when renewed effort is needed to press the success further. If we look broadly at these different and opposing principles, the conclusion is clear: in most cases, making profitable use of continued advance in a war of aggression reduces the superiority with which the attacker began, or the superiority gained through victory.

This naturally raises a question: if that is so, what drives the conqueror to continue the course of victory and keep up the offensive? And can this really be called making further use of the victory? Would it not be better to stop at the point where the superiority gained has hardly begun to diminish?

The natural answer is this: superiority in fighting forces is only a means, not the end. The end is to subdue the enemy, or at least to take part of his territory, and thus put ourselves in a position to secure the value of the advantages we have gained when peace is concluded. Even if our aim is to conquer the enemy completely, we must accept that each step forward may reduce our superiority. But it does not necessarily follow that this superiority will be exhausted before the enemy falls. The enemy may collapse first, and if that result can be achieved by using the last small remainder of our superiority, it would be a mistake not to spend it for that purpose.

The superiority we have or gain in war is therefore a means, not the end. It has to be risked in order to achieve that end. But we

must know how far it can carry us, so that we do not push past that point and, instead of gaining new advantages, bring disaster on ourselves.

We do not need to bring in special examples from experience to prove that strategic superiority wears itself out in a strategic attack. On the contrary, it is the sheer number of such cases that has forced us to look into its causes. Only since the rise of Buonaparte have we seen campaigns between civilized nations in which superiority led, without interruption, to the enemy's collapse. Before his time, every campaign ended with the victorious army trying to secure a position where it could simply hold itself in balance. At that point, the advance of victory stopped, even if retreat did not yet become necessary. This culminating point of victory will also appear in the future in all wars where the military aim is not the overthrow of the enemy; and most wars will still be of that kind. The natural goal of every individual campaign plan is the point where the offensive turns into the defensive.

But to go beyond this point is more than merely a useless waste of strength that brings no further result. It is a destructive step that triggers a reaction, and that reaction, as general experience shows, usually has effects far out of proportion to the original move. This is so common, and seems so natural and easy to grasp, that we do not need to explain its causes in detail. The main causes in every case are the lack of organization in the conquered country, and the very different effect on people's feelings when, instead of the fresh victory they expected, they suffer a serious loss. The moral forces now begin to act with full force: courage on one side often rises into audacity, while on

the other side there is extreme depression. As a result, losses during the retreat increase, and the side that had been successful is often left thanking providence if it can escape by surrendering all its gains, without also losing some of its own territory.

We must now resolve an apparent contradiction.

It might seem natural to assume that as long as an attack keeps advancing, the attacker must still hold the advantage. And since defense, which begins when that victorious advance comes to an end, is a stronger form of war than offense, it may seem that there is even less risk of suddenly becoming the weaker side. Yet that risk does exist. History shows that the greatest danger of a reversal often comes at the very moment when the offensive stops and turns into the defensive. We will try to identify the reason for this.

The superiority we have attributed to the defensive form of war consists of the following:

1. The use of terrain.

2. Possession of a prepared theater of war.

3. The support of the people.

4. The advantage of being in a state of expectation.

It should be clear that these principles are not always available or effective to the same degree. As a result, one defense is not always the same as another, and the defensive will not always enjoy the same superiority over the offensive. This is especially true of a defense that begins after an offensive has exhausted

itself, and whose theater of war is usually located at the tip of an offensive triangle pushed far into the country. Of the four principles named above, this kind of defense fully retains only the first, the use of terrain. The second generally disappears altogether, the third becomes negative, and the fourth is greatly reduced. A few more words of explanation are needed about the last of these.

If that imagined balance is upset by an offensive move—after whole campaigns have often passed without result because the side that ought to take the initiative lacks the resolve to do so, and in that very hesitation lies, as we see it, the advantage of waiting—then the enemy's interests are harmed and his will is stirred into action. That makes it much less likely that he will remain passively undecided. A defence organized on conquered territory is far more provocative than one fought on our own soil. It carries a certain offensive element within it, and that weakens its defensive character. The freedom Daun allowed Frederick II in Silesia and Saxony, he would never have allowed him in Bohemia.

So it is clear that when defence is intertwined with, or mixed into, an offensive operation, it is weakened in all its main principles. It therefore no longer has the superiority that properly belongs to it.

Just as no defensive campaign consists of purely defensive elements, no offensive campaign consists entirely of offensive ones. Apart from the short periods in every campaign when both armies are on the defensive, any attack that does not lead to peace must eventually end in defence.

In this way, defence itself helps weaken the offensive. This is far from being a pointless subtlety. On the contrary, we regard it as one of the main disadvantages of attack: in the end, it often leaves us forced into a highly unfavorable defensive position.

This explains how the original difference between the strength of the offensive and defensive forms of war is gradually reduced. We will now show how it may disappear altogether, and how the advantage may for a short time turn into its opposite.

If we borrow an image from nature, we can explain this more quickly. Every force in the physical world needs time to produce its effect. A force that, if applied gradually, would be enough to stop a moving body will fail to stop it if there is not enough time. This law of the physical world clearly illustrates many things in our inner life. Once we are set on a certain course of thought, not every motive that would be strong enough in itself can immediately change or stop it. Time, calm, and lasting impressions on our senses are needed. The same is true in war. Once the mind has firmly turned toward an objective, or turned back toward a safe refuge, it can easily happen that the motives which would normally restrain action in the first case, and those which would naturally encourage bold action in the second, are not felt at once in their full strength. Meanwhile, action continues to move forward, and a person is carried along by its current past the line of balance, past the culminating point, without realizing it. It may even happen that, despite exhausted strength, the attacker—supported by the moral forces that especially belong to the offensive, like a horse pulling a load uphill—finds it easier to keep advancing than to stop. We

believe this shows, without contradiction, how the attacker may pass that point at which, if he had stopped at the right moment, he might still have achieved through the defensive a result—that is, equilibrium. Correctly identifying this point is therefore important when planning a campaign: for the offensive, so that it does not attempt more than its strength allows and, to some extent, incur debts; and for the defensive, so that it can recognize and take advantage of this mistake if the attacker makes it.

If we now look back at everything a commander must keep in mind when making a decision, we see that he can judge the direction and importance of even the most critical factors only by weighing many other related circumstances, both near and distant. To some extent, he must guess. He must guess whether the enemy's army, after the first blow, will reveal a stronger core and growing firmness, or whether, like a Bologna phial, it will crumble into dust as soon as its surface is cracked. He must guess how much weakness and exhaustion will result in the enemy's military condition when certain resources dry up and certain lines of communication are cut. He must guess whether the enemy, under the searing pain of the blow it has received, will collapse helplessly, or whether, like a wounded bull, it will rise in fury. Finally, he must guess whether other powers will be intimidated or stirred to action, which political alliances are likely to break apart, and which are likely to be formed. When we say that he must strike the right answer in all this, and much more, with the sure instinct of his judgment, as a rifleman hits a target, we must admit that this is no small feat of the human mind. A thousand wrong paths open before his judgment in every

direction; and whatever is left undone by the sheer number, confusion, and complexity of the factors is completed by the sense of danger and responsibility.

That is why most generals would rather fall short of the mark than come too close to it. And that is why bold courage and a strong spirit of enterprise often go too far and, for that very reason, also miss the mark. Only the man who achieves great things with small means has truly struck it.

SKETCHES FOR BOOK VIII PLAN OF WAR

CHAPTER I. Introduction

In the chapter on the essence and purpose of war, we outlined its general nature and showed how it relates to the circumstances around it, so that we could begin from a sound basic idea. There we also noted the many difficulties the mind faces when thinking about this subject, though we postponed examining them more closely. We stopped at the conclusion that the defeat of the enemy—and therefore the destruction of his fighting force—is the main aim of all military action. This then allowed us to show in the following chapter that combat alone is the means by which war acts. In this way, we believe, we established the right point of view at the outset.

Having now examined one by one all the main relationships and forms that appear in military action but lie outside combat, we did so in order to define their value more clearly. We relied partly on the nature of the matter itself and partly on the lessons military history provides. Our aim was to clear away the vague and ambiguous ideas usually mixed up with these subjects, and also to bring into full view the true aim of war: the destruction of the enemy’s fighting force as its primary and universal object. We now return to war as a whole, because we intend to speak of the plan of war and of campaigns; and that requires us to go back to the ideas set out in our first book.

These chapters, which deal with the subject as a whole, contain strategy in the proper sense, in its broadest and most important features. We enter this innermost part of its domain, where all other threads come together, with some hesitation—and that hesitation is fully justified.

On the one hand, the workings of war can seem remarkably simple. When we listen to or read the greatest generals, they speak about it in the plainest, briefest terms. They talk about directing and managing this massive machine, with its hundreds of thousands of parts, as casually as if they were speaking only about themselves. The whole vast and terrifying business of war is reduced to something like a duel between individuals. Even the motives behind their actions are often tied either to a few simple ideas or to some strong feeling. They handle the subject with such ease and confidence that it almost seems light. On the other hand, once we look at everything the mind must take into account, we see an immense number of circumstances. The lines of thought stretch far outward, often without clear limits, and countless possible combinations lie before us. If we remember that theory is supposed to grasp all this in an orderly way, with both clarity and completeness, and always trace action back to a sufficient cause, then we begin to fear being dragged into pedantic dogmatism. We imagine ourselves crawling through the lower depths of heavy, obscure ideas, where no great commander, with his natural coup d'œil, would ever be found. If theory led only to that result, it would be just as well—indeed better—not to attempt it at all. It would only expose theory to the contempt of genius, and the effort itself would soon be forgotten. Yet this quick coup d'œil of the

general, this simple way of forming ideas, this habit of treating the whole action of war as if it were embodied in a single person—this is completely the soul of the true method of conducting war. Only in this broad way can we imagine the freedom of mind that is indispensable if it is to master events rather than be mastered by them.

We move forward again, though not without some hesitation. We can do so only by following the path we set for ourselves from the start. Theory should cast a clear light over the mass of things, so the mind can find its way more easily. It should pull up the weeds of error that have been sown everywhere. It should show how things relate to one another and separate what matters from what does not. When ideas naturally gather into that core of truth we call principle, and when they naturally follow a line that becomes a rule, theory should point this out as well.

Whatever the mind is able to grasp, the light stirred within it by this search into the basic nature of things—that is the help theory gives. Theory cannot provide formulas for solving problems. It cannot force the mind to stay within a narrow path of necessity, fenced in on both sides by principles. Instead, it lets the mind survey the whole field of things and their relationships, and then leaves it free to rise to the higher realm of action. There it can act according to the full measure of its natural powers, with all those powers working together, and seize the true and the right as one clear idea. That idea, emerging under the combined pressure of all these forces, seems less the product of reflection than of feeling.

CHAPTER II. Absolute and Real War

The plan of war includes the whole military act. Through it, that act becomes a unified whole, and it must therefore have one definite final object into which all lesser objects are absorbed. No war is begun—or at least no war should be begun, if people act wisely—without first asking what is to be achieved by it and within it. The first is the final object; the second is the intermediate aim. This central consideration determines the entire course of the war. It sets the scale of the means to be used and the level of energy to be applied. Its influence reaches even the smallest part of action.

In the first chapter, we said that the defeat of the enemy is the natural end of the act of war, and that if we stay within the strictly philosophical limits of the idea, there can in fact be no other end.

Since this idea applies to both sides in a war, it follows that there can be no pause in military action, and peace cannot come until one side or the other has been defeated.

In the chapter on suspending belligerent action, we showed that the basic principle of hostility, as it is embodied in human beings and in all the conditions that give rise to war, is limited and altered by causes built into the machinery of war itself.

But this modification is nowhere near enough to take us from the original idea of war to the concrete form in which it appears almost everywhere. Most wars look more like a state of anger

on both sides. Under its influence, each side takes up arms to defend itself, to intimidate its opponent, and, when the chance arises, to strike a blow. They are therefore not like two destructive elements crashing directly into each other, but more like tensions between two elements still held apart, releasing themselves in small, partial shocks.

But what is this non-conducting medium that prevents the full discharge? Why is the philosophical idea not fulfilled? That medium is the multitude of interests, forces, and circumstances of every kind involved in the life of the State that are affected by war. Through their endless interconnections, the logical conclusion cannot be carried through as easily as it could along the simple line of a few deductions. In this labyrinth, thought gets stuck. And man, who in great matters as in small ones usually acts more from ideas and feelings than from strict logic, is scarcely aware of his own confusion, wavering purpose, and inconsistency.

But even if the mind that decides on war could take in all these war-related factors without ever losing sight of its aim, the other minds in the State that are involved may not be able to do the same. Opposition then arises, and with it the need for a force strong enough to overcome the inertia of the whole body—a force that is rarely available in full measure.

This inconsistency may arise on either side, or on both. It then makes the war into something quite different from what, in theory, it ought to be: a mixed and incomplete affair, lacking real inner unity.

This is almost always what we find, and we might even question whether our idea of war's absolute character or nature has any basis in reality if we had not seen warfare appear in this absolute form in our own time. After a brief opening created by the French Revolution, the forceful Buonaparte quickly brought war to this point. Under him, it was pursued without pause until the enemy was crushed, and the counterblow followed with almost as little delay. Is it not natural and necessary that this phenomenon should bring us back to the original conception of war, with all its strict conclusions?

Should we, then, be content with this idea and judge all wars by it, no matter how much they differ from it? Should we derive all the demands of theory from it?

We must settle this question, because we can say nothing reliable about the Plan of War until we have decided whether war must only take this form, or whether it may also take another.

If we answer yes to the first question, our theory will come much closer to what is necessary in every respect. It will also be clearer and more firmly defined. But then what are we to say about all the wars from Alexander to Buonaparte, apart from a few Roman campaigns? We would have to dismiss them all at once, and perhaps we could not do that without feeling ashamed of our own arrogance. There is another problem as well: we would have to admit to ourselves that, despite our theory, another war of that same kind might well occur within the next ten years. And our theory, for all its strict logic, would still be powerless against the force of circumstances. We must

therefore understand war as it actually is, not as a pure abstraction. We must leave room for everything foreign to its concept that becomes mixed up with it and clings to it: all the natural inertia and friction in its parts, and all the inconsistency, vagueness, hesitation, and timidity of the human mind. We must grasp that war, and the form we give it, arises from the ideas, feelings, and circumstances that dominate at a given moment. Indeed, if we want to be completely honest, we must admit that this was true even when war took on its absolute character—that is, under Buonaparte.

If this is so—if we must admit that war begins and takes shape not through a final balancing of the countless relationships connected with it, but through whichever of them happen to prevail—then it follows naturally that war rests on a play of possibilities, probabilities, good luck, and bad luck. In such a realm, strict logical deduction often loses its way, and is generally a useless and awkward tool for the mind. It also follows that war can exist in stronger or weaker degrees; sometimes it is more fully war, and sometimes less so.

Theory must admit all this. Even so, it is still its duty to give first place to the absolute form of war and to use that form as a general guide, so that anyone who wants to learn from theory may train himself never to lose sight of it, and to treat it as the natural measure of all his hopes and fears, in order to move toward it whenever he can, or whenever he must.

A central idea at the root of our thoughts and actions gives them a particular tone and character, even when the immediate reasons behind them come from entirely different sources. This

is as certain as the fact that a painter can give a picture one tone or another through the colors used for the background.

Theory owes this ability, in large part, to the recent wars. Without these warning examples of the destructive force that was unleashed, it might have argued itself hoarse for nothing; no one would have believed possible what everyone has now lived to see happen.

Would Prussia have dared to enter France in 1798 with 70,000 men if it had foreseen that, in the event of failure, the reaction would be strong enough to overturn the old balance of power in Europe?

Would Prussia, in 1806, have gone to war against France with 100,000 men if it had imagined that the first pistol shot would be the spark at the heart of a mine that would blow everything into the air?

CHAPTER III. A. Interdependence of the Parts in War

Depending on whether we are considering the absolute form of war or one of the real forms that departs from it to a greater or lesser degree, different ideas about its result will naturally arise.

In the absolute view of war, where everything results from natural and necessary causes, one event follows another quickly. There is, so to speak, no neutral interval. Because war contains many interacting effects within itself, because the whole chain of engagements is, strictly speaking, connected, and because every victory has a culminating point beyond which losses and defeats begin, war ultimately yields only one result: the final result. Until that final result appears, nothing is settled, nothing is won, and nothing is lost. Here we may truly say that the end crowns the work. From this perspective, war is an indivisible whole, and its parts—the subordinate results—have value only in relation to that whole. The capture of Moscow, and of half of Russia in 1812, was of no value to Buonaparte unless it brought him the peace he wanted. But that was only one part of his plan of campaign. To complete that plan, one further part was needed: the destruction of the Russian army. If we suppose that this had been added to his other success, then peace would have been as certain as anything of that kind can be. Buonaparte failed to achieve this

second part at the proper moment, and he could never gain it afterward. As a result, the whole of the first part became not only useless, but fatal to him. **

Opposed to this view of the connected nature of results in war—which may be considered one extreme—is another extreme. According to this second view, war is made up of separate, independent results, like a series of games in which the earlier ones have no effect on the ones that follow. On that assumption, everything depends only on the total sum of the results, and each individual result can be stored away like a gaming counter.

Just as the first view gets its truth from the nature of things, the second finds its support in history. There are countless cases in which a small, limited advantage could have been gained without any especially burdensome condition attached to it. The more war is softened or restrained, the more common such cases become. But just as the first view we have imagined has never been fully realized in any war, there has likewise never been a war in which the second view fit in every respect and the first could be set aside entirely.

If we hold to the first of these supposed views, then we must see that every war has to be regarded as a whole from the very beginning. From the first step forward, the commander must keep in sight the objective toward which every line of action is meant to converge.

* Book I, Chapter I.

* Book VII, Chapters IV and V (Culminating Point of Victory).

If we accept the second view, then lesser advantages may be pursued for their own sake, while the rest is left to later events.

Since neither of these ways of thinking is without practical value, theory cannot do without either of them. But it uses them differently: the first must be established as the fundamental idea underlying everything, while the second should be used only as a modification justified by circumstances.

When Frederick the Great, in 1742, 1744, 1757, and 1758, pushed out from Silesia and Saxony with a new offensive thrust into the Austrian Empire, he knew perfectly well that it could not lead to a new and lasting conquest like that of Silesia and Saxony. He did it not with the aim of overthrowing the Austrian Empire, but for a smaller purpose: to gain time and strength. He could choose to pursue that subordinate objective without fearing that he would thereby put his whole existence at risk.() But if Prussia in 1806, and Austria in 1805 and 1809, set themselves an even more limited aim, namely driving the French back over the Rhine, they would not have acted reasonably unless they had first considered the whole chain of events that would probably follow that first step, whether in success or defeat, and would lead on to peace. This was absolutely

necessary, both to decide how far a victory could be pursued without danger, and to determine how and where they would be able to stop the enemy's victorious advance. *

A careful reading of history shows where the difference between the two cases lies. During the Silesian War in the eighteenth century, war was still mainly an affair of courts and cabinets, with the people taking part only as a blind instrument. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, by contrast, the people on both sides became a real force in the balance. The commanders facing Frederick the Great were men acting under instructions, and for that very reason caution was their dominant trait. The man opposed to the Austrians and Prussians, on the other hand, can be described in a few words as the very god of war.

Must not such different circumstances lead to entirely different calculations? In 1805, 1806, and 1809, should they not have made the most extreme disaster seem not just possible, but highly probable? And should they not at the same time have called for plans and measures very different from ones aimed merely at taking a couple of fortresses or some petty province?

* If Frederick the Great had won the Battle of Kollen and captured the main Austrian army in Prague, along with its two field marshals, the blow would have been so overwhelming that he might then have considered marching on Vienna itself, shaking the Austrian court, and forcing an immediate peace. Such a result, unmatched in that age, would have resembled things we have seen in our own time, though it would have been even more remarkable and brilliant because the struggle was between a small David and a great Goliath. It very likely might have followed from winning that single battle. But this does not contradict the point made above, because that point concerns only what the king originally expected from his offensive. Encircling and capturing the enemy's army was something no one could have counted on, and the king never imagined it either, at least not until the Austrians exposed themselves to it by the clumsy position they took up at Prague.

They did not do so to an extent that matched their importance, although both Austria and Prussia, as their military preparations showed, sensed that political storms were gathering. They could not, because at that time those relationships had not yet developed as clearly as history has since shown them to us. It is precisely the campaigns of 1805, 1806, 1809, and those that followed that have made it easier for us to understand modern absolute war in all its destructive force.

Theory therefore requires that, at the start of every war, its character and broad shape should be defined by what the political situation and relationships lead us to expect as likely. The more that likely character approaches absolute war, and the more its scope takes in the full strength of the states involved and pulls them into the whirlpool, the more closely each event will be connected to the others and to the whole. But for that very reason, it also becomes all the more necessary not to take the first step without considering what the last may be.

B. On the Scale of the Object of War, and the Efforts to Be Made.

The degree of force we must use against our enemy will be determined by the scale of our own political demands and his. To the extent that these are known to both sides, they set the measure of each side's efforts. But they are not always equally clear, and that may be the first reason why each side adopts different means.

The position of states and their relations to one another are not the same; this may be a second cause.

The strength of will, character, and abilities of governments also differ; this is a third cause.

These three elements create uncertainty when calculating how much resistance can be expected. As a result, there is also uncertainty about how many resources should be used and what objective should be chosen.

In war, too little effort can lead not only to failure but to actual harm. As a result, each side tries to outdo the other, and this creates a reciprocal action.

This could drive effort to the furthest possible extreme, if such a limit could even be defined. But in that case, any sense of the actual political demands would disappear. The means would no longer bear any proper relation to the end, and in most cases this push toward extreme effort would collapse under the opposing forces within itself.

In this way, anyone who undertakes war is brought back to a middle course. He then acts, to some extent, on the principle of using only as much force, and pursuing only such an objective in war, as is enough to achieve the political purpose. To make this principle workable, he must give up any claim to absolute certainty of result and leave remote contingencies out of the calculation.

At this point, the mind's activity passes beyond the realm of science in the strict sense—beyond logic and mathematics—and becomes, in the broadest sense, an art. That is, it becomes the skill of using judgment to pick out, from an endless number of objects and relationships, what matters most and what will decide the issue. This judgment depends, no doubt, to a greater or lesser degree on an intuitive comparison of things and relations, by which what is distant and unimportant is set aside more quickly, and what is nearer and more important is recognized sooner, than strict logical deduction could manage.

To determine the true scale of the means we must commit to war, we have to think through the political objective on both our side and the enemy's. We must consider the strength and position of the enemy's state as well as our own, the character of his government and his people, and the abilities of both; then we must consider all the same factors on our own side, along with the political ties of other states and the effect the war will have on them. It is easy to see that judging all these different circumstances, and the many ways they connect with one another, is an immense problem. The mind that sees at once what is right shows true genius, and it would be impossible to

master such complexity through methodical study alone.

In this sense, Buonaparte was entirely right when he said that it would be an algebraic problem before which even a Newton might stand aghast.

If the wide range and scale of the circumstances, along with the uncertainty about the right course, greatly increase the difficulty of reaching a sound result, we must also remember something else. The unmatched importance of the issue does not make the problem itself more complex or difficult, but it does greatly increase the merit of solving it well. In ordinary people, a sense of danger and responsibility tends to weigh down the mind rather than sharpen it. But when those very pressures give strength and lift to judgment, they are clear signs of an unusually great spirit.

First, then, we must admit that any judgment about an approaching war—its purpose and the means required—can be formed only after fully considering all the circumstances connected with it. That judgment must also take into account the particular character of the moment. Next, we must admit that this decision, like all decisions in military life, cannot be purely objective. It is shaped by the mental and moral qualities of princes, statesmen, and generals, whether those roles are combined in one person or divided among several.

The subject becomes broader, and easier to discuss in abstract terms, if we look at the general conditions in which states have found themselves at different times. So we must take a brief glance at history.

Half-civilised Tartars, the republics of ancient times, the feudal lords and commercial cities of the Middle Ages, the kings of the eighteenth century, and finally the princes and peoples of the nineteenth century all wage war in their own way. They do so differently, with different means, and for different ends.

The Tartars seek new places to live. They move out as a whole people, with their wives and children. As a result, they are larger in number than any other army, and their aim is either to force the enemy into submission or drive him out entirely. By these means they would quickly sweep away everything before them, if a high degree of civilisation could exist alongside such a condition.

The old republics, except for Rome, were small in size, and their armies were even smaller because they left out most of the population. There were too many of these states, and they were too close together, for any of them to carry out great enterprises. The natural balance that always forms among small neighboring powers stood in the way. As a result, their wars were usually limited to ravaging the countryside and capturing a few towns, so they could secure some influence there for the future.

Rome alone was an exception, though not until the later period of its history. For a long time, it fought its neighbors in the usual way, using small forces in wars for plunder and alliances. It became great less through direct conquest than through the alliances it made, by which neighboring peoples were gradually absorbed into a single whole with Rome. Only after it had spread in this way across all of Southern Italy did it begin to

move forward as a truly conquering power. Carthage fell; Spain and Gaul were conquered; Greece was subdued; and Roman rule extended into Egypt and Asia. By this stage, its military power was immense, though the effort it had to make was not immense in the same proportion. Its wealth sustained these forces. It no longer resembled the ancient republics, or even its own earlier self. It stands alone.

Alexander's wars are equally distinctive in their own way. With a small army, but one remarkable for its quality, he shattered the decaying structure of the Asiatic states. Relentlessly, and without regard for danger, he crossed the width of Asia and pushed on into India. No republic could have done this. Only a king, who was in some measure his own condottiere, could have accomplished so much so quickly.

The large and small monarchies of the Middle Ages fought their wars with feudal armies. Everything was limited to a short span of time. If something could not be done within that period, it was considered impossible. The feudal force itself was raised through a system of vassalage. The bond that held it together rested partly on legal duty and partly on voluntary agreement. Taken as a whole, it was really a confederation. Its weapons and tactics were shaped by the rule of brute force and by single combat, and so they were poorly suited to large formations. In fact, in no other period was the union of states so weak and the individual citizen so independent. All of this clearly shaped the character of war in that age. Wars were carried out fairly quickly. Little time was wasted in camps. But the aim was usually not to conquer the enemy, only to punish him. They drove off his cattle, burned his towns, and then went home

again.

The great commercial towns and the small republics introduced the condottieri. This created a military force that was expensive and therefore, in terms of visible strength, quite limited. Its real fighting power was even less impressive. Far from showing any great energy or force in battle, their engagements were usually little more than mock fights. In short, hatred and hostility no longer stirred a state to act in person; they had become matters of business. War lost much of its danger and completely changed its nature, and so nothing we might say about the character it took on then would apply to war in its true reality.

The feudal system gradually hardened into clear territorial rule. The ties holding the state together grew closer. Obligations tied to personal service were commuted into payments. Little by little, gold took their place in most cases, and feudal armies became mercenary forces. The condottieri were the link in this transition and so, for a time, served as the instrument of the stronger states. But this did not last long. Soon the soldier hired for a limited term was replaced by the permanent mercenary, and the military power of states became an army based on the public treasury.

It was only natural that the slow progress to this stage produced a varied mixture of all three kinds of military force. Under Henry IV, we find feudal contingents, condottieri, and a standing army all being used at the same time. The condottieri continued to exist until the time of the Thirty Years' War; in fact, faint traces of them can still be found even in the eighteenth century.

The relations among the States of Europe during these different periods were just as distinctive as their military forces. On the whole, this part of the world had broken up into a mass of small States: some were republics torn by internal conflict, while others were small monarchies in which the government's power was very limited and insecure. In either case, such a State could not be regarded as a true unity; it was more a cluster of loosely connected forces. For that reason, such a State also could not be thought of as an intelligent being acting according to simple logical rules.

This is the perspective from which we must view the foreign politics and wars of the Middle Ages. Consider the repeated expeditions of the German Emperors into Italy over five centuries, without any substantial conquest of that country resulting from them, or even being seriously intended. It is easy to dismiss this as the same mistake made again and again, a false idea rooted in the nature of the times. But it is more reasonable to see it as the result of a hundred important causes—causes we can partly imagine, though we cannot feel their living force as vividly as those who actually struggled against them. As long as the great States that emerged from this chaos still needed time to consolidate and organise themselves, most of their strength and energy was directed inward to that task. Their foreign wars were few, and those that did occur showed the marks of a State whose unity was not yet firmly set.

The wars between France and England are the first to stand out. Yet at that time France should not really be seen as a monarchy, but as a collection of dukedoms and countships. England, though it showed more of the appearance of unity, still fought

through a feudal organisation and was burdened by serious troubles at home.

Under Louis XI, France took its biggest step toward internal unity. Under Charles VIII, it entered Italy as a power intent on conquest. And under Louis XIV, it brought its political system and standing army to their highest level of development.

Spain achieved unity under Ferdinand the Catholic. Then, through a series of accidental marriage alliances, the great Spanish monarchy suddenly emerged under Charles V, joining Spain, Burgundy, Germany, and Italy. What this vast empire lacked in unity and internal political cohesion, it compensated for with gold, and its standing army came into conflict for the first time with the standing army of France. After Charles's abdication, the great Spanish colossus split into two parts: Spain and Austria. Austria, strengthened by the acquisition of Bohemia and Hungary, now entered the scene as a great power, dragging the German Confederation behind it like a small vessel.

The end of the seventeenth century, the age of Louis XIV, should be seen as the point in history when standing military power, in the form it took in the eighteenth century, reached its height. That military force rested on enlistment and money. States had organized themselves into fully unified political bodies, and governments, by converting the personal obligations of their subjects into money payments, had concentrated their full power in their treasuries. Because society had advanced rapidly and government had become more enlightened, this power had grown very great compared

with what it had once been. France took the field with a standing army of a couple of hundred thousand men, and the other powers did so on a similar scale.

The other relations among states had also changed. Europe was divided into a dozen kingdoms and two republics. It had now become possible for two of these powers to fight each other without drawing ten times as many others into the quarrel, as would certainly have happened in earlier times. The possible political combinations were still numerous, but they could now be recognized and judged from time to time according to probability.

In most places, internal affairs had settled into a fully monarchical system. The rights and influence of privileged bodies or estates had gradually faded away, and the cabinet had become a single, unified authority acting for the state in all its foreign relations. The moment had therefore arrived when the right instrument in the hands of a despotic ruler could shape war in line with the theoretical model.

At this point, three new Alexanders appeared: Gustavus Adolphus, Charles XII, and Frederick the Great. Their aim was to use small but highly disciplined armies to raise minor states to the level of great monarchies and to overthrow everything that stood against them. If they had been dealing only with Asiatic states, they would have resembled Alexander even more closely in the roles they played. In any case, we may regard them as Buonaparte's forerunners in terms of how much could be risked in war.

But whatever war gained in strength and coherence on one side, it lost again on the other.

Armies were financed from the treasury, which the sovereign regarded partly as a private purse, or at least as a resource belonging to the government rather than to the people. Relations with other states, except in a few commercial matters, mostly concerned the interests of the treasury or the government, not those of the people; at the very least, ideas were moving everywhere in that direction. The cabinets therefore saw themselves as the owners and managers of large estates, which they constantly tried to enlarge, while the tenants living on those estates had little real interest in that expansion. So the people—who had been everything in war during the Tartar invasions, and who in the old republics and in the Middle Ages (if we limit the idea to those who possessed the rights of citizens) had been of great importance—were in the eighteenth century directly nothing at all, retaining only an indirect influence on war through their virtues and their faults.

As governments increasingly separated themselves from the people and came to see themselves as the state, war became more and more the government's own affair. It was carried on with the money in the treasury and with idle drifters gathered from its own lands and neighboring countries. As a result, the resources a government could use had fairly clear limits, and both sides could estimate those limits in size and in duration. This stripped war of its most dangerous quality: the drive toward extremes, along with the hidden chain of possibilities that came with it.

A state's financial resources, the money in its treasury, the condition of the enemy's credit, and the size of his army were all known roughly enough. No great increase in these was possible once war had begun. Because the limits of the enemy's power could be judged in this way, a state felt fairly safe from total conquest. At the same time, knowing the limits of its own resources, it confined itself to moderate aims. Since it was protected from the worst extremes, it had no need to risk extreme measures itself. And because necessity no longer pushed in that direction, only courage and ambition could do so. But these were strongly checked by political circumstances. Even kings commanding in person had to use the instrument of war carefully. If the army was scattered, no new one could be raised, and apart from the army there was nothing. This made great caution necessary in every undertaking. They used this costly instrument only when a clear advantage seemed to offer itself. Creating such an opportunity was the general's art. But until it appeared, they drifted to some extent in a complete vacuum: there was no solid basis for action, and all forces—that is, all plans—seemed to stand still. The aggressor's original motive faded into prudence and caution.

In reality, war thus became a formal game in which Time and Chance shuffled the cards. In meaning, however, it was only diplomacy carried to a higher pitch—a more forceful way of negotiating, with battles and sieges taking the place of diplomatic notes. The aim, even for the most ambitious, was to gain some limited advantage and then use it in peace negotiations.

This limited, stunted form of war, as we have said, grew out of the narrow foundation on which it rested. But the reason even outstanding generals and kings like Gustavus Adolphus, Charles XII, and Frederick the Great, leading equally outstanding armies, did not stand out more clearly in the overall course of events—and why even they had to be satisfied with only moderate results—was the balance of power in Europe. As states grew larger and their centers moved farther apart, what had once been achieved through direct and entirely natural ties—shared interests, geographic closeness, personal contact, family connections, and friendship—to keep any one state from suddenly becoming too powerful was now accomplished through a more highly developed diplomatic system. Political interests, attractions, and rivalries became so refined and intricate that not a cannon could be fired anywhere in Europe without every cabinet having some stake in it.

A new Alexander, therefore, had to rely on a skilled pen as well as a strong sword; and even then, he never got very far in his conquests.

But although Louis XIV aimed to overturn the balance of power in Europe, and by the end of the seventeenth century had reached a point where he cared little about the general hostility this provoked, he still waged war in much the same way it had been waged before. For although his army belonged to the greatest and richest monarch in Europe, in its essential character it was no different from the others.

Plundering and laying waste to the enemy's country—practices that had played such a major role among the Tartars, in ancient

nations, and even in the Middle Ages—no longer fit the spirit of the time. People rightly saw them as needless barbarity. They could easily provoke retaliation, and they harmed the enemy's subjects more than the enemy's government. As a result, they achieved little beyond setting a nation back in everything connected with the peaceful arts and civilisation. War therefore became more and more confined, both in its means and in its aims, to the army itself. The army, together with its fortresses and a few prepared positions, formed a kind of State within the State, in which the element of war slowly wore itself out. All Europe welcomed this development and regarded it as the necessary result of the spirit of progress. There was, however, an error in this view. As we have already said, and must repeat, the progress of the human mind can never lead to what is absurd; it can never make five out of twice two. Still, taken as a whole, this change benefited the people. Yet it cannot be denied that it also tended to make war even more a matter for the State, and to separate it still further from the interests of the people. In those times, when a state planned an offensive war, its general aim was usually to conquer one or another of the enemy's provinces. The defender's aim was to prevent that. The specific plan of campaign was to capture one or another of the enemy's fortresses, or to prevent one of our own from being taken. A battle was sought and fought only when it became unavoidable for that purpose. Anyone who fought a battle without such necessity, simply from an inborn desire to win a victory, was considered a general of excessive boldness. In general, a campaign passed with one siege, or, if it was especially active, with two. Then came winter quarters, which were treated as a necessity. During that period, one side could

never take advantage of the other's faulty arrangements, and the relations between the two sides almost entirely ceased. Winter quarters thus formed a clear boundary to the activity thought proper to a single campaign.

If the opposing forces were too evenly matched, or if the attacker was clearly the weaker side, then there was neither battle nor siege. The entire campaign instead turned on holding certain positions and supply depots, and on steadily wearing down particular regions of the country.

As long as war was generally fought in this way, and its natural limits were so narrow and obvious, nothing about it seemed absurd. Everything was thought to be in proper order. Criticism, which in the eighteenth century began to pay attention to the art of war, focused on details and gave little thought to the beginning or the end. In this way, every kind of distinction and refinement was achieved, and even Field Marshal Daun—who was chiefly responsible for Frederick the Great fully achieving his aim and for Maria Theresa completely failing in hers—could still be regarded as a great general. Only now and then did a sharper judgment appear: plain common sense recognized that, if one side has superior numbers, it ought to achieve something definite, or else the war is being badly conducted, no matter how much skill may be displayed.

That was the situation when the French Revolution broke out. Austria and Prussia tried to wage war by diplomatic methods, but this very quickly proved inadequate. In 1793, when people still placed their hopes, in the usual way, on a very limited military force, a kind of force appeared that no one had

imagined. War had suddenly become once again the business of the people—and of a people thirty million strong, each of whom saw himself as a citizen of the State. Without going into the details of the circumstances that accompanied this great development, we will limit ourselves to the results that matter here. Once the people took part in war instead of leaving it to a cabinet and an army, the full natural weight of an entire nation entered the balance. From that point on, the available means and the efforts that could be called forth no longer had clear limits. The energy with which war could be carried on no longer had any counterweight, and so the danger to the enemy rose to the utmost extreme.

If the Revolutionary War passed without all this being fully felt and clearly revealed; if the Revolution's generals did not keep pressing to the furthest possible end and did not bring down Europe's monarchies; if the German armies were now and then able to resist successfully and for a time hold back the flood of victory, the real reason was the technical incompleteness the French still had to struggle against. This weakness showed itself first among the ordinary soldiers, then among the generals, and finally, under the Directory, in the government itself.

Once Buonaparte had brought all this to completion, that military power, founded on the strength of the whole nation, moved across Europe and shattered everything before it with such certainty that, whenever it faced only the old-fashioned armies, the outcome was never in doubt. A reaction, however, arose in time. In Spain, the war naturally became a people's war. In Austria, in 1809, the government began extraordinary efforts

through Reserves and the Landwehr. These measures came much closer to the true aim and went far beyond anything that state had previously thought possible. In Russia, in 1812, the example of Spain and Austria was taken as a model. On the one hand, the vast size of the empire allowed the preparations, though delayed too long, still to take effect; on the other hand, it increased the force of that effect. The result was brilliant. In Germany, Prussia was the first to rise. It made the war a national cause and, without either money or credit, and with its population reduced by half, took the field with an army twice as strong as the one it had in 1806. The rest of Germany followed Prussia's example sooner or later, and Austria, though less energetic than in 1809, still entered the struggle with more than its usual strength. Thus Germany and Russia, in the years 1813 and 1814, together with all who took an active part in or were drawn into those two campaigns, faced France with about a million men.

In these circumstances, the energy brought to the war was very different. It still did not quite match the French, and in some places there was still hesitation. But overall, the campaigns were fought in the new style, not the old. In eight months, the theatre of war shifted from the Oder to the Seine. Proud Paris had to lower its head for the first time, and the formidable Buonaparte lay bound on the ground.

So, since the time of Buonaparte, war—because it became first on one side and then on the other the affair of the whole nation—has taken on a completely new character, or rather has come much closer to its true nature, to its absolute perfection. The resources it called forth seemed to have no visible limit;

that limit disappeared into the energy and enthusiasm of the government and the people. Because these means were so vast, because the range of possible results was so wide, and because feeling ran so high, the energy with which war was conducted increased enormously. Its aim was the overthrow of the enemy, and it was not thought possible to stop or reach any understanding about the opposing aims of the struggle until the enemy lay helpless on the ground.

Thus the element of war, freed from all conventional restraints, burst loose with all its natural force. The reason was the participation of the people in this great affair of state, and that participation arose partly from the effects of the French Revolution on the internal affairs of countries, and partly from the threatening posture of the French toward all nations.

Whether this will always remain true in the future—whether every war in Europe will continue to be fought with the full strength of states, and therefore only over major interests that directly affect the people, or whether the interests of governments will gradually separate from those of the people again—is a difficult question, and certainly not one we mean to decide. But everyone will agree that limits which existed partly because people were unaware of what was possible, once broken down, are not easily restored. And at the very least, whenever great interests are at stake, hostility will express itself in the same way it has in our own time.

Here we bring our historical survey to an end. Our purpose was not to race through the principles by which war was conducted in every age, but to show that each period had its own distinct

forms of war, its own limiting conditions, and its own prejudices. For that reason, each period would also have developed its own theory of war, even if people in both early and later times had tried to build such a theory on philosophical principles. The events of any age must therefore be judged in light of that age's particular character. Only someone who can place himself within a given period—not mainly through painstaking study of minor details, but through a clear view of the whole—is capable of truly understanding and appreciating its generals.

But this way of conducting war, shaped by the particular relations among states and by the military forces employed, must still always contain something broader—indeed, something universal—and that, above all, is what theory is concerned with.

The most recent period in the past, when war reached its fullest intensity, includes most of what is broadly relevant and necessary. But it is just as unlikely that all future wars will take on this grand scale as it is that the broad possibilities now open to war will ever be completely shut again. So if a theory focuses only on this absolute form of war, it would leave out—or dismiss as mistaken—all cases in which outside influences change war's character. That cannot be the purpose of theory. Theory should be the science of war as it exists in real conditions, not in ideal ones. Therefore, while theory should examine, distinguish, and classify its subject with care, it must always keep in view the many different causes from which war can arise. It should trace war's main features in a way that still leaves room for what the demands of a particular time and moment require.

Accordingly, we must add that the goal anyone sets for himself in undertaking war, and the means he brings into action, are determined entirely by the particular details of his situation. For that same reason, they will also carry the stamp of their time and of the broader relations surrounding them. Finally, they always remain subject to the general conclusions that follow from the nature of war.

CHAPTER IV. Ends in War More Precisely Defined: Overthrow of the Enemy

In theory, the aim of war must always be the overthrow of the enemy; that is the basic idea from which we begin.

Now, what does this overthrow mean? It does not necessarily mean the complete conquest of the enemy's country. If the Germans had reached Paris in 1792, then, in all human probability, the war with the Revolutionary party would at once have been brought to an end for a time. At that stage, it was not at all necessary to defeat their armies first, because those armies were not yet strong enough to be regarded individually as major powers in themselves. On the other hand, in 1814 the allies would not have gained everything simply by taking Paris if Buonaparte had still remained at the head of a substantial army. But his army had almost melted away, and so in 1814 and 1815 the capture of Paris decided everything. If, in 1812, either before or after taking Moscow, Buonaparte had been able to inflict a complete defeat on the Russian army of 120,000 on the Kaluga road—such as he had inflicted on the Austrians in 1805 and on the Prussian army in 1806—then possession of that capital would most likely have brought about peace, even though an enormous stretch of country still remained unconquered. In 1805, it was the battle of Austerlitz that proved decisive. Therefore, Buonaparte's earlier possession of Vienna and two-thirds of the Austrian States was not enough to secure peace. But after the battle of Austerlitz, the fact that Hungary

remained entirely untouched was likewise not enough to prevent peace from being concluded. In the Russian campaign, the complete defeat of the Russian army was the final blow needed. The Emperor Alexander had no other army ready at hand, and so peace would have been the certain result of victory. If the Russian army had been on the Danube together with the Austrian army and had shared in its defeat, then the conquest of Vienna would probably not have been necessary, and peace would have been concluded at Linz.

In other cases, even the complete conquest of a country has not been enough. That was true in 1807 in Prussia, when the blow aimed at the Russian auxiliary army in the indecisive battle of Eylau was not decisive enough. The clear victory at Friedland was still needed as the finishing blow, just as the victory of Austerlitz had been in the previous year.

Here too, the outcome cannot be settled by general principles alone. The specific causes—known only to those on the spot—and many moral factors that are never reported, even the smallest traits and chance events that appear in history only as anecdotes, are often decisive. Theory can say only this: keep the dominant relationships of both sides clearly in view. From them, a certain centre of gravity—a centre of power and movement—will emerge, and everything depends on it. All available force must then be concentrated in a blow against the enemy's centre of gravity.

The smaller always depends on the larger, the less important on the more important, and the accidental on the essential. That is the principle that should guide our thinking.

Alexander's centre of gravity was his army; the same was true of Gustavus Adolphus, Charles XII, and Frederick the Great. The destruction of any one of their armies would quickly have ended his career. In states torn by internal conflict, this centre usually lies in the capital. In small states dependent on larger ones, it usually lies in the armies of those allies. In a confederacy, it lies in the unity of interests. In a national uprising, it lies in the person of the chief leader and in public opinion. These are the points at which the blow must be aimed. If the enemy loses his balance as a result, he must not be given time to recover. The blow must be repeated relentlessly in the same direction. In other words, the victor must always strike at the enemy's main mass, not at a mere fraction of it. We do not effectively bring the enemy down by taking one of his provinces with little difficulty and superior numbers, then valuing the safer possession of that minor conquest over greater results. We do so by constantly seeking the heart of the enemy's power and risking everything in order to gain everything.

But whatever point forms the centre of the enemy's power and becomes the target of our operations, the surest way to begin is still to defeat and destroy his army; in every case, that remains the most essential step.

We therefore believe that, according to most established facts, the following circumstances are the chief causes of the enemy's overthrow.

1. The dispersal of his army, if it still constitutes, to some extent, an effective force.

2. The capture of the enemy's capital, if it is both the center of the State's power and the seat of its political assemblies and activity.

3. A decisive blow against the principal ally, if that ally is stronger than the enemy itself.

So far, we have treated the enemy in war as a single unit, which is acceptable for very general purposes. But once we say that subduing the enemy means overcoming its resistance as concentrated in its center of gravity, we have to set that assumption aside and consider cases in which we face more than one opponent.

If two or more States join together against a third, that combination is, politically speaking, a single war. At the same time, however, the strength of that political union can vary by degree.

The question is whether each State in the coalition has its own independent interest in the war, and its own independent power to carry it on, or whether one of them is the main support on which the interests and forces of the others depend. The more the latter is true, the easier it is to treat the different enemies as a single opponent, and the more readily we can reduce our main effort to one great blow. Whenever that is at all possible, it is the most complete and effective path to success.

We may therefore lay down this principle: if we can defeat all our enemies by defeating one of them, then the defeat of that one should be the aim of the war, because in that one we strike the common center of gravity of the whole conflict.

There are very few cases in which this way of thinking is not valid, and in which several centers of gravity cannot be reduced to one. But if that cannot be done, then we have no choice but to regard the war as two or more separate wars, each with its own aim. Since this assumes that the several enemies are substantially independent, and therefore that the whole opposing side has great superiority, the complete overthrow of the enemy generally cannot be considered in such a case.

We now come to the more specific question: when is such an objective possible and advisable?

First, our forces must be strong enough—

1. To win a decisive victory over the enemy's forces.

2. To use whatever force is needed to press the victory far enough that the enemy can no longer recover.

Next, we must be sure that, in our political circumstances, such a result will not stir up new enemies against us and force us to release the first enemy at once.

In 1806, France was able to defeat Prussia completely, even though doing so brought the full military power of Russia down upon it, because France was in a position to face the Russians in Prussia as well.

France might have done the same in Spain in 1808 as far as England was concerned, but not where Austria was concerned. In 1809 it was forced to weaken itself significantly in Spain, and it would have had to abandon the struggle there altogether if it had not otherwise enjoyed great superiority over Austria, both in material strength and in morale.

These three cases should therefore be studied carefully, so that in the last case we do not lose the cause we won in the earlier ones and end up paying the price.

When estimating the strength of forces and what they can achieve, people are often tempted to treat time, by analogy with dynamics, as if it were itself a factor of force. They then assume that half an effort, or half as many forces, could accomplish in two years what the full united force could achieve in one. This idea, which underlies many military plans, sometimes openly and sometimes less obviously, is completely mistaken.

A military operation, like anything else on earth, takes time; naturally, we cannot march from Wilna to Moscow in eight days. But in war there is no sign of the kind of reciprocal relationship between time and force that exists in dynamics.

Time matters to both sides in a war, and the only real question is which side, given its position, has more reason to expect special advantages from delay. In general, setting aside unusual circumstances on either side, the defeated party clearly has more reason to hope for that advantage. This is true not because of material forces, but because of psychological ones. Envy, jealousy, fear for one's own safety, and sometimes even generosity naturally work in favor of the unlucky side. They win it friends on the one hand, and on the other they weaken and break up the coalition of its enemies. So, through delay, something favorable is more likely to happen for the conquered than for the conqueror. We must also remember that making full use of an initial victory, as we have already shown, requires a great expenditure of strength. This is not a one-time cost. It has

to be sustained continuously, like running a household on a vast scale. Forces that were enough to seize a province are not always enough to bear this added burden. Gradually the strain on resources grows, until in the end it becomes unbearable. Time, therefore, can by itself bring about a change.

Could the money and other contributions that Buonaparte extracted from the Russians and Poles in 1812 have provided the hundreds of thousands of men he would have had to send to Moscow in order to hold his position there?

But if the conquered provinces are important enough, and if they contain points essential to the well-being of the regions not yet conquered, then the damage may keep spreading through the whole system like a cancer. In that case, the conqueror may gain more than he loses even if he does nothing further. Under such conditions, if no outside help arrives, time may finish the work already begun. What still remains unconquered may perhaps fall on its own. In that way, time can also become a source of strength for the conqueror. But this can happen only when a counterstroke from the conquered side is no longer possible, and when a reversal in its favor is no longer conceivable. At that point, this factor no longer has any real value for the conqueror, because he has already achieved his main objective. The danger of reaching the culminating point has passed. In short, the enemy is already subdued.

In the reasoning above, our aim has been to show clearly that a conquest cannot be completed too quickly. If you stretch it out any longer than absolutely necessary, that does not make it easier; it makes it harder. If that is true, then it is also true that if

we are strong enough to carry out a given conquest, we must be strong enough to do it in a single advance, without stopping at intermediate points. Of course, we do not mean there should be no brief pauses to concentrate forces and make other necessary arrangements.

By taking this view—that offensive war essentially requires a rapid, sustained push toward a decision—we believe we have removed every basis for the theory that would replace the relentless pursuit of victory with a slow, methodical approach on the grounds that it is safer and more prudent. But even for readers who have followed us this far without difficulty, our claim may still seem paradoxical. At first glance, it runs so strongly against an opinion that has taken root like an old prejudice, and has been repeated countless times in books, that it seems worth examining more closely the basis of the plausible arguments that can be made for it.

It is certainly easier to reach something nearby than something far away. But if the nearer objective does not serve our purpose, it does not follow that breaking the task into stages, or stopping at a midway point, will make the second half of the journey easier. A small jump is easier than a large one, but no one who wanted to cross a wide ditch would, for that reason, try to jump half of it first.

If we look closely at what lies behind the idea of so-called methodical offensive war, we generally find that it consists of the following:

1. Capturing the enemy fortresses that lie in our path.

2. Gathering the necessary supplies.

3. Fortifying important points, such as magazines, bridges, positions, and the like.

4. Letting the troops rest in winter quarters, or whenever they need to recover their health and regain their strength.

5. Waiting for reinforcements in the following year.

If, in order to achieve all these aims, we formally divide an offensive into stages and pause the advance, we assume that this gives us a new base and fresh strength—as though the State itself were moving up behind the army and the army could store up new energy for each new campaign.

All these worthy reasons may make an offensive war more convenient, but they do not make its outcome more certain. In most cases, they are only pretexts used to hide opposing forces, such as a commander's personal feelings or indecision in the cabinet. We will try to unravel them one by one.

1. Waiting for reinforcements suits the enemy just as much, and we may even say it benefits him more. Besides, the nature of the case is that a State can put nearly as many fighting forces into the field in one year as in two, because the actual increase in combat strength in the second year is very small compared with the whole.

2. The enemy gets rest at the same time that we do.

3. Fortifying towns and positions is not the army's work, and so it is no reason for delay.

4. Under the present system of supplying armies, magazines are more necessary when the army is in cantonments than

when it is advancing. As long as we advance successfully, we continually take over some of the enemy's supply depots, which help us when the country itself is poor.

5. Capturing the enemy's fortresses should not be seen as a pause in the attack. It is really a more intense continuation of the advance. So the apparent delay it causes is not the kind of pause we mean here; it is neither a suspension of force nor a change in how force is used. But whether a formal siege, a blockade, or simply watching one fortress or another is the best course depends entirely on the circumstances. In general, we can only say that one other question must be settled clearly first: if we rely only on a blockade while continuing to advance, will the risk become too great? If not, and if there is enough room to spread out our forces, then it is better to delay a formal siege until the whole offensive movement is over. We must therefore be careful not to fall into the mistake of neglecting what is essential because we are too eager to secure immediately what we have already conquered.

No doubt it seems that, by advancing in this way, we immediately risk losing what we have already gained. Our view, however, is that dividing the action, creating stopping points, and establishing intermediate positions do not fit the nature of offensive war. When they cannot be avoided, they should be treated as an evil. They do not make the outcome more certain; on the contrary, they make it less certain. More than that, strictly speaking, if weakness or some other cause has forced us to stop, then a second leap toward our objective is usually impossible. If such a second leap is possible, then the stop at the intermediate position was unnecessary. And if an objective

is beyond our strength at the very beginning, it will always remain beyond our strength.

We say this seems to be the general truth, and by that we mean only to reject the idea that time, by itself, can do anything to benefit the attacker. But political relations may change from year to year, and for that reason alone many cases may arise that are exceptions to this general truth.

It may seem, at first, as though we have drifted away from our main point of view and are thinking only about offensive war. But that is not the case. Of course, anyone who can make the complete destruction of the enemy his aim will not readily fall back on the defensive, whose immediate purpose is simply to hold what one already has. Yet we have maintained throughout that a defensive with no positive principle behind it is a contradiction, in strategy no less than in tactics. We therefore return again to the same point: every defensive, depending on its strength, will try to turn into an attack as soon as it has used up the advantages of the defensive position. So, whether the defence is great or small, we must still include, as a possible aim of the attack that grows out of it, the overthrow of the enemy. That is the true objective of the defensive as well. And so we say that there may be cases in which the assailant, even though he has so great an aim in view, may still prefer at first to adopt the defensive form. That this idea is grounded in reality can easily be shown by the campaign of 1812. When the Emperor Alexander entered the war, he may not have intended to destroy his enemy completely, as later happened. But what makes such an intention impossible? And even if he had held it, would it not still have been perfectly natural for the Russians to

begin the war on the defensive?

CHAPTER V. Ends in War More Precisely Defined (continued): Limited Object

In the preceding chapter, we said that by the phrase “overthrow of the enemy” we mean the true absolute aim of the “act of war.” We must now consider what remains to be done when the conditions required to achieve that aim are absent.

Those conditions assume either great physical or moral superiority, or a strong spirit of enterprise, a natural willingness to accept extreme risks. Where these are lacking, the aim in war can be only one of two kinds: either the conquest of a small or moderate part of the enemy’s country, or the defence of our own until circumstances improve. The latter is the usual case in defensive war.

Which of these two aims is the right one can always be decided by recalling the phrase used for the latter. Waiting for more favorable times implies that we have reason to expect such times in the future, and that kind of waiting—that is, defensive war—is always based on that expectation. Offensive war, by contrast, taking advantage of the present moment, is called for when the future promises better prospects not for us, but for our adversary.

The third case, and probably the most common, is when neither side has anything definite to expect from the future, and so the future gives no reason for making a decision. In that situation, offensive war is clearly required of the party that is politically

the aggressor—that is, the one with the positive motive. It has taken up arms for that purpose, and every moment lost without good reason is simply time lost for it.

Here we have chosen between offensive and defensive war on grounds that have nothing to do with the relative strength of the two sides. Yet it may seem more correct to make that choice depend mainly on their comparative military power. In our view, that would take us off the right path. No one will dispute the logical soundness of our simple argument; we shall now see whether, in a concrete case, it leads to the opposite conclusion.

Let us suppose a small State is drawn into a struggle with a far stronger power and can foresee that its position will grow worse with each passing year. If war is unavoidable, should it not use the time when its situation is least bad? In that case, it must attack—not because attacking in itself guarantees any advantage, for it will more likely increase the imbalance of forces, but because the State must either bring the matter to a decision before the worst moment arrives or at least gain some advantages in the meantime that it may later use to its benefit. This argument cannot seem absurd. But if the small State is quite certain that the enemy will advance against it, then it certainly can and should use the defensive to gain an initial advantage over its enemy; in that case, there is no danger of losing time.

If, again, we imagine a small State at war with a larger one, and assume that concern for the future does not affect either side's decisions, then we must still insist that, if the small State is the political aggressor, it should press on toward its goal.

If it has been bold enough to set itself a positive aim in the face of superior numbers, then it must act accordingly—that is, it must attack the enemy, unless the enemy saves it the effort. To wait would be absurd. The only exception is if, at the moment of action, it has changed its political decision—a case that happens very often and contributes greatly to giving wars an indefinite character.

These points about a limited objective apply both to offensive war and to defensive war. We will examine each in separate chapters. But first we must turn to another aspect of the matter.

Up to this point, we have derived changes in the object of war solely from internal reasons. We have considered the nature of the political aim only in so far as it is, or is not, directed toward some positive end. Everything else in the political aim is, in fact, external to war. But in the second chapter of the first book (End and Means in War), we already acknowledged that the nature of the political object, the scale of our own or the enemy's demands, and our whole political relationship have a deeply decisive influence on how war is conducted. We will therefore devote the following chapter specifically to that subject.

CHAPTER VI. A. Influence of the Political Object on the Military Object

We never see a State that joins another State’s cause pursue it with the same commitment it would show in its own. It sends an auxiliary army of moderate size; if that force does not succeed, the ally treats the matter as more or less finished and tries to withdraw on the cheapest terms it can.

In European politics, states have often bound themselves to mutual support through offensive and defensive alliances. But this usually has not meant that one state fully joins the other's interests and disputes. Instead, each promises in advance to provide a fixed, usually fairly small, number of troops, regardless of the war's purpose or the scale on which the main powers intend to fight it. In an alliance of this kind, the ally does not see itself as truly at war with the enemy in the full sense, as a war that must formally begin with a declaration and end with a peace treaty. Even so, this idea has never been clearly defined, and practice has varied from case to case.

This arrangement would have a certain logic, and it would create fewer problems for the theory of war, if the promised contingent of ten, twenty, or thirty thousand men were handed over entirely to the state already at war, to be used as needed. In that case, it could be treated as a subsidized force. But that is not how things usually work. In most cases, the auxiliary force keeps its own commander, who answers only to his own government, and that government assigns him an objective that

best fits the hesitant, half-measure policies it wants to pursue.

But even when two states go to war against a third, they do not always view their common enemy with the same sense that it must either destroy them or be destroyed by them. The matter is often handled more like a business deal. Each state, depending on the risk it takes or the advantage it expects, invests in the enterprise to the extent of 30,000 or 40,000 men, and acts as though it cannot lose more than the size of that investment.

This is not only the attitude when one state helps another in a cause in which it has relatively little concern. Even when both allies share a common and very important interest, they still do nothing except under diplomatic reservations, and the parties usually agree to provide only a small fixed contingent, so that they can use the rest of their forces for whatever separate aims policy may later suggest.

This way of looking at wars fought because of alliances was once quite common. It gave way to the more natural view only in fairly recent times, when extreme danger forced people's thinking in that direction, as in the wars against Buonaparte, and when overwhelming power compelled them to do so, as under Buonaparte. This was an abnormal condition, an anomaly, because war and peace are ideas that, at their core, do not admit of degrees. Even so, it was not merely a diplomatic invention that reason could dismiss with contempt. It was deeply rooted in the natural limitations and weakness of human nature.

Finally, even in wars fought without allies, the political purpose behind a war greatly influences how it is conducted.

If we ask only a small sacrifice from the enemy, we are satisfied with seeking only a small equivalent through the war, and we expect to gain it with moderate effort. The enemy reasons in much the same way. But if one side or the other discovers that it has miscalculated, and that instead of being slightly stronger than the enemy, as it had supposed, it is actually somewhat weaker, then money and other resources, along with the moral energy needed for greater exertions, are often lacking at that very moment. In that case, it simply does what is called "the best he can," hopes for better things in the future, though there is not the slightest basis for such hope, and meanwhile the war drags on feebly, like a body worn down by illness.

So it happens that the mutual action, rivalry, violence, and force of war fade into the stagnation of weak motives, and both sides move with a certain sense of security within very narrow limits.

Once this influence of the political objective is allowed, as it then must be, there is no longer any fixed limit, and we must be willing to descend to a kind of warfare that consists merely in threatening the enemy and negotiating.

It is clear that the theory of war runs into a problem if it is to remain a philosophical study. Everything that seems essential to the very idea of war appears to slip away, and the theory risks being left with nothing firm to stand on. But there is an obvious way out. As whatever moderates war gains more influence—or rather, as the motives for action grow weaker—the conflict increasingly shifts into passive resistance. It becomes less

eventful and demands fewer guiding principles. Military art then turns into little more than prudence, whose main aim is to keep the shaky balance from suddenly tipping against us and to prevent a half-war from becoming a full one.

B. War as an Instrument of Policy

Having examined both sides of the antagonistic condition in which the nature of war stands in relation to other human interests—both the interests of individuals and those of society—so that we would not overlook any of the opposing elements, an antagonism rooted in our own nature and therefore beyond the power of philosophy to fully resolve, we will now look for the unity into which these opposing elements combine in practical life by partly cancelling each other out. We would have introduced this unity at the very beginning if it had not first been necessary to make the contradiction fully clear and to consider the different elements separately. This unity is the idea that war is only a part of political intercourse, and therefore by no means something independent in itself.

We know, of course, that war arises only out of the political relations of governments and nations. But people generally assume that once war begins, those relations are broken off and an entirely different state of affairs takes over, governed by no laws except its own.

We argue the opposite: war is simply the continuation of political relations by other means. We say "by other means" to make clear that political relations do not stop when war begins. They do not turn into something entirely different. In essence, they continue, whatever form the means may take. The main lines along which the events of war unfold, and to which they remain tied, are really just the broad outlines of policy running through the war until peace is made. How could it be otherwise? Does the end of diplomatic notes end the political relationship

between nations and governments? Is war not simply another way of expressing political thought, another kind of writing and language? It certainly has its own grammar, but its logic is not unique to itself.

Accordingly, war can never be separated from political relations. If we treat it as if it can be, then the threads connecting all the different relationships are partly cut, and what remains before us is something senseless, without any purpose.

This idea would be essential even if war were absolute war, a completely unrestrained force of hostility. For all the conditions on which it depends, and which shape its main features—our own strength, the enemy's strength, allies on both sides, the character of the people and their governments, and so on, as listed in the first chapter of the first book—are these not political in nature? And are they not so closely bound up with political relations as a whole that they cannot be separated from them? But this view becomes even more necessary when we remember that real war is nothing like the consistent drive toward extremes that the abstract idea suggests. It is a mixed and imperfect thing, a contradiction in itself. Because of that, it cannot follow its own laws alone. It must be understood as part of a larger whole, and that whole is policy.

When policy uses war, it avoids the harsh conclusions that follow from war's pure nature. It pays little attention to ultimate possibilities and focuses instead on immediate probabilities. This introduces a great deal of uncertainty into the whole course of action and makes war something like a game. Yet

each government trusts that, in this game, it will outdo its rival in skill and foresight.

So policy turns war, this overwhelming force, into a mere instrument. It changes the mighty battle-sword, which should be raised with both hands and the full strength of the body for one decisive blow, into a light, manageable weapon—sometimes even just a rapier for trading thrusts, feints, and parries.

In this way, the contradictions into which man, naturally timid, is drawn by war can be resolved—if we are willing to accept this as a resolution.

If war belongs to policy, it will naturally take its character from policy. If policy is broad and powerful, war will be as well, and this can go so far that war reaches its absolute form.

From this point of view, then, we do not need to lose sight of war's absolute form. On the contrary, we keep it constantly in the background.

Only from this perspective does war regain its unity. Only in this way can we see all wars as things of the same kind. And only through it can judgment find the true and proper foundation and point of view from which great plans can be drawn up and decided.

It is true that the political element does not reach deeply into the details of war. Vedettes are not posted, and patrols do not make their rounds, for political reasons. But although its influence is small at that level, it is great in shaping the plan for an entire war or campaign, and often even for a battle.

For that reason, we did not rush to establish this view at the beginning. When dealing with particulars, it would have helped little and might even have distracted us to some extent. But in planning a war or a campaign, it is indispensable.

On the whole, nothing in life matters more than finding the right point of view from which to see and judge things, and then holding to it. We can only grasp the full mass of events as a unified whole from a single standpoint, and only by keeping to one point of view can we avoid inconsistency.

If, then, it is not acceptable, when drawing up a plan for war, to adopt two or three different points of view—looking at matters now as a soldier, then as an administrator, and then again as a politician—the next question is whether policy must necessarily take precedence, with everything else subordinate to it.

We assume that policy brings together and reconciles all the interests of internal administration, including those of humanity and every other rational consideration, because in itself it is nothing more than the representative and expression of all these interests in relation to other states. Whether policy may take a wrong direction, or unfairly serve the ambition, private interests, or vanity of rulers, does not concern us here. Under no circumstances can the art of war be treated as its teacher. Here we can only regard policy as the representative of the general interests of the whole community.

The only question, then, is this: when plans for war are being made, should the political point of view give way to the purely military one—if such a purely military point of view can even be imagined? In other words, should it disappear altogether or

place itself beneath the military view? Or should the political point of view remain the governing one, with the military considered subordinate to it?

The idea that the political point of view should end completely once war begins is conceivable only in struggles that are wars of life and death, driven by pure hatred. In reality, however, wars are, as we said before, only expressions or manifestations of policy itself. To subordinate the political point of view to the military would be contrary to common sense, because policy has declared the war. Policy is the thinking power; war is only the instrument, not the other way around. The military point of view can therefore only be subordinate to the political.

If we think about the true nature of war, and remember what was said in the third chapter of this book—that every war must be understood first of all in terms of the likely character it will take, and its main features as they arise from political forces and relationships—and that war often, indeed in our time almost always, must be seen as an organic whole whose separate parts cannot be pulled apart, where every particular action both grows out of the whole and feeds back into it, then it becomes clear that the highest point of view for directing war, the one from which its main lines must be drawn, can only be that of policy.

From this point of view, plans seem to come from a single mold. They are easier and more natural to grasp and judge. Our confidence in them becomes stronger, the reasons behind them more convincing, and history itself easier to understand.

In any case, from this point of view there is no necessary conflict, in the nature of things, between political and military interests. If such a conflict appears, it should be seen as the result of imperfect understanding. For policy to make demands on war that war cannot meet would contradict the assumption that policy understands the instrument it intends to use; and that assumption is both natural and indispensable. But if policy judges the course of military events correctly, then it is entirely its business—and can only be its business—to decide which events, and which direction of events, best serve the war's ultimate and overriding purpose.

In short, at its highest level the art of war is policy—but policy that fights battles instead of writing notes.

From this point of view, it is unacceptable—and even harmful—to leave a major military undertaking, or even the plan for one, to purely military judgment and decision alone. In fact, it makes no sense to ask professional soldiers to give a purely military opinion on what the cabinet ought to do. More absurd still is the theorists' demand that the general should simply be given a statement of the available military resources so that he can draw up a purely military plan for the war or for a campaign based on those means. Experience also shows that, despite the many branches and scientific complexity of military art today, the main outlines of a war are always decided by the cabinet—that is, in technical terms, by a political official rather than a military one.

This is entirely natural. None of the main plans required for a war can be made without understanding the political situation.

And in fact, when people often speak of the harmful influence of policy on the conduct of war, they are really saying something different from what they mean. It is not this influence that should be criticized, but the policy itself. If the policy is sound—that is, if it truly reaches its objective—then its effect on the war can only be beneficial in that same direction. And if the influence of policy causes a departure from the objective, the reason can only be a mistaken policy.

Policy can have a harmful effect on war only when it expects the wrong results from particular military means and measures—results that run against their actual nature. Just as someone speaking a language they do not really know may say something other than what they mean, policy too, even when its intentions are right, may often give orders that do not match its own aims.

This has happened countless times, and it shows that some real understanding of the nature of war is essential for the conduct of political affairs.

But before we go any further, we must guard against a mistaken reading to which this idea is especially open. We are very far from claiming that a minister of war buried in official paperwork, a technically trained engineer, or even a soldier who has proved himself in the field would necessarily make the best minister of state when the sovereign does not govern personally. In other words, we do not mean that familiarity with the nature of war is the chief qualification for a war minister. The main qualities he must have are breadth of view, intellectual superiority, and strength of character; knowledge of war can be acquired in one

way or another. France was never more poorly guided in its military and political affairs than by the two brothers Belleisle and the Duke of Choiseul, although all three were good soldiers.

If war is to remain fully aligned with political aims and policy, and if it is to adapt itself to the means available for waging it, then only one arrangement can be recommended when the statesman and the soldier are not united in the same person: the commander in chief should be made a member of the cabinet, so that he can take part in its deliberations and decisions on important matters. But even this is possible only when the cabinet—that is, the government itself—is close to the theatre of war, so that decisions can be made without serious delay.

This is what the Emperor of Austria did in 1809, and what the allied sovereigns did in 1813, 1814, and 1815, and the arrangement proved entirely satisfactory.

The influence of any military man in the cabinet other than the commander in chief is extremely dangerous; it rarely leads to capable and energetic action. The example of France in 1793, 1794, and 1795, when Carnot directed the conduct of the war while remaining in Paris, should be avoided, since a system of terror is available only to a revolutionary government.

We will now conclude with some reflections drawn from history.

In the last decade of the previous century, Europe saw a remarkable change in the art of war. The best armies discovered that part of their way of fighting had become completely useless, and events unfolded on a scale far beyond anything anyone had imagined before. It certainly seemed as if the art of war itself was to blame for a complete miscalculation

of everything. It was clear that, confined by habit within a narrow range of ideas, it had been caught off guard by the force of a new set of conditions—conditions that may have lain outside that range, but not outside the nature of things.

Those observers who took the broadest view attributed this to the general influence that policy had exercised over the art of war for centuries, and no doubt to its great disadvantage. Under that influence, war had declined into a half-measure, and often into little more than a sham fight. They were right about the facts, but wrong to treat this as something accidental, or as something that could have been avoided.

Others thought the whole matter could be explained by the temporary influence of the particular policies of Austria, Prussia, England, and so on, each acting with regard to its own interests.

But is it really true that the shock which seized men's minds was limited to the conduct of war? Did it not concern policy itself even more? In other words, as we would put it: did the failure come from the influence of policy on the war, or from policy itself being wrong?

The enormous effects of the French Revolution abroad were clearly caused far less by new methods and ideas in the French conduct of war than by the changes it brought to statecraft and civil administration, to the character of governments, and to the condition of the people, and so on. Other governments misunderstood all of this. They tried, with their usual means, to stand against forces of a new kind and overwhelming strength. That was a blunder in policy.

Could this mistake have been recognized and corrected through a war plan based purely on military considerations? No. Even if there had actually been a brilliant theorist of strategy who, simply from the nature of the opposing forces, had foreseen every consequence and predicted distant possibilities, it still would have been impossible to put that insight to practical use.

If policy had properly understood the forces that had emerged in France, and the new political relationships in Europe, it might have anticipated the consequences those changes would have for the major features of war. Only in that way could it have formed a correct judgment about both the scale of the means required and the best way to use them.

We may therefore say that the revolution's twenty years of victories were due chiefly to the mistaken policy of the governments that opposed it.

The real changes in the art of war, then, are the result of changes in policy. Far from proving that the two can be separated, they are strong evidence of how closely connected they are.

So, once again: war is an instrument of policy. It must necessarily take on policy's character and be measured by its standards. In its broad outlines, the conduct of war is therefore policy itself taking up the sword instead of the pen, but not for that reason ceasing to think according to its own laws.

CHAPTER VII. Limited Object—Offensive War

Even when the complete destruction of the enemy is not the objective, there may still be a directly positive aim, and that aim can only be the conquest of part of the enemy's country.

The value of such a conquest is that it weakens the enemy's resources in general, and therefore his military power, while increasing our own. To that extent, we wage the war at his expense. It also helps in peace negotiations, because possession of the enemy's provinces counts as a clear gain: we can either keep them or trade them for other advantages.

This idea of conquering the enemy's provinces is perfectly natural, and there would be no objection to it if the defensive position that must follow the offensive did not often create anxiety.

In the chapter on the culminating point of victory, we already explained how this kind of offensive weakens the fighting force and how it can be followed by a situation that causes concern about what comes next.

This weakening of our fighting force through the conquest of part of the enemy's territory can vary in degree, and it depends mainly on the geographical position of that territory. The more it is attached to our own country—either bordering it or enclosed by it—and the more it lies in the direction of our main force, the less it will weaken our fighting strength. In the Seven Years' War, Saxony was a natural extension of the Prussian theatre of

war, and Frederick the Great's army was strengthened rather than weakened by holding that province, because it lies closer to Silesia than to the Mark and at the same time shields the latter.

Even in 1740 and 1741, after Frederick the Great had conquered Silesia, it did not weaken his field army. Because of its shape, its position, and the outline of its frontier, it presented only a narrow point to the Austrians as long as they were not masters of Saxony. And that small point of contact also lay in the direction of the main operations of the opposing forces.

If, on the other hand, the conquered territory is a strip thrust up between hostile provinces, occupies an exposed position, and has an unfavourable shape and terrain, then the weakening becomes so obvious that a victorious battle becomes not only much easier for the enemy, but may even be unnecessary.

Whenever the Austrians have tried to enter Provence from Italy, they have always had to withdraw without a battle. In 1744, the French were quite satisfied simply to get out of Bohemia without having lost one. In 1758, Frederick the Great could not maintain his position in Bohemia and Moravia with the same force that had won such striking successes in Silesia and Saxony in 1757. Cases in which armies could not keep conquered territory simply because doing so weakened their fighting strength too much are so common that no further examples seem necessary.

So the question of whether we should pursue such an objective depends on whether we can expect to keep what we conquer, or whether a temporary occupation—through invasion or diversion—would justify the force it costs. Above all, we must

ask whether we risk provoking such a powerful counterattack that it completely overturns the balance of forces. In the chapter on the culminating point, we discussed how this question should be weighed in each individual case.

There is only one further point to add.

An offensive of this kind will not always make up for what we lose elsewhere. While we are busy making a limited conquest, the enemy may be doing the same in other places. If our operation is not far more important than his, it will not force him to abandon his own. We must therefore seriously consider whether, in a case like this, we may end up losing more than we gain.

Even if we assume that two provinces—one on each side—are of equal value, we will still lose more from the one the enemy takes from us than we gain from the one we take from him, because part of our forces becomes, to some extent, mere overhead and no longer effective. Since the same is true on the enemy's side, it might seem that there is really no reason to value holding our own territory more than making a conquest. But there is. Defending our own territory always matters more to us directly, and the harm done to our own state cannot be offset, or even partly balanced, by what we gain in return unless that gain is much greater.

The result of all this is that a strategic attack aimed only at a limited objective requires more measures to protect other points that it does not directly cover than an attack aimed at the center of the enemy's strength. As a result, forces cannot be concentrated in time and place to the same degree. To achieve

such concentration, at least in terms of timing, the advance must be carried out offensively from every possible point, and all at exactly the same moment. Because of that, this kind of attack also loses the other advantage of being able to manage with a much smaller force by remaining on the defensive at certain points. In this way, aiming at a lesser objective tends to level everything out. The whole conduct of the war can no longer be concentrated into one main undertaking directed by broad guiding considerations. It becomes more scattered. Friction increases everywhere, and everywhere there is more room for chance.

This is the natural tendency of the situation. The commander, burdened by it, finds himself more and more constrained. The more aware he is of his own abilities, the greater his resources in a subjective sense, and the greater his power in an objective sense, the more he will try to free himself from this tendency so that he can give one point overwhelming importance, even if that can be done only by taking greater risks.

CHAPTER VIII. Limited Object—Defence

As we have already observed, the ultimate aim of defensive war can never be mere negation. Even the weaker side must have some point at which the enemy can be made to feel pressure, and which can be threatened.

We might say that the aim here is to wear the enemy down. The attacker has a positive goal, so every blow that fails—even if its only result is the loss of the force used—still amounts in reality to a step backward. The defender's losses, by contrast, are not pointless, because his aim is to hold what he has, and in that he has succeeded. That would be the same as saying that the defender's positive aim lies simply in holding his ground. This line of reasoning would make sense if it were certain that, after a fixed number of failed attempts, the attacker must be exhausted and give up. But that necessary result is exactly what is missing. If we look at the wearing down of forces, the defender is actually at a disadvantage. The attacker grows weaker, but only in the sense that he may eventually reach a turning point. If we leave that possibility aside, the defender's strength declines faster than the attacker's. First, he is already the weaker side, so if both sides suffer equal losses, he loses more in actual terms. Second, he is usually deprived of part of his territory and resources. So we have no basis for expecting the offensive to stop. What remains is this: if the attacker keeps striking while the defender does nothing but wait and try to repel the blows, then the defender has no counterweight to balance the risk that one of those attacks will sooner or later

succeed.

So this is the defender's aim when he is too weak to consider any major counterattack. But not every defensive war has that character, at least not in the sense we have given to it. In that sense, defence is the stronger form of war, and because of that strength it can also be used when the defender intends to launch a counterstroke of greater or lesser importance.

These two cases must be clearly distinguished from the outset, because they affect the conduct of the defence.

In the first case, the defender's aim is to keep his own country intact for as long as possible, because that is how he gains the most time; and gaining time is the only way he can achieve his purpose. The positive objective he may eventually be able to secure—one that would help him pursue his aim in peace negotiations—cannot yet be built into his war plan. In this strategically passive condition, the advantages the defender can win at particular points amount only to beating back limited attacks. He then tries to use the superiority gained at those points to help himself elsewhere, since he is usually under pressure everywhere. If he has no chance to do that, then the only benefit he often gains is the small one of being left undisturbed by the enemy for a time.

If the defender is not too weak, small offensive actions can still fit within this defensive system without changing its aim or essential character. These actions are directed less toward permanent conquest than toward temporary advantage, enough to offset losses that may be suffered later. Such measures may include incursions, diversions, or operations against a single

fortress.

But in the second case, where a positive objective has already been joined to the defence, the larger the counterstroke that circumstances justify, the more positive the character the defence takes on. In other words, the more the defensive has been chosen deliberately in order to make the first blow more certain, the bolder the traps the defender may set for his opponent. The boldest of all—and, if it succeeds, the most effective—is a retreat into the interior of the country; and at the same time this method differs most sharply from the other system.

Just think about how different Frederick the Great's situation in the Seven Years' War was from Russia's in 1812.

When the war began, Frederick had a certain advantage because he was so well prepared. That let him take control of Saxony, which was also such a natural extension of his theatre of war that holding it did not weaken his fighting strength but actually increased it.

At the start of the 1757 campaign, the King tried to continue his strategic offensive. That still seemed possible as long as the Russians and French had not yet reached the theatre of war in Silesia, the Mark, and Saxony. But the attack failed, and for the rest of the campaign Frederick was forced onto the defensive. He had to evacuate Bohemia and save his own theatre from the enemy. He managed to do so only by turning the same army first against the French and then against the Austrians. He owed that advantage entirely to the defensive.

In 1758, when his enemies had closed in around him and his forces had shrunk to a badly unequal size, he decided on a limited offensive in Moravia. His plan was to seize Olmütz before his enemies were ready—not because he expected to hold it or use it as a base for further advance, but because he meant to use it as a kind of advanced outwork, a counter-approach against the Austrians. They would then be forced to spend the rest of that campaign, and perhaps even another, trying to retake it. This attack also failed. Frederick then abandoned any idea of a true offensive, since he saw that it only made the imbalance in his army worse. His general plan now became this: to hold a compact position in the center of his own territory in Saxony and Silesia; to use short lines so that he could quickly strengthen any point under threat; to fight a battle when it could not be avoided; to make small incursions when the chance arose; and, along with all this, to wait patiently, preserving his resources for better times. Gradually, the way he carried out this plan became more and more passive. He saw that even victory cost him too much, and so he tried to act at still less expense. Everything depended on gaining time and holding on to what he already had. He therefore became less willing to give up any ground, and did not hesitate to adopt a complete cordon system. The positions of Prince Henry in Saxony, as well as those of the King in the Silesian mountains, may be described in that way. In his letters to the Marquis d'Argens, he shows how impatiently he looked forward to winter quarters, and how satisfied he was to be able to take them up again without having suffered any serious loss.

Anyone who blames Frederick for this, and sees it as proof that his spirit had failed, is, we think, judging without much thought.

If the entrenched camp at Bunzelwitz, the positions Prince Henry took in Saxony, and the King's positions in the Silesian mountains no longer seem to us like measures a general should rely on in a last extremity—because a Buonaparte would quickly have cut through such tactical cobwebs—we must remember that times had changed. War had become something entirely different, driven by new energies. So positions that would not be good now may have been excellent then. And beyond that, the character of the enemy also matters. Against the army of the German States, against Daun and Butturlin, it may have been the wisest possible course to use methods that Frederick would have scorned if they had been used against himself.

The result confirmed this judgment: by waiting patiently, Frederick achieved his aim and avoided difficulties that would have shattered his forces if he had met them head-on.

At the opening of the campaign in 1812, the balance of numbers between the Russian and French armies facing each other was even more unfavorable to the Russians than the balance between Frederick and his enemies in the Seven Years' War. But the Russians expected large reinforcements to join them as the campaign went on. All Europe was secretly hostile to Buonaparte. His power had been stretched to its highest point. A consuming war in Spain already occupied him. And the vast size of Russia made it possible, by retreating across hundreds of miles, to wear down the enemy's military strength to the utmost limit. In circumstances on so great a scale, a tremendous

counterstroke was bound to be expected if the French enterprise failed—and how could it succeed if the Russian Emperor refused to make peace, or if his subjects did not rise in insurrection? That counterstroke might even end in the enemy's complete destruction. The deepest sagacity, therefore, could not have devised a better campaign plan than the one the Russians adopted on the spur of the moment.

The fact that people did not think this at the time, and would then have dismissed such a view as absurd, is no reason for us to deny now that it was the correct one. If we want to learn from history, we must treat events that actually happened as things that could happen again. And anyone qualified to judge such matters will admit that the chain of great events that followed the march on Moscow was not just a series of accidents. If the Russians had been able, through great effort, to defend their frontier, it is entirely likely that French power would still have declined and that the French would eventually have suffered a reversal of fortune. But in that case the reaction would certainly not have been so violent or so decisive. Russia bought this immense success with suffering and sacrifice—sacrifices that in any other country would certainly have been greater, and in most countries would have been impossible.

So a great positive success can never be won except through positive measures, planned not for mere waiting, but for a decision. In short, even in a defensive war, no great gain can be won without risking a great stake.

CHAPTER IX. Plan of War when the Destruction of the Enemy is the Object

Having described in detail the different aims toward which war may be directed, we will now examine the organization of war as a whole for each of the three distinct levels that correspond to those aims.

In keeping with everything said so far on this subject, two fundamental principles govern the entire plan of war and guide everything else.

The first is this: reduce the weight of the enemy's power to as few centers of gravity as possible—to one, if that can be done. Next, limit the attack on these centers of force to as few main operations as possible—to one, if possible. Finally, keep all secondary operations as subordinate as possible. In short, the first principle is to act with as much concentration as possible.

The second principle is this: act as swiftly as possible; therefore, permit no delay or detour without sufficient reason.

Reducing the enemy's power to one central point depends

1. The nature of the political relationship. If it is made up of the armies of a single power, there is usually no difficulty. If it consists of allied armies, and one of them is acting only as an ally without any interest of its own, the difficulty is only slightly greater. If it is a coalition pursuing a common objective, then everything depends on how sincere and close the alliance is; we have already discussed this subject.

2. The position of the theatre of war in which the different hostile armies appear.

If the enemy's forces are concentrated in a single army on one theatre of war, they are in effect a single whole, and there is no need to examine the matter further. If they are on one theatre of war but divided into separate armies belonging to different powers, then there is no longer complete unity. Still, the parts remain connected enough that a decisive blow against one part may bring down the other through the shock. If the armies are stationed in neighbouring theatres of war and are not divided by major natural barriers, then each clearly affects the other. But if the theatres of war are far apart, with neutral territory, great mountain ranges, and so on between them, then that influence becomes doubtful and unlikely. If they stand on completely opposite sides of the state against which the war is being fought, so that operations against them must move outward on diverging lines, then almost every sign of connection disappears.

If Prussia were attacked by France and Russia at the same time, the conduct of the war would be much the same as if it were facing two separate wars. At the same time, the unity of the situation would show itself in the negotiations.

Saxony and Austria, by contrast, had to be treated as a single military power in the Seven Years' War. Whatever one suffered, the other felt as well. This was partly because, for Frederick the Great, the theatres of war lay in the same direction, and partly because Saxony had no political independence.

Buonaparte had many enemies in Germany in 1813, but they were all positioned against him in much the same way, and their theaters of war were closely linked, each strongly affecting the others. If he had been able to concentrate all his forces and crush the main army, that defeat would have had decisive consequences everywhere. If he had defeated the great Bohemian army and marched on Vienna through Prague, Blücher, however willing, could not have stayed in Saxony, because he would have been called on to cooperate in Bohemia. The Crown Prince of Sweden, likewise, would not have been willing to remain in the Mark.

On the other hand, if Austria is fighting the French on the Rhine and in Italy at the same time, it will always find it difficult to decide one of those theaters through a successful blow in the other. This is partly because Switzerland, with its mountains, forms too strong a barrier between the two theaters, and partly because the roads on each side run in different directions. France, by contrast, can much more quickly decide one theater through success in the other, because in both cases the direction of its forces converges on Vienna, the center of power for the whole Austrian Empire. We may add that a decisive blow in Italy will have more effect on the Rhine theater than a success on the Rhine would have in Italy, because a blow from Italy strikes closer to the center, while one from the Rhine falls more on the flank of the Austrian dominions.

What follows from this is that the idea of hostile power being separate or connected applies across every degree of relationship. In each case, then, the first task is to determine what influence events in one theater may have on the other.

Once that is clear, we can decide how far the enemy's different forces can be treated as a single center of force.

There is only one exception to the principle of directing all our strength against the center of gravity of the enemy's power: when secondary expeditions promise extraordinary advantages. Even then, however, this assumes that we have such decisive superiority that we can undertake those operations without running too great a risk at the point that remains our main objective.

When General Bulow marched into Holland in 1814, it was clear that his corps of thirty thousand men would do more than merely tie down an equal number of French troops. It would also give the English and the Dutch the chance to take the field with forces that otherwise would never have been brought into action.

So the first consideration in shaping a war plan is to identify the centers of gravity of the enemy's power and, if possible, reduce them to one. The second is to bring together the forces to be used against that center of power in one major action.

At this point, the following reasons for dividing our forces may arise:

1. The original position of the military forces, and therefore the location of the States taking part in the offensive.

If concentrating the forces would require detours and cost time, and if the danger of advancing along separate lines is not too great, then such a course may be justified on those grounds. To force an unnecessary concentration of forces at the cost of

major delay, and thereby weaken the freshness and speed of the first blow, would go against the second guiding principle we have laid down. This deserves special attention whenever there is any hope of catching the enemy at least somewhat by surprise.

But the matter becomes even more important when the attack is carried out by allied States that are not arranged one behind the other on a line leading toward the State being attacked, but stand side by side. If Prussia and Austria were to wage war against France, it would be a serious mistake—a waste of time and strength—to require the armies of both powers to start from the same point. The natural line for an army operating from Prussia against the heart of France runs from the Lower Rhine, while that of the Austrians runs from the Upper Rhine. In this case, then, concentration could be achieved only through sacrifice. In any particular instance, the question would therefore be: Is the need for concentration so great that this sacrifice must be made?

2. An attack along separate lines may produce greater results.

Since we are now discussing an advance by separate lines against a single center of force, we are therefore assuming an advance along converging lines. A separate advance along parallel or diverging lines belongs under the heading of secondary operations, which we have already discussed.

Every converging attack, whether in strategy or tactics, offers the possibility of major results. If it succeeds, the outcome is not merely a defeat of the enemy, but to some extent the enemy’s isolation or encirclement. A concentric attack, therefore, is

always the form of attack that can produce the greatest results. But because it divides the attacking force and widens the theater of war, it also carries the greatest risk. The same principle applies here as in the relation between attack and defense: the weaker form holds out the prospect of greater results.

The question, then, is whether the attacker feels strong enough to aim at so great a result.

When Frederick the Great advanced into Bohemia in 1757, he moved from Saxony and Silesia with his forces divided. He did this for two main reasons. First, his troops had been quartered in winter positions in such a way that concentrating them at a single point would have stripped the attack of the advantages of surprise. Second, this concentric advance threatened both Austrian theaters of war on the flanks and in the rear. The danger Frederick exposed himself to was that one of his two armies might have been completely defeated by superior forces. If the Austrians failed to recognize this, they would have to fight with only their center, or else risk being cut off from their line of communication on one side or the other and suffering a disaster. That was the great result the king hoped to achieve through this advance. The Austrians chose to fight in the center, but Prague, where they took up position, was too exposed to the effects of the converging attack. Because they remained entirely passive there, the attack had time to develop its full force. As a result, when they lost the battle, the defeat became a complete catastrophe, as shown by the fact that two-thirds of the army, together with the commander-in-chief, were forced to shut themselves up in Prague.

This striking success at the start of the campaign came from a bold, converging attack. If Frederick believed that the precision of his own movements, the drive of his generals, and the moral superiority of his troops, on the one hand, together with Austrian sluggishness on the other, were enough to guarantee success, who can blame him? But while we cannot ignore these moral advantages, we also cannot credit the victory solely to the attack's geometric design. We need only think of Buonaparte's equally brilliant campaign in 1796, when the Austrians were harshly punished for their own converging march into Italy. On that occasion, the French general had at his disposal the same means that the Austrian general had in 1757, except for the moral factor. In fact, he had even more, because unlike Buonaparte, he was not weaker than his opponent. Therefore, when an advance on separate converging lines may give the enemy a chance to offset inferior numbers by using interior lines, that form of attack is unwise. And if the situation of the belligerents makes it necessary, it should be seen only as a necessary evil.

If we look from this perspective at the plan adopted for the invasion of France in 1814, it is impossible to approve it. The Russian, Austrian, and Prussian armies were concentrated near Frankfort on the Maine, on the most natural and direct line toward the center of the French monarchy's power. These armies were then divided so that one could enter France from Mayence and the other from Switzerland. Since the enemy's strength had fallen so low that defending the frontier was out of the question, the only advantage expected from this converging advance, if it succeeded, was that one army would conquer

Lorraine and Alsace while the other took Franche-Comte. Was that slight advantage really worth the trouble of marching into Switzerland? We know perfectly well that other reasons—though equally inadequate—also led to this march. But here we limit ourselves to the particular point under discussion.

On the other hand, Bonaparte clearly understood how to defend against a concentric attack, as he had already shown in his brilliant campaign of 1796. Although the Allies had a very large numerical advantage, everyone recognized that his superiority as a commander gave him a counterbalancing edge. He joined his army near Châlons too late, and in general he underestimated his opponents too much. Even so, he came very close to striking the two armies separately. And in what condition did he find them at Brienne? Blücher had only 27,000 of his 65,000 men with him, and the grand army, out of 200,000, had only 100,000 actually present. It would have been hard to create a better opportunity for the enemy. And from the moment active operations began, nothing was felt more urgently than the need to reunite.

After all these reflections, we conclude that although a concentric attack can in itself produce greater results, it should generally arise only from a prior separation of the parts that make up the whole force. There are only a few cases in which it is wise to abandon the shortest and most direct line of operations in order to adopt that form.

3. The width of a theatre of war can be a reason for attacking on separate lines.

If an army on the offensive advances from any point and successfully penetrates some distance into the enemy's interior, then the area it controls is certainly not limited exactly to the road along which it marches. It will control a margin on each side as well. Still, that margin depends greatly, if we may use the image, on the solidity and cohesion of the opposing state. If the state is only loosely held together, and if its people are soft and unaccustomed to war, then a considerable stretch of country will open up behind our victorious army without much effort on our part. But if we are dealing with a brave and loyal population, the space behind our army will take the form of a triangle, more or less narrow.

To avoid this problem, the attacking force must regulate its advance across a certain width of front. If the enemy's force is concentrated at a particular point, this width of front can be maintained only as long as we are not yet in contact with the enemy, and it must narrow as we approach his position. That is easy to understand.

But if the enemy has taken up a position that stretches across a certain front, there is nothing unreasonable about our extending our own front to match it. We are speaking here of a single theatre of war, or of several that lie very close together. So this applies when, in our view, the main operation is also meant to be decisive at secondary points.

But can we always afford to take that risk? Can we expose ourselves to the danger that arises if the main operation does not have enough influence to decide matters at the lesser points? Does not the lack of sufficient breadth in a theatre of

war deserve special attention?

Here, as everywhere else, it is impossible to list every combination that may arise. But we maintain that, with few exceptions, a decision at the main point will bring with it a decision at all minor points. Action should therefore be guided by this principle in every case where the opposite is not clearly evident.

When Buonaparte invaded Russia, he had good reason to believe that by defeating the main Russian army he would force their troops on the Upper Dwina to give way as well. At first he left only Oudinot's corps to face them, but Wittgenstein took the offensive, and Buonaparte was then compelled to send the sixth corps there too.

On the other hand, at the start of the campaign, he sent part of his forces against Bagration. But that general was drawn along by the effect of the retreat in the centre, and Buonaparte was then able to call those forces back. If Wittgenstein had not been obliged to cover the second capital, he too would have followed the retreat of the main army under Barclay.

In 1805 and 1809, Buonaparte's victories at Ulm and Ratisbon decided events in Italy and in the Tyrol as well, even though the first was a more distant theatre and in itself an independent one. In 1806, his victories at Jena and Auerstadt were decisive for everything that might have been attempted against him in Westphalia and Hesse, or along the road to Frankfort.

Among the circumstances that may affect resistance at secondary points, two stand out most clearly.

The first is this: in a country as vast, and relatively as powerful, as Russia, we can postpone the decisive blow at the main point for a time and are not forced to do everything in haste.

The second is this: a secondary point may have an unusual degree of independent strength because it contains many fortresses, as Silesia did in 1806. Even so, Buonaparte treated that point with great contempt. When he had to leave it entirely in his rear on the march to Warsaw, he detached only 20,000 men under his brother Jerome to that quarter.

If a blow at the capital point will probably not shake such a secondary point, or has failed to do so, and if the enemy still has forces there, then an adequate force must be set against them as a necessary evil. No one can leave his line of communication completely exposed from the very beginning.

But prudence may go a step further. It may demand that the advance on the chief point keep pace with the advance on the secondary points. As a result, the main operation must be delayed whenever the secondary points do not give way.

This principle does not directly contradict our own principle of concentrating action as much as possible in one great undertaking. But the spirit behind it is completely opposed to the spirit of our principle. If we followed it, movements would proceed at a measured pace, the driving force would be paralyzed, chance would have more room to interfere, and time would be lost. In practice, all this is entirely inconsistent with an offensive aimed at the enemy’s complete overthrow.

The difficulty becomes even greater if the forces stationed at these secondary points can retreat along diverging lines. What, then, would become of the unity of our attack?

We must therefore declare ourselves completely opposed, in principle, to making the main attack dependent on secondary attacks. We maintain that an attack aimed at destroying the enemy, if it lacks the boldness to strike straight at the heart of the enemy's power like the point of an arrow, can never reach its goal.

4. Lastly, there is a fourth reason for a separate advance: it may make subsistence easier.

It is certainly far more pleasant to march a small army through a rich country than to move a large army through a poor one. But with the right measures, and with troops used to hardship, the latter can still be done. So the former advantage should never weigh so heavily in our planning that it leads us into serious danger.

We have now fairly examined the reasons for dividing forces in a way that turns one main operation into several. If such a division is made for one of these reasons, with a clear understanding of its purpose and after proper consideration of its advantages and disadvantages, we would not criticize it.

But if, as so often happens, a plan is worked out by a scholarly general staff purely by routine; if each theatre of war, like a square on a chessboard, must first have its piece placed on it before any move begins; if those moves creep toward the objective through tangled lines and relationships in the name of some imagined depth in the art of combination; if armies are

separated today only so that all their skill can be spent trying to reunite them, at the greatest risk, fourteen days later—then we can only look with horror on this rejection of the direct, simple, common-sense path in favor of deliberate confusion. This kind of folly becomes more likely the less the commander-in-chief personally directs the war and conducts it, in the sense we described in the first chapter, as an expression of his own individuality armed with extraordinary power. It becomes more likely, therefore, the more the whole plan is manufactured by an inexperienced staff out of the notions of a dozen half-informed theorists.

We must now consider the third part of our first principle: keeping the subordinate parts as subordinate as possible.

As we try to direct all the operations of a war toward a single aim, and to reach that aim as far as possible through one great effort, we reduce the independence of the other points at which the states at war come into contact. They become secondary actions. If we could concentrate everything completely into one action, those points of contact would be entirely neutralized. But that is rarely possible. So what we must do is keep them within such limits that they do not draw too many forces away from the main action.

Next, we maintain that the overall plan of the war should follow this principle, even if it is not possible to concentrate all of the enemy's resistance at a single point. So if we find ourselves in the situation already described—fighting two wars at the same time that are almost entirely separate—one of them must always be treated as the main effort, to which we devote most of our

forces and energy.

From this point of view, it is advisable to take the offensive only against that one main point and to remain on the defensive everywhere else. An attack in those other areas is justified only under very exceptional circumstances.

We should also conduct this defensive posture at the lesser points with as few troops as possible, while making full use of every advantage that defense can offer.

This principle applies even more strongly to all theaters of war where armies from different powers are operating independently, but where those forces will still be affected once the general center of power is struck.

But against the enemy at whom the main blow is directed, there must, on this principle, be no defensive on secondary theaters of war. The main attack itself, together with the secondary attacks that are joined to it for other reasons, makes up that blow and renders any defensive at points not directly covered by it unnecessary. Everything depends on this principal attack; through it, every loss will be made good. If our forces are strong enough to make it reasonable to seek this great decision, then the mere possibility of failure cannot justify protecting ourselves against damage at other points in any case. That course would only make failure more likely, and so it creates a contradiction in our actions.

This same dominance of the main action over the lesser ones must guide each separate branch of the attack. But since broader considerations usually determine what forces advance from one theater of war and what forces advance from another

against the common center of the enemy's power, all we mean here is that we must strive to make the main action clearly decisive. The closer we come to that kind of superiority, the simpler everything becomes and the less it is exposed to the effects of chance.

The second principle is the swift use of force.

Any unnecessary loss of time, any needless detour, wastes strength and therefore goes against the principles of strategy.

It is crucial to remember that the offensive has almost only one real advantage: the element of surprise at the start. Speed and overwhelming force are its greatest strengths, and when the aim is the enemy's complete destruction, it can rarely do without them.

Theory therefore calls for the shortest path to the objective and rules out endless arguments about turning right or left at this point or that.

If we recall what was said in the chapter on strategic attack about the pit of the stomach in a state, and also what appears in the fourth chapter of this book about the influence of time, then no further argument is needed to show that this principle truly has the importance we claim for it.

Buonaparte never acted any differently. He always preferred the most direct main road from one army to another, from one capital to the next.

So what is the main action to which we have referred everything, and for which we have demanded speed and directness?

In the fourth chapter, we explained as fully as possible in general terms what the enemy's total overthrow means, so there is no need to repeat it. Whatever it may depend on in particular cases, the first step is always the same: the destruction of the enemy's fighting force, that is, a major victory over it and its dispersal. The sooner this victory is sought, meaning the closer it is to our own frontiers, the easier it is. The later it is won, meaning the deeper in the enemy's country, the more decisive it is. Here, as everywhere else, ease of success and the scale of success must be weighed against each other.

If we are not so much stronger than the enemy that victory is certain, then, whenever possible, we should seek out his main force. We say whenever possible because this effort to find him could become a mistake if it led to major detours, false moves, and lost time. If the enemy's main force is not on our line of march, and other interests prevent us from going after him, we can be sure we will meet him later, because he will not fail to put himself in our path. We would then, as we have just said, fight under less favorable conditions—an evil we must accept. Still, if we win the battle, it will be all the more decisive.

From this it follows that, in the case now assumed, it would be a mistake to deliberately pass by the enemy's main force if it places itself in our way, at least if we expect that doing so will make victory easier.

On the other hand, it also follows from what has been said that if we have a clear superiority over the enemy's main force, we may deliberately pass it by in order to fight a more decisive battle later.

We have been speaking of a complete victory, that is, a thorough defeat of the enemy, not merely a battle won. But such a victory requires either an enveloping attack or a battle fought with an oblique front, because these two forms always give the result a decisive character. It is therefore an essential part of a war plan to make arrangements for such a movement, both in regard to the mass of forces required and the direction they are to take. More will be said about this in the chapter on the plan of campaign.

It is certainly possible that battles fought with parallel fronts may still lead to complete defeats, and military history offers examples of this. But such an outcome is uncommon, and it will become even rarer as armies grow more equal in discipline and field maneuverability. We no longer pack twenty-one battalions into a village, as they did at Blenheim.

Once the great victory has been won, the next question is not rest, not catching one's breath, not reflection, not reorganization, and so on. It is only a question of pursuit, of striking fresh blows wherever necessary, of capturing the enemy's capital, of attacking the armies of his allies, or of seizing whatever else may serve as a rallying point for the enemy.

If the tide of victory carries us close to the enemy's fortresses, whether we lay siege to them will depend on the resources we have. If our forces are greatly superior, it would waste time not to capture them as quickly as possible. But if we are uncertain about what lies ahead, we must contain those fortresses with as few troops as possible, which rules out any regular, formal

siege. The moment a siege forces us to halt our strategic advance, that advance has, as a rule, reached its culminating point. We therefore insist that the main body should keep pressing forward rapidly in pursuit, without pause. We have already rejected the idea that an advance toward the main objective should depend on success at secondary points. The result is that, in ordinary cases, our main army leaves behind it only a narrow strip of territory that it can truly call its own, and that strip therefore makes up its theatre of war. We have already shown how this weakens the force of the advance at its head, and what dangers this creates for the offensive. Will this difficulty, this built-in counterweight, not eventually reach a point that blocks any further advance? Certainly it may. But just as we have already argued that it would be a mistake to try to avoid this contracted theatre of war at the outset, and for that reason to deprive the advance of its flexibility, so we now maintain that, as long as the commander has not yet defeated his opponent, and as long as he still believes himself strong enough to do so, he must continue the pursuit. He may be doing so at greater risk, but also with the prospect of greater success. If he reaches a point beyond which he cannot safely go, where he must spread his forces far to the right and left in order to protect his rear, then that is most likely his culminating point. His power of movement is exhausted, and if the enemy has not been subdued, he most likely will not be subdued now.

Everything the attacker now does to strengthen the offensive by capturing fortresses, passes, and provinces is still an advance, but a slow one, and only in a relative sense, not an absolute one. The enemy is no longer fleeing. He may already be

preparing to resist again. So even while the attacker continues to make gains, the defender's position may be improving day by day. In short, we return to the same point: as a rule, once a halt has become necessary, there is no second burst of momentum.

Theory therefore requires only this: as long as the aim is to destroy the enemy, the attack must not stop advancing. If the commander abandons that aim because it involves too much risk, then he is right to stop and spread out his forces. Theory objects only when he does this because he thinks it will make it easier to defeat the enemy.

We are not claiming, foolishly, that no State has ever been brought little by little to the very edge of ruin. First, the principle we are arguing for is not an absolute law that admits no exception; it rests only on what usually and probably happens. Second, we must distinguish between cases in which a State falls through a slow, gradual process and those in which the result is decided in a first campaign. Here we are dealing only with the second kind, because only there do we find that intense clash of forces in which one side either overcomes the centre of gravity of the opposing weight or risks being overcome by it. If, in the first year, we gain a moderate advantage, and in the next gain another, and so move step by step toward our goal, there is no single point of extreme danger; the danger is spread across many points. Every pause between one result and the next gives the enemy fresh opportunities. The effects of the first successes have very little influence on those that follow—often none, and often even a negative one—because the enemy recovers, or is stirred to stronger resistance, or receives foreign aid. But when everything is done

in one advance, yesterday's success carries today's with it; one flame kindles another. If there are cases in which States have been defeated by a series of successive blows, and in which Time, usually the defender's ally, has worked against them, how much more numerous are the cases in which the aggressor's plans have completely failed for that very reason. We need only think of the outcome of the Seven Years' War, in which the Austrians tried to reach their aim so comfortably, cautiously, and prudently that they missed it altogether.

From this point of view, then, we cannot agree at all with the opinion that the care involved in preparing a theatre of war and the impulse that drives us forward are equally important, and that the former must to some extent balance the latter. Instead, we regard any harm that arises from advancing as an unavoidable evil, one that deserves attention only when the forward movement no longer offers any hope.

Buonaparte's case in 1812, far from weakening our view, has only confirmed it.

His campaign did not fail because he moved too fast or went too far, as people commonly believe. It failed because the only possible path to success broke down. The Russian Empire was not a country that could be conquered in the ordinary way—that is, occupied and held—at least not by the armies of the European states of that time, and not even by the 500,000 men with whom Buonaparte invaded it. A country like that could be overcome only through its own weakness and the effects of internal division. To strike at those vulnerable points in its political life, the whole country had to be shaken to its core.

Only by carrying the full force of his attack to Moscow could Buonaparte hope to shake the Government's resolve and the people's loyalty and endurance. He expected to find peace in Moscow, and that was the only rational aim he could have had in undertaking such a war.

He therefore led his main force against the main Russian army. It retreated before him, passed the camp at Drissa, and did not stop until it reached Smolensk. He drew Bagration along with this movement, defeated the principal Russian army, and took Moscow.

On this occasion he acted exactly as he always had. It was only by acting in that way that he had made himself the arbiter of Europe, and only in that way could he have done so.

Anyone, therefore, who admires Buonaparte in his earlier campaigns as the greatest of generals ought not to condemn him in this case.

It is perfectly legitimate to judge an event by its result, since the result is the best criticism of it (see fifth chapter, 2nd book). But a judgment based only on the outcome must not then be presented as proof of superior insight. To look for the causes of a campaign's failure is not, by itself, to criticize it. It becomes criticism only if we can show that those causes should not have been overlooked or ignored. Only then do we place ourselves above the General.

We maintain, then, that anyone who calls the campaign of 1812 absurd merely because of its terrible reversal, but who would have praised it as a brilliant design if it had succeeded, shows a complete lack of judgment.

If Buonaparte had stayed in Lithuania, as most of his critics say he should have done, so that he could first seize the fortresses, he would have ended up trapped for the winter in a wretched defensive position. And in truth, apart from Riga, which stood far off to one side, there was hardly a fortress worth mentioning, since Bobruisk was only a small and insignificant military post. In that case, the very same people would have been the first to cry out, "This is not the old Buonaparte! Why has he not even reached a first great battle? He who once set the final seal on his conquests on the enemy's last frontiers, with victories like Austerlitz and Friedland. Has his courage failed him, that he has not taken the enemy's capital, the undefended Moscow, ready to open its gates, and has instead left a center around which new forces of resistance may gather?" He had the extraordinary good fortune to catch this distant and enormous colossus by surprise, as easily as one might surprise a neighboring town, or as Frederick the Great entered the small state of Silesia lying at his doorstep, and yet he made no use of that advantage. He stopped in the middle of his victorious advance, as if some evil spirit had seized him by the heels. That is how he would have been judged after the event, for that is generally how critics make their judgments.

In reply, we say that the campaign of 1812 failed because the government stood firm and the people remained loyal and resolute; for that very reason, it could not have succeeded. Buonaparte may have made a mistake in undertaking such an expedition. At any rate, the outcome has shown that he misjudged his calculations. But we maintain that, if it was thought necessary to pursue this objective, then, on the whole,

it could not have been attempted in any other way.

Rather than burden himself with an endless, expensive defensive war in the east like the one he was already fighting in the west, Buonaparte tried the only course that seemed likely to achieve his aim: to force peace from his stunned opponent with one bold blow. In taking that gamble, he risked the destruction of his army. That was the stake of the game, the price of his great hopes. If the destruction of his army became more complete than it needed to be, and if that happened through his own fault, the fault did not lie in pushing too far into the heart of the country, since that was his objective and could not be avoided. It lay instead in the late start of the campaign, the loss of life caused by his tactics, his failure to take proper care of his army's supplies and line of retreat, and finally in delaying his departure from Moscow for too long.

The fact that the Russians reached the Beresina before him, intending in an orderly way to cut off his retreat, is not a strong argument against our view. First, the failure of that attempt itself shows how difficult it really is to cut off an army. In this case, the army that was trapped under the most unfavorable conditions imaginable still managed in the end to fight its way through. Although that action certainly added to the scale of the disaster, it was not its main cause. Second, only the very unusual nature of the country made it possible for the Russians to go as far as they did. If not for the marshes of the Beresina, with their wooded and impassable edges crossing the main road, cutting off the retreat would have been even less possible. Third, there is generally no way to guard against such a danger except by advancing with a front so broad that we have already

rejected it. For if we follow the plan of pushing forward with the center while covering the wings with armies detached to the right and left, then if either of those detached armies is checked, we must pull back the center, and in that case the attack can achieve very little.

Moreover, it cannot be claimed that Buonaparte neglected his flanks. A stronger force remained facing Wittgenstein. A suitably sized siege corps stood before Riga, and at the same time was not needed elsewhere. In the south, Schwarzenberg had 50,000 men, giving him superiority over Tormasoff and making him nearly equal to Tschitschagow. In addition, Victor had 30,000 men covering the rear of the centre. So even in November, at the decisive moment, when the Russian armies had been reinforced and the French had been greatly reduced, Russian superiority behind the Moscow army was not especially overwhelming. Wittgenstein, Tschitschagow, and Sacken together had a force of 100,000. Schwarzenberg, Regmer, Victor, Oudinot, and St. Cyr still had 80,000 effective troops. Even the most cautious general, advancing in such circumstances, would hardly assign a larger share of his force to protecting his flanks.

If, out of the 600,000 men who crossed the Niemen in 1812, Buonaparte had brought back 250,000 instead of the 50,000 who recrossed it under Schwarzenberg, Regmer, and Macdonald—which was possible if he had avoided the mistakes for which he has been criticized—the campaign would still have been an unfortunate one. But theory would have had nothing to object to, because losing half an army in such a case is not unusual at all. It seems extraordinary to us here only because

the whole enterprise was conducted on such an enormous scale.

That is enough about the main operation, its necessary direction, and its unavoidable risks. As for subordinate operations, they must above all share a common aim. But that aim must be placed in such a way that it does not paralyze the action of any individual part. If we invade France from the upper Rhine, the middle Rhine, and Holland, intending to unite at Paris, and if none of the armies is to risk anything in its advance but each is to preserve itself intact until the concentration is complete, then we have what may rightly be called a ruinous plan. Such an arrangement would require constant comparison of the condition of this threefold movement, producing delay, indecision, and timidity in the advance of each army. It is better to give each part its own mission, and to place the point of union only where these separate actions naturally come together on their own.

So when a military force moves to attack across separate theaters of war, each army should be given a specific objective at which to direct the full force of its blow. The key point is that these blows should fall simultaneously from all sides, not that each one must produce advantages in exact proportion.

If the task given to one army proves too difficult because the enemy has arranged his forces differently than expected, and that army is defeated, this should not—and must not—affect the actions of the others. Otherwise, we would be undermining the chances of overall success from the very beginning. Only if most of the operations fail, or if the main one fails, can and

should that affect the others; at that point, the plan itself must be considered a failure.

The same rule applies to armies, and to parts of armies, that began by acting defensively but, because of their successes, have gone over to the offensive—unless we choose instead to attach those spare forces to the main offensive. That decision will depend chiefly on the geographical situation of the theater of war.

But in such circumstances, what happens to the geometrical shape and unity of the whole attack? What happens to the flanks and rear of corps when the corps beside them have been beaten?

That is exactly the idea we most want to oppose. To pin a great offensive plan to a geometrical square is to lose oneself in illusion.

In the fifteenth chapter of Book Three, we showed that geometry matters less in strategy than in tactics. Here we will only repeat the conclusion reached there: in attack above all, the actual results at different points deserve more attention than the geometrical pattern that may gradually emerge from those differing results.

In any case, one thing is certain: because strategy operates across such vast distances, the judgments and decisions shaped by the overall geographical situation must be left to the commander-in-chief. No subordinate general, therefore, has any right to ask what his neighbor is doing or failing to do. Each should simply be ordered, in clear and definite terms, to carry out his own task. If any serious mismatch really results from

this, the supreme command can always correct it in time. In this way, the main danger of acting separately can be avoided: instead of dealing with realities, the operation becomes entangled in a haze of fears and guesses. Every accident then affects not only the part it touches directly, but the whole force as well, because impressions spread from one part to another. That also creates a wide opening for the personal weaknesses and personal hostilities of subordinate commanders.

We believe these views will seem paradoxical only to those who have not studied military history long enough or carefully enough, who cannot separate what matters from what does not, and who do not make proper allowance for the influence of human weakness in general.

Even in tactics, experienced soldiers all admit that it is difficult to carry out an attack in separate columns when success depends on perfect coordination between them. How much harder—indeed, how nearly impossible—must that be in strategy, where the distances between the parts are far greater. Therefore, if constant connection between all parts were truly a necessary condition of success, then any strategic plan of attack based on such separation would have to be abandoned at once. But, on the one hand, we are not free to reject it entirely, because circumstances beyond our control may force us to adopt it. On the other hand, even in tactics, this constant close union of all parts at every moment of execution is not necessary at all, and it is even less necessary in strategy. In strategy, then, we should pay less attention to that point and insist more strongly that each part be given a clearly defined task of its own.

We still have one important observation to add: it concerns the proper assignment of roles.

In 1793 and 1794, Austria's main army was in the Netherlands, while the Prussian army was on the upper Rhine. The Austrians marched from Vienna to Condé and Valenciennes, crossing the Prussians' line of advance from Berlin to Landau. Austria certainly had to defend its Belgian provinces in that region, and any gains in French Flanders would have been conveniently placed additions to its territory, but that interest was not strong enough on its own. After Prince Kaunitz died, Minister Thugut pushed through a plan to give up the Netherlands altogether so Austrian forces could be concentrated more effectively. In fact, Flanders was about twice as far from Austria as Alsace, and at a time when military resources were very limited and everything had to be paid for in cash, that was no small matter. Even so, Thugut clearly had something else in mind. He meant to use the urgency of the danger to force Holland, England, and Prussia—the powers with a stake in defending the Netherlands and the Lower Rhine—to make greater efforts. He certainly misjudged the situation, because nothing could be achieved with the Prussian cabinet at that time. Still, the episode clearly shows how political interests shape the course of a war.

Prussia had nothing to conquer or defend in Alsace. In 1792, it had undertaken its march through Lorraine into Champagne in a kind of chivalrous spirit. But that campaign came to nothing because events turned against it, and after that Prussia continued the war with very little real interest. If Prussian troops had been in the Netherlands, they would have been in direct contact with Holland, which they could regard almost as their

own country, since they had conquered it in 1787. They would also have protected the Lower Rhine, and with it the part of the Prussian monarchy closest to the theatre of war. Because of subsidies, Prussia would also have had a closer alliance with England, and under those conditions that alliance would not so easily have declined into the crooked policy of which the Prussian cabinet was guilty at that time.

A much better result, therefore, might have been expected if Austria had deployed its main force on the Upper Rhine, while Prussia had placed its whole force in the Netherlands, and Austria had left there only a corps of proportionate strength.

If General Barclay had led the Silesian army in 1814 instead of the energetic Blücher, and if Blücher and Schwartzenberg had remained with the grand army, the campaign might well have ended in complete failure.

If the energetic Laudon, instead of fighting in Silesia—the strongest part of the Prussian dominions—had been placed in command of the army of the German States, the whole Seven Years' War might perhaps have taken a very different course. To examine this question more closely, we must consider the cases according to their main differences.

The first case is when we wage war together with other powers that are not only our allies, but also have interests of their own.

The second is when an ally's army has come to assist us.

The third is when the issue concerns only the personal qualities of the general.

In the first two cases, the question arises whether it is better to combine the troops of the different powers completely, so that each separate army is made up of corps from several powers, as was done in the wars of 1813 and 1814, or to keep them as separate as possible, so that each power's army remains distinct and operates independently.

Clearly, the first option is the healthiest one. But it depends on a level of goodwill and shared interest that is rarely found. When the armies are united in this way, it becomes much harder for their governments to pull their interests apart. And the harmful effects of commanders pursuing selfish aims can then appear only among subordinate generals, and therefore only in tactics. Even there, they cannot act as freely or as safely as they can when the forces are completely separate. In that latter case, the damage reaches strategy itself, and so leaves much clearer marks. But, as already noted, the first arrangement requires an unusual spirit of conciliation from the governments. In 1813, the pressure of events drove all governments in that direction. Even so, the Emperor of Russia deserves the highest praise. Although he took the field with the strongest army, and although the turn in fortune was due chiefly to him, he put aside any pride in appearing at the head of a separate and independent Russian army, and placed his troops under Prussian and Austrian commanders.

If such a union of armies cannot be achieved, then complete separation is certainly better than a halfway arrangement. The worst situation of all is when two independent commanders, leading armies from different powers, find themselves in the same theatre of war, as often happened in the Seven Years'

War with the armies of Russia, Austria, and the German states. When forces are completely separate, the burdens that must be carried are divided more clearly, and each side suffers only from its own failings. As a result, each is driven more strongly to act by the pressure of circumstances. But when they are closely connected, or operating in the same theatre of war, this is no longer true. In that case, the ill will of one side also weakens the power of the other.

In the first of these three supposed cases, a complete separation presents no difficulty, because each State's natural interests usually point to its own distinct way of using its forces. In the second case, that may not hold true. Then, as a rule, the only course is to place oneself entirely under the auxiliary army, provided its strength is at all proportionate to such an arrangement, as the Austrians did in the latter part of the campaign of 1815, and the Prussians in the campaign of 1807.

As for the General's personal qualities, everything here depends on the particular individual. Still, we must not fail to make one general point: we should not, as is commonly done, put the most prudent and cautious commanders at the head of subordinate armies, but the most enterprising. We repeat that in strategic operations carried out separately, nothing matters more than having every part develop its strength to the fullest. In that way, mistakes made in one quarter may be offset by successes in another. But this full activity at every point can be expected only when the commanders are energetic, enterprising men, driven forward by their own natural spirit; a merely objective conviction, coolly reasoned out, that action is necessary rarely proves enough.

Lastly, we must note that, if circumstances otherwise allow, troops and their commanders should be assigned according to their qualities and the nature of the country: regular armies, good troops, numerous cavalry, and older, prudent, intelligent generals for open country; militia, national levies, and young, enterprising commanders for wooded country, mountains, and defiles; auxiliary armies for rich provinces where they can make themselves comfortable.

What we have said so far about the plan of war in general, and in this chapter about wars aimed specifically at destroying the enemy, is meant first to highlight that objective and then to point out principles that can guide the preparation of the necessary methods and resources. Our aim has been to make clear what such a war is meant to do, and what ought to be done in it. We have tried to stress what is necessary and generally true, while still leaving room for particular circumstances and chance. At the same time, we have tried to exclude everything arbitrary, groundless, trivial, fanciful, or sophistical. If we have succeeded in that, then we consider our task complete.

Now, if anyone is surprised to find nothing here about turning rivers, commanding mountains from their highest points, avoiding strong positions, or discovering the keys of a country, then he has not understood us, nor does he yet understand war in its general relations as we see it.

In earlier books we discussed these subjects in general terms, and we came to the conclusion that they are far less important by nature than their reputation would suggest. For that reason, they can and should play an even smaller role when it comes to

shaping the overall plan of a war whose object is the destruction of the enemy.

At the end of the book, we will devote a separate chapter to the question of supreme command. For now, we will close this chapter with an example.

If Austria, Prussia, the German Confederation, the Netherlands, and England decide on war with France, while Russia remains neutral—a situation that has often occurred during the last hundred and fifty years—they are capable of waging an offensive war aimed at overthrowing the enemy. For great and powerful as France is, it is still possible for more than half its territory to be overrun by the enemy, for its capital to be occupied, and for its resources to be reduced to complete ineffectiveness, without any power except Russia being able to give it effective support. Spain is too far away and too poorly situated; the Italian States are at present too fragile and too weak.

The countries we have named, not counting their possessions outside Europe, have more than 75,000,000 inhabitants,() while France has only 30,000,000. If they were truly determined to wage war against France, the army they could bring into the field would be roughly as follows, without exaggeration: *

If this force were put on a war footing, it would in all likelihood be much larger than anything France could set against it; for even under Buonaparte, the country never had an army of equal strength. And if we also allow for the troops that would have to

* This chapter was probably written in 1828. Since then, the numerical proportions have changed considerably. A. d. H.

be deducted for fortress garrisons and depots, for guarding the coasts, and so on, there can be no doubt that the allies would have a clear superiority in the main theatre of war. It is chiefly on that superiority that the aim or plan of overthrowing the enemy depends.

The center of gravity of French power lies in its military strength and in Paris. The allies must therefore aim to defeat the French army in one or more battles, take Paris, and drive the remnants of the French forces across the Loire. The vulnerable point of the French monarchy lies between Paris and Brussels, where the frontier is only thirty miles from the capital. For part of the allies—the English, Netherlanders, Prussians, and North German states—that is the natural area for assembling their forces, since these states lie either directly nearby or in a straight line behind it. Austria and South Germany, by contrast, can conduct their war conveniently only from the upper Rhine. Their natural line of advance runs toward Troyes and Paris, or possibly Orléans. Both blows, then—the one from the Netherlands and the other from the upper Rhine—are direct and natural, short and powerful. Both strike at the center of gravity of the enemy's power. The whole invading army should therefore be divided between these two points.

But two considerations complicate this otherwise simple plan.

The Austrians would not willingly expose their Italian possessions. In any case, they would want to keep control over events there, and for that reason they would not risk attacking the heart of France while leaving Italy protected only indirectly. Given the political condition of the country, this secondary

consideration should not be dismissed lightly. But it would be a clear mistake to tie it to the old, often-tested plan of attacking southern France from Italy, and then, for that reason, to enlarge the force in Italy beyond what is needed simply to guard against possible developments in the first campaign. Only the number required for that security should remain in Italy. Only that number should be taken away from the main effort, if we are not to betray that first principle: unity of plan, concentration of force. To imagine that France could be conquered by way of the Rhone would be like trying to lift a musket by the tip of its bayonet. But even as a supporting operation, an attack on the south of France should be rejected, because it would only bring new forces into action against us. Whenever an attack is made on distant provinces, it stirs up interests and energies that would otherwise have remained inactive. An attack on southern France from that direction would be justified only if the troops left to secure Italy were more numerous than necessary, and if, to avoid leaving them idle, one chose to employ them in that way.

We therefore repeat that the force left in Italy must be kept as small as circumstances allow, and it will be quite sufficient if it can keep the Austrians from losing the whole country in a single campaign. For the sake of illustration, let us assume that number is 50,000 men.

Another point that deserves attention is France’s position in relation to its coastline. Since England holds the advantage at sea, France must, for that reason, be highly vulnerable along its entire Atlantic coast and must therefore defend it with garrisons of varying strength. However weak these coastal defenses may

be, they still effectively triple the length of the French frontier. As a result, substantial forces would inevitably be drawn away from the French army in the main theater of war. If the English threatened France with twenty or thirty thousand troops ready for a landing, that would probably tie down two or three times as many French troops. And we must consider not only troops, but also the money, artillery, and other resources needed for ships and coastal batteries. Let us suppose that the English assign 25,000 men to this purpose.

Our plan of war would then simply be this:

Of these, about 50,000 should be reserved to garrison the frontier fortresses, while the remaining 300,000 should advance on Paris and engage the French army in a decisive battle.

2. A force of 200,000 Austrians and 100,000 South German troops should assemble on the Upper Rhine and advance at the same time as the army of the Netherlands. Their line of march should be toward the Upper Seine, and from there toward the Loire, also with the aim of forcing a great battle. These two offensives might perhaps join into a single one on the Loire.

This settles the main point. What remains to be added is meant chiefly to clear away false ideas, and it is as follows:

1. The chief commanders should seek the great battle as prescribed and fight it only when their numerical strength and the surrounding circumstances promise a decisive victory. Everything must be sacrificed to this objective, and as few men as possible should be used for sieges, blockades, garrisons, and the like. If, as Schwartzenberg did in 1814, they spread out

in diverging directions as soon as they enter the enemy's provinces, all is lost. That this did not happen in 1814, the Allies owed solely to the weakened condition of France. The attack should be like a wedge driven firmly home, not like a soap bubble that swells until it bursts.

2. Switzerland must be left to rely on its own strength. If it stays neutral, it provides a useful point d'appui on the Upper Rhine. If France attacks it, let Switzerland defend itself, which it is quite capable of doing in more than one respect. Nothing is more absurd than claiming that Switzerland has a dominant geographical influence on the course of war simply because it is the highest land in Europe. That kind of influence exists only under very limited conditions, and those conditions are not present here. If the French are attacked in the heart of their own country, they cannot launch an offensive from Switzerland against either Italy or Swabia. Least of all would the country's elevation matter as a decisive factor. The advantage of a strategically commanding country matters chiefly in defense. Whatever value it may have in offense might show itself in a single engagement at most. Anyone who does not understand this has not thought the matter through clearly. And if, at some future council of potentates and generals, a learned officer of the general staff should appear, brow furrowed, and offer this as wisdom, we declare in advance that it is pure nonsense. We can only hope that at the same council there will also be some true Blade, some child of plain common sense, to silence him.

3. We consider the space between two attacks to be of very little importance. If 600,000 men assemble thirty or forty miles from Paris to march against the heart of France, would anyone

seriously think of covering the Middle Rhine as well as Berlin, Dresden, Vienna, and Munich? It would make no sense. Are we supposed to protect the communications? That would not be unimportant. But we might then quickly be led into treating that protection as if it were itself an attack. And then, instead of advancing on two lines, as the position of the States clearly requires, we would end up advancing on three, though there is no need for it. Those three might then become five, or even seven, and in that way the old rigmarole would once again become the order of the day.

Our two attacks each have their own objective, and the forces assigned to them are probably much stronger than the enemy's. If both advance vigorously, each will help the other in a favorable way. If one attack goes badly because the enemy has concentrated more force against it, we may reasonably expect the success of the other to make up for that setback, and that is the real connection between the two. A level of coordination that depends on what happens each day is impossible because of the distance between them. Nor is it necessary. So any immediate, or rather direct, connection is not of great importance.

Besides, an enemy attacked in the very center of his own dominions will have hardly any forces worth mentioning available to disrupt this connection. The only real danger is that the inhabitants might cooperate with partisans in trying to interrupt it, so that the enemy would not actually have to commit troops to the effort. To prevent this, it is enough to send a corps of 10,000 or 15,000 men, especially strong in cavalry, in the direction from Trèves to Rheims. It would be able to drive off

any partisans before it and keep pace with the grand army. This corps should neither besiege nor observe fortresses, but march between them. It should rely on no fixed base, and it should retreat before superior forces in whatever direction they appear. In that case, no great disaster could befall it, and even if one did, it would still not be a serious loss for the whole. Under these conditions, such a corps could probably serve as an intermediate link between the two attacks.

4. The two subordinate operations—that is, the Austrian army in Italy and the English army intended for a landing on the coast—might pursue their objectives in whatever way seemed best. If they do not remain idle, they have fulfilled their mission with regard to the main point, and under no circumstances should either of the two great attacks be made dependent in any way on these lesser ones.

We are firmly convinced that France can be defeated and punished in this way whenever it chooses to assume the arrogant posture with which it has dominated Europe for a hundred and fifty years. Only beyond Paris, on the Loire, can the terms necessary for the peace of Europe be forced from it. Only in this way will the natural balance between 30 million people and 75 million quickly assert itself. It will not do so if the country from Dunkirk to Genoa continues to be hemmed in, as it has been for 150 years, by a ring of armies, while fifty different minor aims are pursued, none of them strong enough to overcome the inertia, friction, and outside influences that arise and renew themselves everywhere, but especially in allied armies.

The reader will immediately see how poorly the provisional organisation of the German federal armies suits such an arrangement. Under that system, the federative part of Germany becomes the core of German power, while Prussia and Austria, weakened in the process, lose their natural influence. But in war, a federative state is a very fragile core. It has no unity, no energy, no sound method of choosing a commander, no authority, and no responsibility.

Austria and Prussia are the two natural centres of strength in the German empire. They are the pivot, the fulcrum, the strong part of the sword. They are monarchical states accustomed to war. They have clearly defined interests and independent power. They are dominant over the others. The organisation should follow these natural lines, not some false idea of unity, which is impossible in such a case; and anyone who ignores what is possible in pursuit of the impossible is a fool.



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