

CHAPTER I

WHAT IS WAR?

but which do not really weaken its power. Force, that is to say, physical force (for no moral force exists apart from the conception of a state and law), is thus the *means*; to impose our will upon the enemy is the *object*. To achieve this object with certainty we must disarm the enemy, and this disarming is by definition the proper aim of military action. It takes the place of the object and in a certain sense pushes it aside as something not belonging to war itself.

3. THE USE OF FORCE THEORETICALLY
WITHOUT LIMITS

Now philanthropic souls might easily imagine that there was an artistic way of disarming or overthrowing our adversary without too much bloodshed and that this was what the art of war should seek to achieve. However agreeable this may sound, it is a false idea which must be demolished. In affairs so dangerous as war, false ideas proceeding from kindness of heart are precisely the worst. As the most extensive use of physical force by no means excludes the co-operation of intelligence, he who uses this force ruthlessly, shrinking from no amount of bloodshed, must gain an advantage if his adversary does not do the same. Thereby he forces his adversary's hand, and thus each pushes the other to extremities to which the only limitation is the strength of resistance on the other side.

This is how the matter must be regarded, and it is a waste—and worse than a waste—of effort to ignore the element of brutality because of the repugnance it excites.

If the wars of civilized nations are far less cruel and destructive than those of the uncivilized, the reason lies in the social condition of the states, both in themselves and in their relations to one another. From this condition, with its attendant circumstances, war arises and is shaped, limited and modified. But these things do not themselves belong to war; they already exist. Never in the philosophy of war itself can we introduce a modifying principle without committing an absurdity.

Conflict between men really consists of two different elements: hostile feeling and hostile intention. We have chosen the latter of these two elements as the distinguishing mark of our definition because it is the more general. We cannot conceive the most savage, almost instinctive, passion of hatred as existing without hostile intention, whereas there are many hostile intentions accompanied by absolutely no hostility, or, at all events, no predominant hostility, of feeling. Among savages intentions inspired by

1. INTRODUCTION

We propose to consider, first, the several elements of our subject, then its several parts or divisions, and, finally, the whole in its internal connection. Thus we proceed from the simple to the complex. But in this subject more than in any other it is necessary to begin with a glance at the nature of the whole, because here more than elsewhere the part and the whole must always be considered together.

2. DEFINITION

We shall not begin here with a clumsy, pedantic definition of war, but confine ourselves to its essence, the duel. War is nothing but a duel on a larger scale. If we would combine into one conception the countless separate duels of which it consists, we would do well to think of two wrestlers. Each tries by physical force to compel the other to do his will; his immediate object is to overthrow his adversary and thereby make him incapable of any further resistance.

War is thus an act of force to compel our adversary to do our will.

Force, to meet force, arms itself with the inventions of art and science. It is accompanied by insignificant restrictions, hardly worth mentioning, which it imposes on itself under the name of international law and usage,

emotion prevail; among civilized peoples those prescribed by intelligence. But this difference lies not in the intrinsic nature of savagery and civilization, but in their accompanying circumstances, institutions, and so forth. It does not necessarily, therefore, exist in every case, but only prevails in the majority of cases. In a word, even the most civilized nations can be passionately inflamed against one another.

From this we see how far from the truth we should be if we ascribed war among civilized men to a purely rational act of the governments and conceived it as continually freeing itself more and more from all passion, so that at last there was no longer need of the physical existence of armies, but only of the theoretical relations between them—a sort of algebra of action.

Theory was already beginning to move in this direction when the events of the last war¹ taught us better. If war is an act of force, the emotions are also necessarily involved in it. If war does not originate from them, it still more or less reacts upon them, and the degree of this depends not upon the stage of civilization, but upon the importance and duration of the hostile interests.

If, therefore, we find that civilized peoples do not put prisoners to death or sack cities and lay countries waste, this is because intelligence plays a greater part in their conduct of war and has taught them more effective ways of applying force than these crude manifestations of instinct.

The invention of gunpowder and the advances continually being made in the development of firearms, in themselves show clearly enough that the demand for the destruction of the enemy, inherent in the theoretical conception of war, has been in no way actually weakened or diverted by the advance of civilization.

So we repeat our statement: War is an act of force, and to the application of that force there is no limit. Each of the adversaries forces the hand of the other, and a reciprocal action results which in theory can have no limit. This is the first reciprocal action that we meet and the first extreme.

(First reciprocal action)

4. THE AIM IS TO DISARM THE ENEMY

We have said that the disarming of the enemy is the aim of military action, and we shall now show that, theoretically, at all events, this is necessarily so.

¹ The war with Napoleon.

If our opponent is to do our will, we must put him in a position more disadvantageous to him than the sacrifice would be that we demand. The disadvantages of his position should naturally, however, not be transitory, or, at least, should not appear to be so, or our opponent would wait for a more favorable moment and refuse to yield. Every change in his position that will result from the continuance of military activity, must thus, at all events in theory, lead to a position still less advantageous. The worst position in which a belligerent can be placed is that of being completely disarmed. If, therefore, our opponent is to be forced by military action to do our will, we must either actually disarm him or put him in such a condition that he is threatened with the probability of our doing so. From this it follows that the disarming or the overthrow of the enemy—whichever we choose to call it—must always be the aim of military action.

Now war is not the action of a live force upon a dead mass—absolute non-resistance would be no sort of war at all—but always the collision of two live forces with each other, and what we have said of the ultimate aim of military action must be assumed to apply to both sides. Here, then, is again reciprocal action. So long as I have not overthrown my adversary I must fear that he may overthrow me. I am no longer my own master, but he forces my hand as I force his. This is the second reciprocal action, which leads to the second extreme.

(Second reciprocal action)

5. UTMOST EXERTION OF FORCES

If we want to overthrow our opponent, we must proportion our effort to his power of resistance. This power is expressed as a product of two inseparable factors: *the extent of the means at his disposal* and *the strength of his will*. The extent of the means at his disposal would be capable of estimation, as it rests (though not entirely) on figures, but the strength of the will is much less so and only approximately to be measured by the strength of the motive behind it. Assuming that in this way we have got a reasonably probable estimate of our opponent's power of resistance, we can proportion our efforts accordingly and increase them so as to secure a preponderance or, if our means do not suffice for this, as much as we can. But our opponent does the same; and thus a fresh competition arises between us which in pure theory once more involves pushing to an extreme. This is the third reciprocal action we meet and a third extreme.

(Third reciprocal action)

6. MODIFICATIONS IN PRACTICE

In the abstract realm of pure conceptions the reflective mind nowhere finds rest till it has reached the extreme, because it is with an extreme that it has to do—a conflict of powers left to themselves and obeying no law but their own. If, therefore, we wanted from the mere theoretical conception of war to deduce an absolute aim which we are to set before ourselves and the means we are to employ, these continuous reciprocal actions would land us in extremes which would be nothing but a play of fancies produced by a scarcely visible train of logical hair-splitting. If, adhering closely to the absolute, we proposed to get round all difficulties with a stroke of the pen and insist with logical strictness that on every occasion we must be prepared for the extreme of resistance and meet it with the extreme of effort, such a stroke of the pen would be a mere paper law with no application to the real world.

Assuming, too, that this extreme of effort were an absolute quantity that could easily be discovered, we must nevertheless admit that the human mind would hardly submit to be ruled by such logical fantasies. In many cases the result would be a futile expenditure of strength which would be bound to find a restriction in other principles of statesmanship. An effort of will would be required disproportionate to the object in view and impossible to call forth. For the will of man never derives its strength from logical hair-splitting.

Everything, however, assumes a different shape if we pass from the abstract world to that of reality. In the former everything had to remain subject to optimism and we had to conceive both one side and the other as not merely striving toward perfection but also attaining it. Will this ever be so in practice? It would if:

1. war were a wholly isolated act, which arose quite suddenly and had no connection with the previous course of events,
2. if it consisted of a single decision or of several simultaneous decisions,
3. if its decision were complete in itself and the ensuing political situation were not already being taken into account and reacting upon it.

7. WAR IS NEVER AN ISOLATED ACT

With reference to the first of these three points we must remember that neither of the two opponents is for the other an abstract person, even as regards that factor in the power of resistance which does not depend on external things, namely, the will. This will is no wholly unknown quantity:

what it has been today tells us what it will be tomorrow. War never breaks out quite suddenly, and its spreading is not the work of a moment. Each of the two opponents can thus to a great extent form an opinion of the other from what he actually is and does, not from what, theoretically, he should be and should do. With his imperfect organization, however, man always remains below the level of the absolute best, and thus these deficiencies, operative on both sides, become a modifying influence.

8. WAR DOES NOT CONSIST OF ONE BLOW WITHOUT DURATION

The second of the three points gives occasion for the following observations:

If the issue in war depended on a single decision or several simultaneous decisions, the preparations for that decision or those several decisions would naturally have to be carried to the last extreme. A lost opportunity could never be recalled; the only standard the real world could give us for the preparations we must make would, at best, be those of our adversary, so far as they are known to us, and everything else would once more be relegated to the realm of abstraction. But if the decision consists of several successive acts, each of these with all its attendant circumstances can provide a measure for those which follow, and thus here, too, the real world takes the place of the abstract, and modifies, accordingly, the trend to the extreme.

Every war, however, would necessarily be confined to a single decision or several simultaneous decisions if the means available for the conflict were all brought into operation together or could be so brought into operation. For an adverse decision necessarily diminishes these means, and if they have all been used up in the first decision, a second really becomes unthinkable. All acts of war which could follow would be essentially part of the first and really only constitute its duration.

But we have seen that in the preparations for war the real world has already taken the place of the mere abstract idea, and an actual standard that of a hypothetical extreme. Each of the two opponents, if for no other reason, will therefore in their reciprocal action stop short of the extreme effort, and their resources will thus not all be called up together.

But the very nature of these resources and of their employment makes it impossible to put them all into operation at one and the same moment. They consist of *the military forces proper, the country with its superficial extent and its population, and the allies.*

The country with its superficial extent and its population, as well as being the source of all military forces proper, is also in itself an integral part of the factors operative in war, if only with that part which provides the theater of war or has a marked influence upon it.

Now all movable military resources can very well be put into operation simultaneously, but not all the fortresses, rivers, mountains, inhabitants, and so forth—in a word, the whole country, unless it is so small as to be wholly embraced by the first act of war. Furthermore, the co-operation of the allies does not depend upon the will of the belligerents, and from the very nature of political relations, it frequently does not come into effect or become active till later, for the purpose of restoring a balance of forces that has been upset.

That this part of the means of resistance, which cannot be brought into operation all at once, in many cases is a much larger part of the whole than at first sight we should think; and that consequently it is capable of restoring the balance of forces even when the first decision has been made with great violence and that balance has thus been seriously disturbed, will be more fully explained later. At this point it is enough to show that to make all our resources available at one and the same moment is contrary to the nature of war. Now in itself this could furnish no ground for relaxing the intensity of our efforts for the first decision, because an unfavorable issue is always a disadvantage to which no one will purposely expose himself, because even if the first decision is followed by others, the more decisive it has been, the greater will be its influence upon them. But the possibility of a subsequent decision is something in which man's shrinking from excessive effort causes him to seek refuge, and thus for the first decision his resources are not concentrated and strained to the same degree as they would otherwise have been. What either of the two opponents omits from weakness becomes for the other a real, objective ground for relaxing his own efforts, and thus, through this reciprocal action, the trend to the extreme is once more reduced to a limited measure of effort.

9. THE RESULT OF A WAR IS NEVER ABSOLUTE

Lastly, the final decision of a whole war is not always to be regarded as an absolute one. The defeated state often sees in it only a transitory evil, for which a remedy can yet be found in the political circumstances of a later day. How greatly this also must modify the violence of the strain and the intensity of the effort is obvious.

10. THE PROBABILITIES OF REAL LIFE TAKE THE PLACE OF THE EXTREME AND ABSOLUTE DEMANDED BY THEORY

In this way the whole field of war ceases to be subject to the strict law of forces pushed to the extreme. If the extreme is no longer shunned and no longer sought, it is left to the judgment to determine the limits of effort, and this can only be done by deduction according to the *laws of probability* from the data supplied by the phenomena of the real world. If the two adversaries are no longer mere abstractions but individual states and governments, if the course of events is no longer theoretical but one that is determined according to its own laws, then the actual situation supplies the data for ascertaining what is to be expected, the unknown that has to be discovered.

From the character, the institutions, the situation and the circumstances of the adversary, each side will draw its conclusions, in accordance with the laws of probability, as to what the action of the other will be and determine its own accordingly.

11. THE POLITICAL OBJECT NOW COMES FORWARD AGAIN

At this point a subject, which in Section 2 we had dismissed, now once more insists on claiming our consideration: namely, *the political object of the war*. The law of the extreme, the intention of disarming the enemy and overthrowing him, had up to now, so to speak, more or less swallowed it up. As this law loses its force, and this intention falls short of its aim, the political object of the war once more comes to the front. If all we have to consider is a calculation of *probabilities* starting from definite persons and circumstances, the political object as the original motive must be an essential factor in this process. The smaller the sacrifice we demand from our adversary, the slighter we may expect his efforts to be to refuse it to us. The slighter, however, his effort, the smaller need our own be. Furthermore, the less important our political object, the less will be the value we attach to it and the readier we shall be to abandon it. For this reason also our own efforts will be the slighter.

Thus the political object as the original motive of the war will be the standard alike for the aim to be attained by military action and for the efforts required for this purpose. It cannot be in itself an absolute standard,

but, as we are dealing with real things and not with mere ideas, it will be the standard relative to the two contending states. One and the same political object can in different nations, and even in one and the same nation at different times, produce different reactions. We can therefore allow the political object to serve as a standard only in so far as we bear in mind its influence on the masses which it is to affect. So the character of these masses must be considered. It is easy to see that the result may be quite different, according as the action is strengthened or weakened by the feeling of the masses. In two nations and states such tensions, and such a mass of hostile feelings, may exist that a motive for war, very trifling in itself, still can produce a wholly disproportionate effect—a positive explosion.

This holds good for the efforts which the political object can call forth in the two states, and for the aim it can assign to military action. Sometimes it can itself become this aim, for example, if it is the conquest of a certain province. Sometimes the political object will not itself be suited to provide the aim for military action, and in such cases one must be chosen of such a kind as will serve as an equivalent for it and can take its place in the conclusion of peace. But in this case also due consideration for the character of the states concerned is always presupposed. There are circumstances in which the equivalent must be much more considerable than the political object, if the latter is to be attained by it. The greater the difference of the masses and the less serious the tensions that on other grounds also exist in the two states and their relations, the more dominant as a standard, and decisive in itself, will the political object be. There are cases in which it is, almost by itself, the deciding factor.

Now if the aim of the military action is an equivalent for the political object, that action will in general diminish as the political object diminishes. The more this object comes to the front, the more will this be so. This explains how, without self-contradiction, there can be wars of all degrees of importance and energy, from a war of extermination down to a mere state of armed observation. But this leads us to a question of another kind, which we have still to analyze and answer.

12. A SUSPENSION OF MILITARY ACTION NOT EXPLAINED BY ANYTHING YET SAID

However insignificant the political claims made on either side, however weak the means employed and however trifling the aim to which military action is directed, can this action ever for a moment be suspended? This is a question that goes deep into the essence of the matter.

Every action requires for its accomplishment a certain time, which we call its duration. This may be longer or shorter, according as the person acting is more or less quick in his movements.

About this we shall not here trouble ourselves. Everyone does his business in his own fashion; but the slow person does not do it more slowly because he wants to spend more time on it but because by his nature he needs more time, and if he were to make greater haste, he would do it less well. This time, therefore, depends on subjective causes and belongs to the actual duration of the action.

If we now allow to every action in war its duration, we must admit, at all events at first sight, that every expenditure of time in excess of this duration, that is to say, every suspension of military action, seems to be absurd. In this connection we must always remember that the question is not of the progress of one or other of the two opponents, but of the progress of the military action as a whole.

13. THERE IS ONLY ONE CAUSE THAT CAN SUSPEND ACTION, AND THIS SEEMS ALWAYS TO BE POSSIBLE ON ONE SIDE ONLY

If two parties have armed themselves for the conflict, a hostile motive must have caused them to do so. So long then as they remain under arms, so long, that is, as they do not make peace, this motive must be present and can only cease to act with either of the two opponents for one sole reason, namely, that *he wants to wait for a more favorable moment for action*. Now, it is obvious that this reason can only be present on one of the two sides, because by its very nature it becomes the opposite on the other. If it is to the interest of the one commander to act, it must be to the interest of the other to wait.

A complete equilibrium of forces can never produce a suspension of action, for in such a suspension he who has the positive aim—that is, the assailant—would necessarily retain the initiative.

But if we chose to conceive the equilibrium as such that he who has the positive aim, and therefore the stronger motive, has at the same time the smaller forces at his disposition, so that the equation would arise from the product of motives and forces, we should still have to say that if no change in this condition of equilibrium is to be foreseen, both sides must make peace. But if a change is to be foreseen, it will be in favor of one side only, and for that reason the other will necessarily be moved to action. We see that the idea of an equilibrium cannot explain a suspension of hostilities, but all it amounts to is the waiting for a more favorable moment. Let

us assume, therefore, that of two states one has a positive aim, the conquest, for instance, of one of the adversary's provinces to be used as a counter in the settlement of peace. After this conquest his political object is attained, the need for action ceases and he can take rest. If his adversary is prepared to acquiesce in this result, he must make peace; if not, he must act. If it is thought now that in four weeks' time he will be in a better condition to do so, then he has sufficient grounds for postponing his action.

But from that moment the duty of action seems to fall logically upon his opponent, in order that no time be allowed to the vanquished to prepare for action. In all this, it is, of course, assumed that each side has a complete knowledge of the circumstances.

14. THUS A CONTINUITY WOULD BE INTRODUCED INTO MILITARY ACTION FORCING EVERYTHING AGAIN TO A CLIMAX

If this continuity of military action actually existed, everything would again be driven by it to the extreme. For apart from the fact that such ceaseless activity would give a greater bitterness to the feelings and impart to the whole a higher degree of passion and a greater elemental force, there would also arise through the continuity of action a more inevitable sequence of events and a less disturbed causal connection between them. Each action would in consequence become more important and thus more dangerous.

But we know that military action seldom or never has this continuity, and that there are many wars in which action fills by far the smallest part of the time occupied, and inaction all the rest. This cannot possibly be always an anomaly. Suspension of military action must be possible, that is to say, not a contradiction in itself. That this is so, and why, we will now show.

15. HERE, THEREFORE, A PRINCIPLE OF POLARITY IS BROUGHT INTO EVIDENCE

By supposing the interests of the one commander to be always diametrically opposed to those of the other, we have assumed a true *polarity*. We propose later on to devote a special chapter to this principle, but for the present must make one observation upon it.

The principle of polarity only holds good if it is conceived in one and the same thing, in which the positive and its opposite, the negative, exactly

destroy one another. In a battle each of the two parties wishes to win; that is true polarity, for the victory of the one destroys that of the other. But if we are speaking of two different things which have a common relation external to themselves, it is not the things but their relations that have the polarity.

16. ATTACK AND DEFENSE ARE THINGS DIFFERENT IN KIND AND OF UNEQUAL FORCE. POLARITY THEREFORE IS NOT APPLICABLE TO THEM

If there were only one form of war, namely, the attack of the enemy, therefore no defense; in other words if the attack were distinguished from the defense merely by the positive motive, which the one has and the other has not, but the methods of the fight were always one and the same, in such a fight every advantage to the one side would be an equal disadvantage to the other and true polarity would exist.

But military activity takes two separate forms, attack and defense, which, as we shall later on explain in detail, are very different and of unequal strength. Polarity lies therefore in that to which they both bear a relation, namely, the decision, but not in attack or defense itself. If one commander wishes to postpone the decision, the other must wish to hasten it, but, of course, only in the same form of conflict. If it is to A's interest not to attack his opponent at once but four weeks hence, it is to B's interest to be attacked by him at once and not four weeks hence. Here is a direct opposition; but it does not follow therefrom that it is to B's interest to attack A at once. That is obviously something quite different.

17. THE EFFECT OF POLARITY IS OFTEN DESTROYED BY THE SUPERIORITY OF THE DEFENSE TO THE ATTACK. THIS EXPLAINS THE SUSPENSION OF MILITARY ACTION

If the form of defense, as we shall hereafter show, is stronger than that of attack, the question arises whether the advantage of a deferred decision is as great for the one side as that of the defense is for the other. When it is not, it cannot by means of its opposite outweigh the latter and so influence the course of military action. We thus see that the impulsive force which lies in the polarity of interests may be lost in the difference be-

tween the strength of the attack and that of the defense, and thereby becomes ineffectual.

If, therefore, the side for which the present is favorable is too weak to be able to dispense with the advantage of the defensive, it must resign itself to facing a less favorable future. For it may still be better to fight a defensive battle in the unfavorable future than an offensive one in the present, or than to make peace. Now as we are convinced that the superiority of the defense (rightly understood) is very great and much greater than may appear at first sight, a very large proportion of the periods of suspended action which occur in war are thereby explained, without our being necessarily involved in a contradiction. The weaker the motives to action are, the more they will be swallowed up and neutralized by this difference between attack and defense. The more frequently, therefore, will military action be brought to a standstill, as, indeed, experience teaches.

18. A SECOND CAUSE LIES IN THE IMPERFECT KNOWLEDGE OF THE SITUATION

But there is still another cause that can stop military action, and that is imperfect knowledge of the situation. No commander has accurate personal knowledge of any position but his own; that of his adversary is only known to him by uncertain reports. He can make a mistake in his judgment of them and in consequence of this mistake believe that the initiative lies with his opponent when it really lies with himself. This want of knowledge could, it is true, just as often occasion untimely action as untimely inaction and would in itself no more contribute to delay than to hasten military action. Still it must always be regarded as one of the natural causes that, without involving an internal contradiction, may bring military action to a standstill. If, however, we reflect how much more we are inclined and induced to estimate the strength of our opponent too high rather than too low, because it lies in human nature to do so, we must also admit that imperfect knowledge of the situation must in general greatly contribute to putting a stop to military action and modifying the principles on which it is conducted.

The possibility of a standstill introduces into military action a new modification by diluting it, so to speak, with the element of time, halting danger in its stride and increasing the means for restoring a lost balance of forces. The greater the tensions out of which the war has sprung and the greater in consequence the energy with which it is waged, the shorter will

be these periods of inaction; the weaker the hostile feeling, the longer will they be. For stronger motives increase the power of the will, and this, as we know, is always a factor in the product of our forces.

19. FREQUENT PERIODS OF INACTION REMOVE WAR STILL FURTHER FROM THE REALM OF EXACT THEORY AND MAKE IT STILL MORE A CALCULATION OF PROBABILITIES

But the more slowly military action proceeds and the longer and more frequent the periods of inaction, so much the more readily can a mistake be repaired, the bolder the commander will thus become in his assumptions, and the more readily will he at the same time remain below the extreme demanded by theory and build everything upon probability and conjecture. So the more or less leisurely course of military action allows more or less time for what the nature of the concrete situation in itself already demands, namely, a calculation of probabilities in accordance with the given circumstances.

20. SO ONLY THE ELEMENT OF CHANCE IS NOW LACKING TO MAKE OF WAR A GAMBLE, AND IN THIS ELEMENT IT IS LEAST OF ALL DEFICIENT

We see from the foregoing how much the objective nature of war makes it a calculation of probabilities. It now needs but one single element more to make of it a gamble, and that element it certainly does not lack—the element of *chance*. There is no human activity that stands in such constant and universal contact with chance as does war. Thus together with chance, the accidental and, with it, good luck play a great part in war.

21. THROUGH ITS SUBJECTIVE AS WELL AS THROUGH ITS OBJECTIVE NATURE WAR BECOMES A GAMBLE

If we now glance at the *subjective nature* of war, that is, at those qualities with which it must be carried on, it must strike us as still more like a gamble. The element in which the activity of war moves is danger; but, in danger, which is the most superior of all moral qualities? It is *courage*. Now

courage is certainly quite compatible with prudent calculation, but courage and calculation are nevertheless things different in kind and belonging to different parts of the mind. On the other hand, daring, reliance on good fortune, boldness and foolhardiness are only manifestations of courage, and all these efforts of the spirit seek the accidental because it is their proper element.

We thus see that from the very first the absolute, the so-called theoretical, faculty finds nowhere a sure basis in the calculations of the art of war. From the outset there is a play of possibilities and probabilities, of good and bad luck, which permeates every thread, great or small, of its web and makes war, of all branches of human activity, the most like a game of cards.

22. HOW THIS BEST ACCORDS WITH THE HUMAN MIND IN GENERAL

Although our intellect always feels itself urged toward clarity and certainty, our mind still often feels itself attracted by uncertainty. Instead of threading its way with the intellect along the narrow path of philosophical investigation and logical deduction, in order, almost unconsciously, to arrive in spaces where it finds itself a stranger and where all familiar objects seem to abandon it, it prefers to linger with imagination in the realm of chance and luck. Instead of being confined, as in the first instance, to meager necessity, it revels here in the wealth of possibilities. Enraptured thereby, courage takes to itself wings, and thus daring and danger become the element into which it flings itself as a fearless swimmer flings himself into the stream.

Shall theory leave it here and move on, self-satisfied, to absolute conclusions and rules? In that case it is of no practical use. Theory must also take into account the human element and accord a place to courage and boldness and even to foolhardiness. The art of war has to do with living and with moral forces; from this it follows that it can nowhere attain the absolute and certain; there remains always a margin for the accidental just as much with the greatest things as with the smallest. As on the one side stands this accidental element, so on the other courage and self-confidence must step forward and fill up the gap. The greater the courage and self-confidence, the larger the margin that may be left for the accidental. Courage and self-confidence are thus principles absolutely essential for war. Consequently theory must only lay down such rules as allow free scope for these necessary and noblest of military virtues in all their

degrees and variations. Even in daring there is still wisdom and prudence as well, only they are estimated by a different standard of value.

23. YET WAR STILL REMAINS A SERIOUS MEANS FOR A SERIOUS OBJECT. MORE PARTICULAR DEFINITIONS OF IT

Such is war, such the commander who conducts it, and such the theory that rules it. But war is no pastime, no mere passion for daring and winning, no work of a free enthusiasm; it is a serious means to a serious end. All that it displays of that glamour of fortune, all that it assimilates of the thrills of passion and courage, of imagination and enthusiasm, are only particular properties of this means.

The war of a community—of whole nations and particularly of civilized nations—always arises from a political condition and is called forth by a political motive. It is, therefore, a political act. Now if it were an act complete in itself and undisturbed, an absolute manifestation of violence, as we had to deduce it from its mere conception, it would, from the moment it was called forth by policy, step into the place of policy and, as something quite independent of it, set it aside and follow only its own laws, just as a mine, when it is going off, can no longer be guided into any other direction than that given it by previous adjustments. This is how the thing has hitherto been regarded even in practice, whenever a lack of harmony between policy and the conduct of war has led to theoretical distinctions of this kind. But it is not so, and this idea is radically false. War in the real world, as we have seen, is no such extreme thing releasing its tension in a single discharge; it is the operation of forces which do not in every case develop in exactly the same way and the same proportion but which at one moment rise to a pitch sufficient to overcome the resistance which inertia and friction oppose to them, while at another, they are too weak to produce any effect. War is, therefore, so to speak, a regular pulsation of violence, more or less vehement and consequently more or less quick in relaxing tensions and exhausting forces—in other words, more or less quickly leading to its goal. But it always lasts long enough to exert, in its course, an influence upon that goal, so that its direction can be changed in this way or that—in short, long enough to remain subject to the will of a guiding intelligence. Now if we reflect that war has its origin in a political object, we see that this first motive, which called it into existence, naturally remains the first and highest consideration to be regarded in its conduct. But the political object is not on that account a despotic lawgiver;

it must adapt itself to the nature of the means at its disposal and is often thereby completely changed, but it must always be the first thing to be considered. Policy, therefore, will permeate the whole action of war and exercise a continual influence upon it, so far as the nature of the explosive forces in it allow.

24. WAR IS A MERE CONTINUATION OF POLICY BY OTHER MEANS

We see, therefore, that war is not merely a political act but a real political instrument, a continuation of political intercourse, a carrying out of the same by other means. What now still remains peculiar to war relates merely to the peculiar character of the means it uses. The art of war in general and the commander in each particular case can demand that the tendencies and designs of policy shall be not incompatible with these means, and the claim is certainly no trifling one. But however powerfully it may react on political designs in particular cases, still it must always be regarded as only a modification of them; for the political design is the object, while war is the means, and the means can never be thought of apart from the object.

25. DIVERSITY IN THE NATURE OF WARS

The greater and the more powerful the motives for war, the more they affect the whole existence of the nations involved, and the more violent the tension which precedes war, so much the more closely will war conform to its abstract conception. The more it will be concerned with the destruction of the enemy, the more closely the military aim and the political object coincide, and the more purely military, and the less political, war seems to be. But the weaker the motives and the tensions, the less will the natural tendency of the military element, the tendency to violence, coincide with the directives of policy; the more, therefore, must war be diverted from its natural tendency, the greater is the difference between the political object and the aim of an ideal war, and the more does war seem to become political.

But that the reader may not form false conceptions, we must here remark that by this natural tendency of war we only mean the philosophical, the strictly logical tendency, and by no means that of the forces actually engaged in conflict, to the point where, for instance, all emotions

and passions of the combatants should be reckoned as included. These too, it is true, might in many cases be excited to such a pitch that they could with difficulty be kept confined to the political road; but in most cases such a contradiction will not arise, because the existence of such strong emotions will imply the existence also of a great plan in harmony with them. If the plan is directed only to a trifling object, the emotional excitement of the masses will be so slight that they will always be rather in need of being pushed on than of being held back.

26. ALL WARS MAY BE REGARDED AS POLITICAL ACTS

To return to our main subject: Though it is true that in one kind of war policy seems entirely to disappear, while in another it very definitely comes to the front, we can nevertheless maintain that the one kind is as political as the other. For if we regard policy as the intelligence of the per-sonified state, we must include among the combinations of circumstances which its calculations have to take into account that in which the nature of all the circumstances postulates a war of the first kind. It is only if we understand the term "policy" not as a comprehensive knowledge of the situation but the conventional idea of a cautious, crafty, even dishonest cunning, averse to violence, that the latter kind of war could belong to it more than does the former.

27. CONSEQUENCES OF THIS VIEW FOR THE UNDERSTANDING OF MILITARY HISTORY AND FOR THE FOUNDATIONS OF THEORY

We see, therefore, in the first place that in all circumstances we have to think of war not as an independent thing, but as a political instrument. And only by taking this point of view can we avoid falling into contradiction with the whole of military history. This alone opens the great book to intelligent appreciation. In the second place, this same point of view shows us how wars must differ according to the nature of their motives and of the circumstances out of which they arise.

Now the first, the greatest and the most decisive act of the judgment which a statesman and commander performs is that of correctly recognizing in this respect the kind of war he is undertaking, of not taking it for, or wishing to make it, something which by the nature of the circumstances it

cannot be. This is, therefore, the first and most comprehensive of all strategic questions. Later on, in the chapter on the plan of a war, we shall examine it more closely.

For the moment we content ourselves with having brought our subject to this point and thereby fixed the main point of view from which war and the theory of war must be regarded.

28. RESULT FOR THEORY

War is, therefore, not only a veritable chameleon, because in each concrete case it changes somewhat its character, but it is also, when regarded as a whole, in relation to the tendencies predominating in it, a strange trinity, composed of the original violence of its essence, the hate and enmity which are to be regarded as a blind, natural impulse, of the play of probabilities and chance, which make it a free activity of the emotions, and of the subordinate character of a political tool, through which it belongs to the province of pure intelligence.

The first of these three sides is more particularly the concern of the people, the second that of the commander and his army, the third that of the government. The passions which are to blaze up in war must be already present in the peoples concerned; the scope that the play of courage and talent will get in the realm of the probabilities of chance depends on the character of the commander and the army; the political objects, however, are the concern of the government alone.

These three tendencies, which appear as so many lawgivers, lie deep in the nature of the subject and at the same time vary in magnitude. A theory which insisted on leaving one of them out of account, or on fixing an arbitrary relation between them, would immediately fall into such contradiction with reality that through this alone it would forthwith necessarily be regarded as destroyed.

The problem, therefore, is that of keeping the theory poised between these three tendencies as between three centers of attraction. — *Principles*

How this difficult problem can be solved in the most satisfactory way, we propose to investigate in the book dealing with the theory of war. In any case this definition of the conception of war becomes for us the first ray of light that falls upon the foundations of theory, and will for the first time separate its main features and enable us to distinguish them.

CHAPTER 2

END AND MEANS IN WAR

Having in the previous chapter ascertained the complex and variable nature of war, we shall now occupy ourselves in considering what influence this has upon the means and the end in war.

If, first of all, we ask what is the aim to which the whole war must be directed so as to be the proper means for attaining the political object, we find that this is just as variable as are the political object and the particular circumstances of the war.

If we begin by keeping once more to pure theory, we are bound to say that the political object of war really lies outside of war's province; for if war is an act of violence to compel the enemy to do our will, then in every case everything would necessarily and solely depend on overthrowing the enemy, that is to say, of disarming him. This object, which is deduced from pure theory but to which in reality a large number of cases nearly approximate, we shall first of all examine in the light of this reality.

Later on, in the plan of a war, we shall consider more closely what disarming a state means, but we must here at once distinguish between three things, which as three general categories include everything else. They are the *military forces*, the *country* and the *will of the enemy*.

The *military forces* must be destroyed, that is to say, put into such a condition that they can no longer continue to fight. We take this opportunity to explain that in what follows the expression "destruction of the enemy's military forces" is to be understood only in this sense.

The *country* must be conquered, for from the country fresh military forces could be raised.