# The Clausewitzean Traditions: *Die Politik* and the political purpose of Strategy

*Beatrice Heuser*

**For Thierry Balzacq and Ron Krebs (eds):**
***The Oxford Handbook of Grand Strategy***

It is an act of bravery to accommodate a chapter on Carl von Clausewitz in a Handbook dealing with Grand Strategy. As the previous chapter (Milevski) has shown, there is no agreement on the meaning of the term "grand strategy", and as I have shown elsewhere, even the term "stratégie/ Strategie/strategy" was unknown in Western Europe until Clausewitz's own lifetime. To this day, authors are struggling to make sense both the narrower term "strategy" and the term "grand strategy" in contexts of ever-evolving war, against the background of changing technology, scale, resources but also ideologies, world views, beliefs and values. What they all have in common, however, is that they relate the use (or threat of use) of armed force, and thus warfare, for a higher political purpose. And in propagating this political dimension of warfare and of strategy, Clausewitz played an undeniably important role.

What this chapter will attempt to do, then, is to identify two traditions of writing about strategy making (in our modern sense) to which he contributed. The first, which we should name after Paul-Gédéon Joly de Maizeroy (1719-1780), introduced the Byzantine term "strategy" to the West and defined it narrowly in a way that Clausewitz espoused and passed on to later generations. The second I shall call the political-military (or pol-mil) tradition of thinking about strategy making, one that sees strategy as subordinate to a higher political purpose. Clausewitz is usually credited with having been the first to formulate this, but as we shall see, the idea precedes him, and he stands in a longer tradition of thinking along pol-mil lines. His contribution to promoting this second tradition is crucial, however, and without this link between higher politics and the use of military force as an instrument, no current definition of grand strategy would exist.

## The Maizeroyan Tradition

So, focusing on the first tradition, we must start with the narrow sense in which Clausewitz himself understood the word "strategy", to explain why this cannot set us on the right path for the argument of this chapter. One should preface his definition by explaining with what meaning the word entered West European usage around the time of the French Revolution, after authors had grasped for some term to describe something bigger than how to deploy forces on a battlefield and how to lead them into combat. We first find the word "strategy" used in the West when a Frenchman and an Austrian,1 at much the same time, stumbled across a Byzantine text dating from around 900 AD attributed to the Emperor Leo VI the Wise or the Philosopher that employed the Greek term "strategia", and rendered it in their own languages. The Frenchman Joly de Maizeroy, defined it as follows:

> *La Stratégie* comprises plans of operations, the movements of armies, the art of establishing camps, marches, distributions of troops in relation to particular projects,

---

1 *Kaiser Leo des Philosophen Strategie und Taktik* übers. von Johann W. von Bourscheid in 5 volumes (Vienna: Joseph Edler von Kurzboeck, 1781)

> and generally the sciences of reasoning such as the *coup d'oeuil* [the intuitive interpretation of a situation]: that is why one calls [strategy] more habitually "military dialectic", which is the higher part of war and the particular science of the general.[2]

Joly de Maizeroy got himself into a pickle as he wrote this in an updated version of a book he called *Course of Tactics*; when he originally published this in 1765, he had not yet come across the Greek text and himself used "tactics" in a larger sense, encompassing what he himself in the revised version would call "strategy". He was by no means the only one to do so – a widely-read work circulating in France in manuscript form at the time by a young officer known as Count Guibert also used the term "tactics" in such a larger sense.[3] We shall presently be coming back to this latter work.

In the century after Joly de Maizeroy published his translation of Leo's text into French,[4] definitions of "strategy" abounded, but were usually very technical and limited. One of the most influential German-language authors of the period, Adam Heinrich Dietrich von Bülow,[5] summed it up flippantly, "where there is a punch-up, it's tactics, where there isn't, it's strategy."[6]

It is against this background that we find Clausewitz giving us the neither original nor very useful definition of strategy as "the use of engagements for the object of the war".[7] Further on he opined, "The art of war in the narrower sense must now in its turn be broken down into tactics and strategy. The first is concerned with the form of the individual engagement, the second its use."[8] And finally: "Strategy is the use of the engagement for the purpose of the war."[9] As the other chapters in this volume show, these Clausewitzian definitions, which are really a rephrasing of what had been said in many ways since Joly de Maizeroy, do not much advance our understanding of war. In the following I shall argue, however, that other ideas of Clausewitz' did, but that they, again, were not altogether his own: in this respect, too, he stands in a larger tradition of other thinkers who went before him, and whose enlightening ideas about the political purpose of warfare deserve to be rediscovered.

## The Problems of Proof

But before we do so, we must insert a note of methodological caution. In writing any history or genealogy of ideas, we very frequently encounter the problem of being unable to prove that an idea travelled from author A to author B in a way that can be called direct influence. Ideas can be in the air, and two or more authors can come upon the same idea at much the same time – this has been the case with famous inventions claimed by more than one scientist (think of

---

2 Paul Gédéon Joly de Maizeroy: *Cours de Tactique, pratique et historique,* 4 vols. (orig. 1765 ; revised Paris : Claude-Antoine Jombert, 1785), p. xxii

3 Jacques Antoine Hyppolite, Comte de Guibert : *Essai général de Tactique* (London: 1772), reprinted as *Guibert : Stratégiques* (Paris : L'Herne, 1977).

4 M. Joly de Maizeroy: *Institutions militaires de l'Empereur Léon le Philosophe* 2 vols. (Paris: Claude-Antoine Jombert, 1771)

5 Arthur Kuhle: *Die preußische Kriegstheorie um 1800 und ihre Suche nach dynamischen Gleichgewichten* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2018).

6 Adam Heinrich Dietrich von Bülow: *Neue Taktik der Neuern wie sie seyn sollte* (Berlin: Himburg, 1805), 2 vols., quoted in , V.E. Thellung von Courtlary: *Versuch über Taktik und Strategie* (Leipzig: Friedrich Christian Wilhelm Vogl, 1819), p.6.

7 Carl von Clausewitz: *Vom Kriege* (Berlin: Dümmler, 1832), trs. by Michael Howard and Peter Paret: *On War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), p.128)

8 *On War*, p. 131f.

9 *On War*, p. 177.

Alexander Graham Bell's and Thomas Edison's and several other inventors' claims to have invented the telephone in one form or another). Similar ideas can blossom in different heads at the same time, when these different heads are confronted with the same new events in history and have read the same literature, which channel their interpretation of events into particular conceptual patterns. Indeed, the interchangeability of officers or civil servants and diplomats that allowed great empires to function rested to no small extent on the standardised education they had undergone, British imperial civil servants of the nineteenth century most notably having been recruited, in large proportion, from a small set of private schools and from a small number of English and Scottish universities, where they had more frequently read the Classics ('Greats'). With such a similar grounding, they were likely to react to a situation in similar ways, even if they did not have the time to consult with one another.10 Analogously, with a similar educational background in military education, with similar reading of military literature, Clausewitz and other contemporaries may have come up with some ideas independently.

As I have shown elsewhere,[11] Clausewitz rarely acknowledged his debts to other authors, but the echoes of the writings of others are sometimes so strong that we do not have to work hard to establish that he had read Guibert or Kant. For other authors, we can make a few arguments of plausibility. While today, in a Department (say) of Politics and International Relations, diversification of interests is such that it is unlikely that all staff will be conversant with all her colleagues' work even just within the department, in Clausewitz's times, much less was published, and fewer members of the teaching staff at the General War School would have published more than short technical articles in one of the handful military journals that were springing up at the time. Moreover, as Clausewitz initially upon his appointment as the War School's director sought to make an impact upon its educational principles, it stands to reason that he would have familiarised himself with the two-volume field manual that his contemporary August Rühle von Lilienstern, who was also the chairman of the academic board of the School, had published in the previous three years. Equally, a copy of the work published in Dresden anonymously in 1774 which we shall discuss below existed in the library of the military academy (*Kriegsakademie*) the director of which Clausewitz was from 1818.[12] So we do, in this context, have to make arguments of plausibility or else conjecture, rather than being able to furnish the sort of proof which alone today will count of evidence for 'impact'.

## The meaning of *die Politik*

Turning thus to the ideas of Clausewitz which did have an important, albeit indirect, impact on how we think about "strategy" today and about "grand strategy", they revolve around the relationship between the political purpose of a war and warfare. While there are clearly many different definitions of "strategy" and "grand strategy" today, and there is a fair amount of divergence, what they have in common is that they see the use or the threat of the use of armed forces in war and peace as in some way subordinate to a greater purpose which transcends purely military war aims and should be seen as political. Moreover, "grand strategy" tends to assume

---

10 R.K.Kelsall: *Higher Civil Servants in Britain* (London: Routledge, 1955), p. 3.

11 Beatrice Heuser: "What Clausewitz Read", in Beatrice Heuser: *Strategy before Clausewitz* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), pp. 185-207.

12 After the dissolution of the *Kriegsakademie* at the end of the Second World War, its library was originally loaned to the State Library of Lower Saxony, but the books formally became property of the Bundeswehr when this was set up, and are now mainly in the library of the Centre for Military History and Social Sciences of the Bundeswehr (ZMSBw) in Potsdam.

that there are tools and resources other than the purely military – albeit perhaps largely in support of the military – being employed in the pursuit of the higher purpose.13

We have to pause here, as in fact there is some debate[14] about what Clausewitz himself meant by his famous line in *On War* – perhaps even the only one which everybody knows – that "war is the mere continuation of *die Politik* with other means", or, as it says in the text itself, "Thus we see that war is not only a political act, but a true political instrument, a continuation of political intercourse, its execution with other means."[15] In Clausewitz's use, does "*die Politik*" translated into our contemporary English mean "politics" or "policy", does it mean "political decision-makers", indeed "the government", "the state", or perhaps only "the minister/ministry responsible"? This we need to establish before we can then take the next step and see what larger insights Clausewitz has for us on the nature of the interface between (a) military strategy and a higher political purpose.

I propose to approach the subject by looking, first, at what the term *Politik* meant in Clausewitz's own times, and how the authors he read or presumably read used the word before him. Secondly, we shall home in on particularities of Clausewitz's views of the relationship between *die Politik* and the use of armed force, compared and contrasted with the views of the others. As we shall see, Clausewitz was far from being the only one to have understood that there is (or should be) a higher political purpose to war, even though his was the punchiest formulation of that relationship.

In Grimm's Dictionary, which the Grimm brothers compiled during Clausewitz's life time, the word is defined as "die Kunst des Staatslebens", the art of state life, a curious word elsewhere defined in Grimm's Dictionary as "life of a state, or life within the state" ("Leben, das der Staat führt oder wie es innerhalb des Staates geführt wird").[16] But Clausewitz also read works in French. In French, the term had been used since the thirteenth century, and could mean different things. The French National Centre for Textual and Lexical Resources has identified the following: the earliest, thirteenth-century use referred to "the science and practice of government." Since Corneille used the term in the 17th century, it could be taken to mean "the particular way of governing,"[17] to illustrate which one could use this passage from Montesquieu's *Spirit of Law* of 1748 which Clausewitz greatly admired. Montesquieu in this book only used the term "*la politique*" thirteen times, without ever providing a definition of the term, but it seems to fit "the particular way of governing". For example, he wrote, "In monarchies, *la politique* achieves great things with the least effort [*vertu*] possible; as in the most beautiful machines, as few movements, forces and wheels as possible are used by craftsmanship."[18]

But from the 17th century onwards, "*la politique*" could also mean "principles guiding action" (as in the English: "policy"), "public affairs, activities relating to the exercise of power in a State", and "behaviour in the public domain", but also "in the private domain". At the same time, it could mean "agility, subtleness in one's conduct". Last not least for our purposes, we should note that Germaine de Staël – in whose intellectually highly charged country house in Switzerland Clausewitz stayed for several weeks in 1807 – in her reflections on the French

---

13 Thierry Balzacq, Peter Dombrowski & Simon Reich: "Is Grand Strategy a Research Program? A Review Essay", *Security Studies* (2018), DOI: 10.1080/09636412.2018.1508631.

14 For a critique of the Howard and Paret translation with its inconsistencies, see

15 Carl von Clausewitz: *Vom Kriege*, I.1. para 24, my translation.

16 http://woerterbuchnetz.de/DWB/?sigle=DWB&mode=Vernetzung&lemid=GS38261#XGS38261, accessed on 9 V 2016.

17 https://www.cnrtl.fr/etymologie/politique, accessed on 30 May 2019.

18 Montesquieu: *De l'Esprit des Lois* (1748, this version Paris: Flammarion, 1979), vol. I, Book III Chapter 5, p.147.

Revolution published in 1817 used "*la politique*" to mean "*parler politique*", which might be loosely translated as "political discourse" or "political talk".[19]

A work to which Clausewitz may have been introduced by Germaine de Staël who in her youth had known the author well, and which he definitely read before 1812[20] was clearly of central importance to his thinking: the *Essai général de Tactique* de Guibert, the preliminary discourse of which begins with the words:

> If by *politique* we mean the art of negotiating, or rather intriguing, that of blindly fomenting some revolution, or in the obscurity of cabinets to conclude or break some treaties of alliance, peace, marriage or commerce, we are in this regard without doubt superior to the Ancients, we bring to this more cleverness and more wit then them. But if *la politique* is the vast and sublime science to rule a state, internally and externally; to direct individual interests towards a general interest; to render the peoples happy and to attach them to [make them supportive of] their governments, let us agree that [*la politique*] is entirely unknown to modern administrations…[21]

The author thus criticized the French government of his own times, and what followed was a series of suggestions for the improvements of things. Clausewitz was so impressed with this book that he translated whole passages of it into German, and paraphrased them in his own *On War.*[22]

Let us turn to some examples where Clausewitz used the German equivalent term "*die Politik*" in his earlier writings. In his early ruminations on the Peace of Tilsit (1807), he clearly used the term in the meaning of "policy" or the modern sense of overall strategy: having accused Tsar Alexander of Russia of having, first, helped Prussia and then helped himself to a small portion of Prussian territory (the area of Byalystok). He argued that (even) Machiavelli – his own literary lode star – would have turned away with disgust from such a *Politik*. He went on to extol the greatness of Machiavelli's thoughts, and spoke of the "*Politik* towards other states, which Machavelli counselled to such states, which are too weak to take the straight approach".[23]

In a stream of consciousness that he penned some time between 1819 and 1823, he blamed Napoleon's conquests in Europe not only on French military acumen, but also on the "liederliche *Politik* des Augenblicks" of Europe's other princes, perhaps best translated as the shameful short-sighted politics of ad-hockery that focused "on one day at a time" rather than on the big picture. Some German polities had seized this time of French expansion to ask for constitutional changes, perhaps even thinking (admiringly) of "old Rome with its enormous *Politik*". Here the word could either mean "policy/strategy of expansion", or its great political system. (Interestingly, he went on here, like Montesquieu before him to emphasise the link between the constitution of the polity and its foreign policies, and the indirect influences of

---

19 https://www.cnrtl.fr/etymologie/politique, accessed on 30 May 2019.

20 As he quoted long passages from it in his "Confession Memorandum" of 1812, see Beatrice Heuser: "What Clausewitz Read", pp 204-207.

21 Anon. (Jacques-Antoine-Hippolyte de Guibert): *Essai général de Tactique* (London : Associated Librarians, orig. 1772, reprint of 1773), 2 vols, here vol. I, p.iii.

22 For these passages, see Heuser: Heuser: "What Clausewitz Read", pp. 204-207.

23 Hans Rothfels (ed.): *Carl von Clausewitz: Politische Schriften und Briefe* (Munich: Drei Masken Verlag, 1922), pp.62, 64.

parliaments – he spoke of them in terms of representatives of the social classes and guilds – on foreign policy, a rare case of Clausewitz articulating reflections on this subject).[24]

And now for a crucial passage of *On War,* concerning Prussia's defeat of 1806, translated here by Alan Cromartie who deliberately refrained from replacing the word *Politik* itself: "did the disaster arise from the influence of *die Politik* on war or from the mistaken *Politik* itself?" And Clausewitz continued, although the mistakes only revealed themselves in wartime.

> This did not happen because *die Politik* omitted to take counsel from the art of war. The very art of war in which an exponent of *die Politik* might have believed – i.e. the one from the real world, which belonged to the *Politik* of the day as its familiar tool – *this* art of war, I say, was naturally caught up in *die Politik*'s mistake and couldn't inform it of a better way. It is true that war too had itself endured meaningful changes in its nature and its forms which had brought it closer to its absolute manifestation, but these changes didn't happen through a process by which the French government had freed itself from the leading strings of *die Politik*, but arose from the altered *Politik* which was produced by the French Revolution for the whole of Europe as much as for France. This *Politik* introduced other means, other forces, and in so doing made possible an energy in the conduct of war that would not otherwise have been thinkable.[25]

Let us attempt to paraphrase this by replacing especially the word "Politik": "did the disaster arise from the influence of *policy-makers (the king and the diplomats)* on war or from the mistaken *policy* itself?" We would thus read:

> This did not happen because *the king* omitted to take counsel from *his generals*. The very art of war in which *the political leadership* might have believed – i.e. the one from the real world, which belonged to the *political context* of the day as its familiar tool – *this* art of war, I say, was naturally conditioned by *the mistaken overall policies (grand strategy?)* and couldn't inform *policy makers* of a better way. It is true that war too had itself endured meaningful changes in its nature and its forms which had brought it closer to its absolute manifestation, but these changes didn't happen through a process by which the French government had freed itself from the leading strings of *cabinet politics*, but arose from the altered *political dynamics* which was produced by the French Revolution for the whole of Europe as much as for France. This *revolutionary political dynamic* introduced other means, other forces, and in so doing made possible an energy in the conduct of war that would not otherwise have been thinkable.

We find easily that it is impossible to settle for a one-to-one consistent translation using only one English word.

The question why Clausewitz chose the word "Politik" for all of these is legitimate.[26] There are several possible answers to this. One is that in *On War*, where this passage hails from, Clausewitz was not concerned with settling scores, nor to offend King Frederick William III on whose favour he continued to depend until his death (and indeed, his widow would depend on

---

24 Incidentally another example of Clausewitz's relative unfamiliarity with Ancient history, as "old Rome" seems to be reduced to the centuries of the Republic. Rothfels (ed.): *Clausewitz: Politische Schriften*, p. 173 f.

25 *On War* VIII.6B (p. 996f. in Hahlweg ed), this translation by Alan Cromartie: "Introduction", in Alan Cromartie (ed): Liberal Wars: *Anglo-American strategy, ideology, and practice* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), p.10.

26 I am grateful to Hew Strachan for having raised this question.

the goodwill of the court). If elsewhere he was less reserved in his implicit criticism of this monarch, he is not as much as mentioned in *On War*.

Secondly, we should recall that Clausewitz had set out to write something akin to Montesquieu's *Esprit des Lois*. Montesquieu himself had been on the look-out for (a limited number of) higher principles that, he claimed, governed all the laws about which he was writing. He explained, "once I had discovered my principles, all that I was looking for came to me, and within twenty years, I saw my work begin, grow, advance, and finish."[27] Montesquieu's principles included the subordination of private law to public law, and of the state (and its governments) to the rule of law. If it is – as we may assume from his own statement – this sort of principle that Clausewitz was in search of, then writing about the subordination of warfare to *politics* as a higher principle, a big generic term that could encompass many different aspects, made perfect sense. Clausewitz took little interest in the mechanism of politics, in decision making processes or "process tracing". To the contrary, one can assume that he wanted to boil the manifold manifestations of political activity down to one bigger principle – *die Politik* – just as elsewhere he introduced the principle of chance, or the principle of passion. Considering also his interest in Newton[28] who with his concept of "force" had found a common descriptor for the horse's muscle power pulling a chariot and the mutual attraction of planets expressed on ours through gravitation, one could see the attractiveness of one such comprehensive term.

But there is a third, much simpler explanation: the meanings of words change over time. As we have seen from the etymological survey of the use of the term "*la politique*" in French and *die Politik* in German, these were terms used widely to encompass a variety of meanings and nuances. Where today one might, for the sake of precision and after a century of the existence of Political Science as a discipline at universities, wish to use a number of different expressions, all these terms seem to have come together in the heads of contemporaries writing both in French and in German.

## The pol-mil nexus: *die Politik* and Warf

Having thus explored how Clausewitz might have thought about die Politik, let us now see what light other works on the interface between die Politik/la politique and the use of force might shed on Clausewitz's ideas about it. The first to turn to is again the *Essai général*, where Guibert identified two strands of the policy-making of a government, and the need for them to interact for the state to have a robust defence posture:

> By Politics [*la politique*] I mean the art of governing a State in such a manner that the subjects may be happy, the State powerful, and respected by her neighbours; when considered in that extensive point of light it becomes the most interesting science; from thence Politics is naturally divided into two parts, *interior* and *foreign* Politics [*Politique intérieure et Politique extérieure*].
>
> The first is the foundation of the second. All that belongs to the happiness and strength of a people falls under the first [category]: laws, manners, customs, preconceived opinions, national spirit, justice, police, population, agriculture, trade, revenues of the nation, expenses of government, duties, application of their produce …

Guibert went on to explain the complementary contributions that the two branches of government should make to the wellbeing of the state and its people, clearly thinking in terms of the duties of two complementary but distinct branches of government.

---

27 Montesquieu: *De l'Esprit des Lois* (Paris: Flammarion, 1979), vol. I, p. 119.

28 Mentioned in *On War*, pp. 112 and 146

> While Interior Politics thus prepares and perfects every tool [of governing the state] internally, foreign Politics examines what weight and consideration the application of those tools can give to a State externally ... [Foreign Politics] must be acquainted with every kind of relation of its own country and the interests of others. It must distinguish illusionary and apparent interests from those that are real and permanent, those alliances which are ephemeral and ineffectual, from those useful and solid bonds that the topography of countries dictates, or the respective advantage of their contractors. [Foreign Politics] must afterwards calculate what military force a State requires to impose respect on its neighbours, to give weight to its negotiations. [Foreign Politics] should tailor its military force in relation to the spirit and strength of the country, so it is not too great for its means, or else it would exhaust the State... [Foreign Politics] should instil into the armed forces the best understanding, the greatest valour, the most consummate discipline, because then they can be less numerous, and with this reduction of numbers less burdensome to the subjects.[29]

So for Guibert, a healthy state was needed for a strong defence posture; meanwhile he did not differentiate between the exercise of diplomacy and the tasks of dealing with the military. (This predominance of foreign policy over defence policy continues to resonate in France.) Guibert's *Essai général* must have encouraged Clausewitz to reflect further about foreign policy making and warfare.

But Guibert was not the only one to be writing about the relationship between politics and warfare. In 1774, two years after the first publication of Guibert's *Essai général,* an anonymous author who was writing at the court of the King of Saxony published a book with the title *Attempt to establish rules according to which a concept for a war in its entirety, as well as operational plans for each individual campaign, are to be drawn up*. In simple terms, the author explained that if a prince's Cabinet [*Cabinett*]or council of minister wanted to decide whether and how to wage a war, they should produce two plans: one concerning the war as a whole (today one might say the strategy by which it would be fought, in all its planning dimensions) and one a campaign plan [*Operationsplan*]. The two plans might effectively coincide, for example in the case of a small power fighting defensively only on one frontier. In a more complex scenario in which choices would have to be made, however, one would need the expertise or skill [*Kunst*] to make the best choices, i.e. how to prioritise or prefer some choices of action over others, to find "the shortest and easiest way to a secure and advantageous peace".[30]

On what we would no call a strategic or grand strategic level, a war plan would have to take into account the specific attributes of enemies and allies. Some powers would be enemies from the start, others might become enemies because of the way one was prosecuting the war. One might have to seek new allies as the war evolved.[31] Meanwhile, one should consider ways to undermine the enemy alliance, and how to behave towards neutrals.[32]

The author underscored that in order to draw up a good campaign plan, one needed "the skill [*Kunst*] to choose those among the different possible steps one could take against an individual

---

29 In Beatrice Heuser (ed. and trs.): *The Strategy Makers: Thoughts on War and Society from Machiavelli to Clausewitz* (Santa Monica, CA: ABC-Clio, 2010), pp. 150-170.

30 Anon.: *Versuch über die Regeln, nach welchen der Entwurf zu einem Kriege im Ganzen, sowohl als der Operationsplan eine einzelnen Feldzugs einzurichten ist* (Dresden: Churfürstliche Hof- und Buchdruckerei, 1774), p. 3ff.

31 Anon.: *Versuch über die Regeln,* p.15f.

32 Anon.: *Versuch über die Regeln,* pp. 146-156.

enemy the most decisive ones, and to identify the means that would in the fastest and most secure way execute this plan." The author explained that each campaign plan and the plan for the war as a whole had to be thought out jointly, so that implications of each for the other could be taken into account: one could not allocate the same manpower and resources to several campaign plans simultaneously, and one would have to prioritise at the level of the plan for the war as a whole (we would say: the strategic level), with implications for resources at the level of the *Operationsplan*, i.e. individual campaigns.[33] Consequently, resource constraints might lead one to the decision to avoid the war altogether, or else "to conduct the war, not as one would like to, but as one can."[34]

Who should be charged with drawing up the war plan and the *Operationspläne?*

> A general of a certain format will always have the talent to draw up [the concept for] the war as a whole from the *Operationspläne* of the individual campaigns. The minister by contrast, if he is not simultaneously a soldier, is never capable of designing the *Operationsplan* of an individual campaign, or even to judge its quality. Nor should one ever leave it to the minister alone to draw up [the concept for] the war as a whole. Instead, one must listen to the [respective] generals who are to be put in charge of the different frontiers, so that one can base the design for the war as a whole on their knowledge of war [*Kriegswissenschaft*] and simultaneously on the art of [governing] the state [*Staatskunst*].[35]

To be balanced, however, the wisdom and expertise of the minister was very much needed for the conduct and termination of the war as a whole. A soldier might always be tempted to push further into enemy territory and to make further conquests. The minister, however, would take a larger (as we would say strategic) view and realise that there are limits to territorial conquest which the art of governing the state [*Staatskunst*] must impose, as this would lengthen the frontiers one would henceforth have to defend and create new enemies. The wise prince, counselled by the minister, would return conquered territory little by little, in return for concessions elsewhere which would help bring about "a secure and lasting peace." The minister would contribute his knowledge of the enemy country, of the obstacles to a successful campaigns and war, and would see what parts of the military plans had to be adapted to these external realities. To conclude, the anonymous author wrote, in order to determine all this properly,

> one has to comprehend the war in its entire extent, and think it through from the beginning to the end [*bis zu seinem Ende durchdenken*], otherwise one runs the risk of already making a mistake with the first step, of embarking on it wrongly from the beginning, of confusing the game and losing.
> Thus art of war and *die Politik* hold hands jointly to determine the design of the war as a whole. He who follows only the road signs of one or the other will go astray. Indeed

---

33 Anon.: *Versuch über die Regeln,* p. 5.

34 Anon.: *Versuch über die Regeln,* p. 19.

35 Anon.: *Versuch über die Regeln,* p. 13. In this context and more generally that in German and French, as in English at the time, the word "art" referred to the skill and ability to do something practical, while "science" was used to refer to impractical, theoretical reflection. See Beatrice Heuser: 'Theory and Practice, Art of Science of Warfare: an Etymological Note', in Daniel Marston and Tamara Leahy (eds): *War, History and Strategy; Essays in Honour of Professor Robert O'Neill* (Canberra: ANU Press, 2016), free download under https://press-files.anu.edu.au/downloads/press/n1879/pdf/book.pdf, accessed on 31 May 2019.

> one should draw up multiple plans and consider their [respective] requirements, so as to be prepared for unforeseen situations.[36]

Clausewitz' own remark that one should know at the beginning what the war is supposed to accomplish may be an echo of this passage in the anonymous work, as may be his insistence that the military commander-in-chief should be consulted by the Cabinet when making decisions about the war. In any case, while this anonymous author did not include anywhere a punchy line about how warfare must be subordinated to higher purposes of *die Politik*, this is implicit in his writing.

A couple of decades later we by implication find this thought again in the writing of the Königsberg philosopher Immanuel Kant. Dwelling on war as the recourse of the state to pursue its legal claims in the absence of a court, he wrote, "Die Anwendung, die der Staat von seiner Gewalt macht, um sein Recht zu verfolgen, is also der Krieg".[37] – loosely translated, "war is the means by which the state applies its power"; war is thus an instrument of the state, here the State's quest for justice. This in turn is echoed in an essay by Clausewitz's colleague Otto August Rühle von Lilienstern, originally written in 1813, which had the telling title "*Vom Kriege*"("On war"), which of course Clausewitz later borrowed for his own work. Echoing Kant, Rühle wrote that "war is the way and method to decide quarrels of the peoples through luck and the use of force."[38] Summarising a lengthy argument, Rühle homed in once again on the need to keep in mind "relationship between war and the State", and how the State had to "dominate the raw violence [of war] in such a way that [war] allows itself to become a useful instrument of an enlightened art of statesmanship [*Staatskunst*]."[39] In short, through the exercise of statesmanship, war is a tool of politics.

We do not have explicit proof that Rühle had read Guibert, but there seem to be echoes of Guibert in Rühle's writing. While instead of writing of *la politique* or *die Politik*, Rühle used the term « *die Staatskunst* », but this fits perfectly Guibert's definition of *la politique* as "the vast and sublime science of ruling a State" (see above). In any case he went a conceptual step further than Guibert who had differentiated between domestic and foreign policy making. Rühle saw both as part of statecraft, but noted that one tended to divide the latter into two sub-areas (each with their own ministries). "One tends to label the art of the conduct of relations among states in the state peace as *Diplomatic Art,* while in times of war it is called *Art of the Conduct of War* [Rühle's emphasis]."[40] He also used his own neologism *Diplomatik* as shorthand for "diplomatic art", which should ensure that the state was at all times prepared for defence, but also to prepare a particular war, and should determine when to pass to a state of war. He called for practitioners of a "*diplomatische Kriegskunst",* a diplomatic art of war, which should straddle the civilian aspect of

---

36 Anon.: *Versuch über die Regeln,* pp. 157-159

37 Quoted in G.S.A. Mellin: *Encyclopädisches Wörterbuch der Kritischen Philosophie* (Jena & Leipzig: Friedrich Frommann, 1801), Vol. III Part II, p. 715. Also quoted as „Der Krieg, sagt Kant, ist die Anwendung, die der Staat von seiner Gewalt macht, um sein Recht zu verfolgen" in Otto August Rühle von Lilienstern: *Vom Kriege: ein Fragment aus einer Reihe von Vorlesungen über die Theorie der Kriegskunst* (Frankfurt am Main: Johann Friedrich Wenner, 1814), p.6f.

38 This essay was originally called „Apologie des Krieges", i.e. "Apology of War" (1813), but was reprinted in 1814 „Vom Kriege" (1814), and then in Otto August R[ühle] v[on] L[ilienstern]: *Aufsätze über Gegenstände und Ereignisse aus dem Gebiete des Kriegswesens* (Berlin: Ernst Siegfried Mittler, 1818), p. 102.

39 R[ühle] v[on] L[ilienstern]: *Aufsätze*, p. 159.

40 R[ühle] v[on] L[ilienstern]: *Aufsätze*, this section originally written in 1811, p.180.

the art of governing a country and the art of war. Such practitioners, he thought, could be formed by sending civil servants to attend courses in military academies.[41]

To underscore that foreign policy, comprising the art of conducting state policy in both peace and war, must not be conducted in separate silos (as we would say today), he explained, in a passage which again seems to echo the anonymous author from the court of Dresden:

> Throughout history we only see great political results where diplomacy [*die Diplomatik*] (or *die Politik*, as it is also called) goes hand in hand with the art of war, where either both are directly united in the person of the prince himself, or where the joint supreme command is left to the supreme military commander, or where the foreign minister is sufficiently well initiated into the secrets of the art of war in order to be capable of designing military operations, and to assess the military situation of the state and its neighbours in their entire extent.[42]

Regrettably, he thought, the latter two were rarely the case: neither was the supreme military commander usually given the necessary political instructions, nor had the foreign minister usually made the effort to learn about the simplest rules of the art of war. The prevailing processes of government decision making kept both compartments of the state well apart, especially in times of peace. "Thus when war breaks out, there is in every direction a lack of the necessary harmony [between them]. One cannot come to an agreement about the purpose [of the war] nor about the means" to pursue it. Foreign minister and military commander-in-chief poinson each other's lives, "and it is sheer luck if the survival or the actual interests of the state are not buried under the hostile sparring of Diplomatik and art of war." 43

Against this background of existing literature Clausewitz, writing in the late 1810s and the 1820s until his departure for war in 1830, formulated his own ideas about peace and war, including of course the passage for which he is most famous:

> War is thus a political act. … If we keep in mind that war springs from some political purpose, it is natural that the prime motive of its existence will remain the supreme consideration conducting it. … *Die Politik* will thus permeate the entire war-act and will have a continuous influence on it, as far as the nature of the exploding forces allow.
>
> **24. War is a mere continuation of *die Politik* with other means.**
>
> Thus we see that war is not just a political act, but a true political instrument, a continuation of political intercourse, a completion of the same with other means. What remains distinctive about war relates only to the particular nature of its means. … the political intention is the purpose, war is the means, and the means can never be thought of without the purpose.[44]

This is the foundation on which the pol-mil understanding of strategy would ultimately be built.

## The Maizeroyan Tradition after Clausewitz

It was the narrow Joly-de-Maizeroyan definition of strategy, reinforced by Clausewitz's own use of the term, that would prevail in the Western literature well into the 20th century. Most

---

41 R[ühle] v[on] L[ilienstern]: *Aufsätze,* p.185.

42 R[ühle] v[on] L[ilienstern]: *Aufsätze*, p. 180f.

43 R[ühle] v[on] L[ilienstern]: *Aufsätze*, p. 181.

44 Clausewitz: *Vom Kriege,* I.1.23-24, my translation.

famously, Napoleon's Swiss general Baron Henri de Jomini, whose works would dominate the teaching in military academies from America to Russia during the decades when Clausewitz was all but unknown, produced the following definitions independently of (and probably earlier than) Clausewitz, but clearly, once more, inspired by the Maizeroyan tradition:

> Strategy is the art of making war upon the map, and comprehends the whole theater of operations. Grand Tactics is the art of posting troops upon the battlefield according to the accidents of the ground, or bringing them into action, and the art of fighting upon the ground in contradistinction to planning upon a map. … Strategy decides where to act … grand tactics decides the manner of execution and the employment of the troops.'[45]

And further on in his famous and frequently re-published Art of War, he wrote "Strategy … is the art of bringing the greatest part of the forces of an army upon the important point of the theater of war or the zone of operations."46

In 1840, one of Clausewitz' successors as instructors of the Prussian Army, Wilhelm von Willisen, told his disciples that "the task of the art of war is [to bring about] victory … Victory merely means the achievement of the military aim as it arises directly from the fight."[47] And, "strategy is the doctrine of joint [operations]", "the doctrine of battle [*Schlagen*] is tactics."[48] Five years later, the French Maréchal Marmont, once Napoleon's Aide de Camp, continued the Jominian tradition, writing "the general movements that take place beyond the vision of the enemy and before battle are called strategy" and "tactics is the science of the application of manoeuvres".[49]

Twenty years later, again echoing Jomini, the Briton Sir Edward Bruce Hamley lectured his students in that "The theatre of war is the province of strategy", while "The field of battle is the province of tactics".[50] Writing for the British Army, Colonel J.F. Maurice merely echoed Hamley's words.[51] At much the same time, the Jominian definitions were still repeated verbatim by French General Derrécagaix.[52] Even at the turn of the 19th to the 20th century, G.F.R. Henderson, Instructor in Tactics at the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst, could lecture the British army that

> Strategy, according to the official text-book of the British infantry, is the art of bringing the enemy to battle, while tactics are the methods by which a commander seeks to overwhelm him when battle is joined. It will thus be seen that strategy leads up to the actual fighting – that is, to the tactical decision: but that while the two armies are seeking to destroy each other it remains in abeyance, to spring once more into operation as soon as the issue is decided. … the end of strategy is the pitched battle; …

---

45 Barnon Antoine Henri de Jomini: *The Art of War*, trs. Capt. G.H. Mendell and Capt. W.P. Craighill, (originally 1868, repr. London: Greenhill Books, 1992), pp. 69-71

46 *The Art of War*, p. 322

47 Wilhelm von Willisen: *Theorie des großen Krieges* vol 1 (orig. 1840, 2nd edn Leipzig: Verlag Duncker & Humblot, 1868), p. 26.

48 Willisen: *Theorie des großen Krieges* vol 1, pp. 30-32.

49 Maréchal Auguste de Marmont, Duc de Raguse: *De l'Esprit des Institutions militaires* (Paris : Librairie militaire J Dumaine, 1845), pp. 17, 25.

50 Sir Edward Bruce Hamley: *Operations of War Explained and Illustrated* (originally 1866, 3rd edn, Edinburgh: William Blackwood & Sons, 1872), p.60.

51 Colonel J.F. Maurice: *War* (London: Macmillan, 1891), p.7

52 Victor Bernard Derrécagaix: *La Guerre moderne* (originally 1885, 2nd edn, Paris: Librairie militaire de L. Baudoin, 1890), vol. 1, p.4.

> the encounter at which strategy aims is one in which every possible advantage of numbers, ground, supplies, and *moral[e]* shall be secured to himself, and which shall end in his enemy's annihilation.[53]

It was the Soviets who most tenaciously clang to the Maizeroyan tradition because it had found its confirmation of Clausewitz's writings. And Clausewitz in turn had been approved of by Lenin. Liddell Hart and others had long tried to give "strategy" a much wider definition and the Cold War was already in full swing when Soviet definitions, following Clausewitz, still clung to those derived from Emperor Leo. Marxist Leninist teaching of war defined strategy "as the preparation and execution of the war as a whole and tactics as the organisation and conduct of battle. The content of strategy and of tactics is the same - armed struggle."[54]

Ultimately, however, a reflection on grand strategy such as Paul Kennedy's would have been unthinkable without that other, the pol-mil tradition, which Clausewitz did not invent, but which he was ultimately key to helping build:

> The crux of grand strategy lies ... in policy, that is, in the capacity of the nation's leaders to bring together all the elements, both military and non-military, for the preservation and enhancement of the nation's long-term (that is, in wartime and peacetime), best interests.[55]

7650 words

---

[53] George Francis Robert Henderson: *The Science of War: A Collection of Essays and Lectures, 1892-1903* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1905), p.39.

[54] Major General Professor Rasin: 'Die Bedeutung von Clausewitz für die Entwicklung der Militärwissenschaft", *Militärwesen* 2nd year No. 3 (May 1958), p. 385.

[55] Paul Kennedy: "Grand Strategy in War and Peace: Toward a Broader Definition" in id. (ed): *Grand Strategy in War and Peace* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), p. 5.