The Days of the Sword Run Unbroken: Attack, Defense and the Question of Victory in War, 1792-2023

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Dedication

To my mother and father, who have unceasingly and lovingly supported me through every step of this journey. To Poppy, for his love and enthusiasm. And to Amah, who I dearly wish had been here to read this.

Kalan ses atsen'vy asais atas, tsehn tyr tyras setest veral.

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Chapter One: Introduction

When considering the long and oftentimes wandering story of human civilization, there are a few constants that stand out as universal. The one pertinent to this conversation is war. Despite the insistences of politicians, optimistic scholars and philosophers, world peace is likely impossible for the simple reason that there has not been a stretch of fifty years since the rise of Egypt and Sumer in which one people have not been at war with another, somewhere on the globe. Most recently, in February 2022, Vladimir Putin's Russia invaded Ukraine seven months after the twenty-year American conflict in Afghanistan came to is sudden end. The Gulf War of 1990-91 came at the 1989 tail-end of Russia's own disastrous ten-year attempt to subjugate Afghanistan, which in turn started shortly after the two-decade Vietnam War came to a close. The Korean War in 1950 followed the deadliest war in human history, the Second World War, started when Hitler invaded Poland in 1939, only ending in 1945. Before this, Italy invaded Ethiopia in 1935, Japan did the same to Manchuria in 1931 and declared war on China, all of this less than fifteen years after the end of the First World War in 1918. Russia lost to Japan in 1904-05, and the Prussians unified Germany after utterly crushing the French in 1870-71. In the 1860's Austria lost its influence over the German states after being defeated by Prussia, and the still-young United States fought a Civil War which yet remains the deadliest conflict as measured by American lives lost. The Crimean War was fought in 1853-56, following the rebellions and civil wars in Spanish America throughout the 1820s and 30s. These wars came after the defeat of Napoleon at Waterloo in 1815, which

ended the two-decade long Wars of the Coalition started by Revolutionary France in 1792. Regardless of any insistence otherwise, war is a regrettable fact of humanity.

This being established, it must also be stated that war, despite being an undeniable constant, changes over the course of its history. Not simply technological, but theoretical, strategic, and tactical innovations come in growing waves until a tipping point makes such innovations the required norm. 1792, the start of the Wars of the Coalition, is commonly viewed as the beginning of "modern" war, when such conflict shifted from dynastic struggles between dueling monarchs to issues of the survival of nations. Such dramatic shifts require analysis and study to understand, and thus predict the possible trajectory that war will follow.

The term "warnography" gets tossed around by scholars criticizing this study, insinuating that those of us involved in the discipline study it for our own enjoyment of violence, or something equally ridiculous. This is not only incorrect, but deeply insulting. The only way to move away from the mistakes of the past is the understand them, to recognize them, so that we can see when we are in danger of repeating them. To ignore a part of our history is to render ourselves willfully blind, and such can lead only to more suffering as we fail to learn. War, as Clausewitz says, is tied incontrovertibly to politics, society, culture and policy, and how can we study those factors together to understand when a war is likely to break out? How can an understanding of such inform our ability to respond to war?

After the French Revolution, the idea of the nation as part of one's identity began to take hold in the world. Nationalism became an increasingly common reason for

supporting a war, in contrast to the dynastic struggles of the past, leading to a steady escalation in the size and scale of global conflict. Put simply, saving one's nation, for an individual of the lower-class, is a far-more palatable goal than saving the crown of a king who will just be replaced by another king under whom nothing will meaningfully change. It was from this point forward that the major pattern explored by this Thesis took hold: the initial military aggressor of a major conflict is generally the one that loses. As examples: in the Franco-Prussian War, France declared first and was utterly crushed by the Prussians (though the aggressor here may be subject to debate). The First World War: Austria-Hungary declared war first, the Central Powers lost. The Second World War: Hitler invaded Poland, the Nazis lost. The Afghan-Soviet War: the USSR invaded Afghanistan, the Soviets lost. The U.S.-Afghan War: the U.S. invaded Afghanistan, and while they overthrew the Taliban, two-decades later the Taliban took it back; the U.S. lost. Exceptions to this trend do exist: the Russo-Japanese War as an example, in which Japan declared first and soundly beat the Russians.

Why is this? And what role does nationalism play? What does the apparent trend demonstrate in military history, and how does this fit into the dominant military theories of the time? I seek to explore this trend through an analysis of a series of conflicts, starting with the Napoleonic Wars and ending with the 2022 Russian Invasion of Ukraine, in order to see how non-material aspects such as nationalism can give beleaguered defenders outmatched by their adversaries the ability to triumph in the end.

The question of the offensive in war has been written on extensively, as has the issue of morale and how it ties to success in war. Nationalism, as a tool of war, has also

been discussed frequently. This said, I am not aware of anyone who has specifically analyzed the question of why the initial aggressors in a conflict seem to be the ones that lose. This may be because my initial observations are not fully correct, or that I'm looking for causation in a pattern with prominent exceptions to the rule. Therein, however, lies a striking truth of the matter: war, despite what General William Westmoreland would have you believe, is neither a game of science nor numbers. It is an art that plays heavily on the human consciousness and will to survive. Exceptions to the patterns should be expected, and the reasons for those exceptions should be studied and understood.

To this end, I will analyze a series of conflicts ranging from the Napoleonic Wars to the 2022 Invasion of Ukraine to try and understand this pattern, as well as attempt to pinpoint the specific reasons for it and how they connect to military history and theory. First, the theories in question must be understood. There are a few that are central to the system of Clausewitz's thought that shall be central to the point of this essay. Both the thought of Jomini and Moltke support this theory in their own ways. The analytical sections shall be broken down, mostly, by century. This will start with the Napoleonic Wars and Franco-Prussian War in the nineteenth century. The Russo-Japanese War, World War Two and the Vietnam War shall be discussed in the twentieth century. The twenty-first century will contain a brief overview of the Gulf War, as it straddles a strange line, one foot in the twentieth century one foot in the twenty-first century, before moving on to the U.S. Invasion of Afghanistan and ending with the current Russo-Ukrainian War.

War, and Clausewitz's theory in particular, is a topic that has been written on widely. Modern war is particularly interesting in that its historiography is a long series of theoreticians and experts writing and commenting on each-other's work, making some primary sources secondary as they relate to past subjects. Helmuth von Moltke, as an example, can be read as a primary source as he relates to his own history and conflicts, but his commentary on figures such as Clausewitz are technically secondary. Moltke, as it stands, argues that maneuver, position and aggression are crucial to victory in war, and he agrees with Clausewitz that defense is the stronger form of war.[1]

More modern scholars often gather in collections of works such as *The Makers of Modern Strategy* (1968), a series of essays published in one volume that cover subjects from Machiavelli to nuclear war. Peter Paret, the editor of *Makers of Modern Strategy*, is one of the best-known scholars of Clausewitz, having helped with a recent translation of the work. While I do not always agree with him (some of his more pacifistic views get in the way of his interpretations of Clausewitz), he is an accomplished academic and worthy of respect. Others, such as Mark T. Calhoun and Richard M. Swain, have written on Clausewitz, and Jomini, as well. Some argue that the theoretical foundations of the two are fundamentally incompatible, while others show that they are actually not too far apart

[1] Helmuth Graf von Moltke, *Moltke on the Art of War: Selected Writings*, ed. Daniel J Hughes (New York: Presidion Press, 1996); Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. by Otto Jolle Matthijs Jolles (Washington, District of Colombia: Combat Forces Press, 1953).

from one another. I tend to believe the latter, as when one reads the two side-by-side, they converge on some of the central aspects of war.[2]

The foremost work on the Napoleonic Wars is *The Napoleonic Wars: a Global History* (2020), by Alexander Mikaberidze. Mikaberidze emphasizes the fact that the Wars of the Coalition should be considered the first truly global war, and his unimpeachable research very clearly illustrates why both Clausewitz and Jomini reached the conclusions that they did. Gordon Alexander Craig is an eminent historian of Germany, and while his book *Germany: 1866-1945* (1978) is several decades old at this point, it remains an authoritative source on the history of the period. Craig's focus as it relates to his subject is primarily that of policy and diplomacy; a military historian he is not. William Manchester, author of *The Arms of Krupp: 1587-1968* (1970), focuses heavily on the Krupp family and their arms manufacturing business. As such, when he writes about conflict, he tends to come at it from a technological angle. Hajo Holborn, one of the historians who contributed to *Makers of Modern Strategy*, emphasizes the creation of the general staff, a core group of offices who determines the unifying strategy of an entire campaign. These three somewhat underscore the general thrust of three forms of military analysis: politics, technology, and strategy.[3]

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[2] Peter Paret, Gordon A. Craig and Felix Gilbert eds. *Makers of Modern Strategy from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age* (Princeton University Press, NJ, 1968); Mark T. Calhoun, "Clausewitz and Jomini: Contrasting Intellectual Frameworks in Military Theory," *Army History*, no. 80 (2011): 22–37; Richard M. Swain, "'The Hedgehog and the Fox': Jomini, Clausewitz, and History," *Naval War College Review* 43, no. 4 (1990): 98–109.

[3] Alexander Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars: A Global History* (Oxford University Press, 2020); Gordon Alexander Craig, *Germany, 1866-1945* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978); William Manchester, *The Arms of Krupp, 1587-1968* (New York: Bantam Books, 1970).

Denis and Peggy Warner, authors of *The Tide at Sunrise: a History of the Russo Japanese War* (2002), cover their subject in remarkable detail, arguing for the effectiveness of surprise, quality, and patriotism in war. *The Guns at Last Light* (2013), by Rick Atkinson, deals with the last days of the Second World War, and Craig also covers this period. It can easily be asserted that the Second World War is likely the most widely studied war in history, with Craig, Atkinson, Manchester, all touching the event though their subjects are much larger. World War II has reached an almost legendary status, transcending historians and entering the public consciousness, making the separation of truth from myth occasionally difficult, and figures like Stephen E. Ambrose add to the historiographical issues around the subject. Likewise, the less said about certain corners of the amateur historical community, the better.[4]

Analysis of strategy in the current era is aided by the increased availability of documents to historians, allowing an understanding of not only what happened, but the processes of those involved. Chris Mason, Jeffrey Legro, Robert Leiber and Peter Hunt all belong to this category, writing papers on the efficacy of certain tactics in specific wars, as well as discussing how these can be learned from. Non-military historians can aid the study of military history as well, as in order to truly understand a conflict, one must understand the history and character of the peoples involved. Serhii Plokhy, author

[4] Denis Warner and Peggy Warner, *The Tide at Sunrise: A History of the Russo-Japanese War, 1904-1905* (London: Frank Cass, 2002); Rick Atkinson, *The Guns at Last Light: the War in Western Europe, 1944-1945* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2013).

of *The Gates of Europe: A History of Ukraine* (2015), is a masterful historian of Eastern Europe, and his work provides a window into the *why* behind current events.[5]

Likewise, when addressing the current Russo-Ukrainian War, the historiography is still being formed. There is a bounty of journalistic and governmental sources that can help a historian put the story together, and those are employed more frequently in this work than secondary sources surrounding the conflict. Various commentators and analysts have been assessing the questions of the war, such as Michael Koffman, in an effort to understand the potential trajectory of the conflict. This kind of assessment, while valuable, can be dangerous, as war, by its very nature, is never certain.[6]

The two foundational theoreticians referenced in this work, as mentioned, are Carl von Clausewitz and Antoine-Henri de Jomini. The two came from remarkably similar backgrounds, and both fought during the Wars of the Coalition. Though on opposite sides, and drawing their conclusions from different sides of the same coin, the journeys of the two were essentially parallel.

Carl von Clausewitz was born in 1780 in the city of Magdeburg. His father was a local official, a tax collector, who had served as a junior officer in the army of the legendary Frederick the Great. Inspired, Clausewitz first went to war at the age of thirteen

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[5] Serhii Plokhy, *The Gates of Europe: A History of Ukraine* (New York, Basic Books, 2015); Chris M. Mason, "The Strategic Lessons Unlearned from Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan: Why the Afghan National Security Forces Will Not Hold, and the Implications for the U.S. Army in Afghanistan," Report, Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, 2015. 175-210; Jeffrey W. Legro, "Strategic Bombing," in *Cooperation under Fire: Anglo-German Restraint during World War II*, 94–143 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995); Robert J. Lieber, "Oil and Power after the Gulf War," *International Security* 17, no. 1 (1992): 155–76; Peter C. Hunt, "The Persian Gulf War," *Coalition Warfare: Considerations for the Air Component Commander* (Montgomery: Air University Press, 1998).

[6] Michael Koffman and Ryan Evans, "Interpreting the First Few Days of the Russo-Ukrainian War," February 28, 2022, in *War on the Rocks*, podcast, accessed March 12, 2023, https://warontherocks.com/2022/02/interpreting-the-first-few-days-of-the-russo-ukrainian-war/.

in 1792, when the first of the Wars of the Coalition began against the tide of French revolutionary fervor. He served several years of regimental duty, was accepted into the War Academy of Berlin, and was quickly noticed by the legendary General Gerhard von Scharnhorst. Clausewitz fought through the entirety of the Wars of the Coalition, serving as Prince August of Prussia's aide-de-camp, and he watched as the army to which he had devoted his life was destroyed in the twin battles of Jena and Auerstedt.[7]

He was taken captive by the French, and during his internment, began to question why the defeat had occurred. Here he began to formulate his theories of war, laying the intellectual groundwork for *On War*. Upon his return to Prussia, Clausewitz was crucial to the total military reformation of the kingdom under Scharnhorst in 1809. He was never popular amongst the conservative aristocracy of the kingdom, which would create problems later on. In 1812, refusing to fight for Napoleon when the Emperor raised his Grand Armée to invade Russia, he offered his services to the tsar. After the collapse of the Russian Campaign, he served as the Russian liaison officer to his former commander Scharnhorst. He fought bravely as General Johann von Thielmann's Chief-of-Staff, keeping Marshal Emmanuel de Grouchy from reinforcing Napoleon at Waterloo, where Marshal Gerhard von Blücher and the Duke of Wellington conclusively ended Napoleon's dream of empire. Despite his largely unimpeachable record, he was viewed as a demagogue and revolutionary upon his return to Prussian service and was shunted aside into the administrative position of director of the War Academy in Berlin, where he had

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[7] Clausewitz, *On War,* xxii-xxiii; Calhoun, "Clausewitz and Jomini," 22–37; Richard M. Swain, "'The Hedgehog and the Fox': Jomini, Clausewitz, and History," *Naval War College Review* 43, no. 4 (1990): 98–109; Craig, *Germany*, 26-28; Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*, for the battles of Jena-Auerstedt 220-221, for a thorough breakdown of the Russian Campaign, 525-551; Roger Parkinson, *Clausewitz, a Biography*, (New York: Stein and Day, 1971).

no influence over policy. He used his time to put to paper his theories, and steadily his magnum opus on warfare took form. He was, at last, given a field command in 1830 as the Chief of General Staff to Marshal Gneisenau, another officer who fell victim to post-war Prussian politics. Tragically, however, General Clausewitz died in 1831 of cholera, or complications thereof, never having been able to personally test his theories on the battlefield.[8]

Antoine Henri de Jomini was born on March 6, 1779, in Payerne, Switzerland, where his father worked as a minor official in local government. His career was not military from the start, instead he initially pursued commercial business in Paris and Switzerland. While sympathetic to the French cause, he was not involved in the fighting from the beginning, unlike Clausewitz. He later joined the armies of Revolutionary France and their Swiss client state, the Helvetic Republic for whom he served as Minister of War. When the 1801 Treaty of Lunéville ended the conflict between the Austrian Habsburgs and France, he left the military and returned to Paris to pursue his career in business which had been interrupted by the continuing conflicts. During this intermission in his military service he published his earliest essay on warfare, "Treatise on Grand Military Operations," which drew the attention of the powerful French Marshal Michel Ney.[9]

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[8] Jolles' introduction to Clausewitz's *On War,* pages xxii-xxiii; Calhoun, "Clausewitz and Jomini;" Swain, "The Hedgehog and the Fox;" Craig, *Germany*, 26-28; Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*, Jena-Auerstedt 220-221, for a thorough breakdown of the Russian Campaign, 525-551; Parkinson, *Clausewitz, a Biography*.

[9] Antoine Henri de Jomini and Horace E. Cocroft, *The Art of War*, trans. G. H. Mendell and W. P. Craighill (Rockville, MD: Arc Manor, 2007), introduction to *The Art of War* by Cocroft, 3; Calhoun, "Clausewitz and Jomini," 23-27; Swain, "The Hedgehog and the Fox," 98-100.

Pleased with what he read, Ney placed Jomini on his staff. This in turn was noticed by Napoleon himself who, impressed with the young officer, ensured his promotion first to colonel, then brigadier-general and awarded him the Legion of Honor. Jomini rejoined Ney as the Marshal's Chief of Staff after the Prussian and Polish campaigns of 1806-1807, a position he held until 1813. In the aftermath of Napoleon's victory over Prussia and Russia at the Battle of Bautzen, Jomini's bitter feud with Louis-Alexander Berthier, Napoleon's own Chief of Staff, erupted, and Jomini subsequently resigned his French commission. In the subsequent peace that followed the armistice signed in the wake of Bautzen, Jomini switched his allegiance to that of Russia. He was given the rank of lieutenant-general in the Russian army, and because of his reputation and past published works he was appointed to the position of aide-de-camp to Tsar Alexander. After the Wars of the Coalition, he remained in the Russian military, was responsible for the military education of Prince Nicholas and played an integral role in the formation, development and organization of the Russian Staff College. He retired from military service in 1829 and spent his retirement writing works of military philosophy and commenting on matters of war until his death on March 24, 1869.[10]

As the foundations of this work are based on specific theories, there are several technical terms to define. *Will* relates to the metaphysical aspects of war. *Means* refers to the physical aspects of fighting: guns, ammunition, tanks, soldiers, so on. *Time* is literal: how long a war is taking to progress. *Distance* refers to the spatial advantages or disadvantages a side holds in relation to its foe. *Genius* is a specifically Clausewitzean

[10] Jomini, *The Art of War*, 3-4.

term used to express the natural ability of a general in the field. Similarly, there are three levels of planning as it relates to war: *Strategic*, *Operational* and *Tactical*. *Strategy* is the art of fighting a war on a map, *Tactics* are the actions one takes on the battlefield, the *Operational* level is in between. A *Campaign* is a specific plan undertaken by a side in a war with a specific goal.

It is an apparent trend in history that the defender in a conflict will likely see victory. This is a question of the balance of *Means* and *Will*, in relation to *Time* and *Distance*. A defender has a natural advantage in *Will*, and should *Means* be relatively balanced, then their advantage is clear. So long as *Means* can be maintained, *Time* is on the side of the defender, as the longer a war goes on the more the attacker's morale is worn down. The *Will* of a defender, as shall be discussed, tends not to break in modern war for existential reasons. *Distance* plays to the advantage of whoever is closer to the front lines, the reason why a specific defensive strategy has been so effective over the course of history. There are exceptions to the rule that the defender wins, and the reason for those exceptions can be found in the same analysis. In order to carry out this analysis, the first things that must be discussed, of course, are the pertinent theories. The above assertions can be explained by the thought of two particular nineteenth century generals and military theoreticians. Thus we come to the central ideas that drive this analysis, those of Carl von Clausewitz and Antoine-Henri de Jomini.

Chapter Two: The Theory

It was October of 1806 when Carl von Clausewitz witnessed the collapse of his world. The mighty army of Frederick the Great, the army that had built Prussia in the Seven-Years' War, had been comprehensively defeated by Napoleon. The rigid lines of Prussian state infantry stood no match against the mobile formations of the new French armies. At the twin battles of Jena and Auerstedt, Napoleon's swift maneuvers and natural genius broke the outdated Prussian military and spelled the end of resistance in the north German states for a time. Clausewitz had been in Prussian service since 1792, and this blow fell heavy on the young officer. In French captivity, the shock of defeat passed slowly, and Clausewitz grew contemplative, turning his sharp mind to the question of *why*. At the same time, Antoine-Henri de Jomini, a Swiss revolutionary in French service, began to develop his own theories as he watched the Emperor he served march to victory after victory across Europe. Clausewitz, along with Gerhard von Scharnhorst and August von Gneisenau, would lead a Prussian reformation that would modernize the military of the great power before offering his service to Russia in the Campaign of 1812. Jomini, long-feuding with Louis-Alexandre Berthier, Napoleon's Chief-of-Staff, would abandon his Emperor after the Battle of Bautzen and join Clausewitz in Russia. There the two would witness the end of Napoleon, and Clausewitz's theories would crystalize.[11]

On War is a vast work, oceanic in its depth and remarkably thorough. Clausewitz covers war from the philosophical to the strategic, all the way down to tactical minutiae.

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[11] Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*; Clausewitz, *On War*; Jomini, *The Art of War*; Parkinson, *Clausewitz*.

Jomini, in *The Art of War*, does much the same, though he is primarily concerned with the practical. This is a weakness of Jomini's, as he tends to dismiss the metaphysical, overarching principles of war in favor of creating what amounts to an instructional handbook. As it stands, the tactical considerations of the Napoleonic era are largely irrelevant today. Certain aspects have translated forward, such as massed-artillery bombardment or amphibious landings, but no one rational believes anymore that a battle must end with a bayonet charge. Accordingly, *The Art of War* loses much of its utility, whereas *On War* contains wisdom that has endured through the centuries. In particular, there are several theories of Clausewitz's that define the very being of modern war, from the French Revolutionary Conflicts in 1792 all the way up to the Russian Invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Among these theories are the Iron Calculus, the Trinity, and the Strategic Defense.[12]

Before discussing the meat of the issue, a quick issue regarding Clausewitz and Jomini must be addressed. It is not uncommon for the two theorists to be considered opposites of one another, as they have seemingly irreconcilable differences on several subjects.[13] Though this is to some extent undeniable, such an assessment overlooks an important fact; Jomini is more Clausewitzean, and Clausewitz more Jominian, than most think.[14] While Clausewitz believes that war must be learned experientially, and that the natural skill of a general plays a substantial role, he acknowledges the more academic and

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[12] Clausewitz, *On War*; Jomini, *The Art of War*.

[13] Jomini, *The Art of War*, 4. War as a science vs. war as an art, natural genius vs. studied skill, so on.

[14] David S Fadok, "Clausewitz and Jomini Revisited," in *John Boyd and John Warden: Air Power's Quest for Strategic Paralysis* (Montgomery: Air University Press, 1995), 34.

instructional form of learning that Jomini espouses.[15] Likewise, Jomini addresses Clausewitz's *Genius* in his own words, *coup d'oeil*, and recognizes it as a crucial part of good generalship.[16] Moreover, the two are not so far apart on the questions of offensive and defensive strategy either. They hold different opinions on the road to get there, but both agree that an offensive must be undertaken to achieve victory.[17] The theories of the two stem from their observations of the same wars in which they both fought, but Jomini draws his conclusions from the successes of Napoleon, whereas Clausewitz's come from what brought the French Emperor down. As such, the two are similar to the point that their views are compatible, yet cover different methods and topics to the degree that they should be considered together. Clausewitz addresses the weaknesses of Jomini, and Jomini largely does the same for Clausewitz. Neither has a *fully* comprehensive theory of war, thus the words of both are to be heeded as we move onto the main subject.

That being said, it should be mentioned that, due to the subject under discussion, more attention will be paid to Clausewitz for the simple reason that he more sufficiently addresses the entwinement of war with politics, society, culture and history.[18] Jomini, while he does touch on this subject, is largely limited to the discussion of what he sees as the different types of war, as well as a brief discussion of military policy.[19] Jomini's *Art of War* certainly does its job, but nowhere in the work does he address with the same kind of

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[15] Clausewtiz, *On War*, 31-47, 84-87, and elsewhere.

[16] Jomini, *The Art of War*, 136 and elsewhere.

[17] Clausewitz, *On War*, see books 2, 3, 6 and 7; Jomini, *The Art of War*, see chapters 3, 4 and 5.

[18] Clausewitz, *On War*, see books 1 and 2.

[19] Jomini, *The Art of War,* see chapters 1 and 2.

thoroughness what Clausewitz does. Jomini is a master of war as a technical craft, very thorough in his tactical and strategic instructions, but Clausewitz provides tools for the understanding and analysis of the bigger picture and all its chaotic variables, something Jomini rejects at large. This is one of Jomini's greatest weaknesses, missing the forest for the trees, and thus why we turn to Clausewitz to help to answer the more abstract questions.

What is war? The definition here sought is not one of philosophy or humanitarianism, but instead of practical understanding. How can war be boiled down to its essence? In the words of Clausewitz, war is simply "an act of force to compel our adversary to do our will," with the aim of "disarming" the enemy.[20] In other words, to make it so that said enemy is unable to continue resisting and thus acquiesce to whatever war goals we have declared. He believed, based on his experiences, that this "disarmament" was achieved through a decision of arms and the destruction of the enemy's army on the battlefield.[21] This leads to the inevitable conclusion, and another of Clausewitz's well-known maxims, that war is "never an isolated act," and thus, "a mere continuation of policy by other means."[22] The theory, put simply, is that war is inseparable from national politics, and that it does not, cannot, exist in a vacuum.[23] There is always a purpose, always a reason, for a nation going to war, and these reasons are crucial to their success or failure in conflict.

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[20] Clausewitz, *On War*, 3-5. Much of the following is based solely on Clausewitz, as this is one of Jomini's most noticeable weaknesses.

[21] Clausewitz, *On War*, 5.

[22] Clausewitz, *On War*, 7, 16.

[23] Clausewitz, *On War*, 3-18.

In light of this truth, modern war ("modern" here having the meaning of 1792 and after) takes a largely different form than the majority of past wars. Specifically, after the French Revolution there was a marked change in that wars were no longer being waged as dynastic struggles between rulers.[24] Instead, war had shifted to a "clash between peoples," along with their respective nations or national identities, and became "increasingly total."[25] Put another way, war was no longer fought between the kings or leaders of combatant nations *solely* for personal or political reasons, but instead between their peoples with greater ideological implications. Nationalism changed the reason of why a war was being fought from the ambitions of those at the top of the social ladder to a struggle for the survival of a group's very identity. It gave the common solder a tangible connection to the conflict other than the promise of loot, as well as clearly showing what, for them, is now at stake. In the past, what did it matter which king was ruling over an oppressed peasant if they would be oppressed either way? The moment national identities get involved, however, it becomes a question of "us vs. them," an issue of the very survival of cultures and peoples. Little motivates us as a species to violence more than the idea of the invading other.

This noticeable shift is not to say that nationalism and its effects on war did not exist before the French Revolution, it *absolutely* did, but there are moments in military history where what was an outlier in the past suddenly becomes the required standard. As an example of this, both Clausewitz and Jomini frequently refer to Frederick the Great, an

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[24] R. R. Palmer, "Frederick the Great, Guibert, Bülow: From Dynastic to National War," in *Makers of Modern Strategy*, ed. Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 91.

[25] Palmer, "Frederick the Great, Guibert, Bülow," 91-92.

earlier practitioner of, and the one who is considered to have perfected, the "Strategic Defense," a strategy that the allied powers used to finally defeat Napoleon and which subsequently became standard.[26] Such is what is demonstrated by this nationalistic shift; what once was an outlier began to spring up everywhere by the spread of the French Revolution and in response to it.[27] Specifically, the use of nationalism by the French revolutionary government to rally armies large (and zealous), enough to hold off the rest of Europe in the War of the First Coalition demonstrated to the rest of the continent that they must follow suit or be destroyed.[28] The Napoleonic Wars are filled with shifts like this, such as the changing role of artillery, which had been in use in various forms since Ancient Rome and before.[29] Its role was emphasized by Napoleon (who started out as an artillery major), and became an indispensable part of war as a whole, not simply sieges and not only as infantry fire support.[30] The Corps system as well: perfected by Napoleon but early variations, such as the highly-maneuverable blocks of Swiss pikemen or the Roman legions, had been used to great effect.[31] Such systemic changes are almost universally precipitated by a pressing need to respond to an immediate crisis of some

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[26] Clausewitz, *On War*, see 119, 120, 138, among many others for Frederick the Great; Jomini, *The Art of War*, 55 and others. Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*, see chapters 21 and 22.

[27] Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*, 52-53, 69-70, 552-554, 618, and elsewhere.

[28] Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*, 3-17, 44-67.

[29] Renatus, Flavius Vegetius Renatus, *De Re Militari (Concerning Military Affairs): The Classic Treatise on Warfare at the Pinnacle of the Roman Empire's Power* (Leonaur, 2012), 61-62.

[30] Jomini, *The Art of War*, 238-241; Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*, 50.

[31] Robert Holmes, "'The First True Infantry': Swiss Forces of the Burgundian Wars," in *Medieval Warfare* 4 (no. 4, 2014), 12–15; Renatus, *De Re Militari*, Books 1 and 2. The comparison, while not perfect, is apt. Napoleon's corps structure were essentially small armies with their own infantry, artillery and cavalry, capable of independent action. The Swiss pike blocks were much the same, with each their own pikemen, halberdiers and crossbowmen, capable of independent action. The Roman legions were the same, each having their own infantry, artillery and cavalry, each capable of independent operation.

kind that is insurmountable with currently existing strategies. Thus, one could argue that Clausewitz's entire system developed from a series of this form of flashpoint-crisis created by the brilliance of Napoleon's generalship.

There are two theories that rest at the heart of Clausewitz's text, the first of which is colloquially referred to as the "Iron Calculus." This states that a particular nation's martial power of resistance is equal to the product of its physical means of fighting and its will to fight.[32] The theory can be written out as a simple equation: *Resistance* = *Means* × *Will*. Naturally, should either *Means* or *Will* drop to zero, then the ability to fight of the combatant in question will totally collapse. The function of this is to assess the relative strength of combatants and provide a point of comparison that might help to determine who is in a stronger position at any particular point of a conflict. It must be said that the Iron Calculus is not infallible, as war is not a predictable science no matter what Jomini insists, and any number of events could suddenly arise to change the facts on the ground.[33] *Will*, thus, is central to the theory: *Means* can be replenished to a certain extent, but once people start to lose the *Will* to fight such is very difficult to recover.

Before getting into the metaphysical, a brief word on *Means*. What Clausewitz is referring to here is simply the materiel and personnel available to any particular side. Number of soldiers, how many cannon, how many horses, how much ammunition, so on, that any one belligerent possesses. This, with the right intelligence, is the easier of the

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[32] Clausewitz, *On War*, 5-7.

[33] Clausewitz, *On War*, 84-85.

two to estimate, though potentially disastrous if said estimation is wrong.[34] The economic strength of a state is a part of this assessment, though it must be said that such is *never* a sure indicator of success or failure. Contrary to popular sentiment, history shows that money does not win wars alone, though maintaining the *Means* of resistance is just as crucial as keeping up the *Will* to resist.[35]

The central aspect of *Will* is the second main theory that will be discussed, something that Clausewitz himself called "The Trinity."[36] He writes that war is "a strange trinity, composed of the original violence of its essence, the hate and enmity which are to be regarded as 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."[37] He continues, assigning hatred to the people, emotion to the military, and intelligence to the government.[38] As it stands, I prefer to refer to "emotion" in this discussion as "chance," for the reason that it more accurately captures what Clausewitz was trying to express, as well as limiting any potential confusion. Hatred is an emotion, and thus referring to "hatred" and "emotion" in the same sentence causes problems, as one might associate the two and consider "hatred" subordinate to "emotion." Within the theory, however, the two are referring to entirely separate things: the people and the military. Clausewitz emphasizes *chance* in his

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[34] Clausewitz, *On War*, 6. More on over or under-estimation later: it comes to play a crucial part in a number of relevant conflicts.

[35] Examples of this will be demonstrated later in the Thesis.

[36] Clausewitz, *On War*, 18.

[37] Clausewitz, *On War*, 18.

[38] Clausewitz, *On War*, 18.

explanation, which fits with his assertions that victory in the field is as much a question of circumstance as it is the "genius" of a commander.[39] Thus, when discussing the individual pieces of the Trinity, I refer to "emotion" as "chance."

These three aspects each represent a part of *Will*. Intelligence represents the policy goals and intent of the government in question. Chance not only represents the unforeseen on a battlefield, but also the ability of generals and the military to carry out action leading to those policy goals: in short, *genius* or *coup d'oeil*. Lastly, hatred represents the feelings of the people towards the policy goals of the government. Do the people feel strongly enough about the reasons for going to war or hate the enemy enough (or both), and thus, do they support the war at large. These three must be in balance: the government's policy must be sufficiently supported by the people, and it must be within the ability of the military to carry out. Should the hatred of the people go beyond what the government is seeking, then such might drag the government into an extension of the conflict that it could not hope to win. Similarly, if the policy goals are beyond the capability of the military, then the conflict will not end favorably. Clausewitz expresses this when he says that any theory that ignores or leaves out any one of them or sets "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."[40] Helmuth von Moltke the Elder agrees, emphasizing in his own writings that military

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[39] Clausewitz, *On War*, 18, 31-46. Genius is a central aspect to Clausewitz's assessment of a general and success in battle, which will be addressed shortly.

[40] Clausewitz, *On War*, 18.

action is subordinate to political realities, but also that what policy demands must not be unrealistic for the military to carry out.[41]

While the balance of the Trinity is absolutely critical to the overall success of any campaign, the most difficult of the three to maintain is hatred. Policy and military capability are largely internal and independently controlled: the leaders of the nation and the armed forces respectively have power over both. The feelings of the people, however, are a trickier thing. In an autocracy, it is possible to silence dissenters and utilize propaganda to keep morale on the homefront up, though this inevitably starts to flag as casualties come home. All populations have a breaking point. In a democracy with the freedom of speech and the press, leadership must continually make their case for the invasion; for the more people are dissatisfied with a war, the more they will speak out against it, and the more the *Will* to fight said war will collapse. This situation exactly has led to several unexpected military victories that will be discussed later on. Generally, the party that was attacked has a much easier time maintaining the *Will* to fight, as they face a clear existential threat to their national identity, whereas the attacker must justify an offensive conflict. This is not, however, the only part of war in which the defender tends to have an advantage.

One of Clausewitz's most famous maxims, other than "war is a mere continuation of policy by other means," is that the defense is the highest form of war.[42] Clausewitz writes that defense is not only "the warding off of a blow," but also awaiting one, an

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[41] Gunther E. Rothenberg, "Moltke, Schlieffen, and the Doctrine of Strategic Envelopment," in *Makers of Modern Strategy*, ed. by Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 298.

[42] Clausewitz, *On War*, 16, 317-319.

important distinction.[43] The objective of being on the defensive is to *survive*, above all, and as such it tends to be the easier form of war.[44] Every delay in time, every pause in the attack, every moment that the defender has to reorganize, redeploy and rearm while their enemy dithers is in their favor.[45] It is the easier form of war in that the defender is fighting on their own soil, and thus knows the ground better than the attacker and can choose to engage at the most effective point.[46] A third advantage is in supply lines: a defender is acting within the borders of their own country, whereas the attacker must lengthen their lines as well as deploy valuable troops to defend those lines that could have made a difference in battle.[47] This entire issue of distance is usually termed "interior lines," expressing the advantage of a defender to move within their own borders while the attacker is forced to go around hostile territory and lose time or risk an engagement. Thus, one reaches the conclusion that the deeper an attacker pushes into enemy territory, the longer their lines of supply grow and the weaker their position becomes. The problem with taking a purely defensive posture, of course, lies in the fact that war is an act of force with the intent of compelling another power to bend to one's will. Victory requires action, and "absolute defense completely contradicts the conception of war" for the simple fact that it has a negative objective.[48] Negative here meaning that the intent of the

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[43] Clausewitz, *On War*, 317.

[44] Clausewitz, *On War*, 317.

[45] Clausewitz, *On War*, 317-318.

[46] Clausewitz, *On War*, 317.

[47] Clausewitz, *On War*, 317.

[48] Clausewitz, *On War*, 317.

defense is to survive and *not lose* ground, whereas attacking has a positive objective: to *take* ground.

Here we come to the issue of the Strategic Defensive, Clausewitz's answer to the problem expressed above. He writes that taking a defensive posture must be used to create a substantive advantage for the defender, and if it has done so, then it has fulfilled its purpose.[49] From this point, it must become the intent of the defender to take advantage of that opening and attack.[50] As has already been established, the overall goal is to disarm the enemy, to do which one must make them incapable of further resistance. Such disarmament can only be done through the destruction of their *Means* and *Will*, both of which, more often than not, require their defeat on the field. As such, the defender must, when given an opening, counterattack, otherwise their defensive maneuvers would amount to nothing. According to Clausewitz, "a swift and vigorous transition to attack—the flashing sword of vengeance—is the most brilliant point of the defensive."[51] A general that fails to understand this, he insists, will never understand the true strength of the defense, and will only see what is being lost, rather than the opportunities gained which "depend not on how we start a battle but how we finish it."[52]

This form of counterattack ties directly into his concept of the uses of strategy, specifically in creating the conditions for victory and what happens after the battle.[53] A

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[49] Clausewitz, *On War*, 331.

[50] Clausewitz, *On War*, 331.

[51] Clausewitz, *On War*, 331.

[52] Clausewitz, *On War*, 331.

[53] Clausewitz, *On War*, 213.

war is never over until the last battle is fought, and each side must carry on after an engagement with the assumption that hostilities will continue. To this effect, the strategic decisions made after a successful battle are often the most crucial for a defender, as "[strategy's] brilliance and renown she wins by turning to good account a victory gained."[54] The pursuit and destruction of a routed army is something that must be done to decisively end a conflict; disarming the enemy.[55] Even if a defender claims victory on the field, if they do not switch to the attack, then their foe can simply fall back, regroup, reinforce, and either try again or maneuver into a better position. Of course, recognizing the proper conditions for a successful counterattack is not always simple (blindly pursuing a routed unit into the waiting arms of the rest of the army has been the downfall of many a general), but regardless stands as necessary.

This entire strategic structure highlights both the strengths and weaknesses of the offensive. An offensive *can* be a single blow, but more often than not it requires periods of rest in which a defensive posture must be taken.[56] Such moments are places where the defender can take advantage of the attacker's relative positional weakness, and strike back.[57] However, if an attacker can maintain their momentum, and either prevent the defender from taking advantage of those breaks or beat off their counterattacks, then it is not unrealistic to assert that the attacker can, and very well might, claim victory. Nothing in war is absolute, only more or less likely.

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[54] Clausewitz, *On War*, 213. Brackets added by author for grammatical consistency.

[55] Clausewitz, *On War*, 213.

[56] Clausewitz, *On War*, 508-509.

[57] Clausewitz, *On War*, 508-509.

Jomini's view on the subject, while initially seeming to be a clear opposite, is not quite so contradictory. The Swiss general places an emphasis on the offensive, insisting, in opposition to Clausewitz, that offense is the stronger form of war.[58] His assertion is not without merit: it *is* true the bulk of the damage inflicted will be done on the defender's territory, and it *is* true that the attacker will often have the initiative (amongst other reasons).[59] However, Jomini also recognizes the strength of the Strategic Defensive, and fully agrees with Clausewitz when he says that "the passive defense is always pernicious; the active may accomplish great successes."[60] Most importantly, Jomini asserts that one of the most crucial abilities of any general is knowing how and when to take either posture, and where each would be most effective.[61]

This defensive axiom did not die with Clausewitz and Jomini. Moltke, in his essays, likewise discusses the Strategic Defense, first acknowledging, like Clausewitz and Jomini, that the attacker possesses the advantage of the initiative, while the defender must await the blow and accurately divine where it will land.[62] Moltke espouses the tactical advantages of a strong defensive position, saying "it is another question, however, whether we should first fully utilize the obvious material advantages of the stationary firefight before we ourselves take the offensive."[63] He further illustrates the advantages of holding a defensive position, discussing the physical exertion of attacking forces, the

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[58] Jomini, *The Art of War*, 53-54.

[59] Jomini, *The Art of War*, 53-55.

[60] Jomini, *The Art of War*, 54. "Active defense" is another way of saying "strategic defense."

[61] Jomini, *The Art of War*, 55.

[62] Moltke, *On the Art of War,* 48.

[63] Moltke, *On the Art of War*, 48.

support of friendly batteries and the use of cavalry for pursuits, putting tactical detail to the axiom.[64] Moltke, in sum, expresses the intent of the Strategic Defense artfully: "skillful leadership will in many cases succeed in selecting defensive positions which are strategically of such an offensive nature that the opponent will be forced to attack them."[65] Thus granting the defender a substantive advantage by forcing the attacker to maneuver into a bad position.

All of this is to say that fighting a purely defensive war is impossible. Doing so hands initiative to the attacker and will eventually result in their victory. A general must be active in their defense: maneuvering in the face of the enemy, fighting on carefully chosen ground, knowing when to disengage, and overall, knowing when to switch to the attack. All of this comprises the Strategic Defense. These advantages, in the Trinity and in fighting a defensive war, lead to the fact that in modern war the defender is generally the one who wins. There are, of course, exceptions to this rule, and one of the big questions is *why*. The answer lies in three factors, a second "Trinity," perhaps.

Firstly, there comes the question of *Means*. The greater the inequality of *Means* between the two combatants, the less of an advantage a defensive war will convey. Good generalship can mitigate this somewhat, but if the *Means* of fighting are too unbalanced, then no amount of *Will* or skill can make up for it. If the attacker can quickly overpower the defender, then the war will likely end in their favor. The second is *Time*. The longer a war goes on, the more disaffected the attacker's people will grow, the more momentum

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[64] Moltke, *On the Art of War*, 48.

[65] Moltke, *On the Art of War*, 48.

they lose. The sooner an attacker can force a decision of arms the better, as a long war always plays to the advantage of the defender. The last is *Distance*. The further a combatant must deploy from their primary base of operations, the less likely it is they will succeed. This is for the simple reason that it will take said combatant longer to transport supplies and reinforcements to the front than their enemy, and that time can be the difference between victory and defeat. These assertions about the state of victory in modern war shall be proven hereafter by examining conflicts post the nationalistic shift in 1792, starting, of course, with Napoleon.

Chapter Three: The Nineteenth Century

In April 1792, France, still contending with the blood of its revolution, declared war on the rest of Europe. Only a few short years previously, the country had overthrown its monarchy, was on the way to guillotining its royals, and had declared a republic that became a proverbial revolving door of governments. Deliberately attempting to spread its ideology, the revolutionaries in France awoke deep-seated fears in monarchies as far as Russia, leading to the first in a series of seven conflicts now commonly known as "The Wars of the Coalition." This conflict stretched, nearly unbroken, from this declaration of war all the way to its final conclusion at Waterloo in 1815. It was, conclusively, the culmination of the escalating Anglo-French competition that had dominated a substantial part of the second millennium.[66]

It was the thunder of canon that heralded the introduction of this period's main player, a man who, arguably, could be considered the greatest military mind in history. A pioneering general, Napoleon Bonaparte led a revolution in military theory that required the rest of Europe to adapt to his tactics for their own survival. Very little of what Napoleon did was fully original, as is usually the case with military innovators. The corps system has been seen in other forms in the past, and he is hardly the first general to use speed and maneuverability to his best advantage. What made him extraordinary was his combination of these things, and *how* he implemented them. This aspect of his military

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[66] Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*, chapters 1-2 for the background of the conflict, 3, for the First War of the Coalition.

genius (and he was a genius, both in the Clausewitzean sense and the traditional one) is what made him such an extraordinary innovator.

But, of course, all things have their weaknesses. While Napoleon may have been the first true practitioner of *blitzkrieg*, total war and a myriad of other things, his enemies did learn. It required twenty-three years of war, but the French colossus was eventually toppled. It was because of his brilliance that the concept of the *Strategic Defense* was brought to the forefront. It was because of his brilliance that the entire weight of Europe was required to being him down. When one considers the scope of the period, the innovations developed, it should come as no surprise that Clausewitz's flashing sword of vengeance was first truly seen during the earth-shaking charges of French Cuirassiers and Russian Cossacks.

Now, the first issue that must be addressed is the question of whether this series of events should be considered seven different wars, or one major conflict. It could be argued that as each has their own definitive beginning and end, then they are each unique. However, it is also clear that these wars are essentially the same conflict being fought over the course of seven chapters, with largely the same belligerents on largely the same sides. I maintain that this interpretation is correct, especially as Britain was at war with France in some capacity for almost the entire twenty-three year period. The overall similarities between the wars, as well as the near negligible time between them, leads one to conclude that the entire period is one continuing conflict, unlike one would with Korea and Vietnam, or the Seven-Years-War and the War for American Independence, which were wholly distinct.

Secondly, it must be established that the French were the ones to officially start the conflict. In 1791, the monarchies of Europe were growing concerned over the revolutionary fervor churning within France, and the monarchs of Austria and Prussia released the Pillnitz Declaration, stating that the events taking place in France were contrary to the common good of Europe.[67] This was not unprovoked, however, as it was made after the arrest of the Bourbon royals during their flight from France, of whom Marie Antoinette was the sister of Leopold II, Emperor of Austria.[68] The declaration, no matter its intent or the personal stake of those involved, was inflammatory, and it led to "a fierce nationalist and revolutionary fury among the [French] patriots, propelling them to action."[69] Debates sprung up in the Legislative Assembly, the body that had suddenly replaced the National Assembly in October of 1791, and finally in 1792, France declared its crusade on Europe, hoping to spread the ideals of its revolution and "freedom" to the rest of the continent.[70]

This is the first crucial moment of theory that need be addressed, and it is one of the most fascinating. Both sides in the Wars of the Coalition were *utterly* convinced that should the other side be victorious, their ways of life would be destroyed.[71] The revolutionaries in France were acutely aware that the monarchies of Europe sought a conclusive end to the spread of their ideology, and the remaining monarchs of the Great

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[67] Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*, 15.

[68] Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*, 15.

[69] Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*, 15.

[70] Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*, 16-17, 44.

[71] Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*, 3-43.

Powers knew that should the revolutionaries win, they would end up like the Bourbons.[72] Whether or not this is what would have actually happened is unimportant, for it is the perception that matters. Interestingly enough, however, this issue of survival was generally lopsided. For the French, it was a war of nationalistic zealotry, but the monarchies were still fighting in some ways a dynastic struggle: an attempt for them to keep their thrones before the rapidly-advancing populist tide of *liberté, égalité, fraternité*. They had to adapt in order to keep their people fighting for them: again, why should an exploited peasantry fight for a king rather than join those who want to free them from that bondage? Ironically, the French themselves gave them an excellent reason by forcing French forms of government, ideology and culture on those they conquered, as well as categorically ignoring local interests for their own in conjunction with the more traditional goals of conquest.[73] It was reaching the point that "the supposed beneficiaries of emancipation began to feel very much like the victims of what one British observer dubbed the 'homicidal philanthropy of France.'"[74] Their "freedom" came hand in hand with subservience to France, and thus, was not true "liberation." Nationalism allowed the French to survive the initial onslaughts during the First and Second Coalition, but it also provided the impetus for resistance.

It was during this period that Napoleon Bonaparte, at first "an obscure artillery major," began to distinguish himself.[75] In 1796, after several promotions, Napoleon

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[72] Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*, 5-17.

[73] Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*, 48, 68-70,

[74] Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*, 48.

[75] Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*, 50.

assumed command of the Armée d'Italie at a particularly dire moment for the French.[76] The First Coalition, the Austrians in particular, had blunted several French advances across the Rhine, and after Archduke Charles soundly defeated General Jean-Baptiste Jourdan at Amberg on 24 August, the French were driven back across the river.[77] It was now that Napoleon first used what became a signature tactic: he defeated the Austrian-Piedmontese army opposing him in Italy at the junction connecting the two forces, then interposed his army between them.[78] He moved quickly, taking advantage of his position, and destroyed his enemy piecemeal before forcing the Piedmontese to sue for peace.[79] He pursued the Austrians with great alacrity, scoring victories at Lodi, Castiglione, and Bassano before crossing the Alps and invading Austria itself, ending the war.[80]

This strategy today is commonly known as destruction in detail, where an inferior force is able to defeat a larger one by engaging a smaller part of the enemy with the majority of its own forces. While, again, not the first to recognize the efficacy of this tactic, Napoleon became particularly adept at employing it. He used it to great effect in a number of campaigns, defeating more powerful Coalition armies until his myriad of enemies finally figured out an effective counter towards the end of the wars.

Just before the War of the Second Coalition (1798-1802), Napoleon led a French expedition to Africa with the intent of conquering Egypt and weakening the power of the

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[76] Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*, 53.

[77] Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*, 53.

[78] Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*, 53.

[79] Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*., 53.

[80] Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*, 54.

Ottoman Empire.[81] The expedition, while initially successful, ultimately failed. Admiral Horatio Nelson dogged Napoleon the entire journey, then utterly destroyed his fleet in the Battle of the Nile.[82] It was a simple fact that the British controlled the Mediterranean, and thus while Napoleon had claimed many victories over the Ottomans, the French government could send him no reinforcements.[83] At the same time, the Ottoman Empire, while something of a drowsy lion, was starting to blink the sleep from its eyes. Several Ottoman armies numbering each in the tens of thousands, all converging on Egypt, were very large teeth indeed.[84] At this point the War of the Second Coalition was underway, France was suffering setbacks, and Napoleon decided to abandon his men and return to the home country where he received a hero's welcome by a French populace eager to see their fortunes turn.[85]

France was facing the combined might of Britain, Austria, Russia, Naples, Portugal and, not shockingly, the Ottomans.[86] By August 1799, these combined forces had rolled back the French revolutionary tide and reversed many of its gains from the War of the First Coalition.[87] Napoleon, seizing an opportunity, overthrew the deeply unpopular Directory and installed himself as "First Consul," leader of the French government, and then quickly crossed the Alps and won renown at the close-fought Battle

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[81] Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*, 74-75.

[82] Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*, 76.

[83] Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*, 77-78.

[84] Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*, 77-78.

[85] Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*, 78.

[86] Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*, 80.

[87] Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*, 80-81.

of Marengo.[88] It did not take long after this for the Austrians to sue for peace, especially in light of the collapse of their military cooperation with Great Britain.[89]

Following this, there was a peaceful interlude that lasted several years, though one that should be qualified as a deep breath before the next round of hostilities.[90] Several important things happened during this period, most notably the signing of the Treaty of Aranjuez between France and Spain, which tied the two nations closer together and laid the foundations for a future alliance.[91] Napoleon ordered general demobilization, returned thousands of conscripts that had just been called up, and seemed to be preparing for a diplomatic fight, rather than a military one much to his people's relief.[92] Peace was not universal however: Britain was still vigorously working against France, and tensions between the island nation and Russia soared as Emperor Paul I grew closer to France, as well as tried to resurrect the League of Armed Neutrality and economically blockade Britain.[93] The British, in their typical style, responded by seizing the Caribbean colonies of the states involved before sending the Royal Navy to blow up Copenhagen, which forced the Danes out of the League and proved that the British could strike essentially anywhere they wanted with impunity.[94] This ended in 1801 with the assassination of Paul

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[88] Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*, 81.

[89] Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*, 82.

[90] Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*, chapter 6.

[91] Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*, 111.

[92] Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*, 111.

[93] Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*, 116-117.

[94] Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*, 117.

I by a group of concerned nobles, and the abrupt about-face of his successor, Alexander I, led a Russian-British rapprochement.[95]

The War of the Second Coalition officially ended in 1802 with the signing of the Treaty of Amiens, pausing the conflict between the French and the British.[96] The pause brought about by this treaty lasted 420 days before hostilities between Great Britain and France resumed.[97] The myriad reasons why it ruptured are too many and require too in-depth an explanation to be fully examined here, but what is pertinent to this discussion is simply that the rupture occurred.[98] Put briefly, Alexander Mikaberidze paraphrases Thucydides' discussion of the Peloponnesian War to succinctly summarize the reason for the collapse of the treaty, saying "the rising power of one state and the fear it inspired in another" was primarily responsible.[99] In this case, Napoleon seemed entirely unwilling to curtail his imperial ambitions, especially after the release in 1803 of General Horace Sebastiani's report on his expedition to the Middle East which, while intended to simply pressure the British to fulfill their obligations, threatened them instead, flew in the face of the Treaty of Amiens, drew international condemnation, and thus backfired spectacularly.[100] And so, in March of 1803, Britain and France were once again at war,

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[95] Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*, 118.

[96] Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*, 122.

[97] Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*, 148.

[98] Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*, 148.

[99] Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*, 148.

[100] Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*, 153.

actively facilitated by Napoleon under the mistaken belief that Britain did not have the stomach for a long fight.[101]

Napoleon distinguished himself in the following decade of war, becoming known as likely the greatest military leader of his time, as well as earning an Imperial crown along the way.[102] He humiliated Austria, badly beat the Prussians, Russians and essentially anyone who stood in his way on land; for a time, he seemed invincible.[103] He proved that he was a master of conventional warfare, and his greatest strengths (in addition to his natural *genius* and *coup d'oeil*) were his speed and maneuverability.[104] There were, however, cracks in this facade that grew as the conflict ground on. The first, of course, was Trafalgar, where a substantial part of the combined French-Spanish navy was captured by the British, securing their control of the seas and dominance over global trade.[105] This contributed to the later failure of the Continental System, as Britain simply shifted its trade elsewhere when cut off from Europe.[106]

The second major crack was in Spain. Napoleon, having noted the weakness of his southern ally, "mediated" an issue of succession and handed the Spanish crown to his brother, Joseph.[107] Napoleon had earlier forced the Bragança monarchy of Portugal into exile in Brazil, and these two events led to a military disaster that would tie up hundreds

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[101] Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*, 168.

[102] Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*, 193-195.

[103] Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*, see chapters 10, 13 and 14.

[104] Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*, 200-207.

[105] Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*, 207.

[106] Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*, 530-541.

[107] Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*, 253-258.

of thousands of French troops.[108] First, the Spanish formed local "juntas" and rebelled against their new French king, fighting not conventionally like Napoleon was used to, but instead as guerrilla fighters scattered throughout the countryside, to which his normal tactics could not well respond.[109] Secondly, the closest allies of the Portuguese, the British, deployed an expeditionary force to the Iberian Peninsula initially under the command of none other than Arthur Wellesley, the future Duke of Wellington.[110] Command of the British forces changed hands several times, and Napoleon himself made several appearances, winning victories wherever he appeared; he could not, however, be everywhere at once, and the British and Spanish forces began to steadily bleed the French forces on the Peninsula.[111] Wellesley retook command in 1809 and drove the French out of Portugal in four weeks, though with substantial losses.[112] It was then he struck upon the greatest weakness of the French, and his greatest strength. Wellington (ennobled for his victories) was, by all accounts, a superb defensive commander and, with his forces depleted, he fell back to the Lisbon peninsula, destroying everything the French cold use as he went, then constructed an enormous series of fortifications unrivaled in scope in the rest of the Wars of the Coalition.[113]

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[108] Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*, 242-243.

[109] Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*, 259-260.

[110] Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*, 261.

[111] Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*, 261-270.

[112] Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*, 271-272.

[113] Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*, 272-273.

After the surrender of Austria in the summer of 1809, Napoleon poured hundreds of thousands of men into Spain, steadily reasserting control over the peninsula.[114] Despite winning a number of victories, the French war machine pushed Wellington back to the Lines of the Torres Vedras, where the pursuing French, led by Marshal André Masséna, were stunned by the barrenness of the countryside and the magnitude of the fortifications facing them.[115] Masséna held on longer than was expected, but eventually was forced to abandon his campaign, marking a turning point in the Peninsular War.[116] The British, from this point, launched a series of counterattacks that would prove seriously problematic for Napoleon's continuing war effort.[117] Intently watching these battles was Tsar Alexander I of Russia, and the lessons learned would lead to the third crack, and spell the end for Napoleon's dream of empire.

This was the start of the Coalition's military breakthrough on the question of defeating Napoleon. The French Emperor had proven over the course of the entire conflict that to face him offensively in the field, muzzle-to-muzzle, was a dangerous proposition. He, as a master of maneuver and positional warfare, was likely to out-general his opponent on the attack. Take away his maneuverability and speed, and the ground once again grows even. This is one of the primary reasons why Clausewitz determined that the defense is the stronger form of war: it was the only way to overcome the greatest military mind of his time. Wellington's construction of the Lines of the Torres

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[114] Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*, 274.

[115] Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*, 274-275.

[116] Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*, 275-276.

[117] Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*, 276-277.

Vedras and destruction of any and all useable resources outside of them are a prelude to what the Russians would do in 1812. His actions here, and swift counterattack, serve also as an example of the effectiveness of a properly-executed Strategic Defense.[118]

The Continental System, the general European boycott of British goods intended by Napoleon to economically strangle the island nation, harmed more than its target: Russia was hit particularly badly by the loss of British trade.[119] It is an extension of Clausewitz's "war is policy through other means," by using policy for the purpose of war.[120] This, coupled with other perceived indignities, caused Alexander I to break with Napoleon, leading to the French Emperor's invasion of Russia.[121] Napoleon assembled his Grande Armée, some 650,000 men, 180,000 horses and 1,372 cannon, and prepared to punish Alexander I for his disobedience.[122] On 23-24 June of 1812, the Grande Armée pushed across the Nieman River and began the invasion of Russia.[123] By all accounts, this *should* have been a lopsided affair: the full might of the French Empire *should* have overwhelmed its Russian foe. Napoleon was at his strongest on the battlefield and he knew it, he thus planned to engage the Russians in a general engagement and destroy them, forcing Alexander to capitulate.[124] The Russians, however, had learned. Alexander's armies did not oblige, falling back, actively avoiding battle, and burning

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[118] Clausewitz, *On War*, books VI, VII, and VIII for his discussion on defense, attack and the planning of wars.

[119] Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*, 528-529.

[120] Clausewitz, *On War*, 16.

[121] Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*, 529-530.

[122] Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*, 531.

[123] Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*, 531-532.

[124] Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*, 531-532.

everything of use to Napoleon's forces.[125] The French finally caught the Russians at the village of Borodino outside of Moscow, and Napoleon got the battle he desired.[126] Borodino, however, was no Austerlitz or Jena-Auerstedt, and while it was a French tactical victory, the Russians pulled back in good order after mauling the French as badly as they had been.[127]

Napoleon pushed on into Moscow, which he fully expected the Russians to try and hold.[128] Contrariwise, Alexander I ordered the city evacuated and somewhere in the rush a fire started that resulted in the destruction of Moscow.[129] Napoleon dithered for a month, waiting for Alexander to negotiate, when the first of winter's flurries began to flutter down over the ruins of Moscow and the seriousness of his situation began to dawn on the French Emperor.[130] He began a steady retreat back towards his own borders, and it was then that the Russian forces fell upon him.[131] They harassed him all the way back to the Berezina River, across which Napoleon barely escaped being surrounded by the Russians at the cost of some 40,000 men.[132] In the end, the Grande Armée, which entered Russia over half-a-million strong, left with fewer than 100,000.[133]

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[125] Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*, 532-533.

[126] Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*, 536.

[127] Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*, 536.

[128] Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*, 536-537.

[129] Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*, 536.

[130] Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*, 537-538.

[131] Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*, 537-538.

[132] Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*, 538-539.

[133] Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*, 539.

This episode is a textbook example of the Strategic Defense in use, and it was a harbinger of what was to come. Alexander knew he could not possibly fight Napoleon on the field with what he had: he was facing the largest army assembled in living memory led by the greatest military mind of his time. Instead, he fell back, using the vastness of Russia and scorched earth tactics to force Napoleon to extend his supply lines back to his own borders. Napoleon then needed to waste men that could have otherwise been used on the battlefield in garrisoning towns and fortresses, as well as guarding his lines of communication and supply. This, as Napoleon could no longer disperse his corps to sustain themselves off local resources like he could in the rich heartlands of Central Europe, required him to drag along large and slow wagon trains to keep his troops fed.[134] This crippled his greatest advantages: speed and maneuverability. Even when caught, Alexander fought well and withdrew as soon as possible, keeping his forces as strong as possible in an attempt to even the odds against him. By the time Napoleon had occupied Moscow, it was essentially already over. He had taken enormous losses in war horses and transport animals, making his army yet more ponderous, and his troops were losing discipline. His hasty retreat out of Russia was the moment when he was at his weakest, and that was when Alexander attacked. Again, a classic example of the Strategic Defense. From there, the utter failure of Napoleon's Russian Campaign was a forgone conclusion. Napoleon's catastrophes didn't end there, however, as 1813 would see the total collapse of his empire, and the toppling of the French colossus.[135]

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[134] Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*, 532-533.

[135] Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*, 525-541; Clausewitz, *On War*, 317-318, 331.

The War of the Sixth Coalition (1813-1814) started upon Napoleon's return from Russia, and, smelling blood in the water, after the Russians and Prussians signed the Treaty of Kalisch.[136] This formed a military alliance between the two, and they both pledged to deploy large forces (150,000 Russians, 80,000 Prussians) to defeat Napoleon, as well as promising not to negotiate separately with France.[137] The early days went well for Napoleon, but, largely due to his lack of cavalry (and here we see the importance of combined arms), he was unable to destroy the Russo-Prussian forces, who, though beaten, were not defeated.[138] When it seemed a negotiated peace might be on the table, Austria offered its services as mediator and the Pleischwitz Armistice was signed; in hindsight, an enormous mistake on the part of Napoleon.[139] Negotiations began, Britain got involved, and the Austrians used the pause to mobilize 200,000 men in Bohemia, and two further armies along the Danube.[140] Despite fairly generous terms, Napoleon failed to deliver his response by the deadline set by the allies, and the minute the clock struck midnight on 11 August, the day after the deadline, Austria declared war on France.[141]

Napoleon was now totally surrounded. Not only was he fighting the Russians, Prussians and Austrians on his eastern front, but Wellington decided this was an *excellent* time to launch a counterattack from Portugal. With 80,000 men, over half of them British, Wellington stabbed deeply into the heart of Napoleonic Spain, destroying King Joseph's

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[136] Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*, 552-554.

[137] Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*, 552-553.

[138] Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*, 557-559.

[139] Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*, 560.

[140] Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*, 561.

[141] Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*, 562-566

army at the Battle of Vitoria, and capturing 153 guns as well as the fruits of six years of French plunder. It was a resounding victory. The road to the Pyrenees now lay wide open for the Duke, and he could begin planning for the invasion of southern France. This was the least of the Emperor's problems. The Allies deployed three armies in the east composed of the Army of Bohemia, 230,000 men, the Army of North Germany, more than 140,000 men, and the Army of Silesia, 105,000 men. They were commanded by Austrian Marshal Karl Fürst zu Schwarzenberg, Swedish crown prince Bernadotte and Prussian Marshal Gebhard Leberecht von Blücher, respectively. Napoleon still had no cavalry, and was facing nearly a half-million men on one side, plus another eighty thousand to his south west.[142]

The Allies, likewise, had determined a very clear strategy to defeat Napoleon once and for all: don't fight Napoleon. They employed a variation of the Strategic Defense, where if any of the three forces were attacked by Napoleon, they would fall back whilst the other two would close in on his flanks, striking at his lines of communication and supply, and ideally destroying whatever forces the Emperor deployed under his Marshals on separate missions. The intent was to run Napoleon ragged and weaken him sufficiently so that they could unite their forces for a final climactic battle. This plan worked perfectly. General Dominique Vandamme and his entire command was captured at Kulm on 29 August. Marshal Michel Ney, sent by Napoleon to take Berlin, was defeated at Dennewitz on 6 September. All the while, Napoleon himself was marching back and forth between the Bober and Elbe Rivers, futilely trying to catch the Allies who would always

[142] Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*, 566-567.

slip just out of reach. The incessant marching, fighting and rain began to sap the spirits of Napoleon's men, and exhaustion began to set in. The Allies noticed his weakness, and, like Clausewitz's flashing sword of vengeance, struck.[143]

Napoleon retreated across the Saale River, noticing his inability to pin down his enemy, and decided to take a defensive stance in the city of Leipzig. His intent was to wait for them to close in on him, then strike at their converging armies and destroy them piecemeal. Again, a variation on the Strategic Defensive. This might have worked had he moved on October 15, when Schwarzenberg was approaching from the north and Blücher from the south. The Allies were too far apart to reinforce each other, and this would have been the perfect moment to attack that Clausewitz writes about. By October 16, however, when the battle began, the Allies already had 200,000 against Napoleon's 170,000. Over the next day, Allied reinforcements poured onto the battlefield, increasing their numbers to almost 400,000 men and 1,500 guns, around twice what the French Emperor could muster. Napoleon sent a letter to the Austrians suggesting an armistice and possible concessions, but the Allies refused, knowing he was well and truly trapped and that the noose was rapidly tightening around his neck. The battle that followed on October 18 is often called the Battle of the Nations, due to the number of states that took part. After a day of vicious fighting, Napoleon ordered a general retreat across the Pleisse and Elster Rivers over only a single bridge. Worse yet, the corporal ordered to destroy the crossing behind them panicked at the sight of the approaching enemy and lit the fuse too early. Thousands stranded in the city were captured, and many more, like Marshal Jozef

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[143] Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*, 567-568; Clausewitz, *On War*, see book VI.

Poniatowski drowned trying to swim across the rivers. At the end of the day, the Allies lost 50,000 men, Napoleon 60,000. The difference being that Napoleon could not afford those losses, whereas the Allies could. By 1814 it was over: Wellington was in the south of France, and the Allies were pushing into the north. Napoleon fought to the last, raising a final army of 120,000 men and winning many battles, but it was too late and the odds against him were too long. After one final stunning victory at Rheims, Napoleon was pushed back to Paris and, on April 11 at Fontainebleau, forced to abdicate.[144]

This, however, was not the end. While the Allies were remaking the European order, Napoleon was watching from his exile on Elba. On February 26, accompanied by around a thousand men and his staff, he invaded France. As he marched towards Paris, he used the recently reinstated, and deeply unpopular, Bourbon monarchy under Louis XVIII as the reason for his return. The army, still filled with loyal Bonapartists and irate at Louis XVIII's military reforms, flocked en-mass to the ranks of the former Emperor, propelling him bloodlessly back onto his throne. Upon learning of his escape at 7:30 am on March 7, Emperor Francis of Austria quickly informed Emperor Alexander of Russia and King Frederick-William of Prussia, and by half-past-eight, the three agreed to general mobilization. Napoleon tried one final time to negotiate, but the Allies were having none of it and the Emperor found all diplomatic channels closed. The Allies mustered five main armies, 120,000 Prussians under Blücher, around 100,000 Anglo-Allied under Wellington, more than 200,000 Austrians under Schwarzenberg, 150,000 Russians under Field Marshal Barclay de Tolly, and some 75,000 Austro-Italians under General Johann

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[144] Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*, 568-570, 576-580.

Frimont. The allies ended up deploying over 700,000 men in total. Blücher and Wellington would attack the north through Belgium, Schwarzenberg and de Tolly took positions on the Rhine, and Frimont would strike up through France's southeastern border.[145]

Napoleon himself could muster little more than 250,000 men to fight off this invasion, and after the necessary deployments for garrisoning and the suppression of revolts, he had around 130,000 effectives under his command. However, unlike the allies, those 130,000 were largely composed of loyal, hardened veterans from his past campaigns who were eager to fight once again for their Emperor. His choices of officers, regrettably, were far more limited. In order to counter this numeric imbalance, Napoleon knew he had to destroy his enemies before they could converge, and thus struck at those closest to him: Wellington and Blücher in Belgium. He interposed himself between their armies, beating the British at Quatre Bras and the Prussians at Ligny. All three armies took casualties, but the British and Prussians fell back in good order and on parallel tracks. It should be noted here that while the Prussians were under the overall command of Blücher, August von Gneisenau, the mentor of Clausewitz, was the brains of the army. Moreover, Clausewitz himself served in this battle as adjutant to Johann von Thielmann who commanded the Prussian forces at the Battle of Wavre.[146]

Napoleon detached some 30,000 men under Marshal Grouchy to keep Blücher from connecting with Wellington, then set off after the Anglo-Allied forces which finally

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[145] Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*, 602-607.

[146] Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*, 607-609; Parkinson, *Clausewitz*, 263-289.

turned to face him on June 18, 1815, at a sleepy little village called Waterloo. Here Wellington once again proved his defensive genius, choosing to pin himself to a long ridge, the reverse slopes of which provided his men with cover from Napoleon's artillery. By interposing himself between Napoleon and Brussels, Wellington forced the French Emperor to attack a strong defensive position, something straight out of Clausewitz's advice for a general forced to defend. The French fought very well, and as the battle wore on it looked like Wellington would be forced to retreat, until, in the late afternoon, the Prussians came pouring into Napoleon's flank. Blücher had left Thielmann's corps at Wavre to pin down Grouchy, then quickly crossed to support the British. Napoleon's army broke, and the Emperor fled to Paris. It was a comprehensive defeat for the Emperor, and the conclusive end of his empire.[147]

In the Napoleonic conflicts we see the two examples of military action that have come to define modern war. Napoleon was an aggressive commander who always sought a decision of arms on the field. His emphasis on speed and maneuvers would come to define his style of war. This energy, combined with his administrative skill and natural military genius (to borrow a term from Clausewitz), made him nigh-on invincible when faced toe-to-toe in the field. His tendency was to interpose himself between his enemies and destroy them piecemeal. His more unified command structure allowed for better coordination between his corps, whereas the often-at-odds Allies had difficulty uniting before he could destroy them. In many ways, Napoleon was the first practitioner of *blitzkrieg*. On the flip side of that, are the Allies, who initially tried to fight fire with fire.

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[147] Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*, 609-611; Parkinson, *Clausewitz*, 263-289; Alessandro Barbero, *The Battle: A New History of Waterloo* (New York: Walker & Company, 2003).

After nearly two-decades of being repeatedly crushed by Napoleon, they learned the same lesson that Frederick the Great had decades before.

To overcome Napoleon, the Allies learned that they could not fight Napoleon unless the conditions were fully in their favor. Wellington began this trend in Portugal, using scorched earth tactics and fortifications to keep the British involvement in the Peninsular War alive. The Spanish partisans used hit-and-run tactics to likewise negate the traditional strength of the French armies. Russia took a page out of Wellington's book and, falling back before the advance of the Grande Armée, negated Napoleon's advantage of speed while forcing it to overextend itself until the circumstances were decidedly in Russia's favor. In 1813, the Allies deliberately refused to engage Napoleon, retreating before him, exhausting his army, destroying whatever forces he detached for other missions, until they could finally converge, surround, and destroy him at Leipzig with force so overwhelming no amount of *genius* could even the odds. Lastly, during the Hundred Days, Napoleon proved his skill by interposing himself between Wellington and Blücher, but their coordination and defensive know-how made it so they were able to once again converge and overcome his *genius* through numbers and sheer determination.

Napoleon proved that if a commander can fight and end a war quickly, then their success, while not guaranteed, is far more certain. On the flip-side, should the defender survive to drag the war out while maintaining their means of fighting, or implement an effective Strategic Defense, then even Napoleon likely would not be able to overcome them. In each of these seven conflicts, France was the aggressor, and as their looting and pillaging for the funding of their war-efforts continued, it became steadily easier for the

Allies to rally nationalist sentiment against the French occupiers. All the Allies had to do to justify their wars to their people was to point at Napoleon and say "behold! The face of French imperialism is come to trample thy culture and steal thy wealth!" And it worked. Napoleon's constant aggression turned the rest of the continent against him and gave it the *Will* to match him in the end.

This was the conclusive beginning of modern war: no longer could war be fought in the ways of the past. The ideology of the French Revolution brought nationalism front and center as it relates to motivating people to fight. This made it possible to mobilize an entire nation for the purposes of conflict: a "total war," as such is known today. The French governments used it to frighten their people into believing that the rest of Europe wanted "the revolution" destroyed, which they did, and thus posed an existential threat. The rest of Europe used France's tendency to impose their form of government and culture on the defeated, as well as their looting-sprees, to create the same kind of existential threat. This was not a war of *Will*, as both sides were legitimately under (a degree) of existential threat. It was instead a war of *Means*, and while Napoleon held on longer than he realistically had any right to, the weight of Europe's power and the enemies he could not help but create in his quest for empire swung eventually against him. It was in this crucible that Clausewitz and Jomini forged their theories. Napoleon mastered the war of maneuver and speed, as well as fully developed the modern system of corps for the structure of an army. He, likewise, utilized combined arms like few before him had, and was essentially the first master of *blitzkrieg*. The Allies, forced to

respond, perfected the Strategic Defense so championed by Clausewitz, as it was the only possible road to overcoming the French Emperor in the field.

Over the course of the entire conflict, from 1792 to 1815, we see the truth of Clausewitz's "Iron Calculus." At the beginning, the French had the *Means* and the *Will* to fight the rest of Europe and win, however the continuing aggression of the revolutionary governments, and later Napoleon, led to an unsustainable cycle of war. It became a question not of *Will*, but of *Means*, as both sides had very compelling reasons to fight. In a war of *Means*, Napoleon's loss was simply a matter of time. The Allies had the defensive advantage, and they could grind down his armies and resources until he could no longer realistically fight. The British command of the seas directly affected this as they secured their domination of global trade and further reduced the resources at Napoleon's disposal. By the time the Grande Armée was destroyed in Russia, the Emperor of the French was running out of cannons, horses, and men. The armies he raised in 1813, while impressive, were no match for those mustered by the Allies. All of this is to say, the longer a war goes on the more it swings in favor of the defender. A second case-study, that of the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, further proves Clausewitz's assertions about the defender and *Will*, but it also demonstrates that the "flashing sword of vengeance" need not necessarily come *after* the instigator attacks.

By this time, Prussia had already beaten the Austrian Empire in the Austro-Prussian war of 1866, forcing the Austrians out of German affairs and setting the stage for future events with the formation of the North German Confederation.[148] At the end of

[148] Craig, *Germany*, 1-11; Moltke, *Moltke on the Art of War*, 126-127 for the 1866 Campaign.

the conflict, the French stepped in and convinced the Austrians to come to the negotiating table, despite the fact that the Prussians were more than ready to push on to Vienna.[149] Internationally, the Prussians were in something of a precarious position; both Great Britain and Russia were growing increasingly concerned with Prussia's rising strength (Europe hates hegemony, as has already been demonstrated), and the French were burning for another war.[150] The French expected territorial concessions in Southern Germany for not joining the war on the side of the Austrians and for helping to bring the conflict, diplomatically, to a close.[151] This was something that Prussia, reasonably, did not oblige them, and the French viewed Königgrätz, the battle that ended said war, as not just an Austrian defeat but a French one as well.[152]

The German Chancellor of the time, Otto von Bismarck, was acutely aware that war with France was likely inevitable, the only question was when and why.[153] The French continued to believe that they deserved territorial compensation for their neutrality, something that the Prussians did little to discourage; if the French seemed the ones determined to acquire territory aggressively after the Peace of Prague and *not* Prussia, then much of the fears of Russia and Britain would be assuaged.[154] Moreover, this appearance of French territorial aggrandizement suggested to the German people that they were directly threatened by an imperialist France for the second time in the same

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[149] Craig, *Germany*, 3-4.

[150] Craig, *Germany*, 15.

[151] Craig, *Germany*, 12-14.

[152] Craig, *Germany*, 12-14.

[153] Craig, *Germany*, 14.

[154] Craig, *Germany*, 15-16.

century. The foundations of *Will*. In anticipation of this eventual outbreak of hostilities, Bismarck began to quietly open talks with the South German States, whose allegiance would be required in any war against France.[155] In the meanwhile, the French sent ambassadors who offered a Franco-Prussian alliance in which the French would not object to German unification if only Prussia would help them acquire Luxembourg and Belgium.[156]

Bismarck, as one might expect, did not agree to this, however he retained the document given to him by the French ambassador suggesting it, something he would produce in 1870 "like a rabbit out of a hat to confound the friends of France."[157] Here France provides evidence of its own desire for conquest, and a skilled politician could easily use such to prove the righteousness of their own cause standing against the desires of a conqueror. Despite his political wiliness, Bismarck experienced little success in Southern Germany, but an opportunity in 1870, when a Spanish ambassador arrived in Berlin to discuss the again-vacant Spanish throne, changed things.[158] Prince Leopold of the Prussian ruling House of Hohenzollern declared his candidacy, much to the dismay of the French, ratcheting tensions between the two powerhouses yet higher.[159] Napoleon III, French Emperor at the time, along with one of his most powerful ministers, Émile

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[155] Craig, *Germany*, 16.

[156] Craig, *Germany*, 16.

[157] Craig, *Germany,* 16-17.

[158] Craig, *Germany*, 18-22.

[159] Craig, *Germany*, 23-24.

Ollivier, sent French ambassador Vincent Benedetti to Prussian King Wilhelm I to object to Leopold's candidacy.[160]

Naturally, Wilhelm I refused the request politely, France has no say in the affairs between Prussia and Spain, then the king sent a description of the conversation to Bismarck.[161] Seeing a further opportunity, Bismarck released an edited version of the conversation to the public which made Wilhelm seem more curt and sharp than he actually was, while remaining completely reasonable and within the bounds of diplomatic propriety.[162] Again, the French had no legal authority to intervene in these discussions, they simply objected to the possibility of the Prussians gaining yet more power. It undoubtedly would have made Prussia a greater threat to French power on the continent, but these fears seem hypocritical the moment one considers the fact that the French wanted to conquer Belgium. In light of this apparent increase in French aggression, the German public loved that the Prussian king essentially told the French to go pound sand.[163] The French, in contrast, were outraged, and Napoleon III (though opposed to war), along with Ollivier and acutely aware of the fact that governments only last in France as long as the people don't feel the rush of revolutionary fervor, could not leave this "slight" to their "honor" and "imperial authority" unanswered in the wake of the fanatical and orgiastic passion it inspired in the French people.[164]

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[160] Craig, *Germany*, 26-27.

[161] Craig, *Germany*, 27.

[162] Craig, *Germany*, 27.

[163] Craig, *Germany*, 27.

[164] Craig, *Germany*, 27.

Bismarck didn't necessarily want a war in 1870, but it's what he got, and the Prussian state seized the opportunity with both hands. The southern German states rallied to Prussia and the North German Confederation in the face of this apparent, to borrow a term from Gordon Craig, "premeditated assault" motivated by the envy and arrogance of the French. General mobilization ensued, and over 1.8 million men, regulars and reserves both, were called up over the stunningly short period of eighteen days. In the same time, nearly a half-million of those men were moved to the front. This was largely due to the efficient system of railroads built by the Prussians that allowed them to move troops and materiel around far more quickly than the French could. It was the brainchild, largely, of Helmuth von Moltke, who presciently foresaw the importance of rapid deployment and concentration of forces as a prerequisite to victory. The French, in contrast, could only assemble around 230,000 men, and reservists were still trying to get organized twenty-three days after war was declared.[165]

There was also a significant disparity in leadership. The French forces were led by Emperor Napoleon III and Marshal Edmond Leboeuf.[166] The Prussians were led by King Wilhelm I and Chancellor Otto von Bismarck, with Marshal Helmuth von Moltke the Elder in operational command of the armed forces.[167] The French were quite confident in their leaders, and had they "been told that King Wilhelm, despite his seventy-three years, was a far more effective commander than their Napoleon and that Leboeuf was not worth a single braided strand from the great Moltke's epaulettes, they would have been

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[165] Craig, Germany, 27-28; Moltke, *Moltke on the Art of War*, 17, 71-72.

[166] Craig, *Germany*, 27; Manchester, *The Arms of Krupp*, 128-129.

[167] Craig, *Germany*, 27; Manchester, *The Arms of Krupp*, 128-129.

incredulous."[168] Moltke, by this point, had perfected his style of war, and used it to great effect.

Napoleon III initially had a plan to launch a diversionary amphibious operation in the Baltic regions of Germany, then launch a massive attack into the south which would, hopefully, rally the Italians and Austrians to his cause as allies.[169] However, before the "widely dispersed" reservists could assemble for the operation, the Prussians smashed through French resistance at the Lorraine Gap and won difficult victories at Vionville-Mars-la-Tour, Saint-Privat and Gravelotte.[170] The French had underestimated Prussian organization, and Moltke's brilliant success in 1866 had been dismissed, for "anybody could defeat the Austrians, and nearly everyone had."[171] These battles interposed them between Paris and the two main French armies led by Marshals MacMahon and Bazaine.[172] MacMahon, now joined by the Emperor himself, tried to go to the aid of Bazaine after he was forced east and into the fortress of Metz, but instead was pinned against Belgium at Sedan.[173] The French had hardened veterans and the better rifle: the chassepot dramatically outranged the Dreyse needle gun, and their new mitrailleuse was a predecessor of the modern machine gun.[174]

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[168] Manchester, *The Arms of Krupp*, 129.

[169] Craig, *Germany*, 28-29.

[170] Craig, *Germany*, 28-29.

[171] Manchester, *The Arms of Krupp*, 129.

[172] Craig, *Germany*, 28-29.

[173] Craig, *Germany*, 28-29.

[174] Manchester, *The Arms of Krupp*, 130.

The French, however, lacked artillery, and Napoleon's marshals were so obsessed with "la gloire militaire," that the importance of artillery was somewhat overlooked.[175] Manchester, in fact, goes so far as to call the French cannon "hopelessly obsolete;" though they were rifled, they were still bronze-cast muzzle-loaders, not all that different from the cannon used by Napoleon sixty-years before.[176] The Prussians, in contrast, were using advanced Krupp steel-cast breech-loaders: rifled guns with disproportionate range and power for their size.[177] Moreover, the French had 30-percent fewer pieces of field artillery than the Prussians, putting them at a distinct disadvantage when long-range fire support was taken into account.[178] Leboeuf, the overall French commander, remained stubbornly convinced that muzzle-loaders were superior, and even if breeches could be made safe there would still be the issue of gas escape that would lower the range of the guns.[179] To say he was comprehensively wrong is putting it lightly; Moltke, Bismarck and Wilhelm had seen their power at Krupp's Tegel range, and soon so would the world in France.[180] Worse still, though the mitrailleuse had been so secret it was only distributed to the French forces in the last days of mobilization, "Prussian intelligence had warned Berlin of them…and the Prussians, unlike the French, took their spies seriously."[181]

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[175] Manchester, *The Arms of Krupp*, 130.

[176] Manchester, *The Arms of Krupp*, 130.

[177] Manchester, *The Arms of Krupp*, 130-131.

[178] Manchester, *The Arms of Krupp*, 130.

[179] Manchester, *The Arms of Krupp*, 131.

[180] Manchester, *The Arms of Krupp*, 131.

[181] Manchester, *The Arms of Krupp*, 131.

Sedan was a disaster for the French. MacMahon was convinced he had a solid position but a veteran of the Battle of Wörth who bore witness to the power of the Prussian guns, General Auguste Ducrot, "knew what was coming."[182] The moment dawn began to lighten the valley, sixteen batteries of Krupp artillery deployed on a rocky height began to rain death upon the French.[183] Entire divisions were destroyed by the "uncannily accurate gunfire," and MacMahon himself was wounded by an exploding shell.[184] By mid-morning, Moltke had thrown units across the Sedan-Mézières road and cut off the last possible avenue of escape for MacMahon and the Emperor.[185] Sedan was a a stunning Prussian victory, delivering 100,000 men, and the Emperor, into the hands of the Prussians, but it did not end the war.[186] The morning after the battle, 3 September, the empire was overthrown and another Republic was declared, one that vowed to go on fighting.[187] Paris was subsequently encircled by the Prussian military, subjected to siege and bombardment, and though partisan groups were forming in the country, the war came to a close in 1871 and the German empire was declared shortly thereafter.[188]

The Franco-Prussian war serves as a demonstration of a few different factors, firstly the issue of *Means* and *Will* in war. While the French may have technically been provoked by Bismarck, the Prussian Chancellor did so in a way that, in the eyes of the

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[182] Manchester, *The Arms of Krupp*, 133; Moltke, *Moltke on the Art of War*, 63-67.

[183] Manchester, *The Arms of Krupp*, 133.

[184] Manchester, *The Arms of Krupp*, 133.

[185] Manchester, *The Arms of Krupp*, 133.

[186] Craig, *Germany*, 29.

[187] Craig, *Germany*, 29.

[188] Moltke, *Moltke on the Art of War*, 115-121; Craig, *Germany*, 31-37.

public and international community, totally absolved the Germans of the blame. The whole conflict looked, instead, like a simple continuation of the French aggression that had been so common since the reign of Loius XIV.[189] This rallied the German people around Prussia, all of whom acutely remembered the tyranny of Napoleon, which was still very much within living memory, including that of Moltke. Thus, the Prussians were fighting, essentially, against perceived French imperialist greed, a clear existential threat based on history, whereas the French were fighting (again…) for their pride and *honor*. Thus we have our first imbalance, that of *Will*. The Germans were not going to break so long as they believed the French were a threat.

Secondly, there is the problem of *Means*. The French military, it must be said, was *not* weak. The chassepot rifle was fantastic, certainly superior to its Prussian equivalent. The mitrailleuse was groundbreaking, and had the potential to do enormous damage had the Prussians not been aware of them. The French troops were also skilled, and so their deficiencies in the Franco-Prussian war were in none of those departments. Instead, the issues came around organization and artillery. The Prussian cannon were outright better: rifled steel breechloaders will *always* outperform rifled bronze muzzleloaders. Moltke, also, had learned from the usage of railroads and telegrams in the American Civil War, and had invested heavily in Prussia's rail system.[190] These were used masterfully to coordinate the Prussian mobilization almost a week before France was in a similar position, and by then the Germans outnumbered them by a substantial margin. There was

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[189] Craig, *Germany*, 29.

[190] Moltke, *Moltke on the Art of War*, 107-121.

no reason for Moltke to consider the Strategic Defense for the simple reason that he had the advantage in numbers, coordination, position, firepower and command, and thus an overwhelming assault could be mounted before the French were ready to meet them.[191] This case is so interesting because it is one where the defender was able to mobilize *before* the attacker and take the initiative that the French should have had if their system of organization was better.

The combination of these two, an ironclad reason for war to support *Will*, and superior *Means* to execute that war, meant that Prussia would likely have seen success even had the French attacked first. As has been stated, a long war tends to fall in favor of the defender so long as they have the *Means* to fight. The Prussians did not need to fight a long war, however; France had shown a fatal weakness without having to be drawn out and lured into a bad position. Napoleon III did not possess the same energy and administrative skill that made the armies his namesake could muster so impressive.

Third, there is the issue of a war of maneuver and the lack of a Strategic Defense on the part of the French. An advantage in numbers does not guarantee victory, Napoleon learned this first hand in 1812. The French in 1870 were arrogant: as has been mentioned, they dismissed Moltke's victory over the Austrians in 1866 because it was over the Austrians. France's military memory was fixed on the glories of Napoleon I, his thundering lancers, infantry with bayonets gleaming as they wheeled into the flanks of the enemy, cuirassiers rearing toward the sky, sabers flashing in the sun. In the words of Manchester, "there was no place in such fantasies for the dull clatter of Morse keys and

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[191] Moltke, *Moltke on the Art of War*, 69-73.

the duller click of locomotive wheels," and thus the French "convinced themselves that these didn't matter."[192] They hamstrung their own mobilization by refighting "the battles of Napoleon I."[193] Moltke utilized the technology of the time to aid his logistics, and thus permitted him to take the initiative and invade France before France could invade the German states. Again, Moltke did not need to use the Strategic Defense to get the French to reveal a weakness, one was already plain as day.

Whatever the reason, perhaps it had something to do with this military arrogance, the French failed to follow in the footsteps of Alexander I and the Allies. Napoleon III did not learn from the fall of Napoleon I. Now, this is not to say that a Strategic Defense would have solved all of France's problems in 1870, as pulling one off successfully requires a coordination and organization that the French just did not have, but it certainly would have been better than what they tried to do. The only thing guaranteed in war is that people will suffer, so who knows, perhaps a different strategy would have allowed the French to hold on long enough for them to convince the Austrian to enter the war on their side. In any case, the problem for France was that it started a war it likely couldn't hope to win. Prussia was battle-ready almost a full week before the French, and were able to muster a considerably more powerful force. This initiative in the hands of the defender is what makes the Franco-Prussian War such a curious episode for the simple reason that in all of the other conflicts to be discussed, the side that initially declares war strikes first.

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[192] Manchester, *The Arms of Krupp*, 130.

[193] Manchester, *The Arms of Krupp*, 130.

It was in the nineteenth century that these theories of war were put to paper by Clausewitz and Jomini, forged by their experiences in the twenty-three years of war that clove Europe apart. Napoleon Bonaparte, and what brought him finally down, defined them, and they were proven still applicable even half-a-century later when another Napoleon tried to match his namesake's legacy. Though technology changed the way war was fought, the foundational principles remain the same, and the same motivations that drove these early wars can be found in later conflicts throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. However, before the World Wars can be discussed, a smaller, but notable, conflict must be spoken of. A conflict where a rising industrial power in the far east humbled the giant that was the Russian Empire.

Chapter Four: the Twentieth Century

Clausewitzean theory is not limited by any means to the nineteenth century, and can be applied to nearly every conflict following the Napoleonic Wars, and likely those before as well. There are several wars in the twentieth century that are particularly emblematic of the trend that has so far been explored, however, in the interests of time, the two that shall be discussed are the Second World War and the Vietnam War. The former contains an essential repeat of 1812, as well as clear demonstrations of the impact of *Will* and *Means* in war. The latter is one of the best examples of an asymmetric war *not* going the way one would expect, as well as the impact of *Will* on a nation without a solid justification for intervention. The twentieth century also contains a fascinating exception to the rule that the defender usually wins, and the reasons help to explain why the existence of such exceptions are not problematic for the overall theory, but in fact are fully aligned with its foundational principles. The Russo-Japanese War shall be discussed first; the first time a European Great Power had been decisively defeated by a non-European rival.

By 1904, the Meiji Restoration in Japan had catapulted the island nation from an inward-facing isolationist state to a rising international power with a modernized economy and military. Western style and innovation were embraced in this period, bringing the ex-feudal nation into the modern era. Japan rapidly became a center of technology and commerce, leading to a commensurate increase in its international standing. While Japan assimilated Western technology and practical theory (economics,

military, industrial, so on), and while certain ancient laws and privileges were changed (specifically regarding the samurai), the nation did not *Westernize*, and very much kept its cultural identity. Japan has always, to some extent, been militant, and the *Bushido* Code was still very strong amongst the military and upper classes of the country, many of whom were samurai or daimyo, or associated with them. This combination of factors led to the dream of an eastern empire taking root in the nascent Great Power, nurtured by the brilliant rays of its rising sun.[194]

Throughout the end of the nineteenth century, this dream brought Japan into conflict with two other old empires, China and Russia. Russia, stretching from the Baltic all the way to the Pacific Ocean, was a political colossus that had largely stepped into Napoleon's boots after the fall of the French Empire. It had been humiliated in the Crimean War mid-century, and Germany was rapidly catching up, but it remained one of the foremost among the world's Great Powers. China, while much reduced due to constant European encroachment, remained an ancient and proud nation, with significant regional authority. Both states desired to increase their own standing, same as Japan, and so the three found themselves in an inevitable spiral into conflict. Russia had a second problem, however: the simmering anger of the Russian revolutionary movements were beginning to roil, and the leader of Russia at the time, Tsar Nicholas II, was doing all he could to hold onto power. Little brings a people together like a successful war, and

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[194] Denis Warner and Peggy Warner, *The Tide at Sunrise: A History of the Russo-Japanese War, 1904-1905* (London: Frank Cass, 2002), 23-55.

picking a fight against a young nation, still new to the international stage, began to look like an increasingly tempting option to stave off revolution.[195]

The conflict began with an image that should be familiar to anyone who has a modicum of knowledge about the Second World War. On the evening of February 8, 1905, without a declaration of war, a task force of ten Japanese torpedo boats quietly slipped into the tranquil waters of Port Arthur, one of the most important Russian cities in the east and the first of two home bases for their Pacific fleet, the First Pacific Squadron. The hulls of the ships had been greyed, names painted over in black, and they were cruising at thirteen knots, a speed slow enough that there was not a spark visible from their funnels. Though eventually spotted by their wakes, the darkness and lack of markings made the Russians believe they were friendly scouts returning to harbor. A brief panic ensued on the Japanese ships, but quickly regaining control, the officer in command ordered his forces to attack.[196]

Four of the Japanese vessels made a sprint for the Russian battleships, all very tempting targets at anchor, and fired their torpedoes at six hundred meters before breaking off. The rest of the squadron followed. The Russians, though surprised, began firing back with their ship guns and emplacements on the harbor forts. The Japanese, however, were too fast. The torpedo boats sped into the harbor, launched their weapons, then sprinted back out, barely presenting a target. Three of Russia's largest and most powerful battleships were badly damaged in the attack, all of them now requiring

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[195] Warner and Warner, *The Tide at Sunrise*, 55-98.

[196] Warner and Warner, *The Tide at Sunrise*, 3-22.

extensive repairs. This strike was quickly followed by Japanese troops landing at Chemulpo, modern-day Incheon near Seoul, with orders to sweep through the peninsula and into Manchuria. The Japanese commanders considered surprise to be so crucial to their strategy (Russia still had the military of a Great Power) that to declare war, thus tipping their hand, was viewed as an act of criminal stupidity. Thus, the beginning of a trend was formed that would result in one of the most infamous incidents of the Second World War.[197]

The Japanese military was not weak. It had modernized over the course of the Meiji Restoration, like the rest of the country, and was a formidable fighting force combining modern technology with traditional militarism and the intensity of the *Bushido* Code. Thus, the Russians dramatically underestimated the martial ability of the Japanese. Japan had some thirteen divisions ready, but the Russians were certain they could deploy only ten. Further, the Russians had no idea the size of the Japanese reserve force, 400,000 men, and they believed that one Russian soldier was worth three Japanese. Contrarily, the Japanese cast a wide net of inquiry and gathered an enormous amount of military intelligence, ranging from the amount of materiel stored in cities to the color of the caps worn by Russian troops. The Japanese knew exactly what they were up against, the Russians knew almost nothing and were buoyed by dangerous assumptions.[198]

Japan also retained naval superiority in the east. The Japanese completed their naval expansion program in 1902, and in order to present any competition the Russians

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[197] Warner and Warner, *The Tide at Sunrise*, 3-22.

[198] Warner and Warner, *The Tide at Sunrise*, 154-161.

were forced to quickly reinforce their First Pacific Squadron until it numbered "seven battleships, four of them armored, five first-class two third-class cruisers, twenty-five destroyers, seventeen torpedo boats and ten sloops and gunboats."[199] The Japanese had six first-class armored battleships, larger and more powerful than anything the Russians had, and eight first-class armored cruisers.[200] The Japanese had more second and third-class cruisers than the Russians, and nineteen destroyers; worse yet for Russia, all of the Japanese ships were faster than their own.[201] A further disparity was in training: the Russian sailors were varying in quality, some skilled some less so, whereas the Japanese performed constantly well.[202] Japanese sailors had better discipline and more experience (they were drawn from the nautical professions of thousands of miles of coast), and their "patriotism…was almost a religion."[203] It is also important to note that the Japanese Navy had been trained by the British, and their ships were British-built. The idea that the most experienced naval power in the world had trained the sailors of a nation with an extant, powerful martial culture only emphasizes the nautical skill of the Japanese, as well as the magnitude of Russian underestimation.[204]

The Japanese advance on land was relatively swift, putting Russian positions, including Port Arthur under siege.[205] The land war turned into a preview of the First

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[199] Warner and Warner, *The Tide at Sunrise*, 162-163.

[200] Warner and Warner, *The Tide at Sunrise*, 163.

[201] Warner and Warner, *The Tide at Sunrise*, 153-164.

[202] Warner and Warner, *The Tide at Sunrise*, 164.

[203] Warner and Warner, *The Tide at Sunrise*, 164-165.

[204] Warner and Warner, *The Tide at Sunrise*, 164-165, see part III.

[205] Warner and Warner, *The Tide at Sunrise*, see part III.

World War, trenches, artillery, machine guns and all, and Japanese tenacity began to prove its worth.[206] Simultaneously, the situation at sea began to turn dire for the Russians. In April 1904, Admiral Stepan Makarov (commander of the Russian navy in the east, his flag on the battleship *Petropavlosk*) and what was left of the First Pacific Squadron, "five battleships, four cruisers, and nine destroyers, had been lured more than fifteen miles out to sea" by a small Japanese force, beyond the support of the defenses of Port Arthur.[207] By the time Makarov realized what had happened, Japanese Admiral Togo Heihachiro was approaching with six battleships and six first-class cruisers.[208] Not liking those odds, Makarov turned his fleet and made a sprint back for the harbor, the Japanese ships on his tail and gaining every minute.[209] Captain Semenov of the *Diana* waited for Makarov to order the fleet to fire at the advancing Japanese, when a nearby explosion rocked his ship.[210] The *Petropavlosk* had struck a mine, and the Russian sailors on nearby ships could only watch in horror as a cloud of smoke and fire consumed the vessel.[211] The powerful battleship sank in minutes, taking her entire crew and Admiral Makarov with her.[212] This loss, coupled with past damage effectively crippled the First Pacific Squadron. When the news made it back to Tsar Nicolas II, he knew that he needed to

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[206] Warner and Warner, *The Tide at Sunrise*, see part III.

[207] Warner and Warner, *The Tide at Sunrise*, 238-239.

[208] Warner and Warner, *The Tide at Sunrise*, 239.

[209] Warner and Warner, *The Tide at Sunrise*, 239.

[210] Warner and Warner, *The Tide at Sunrise*, 239.

[211] Warner and Warner, *The Tide at Sunrise*, 239.

[212] Warner and Warner, *The Tide at Sunrise*, 240-241.

regain naval superiority in the east or face a catastrophic defeat, so he decided to deploy the Baltic Fleet into the Pacific.

The journey of the Baltic Fleet was bizarre, and while certain events will be mentioned here, the entire voyage needs its own book for a full accounting. Admiral Zinovi Rozhdestvenski set off in October 1904, and after suffering several accidents, opened fire on a group of "Japanese torpedo boats" off the coast of England. Because it is completely natural to assume that the Japanese would have sailed torpedo boats all the way around the world. These "warships" turned out to be British fisherman; the attack brought Great Britain and Russia to the brink of war and caused the Royal Navy to trail the Russians with ten battleships until Gibraltar. The main fleet was forced to sail around the horn of Africa, making the journey long and arduous on both sailors and officers. Men fell sick, including Rozhdestvenski himself, and news of the fall of Port Arthur on January 1, 1905, hit the Baltic Fleet particularly hard. Not only had the city been lost, but the remains of the First Pacific Squadron went with it, leaving Rozhdestvenski's ships the only Russian naval forces left in the region. The Russians neared their destination by mid-May 1905, and Admiral Togo was waiting for them.[213]

Disappointed that the Japanese Navy played comparatively so small a role in the destruction of the First Pacific Squadron, Togo swore that Rozhdestvenski's end would come at his hand. He personally oversaw the refitting and repair of his ships, mined the entrance to Vladivostok's port, and on February 21, 1905, deployed his ships to the secret naval base near Koji Island off of Korea. Togo knew that Rozhdestvenski would try to

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[213] Warner and Warner, *The Tide at Sunrise*, 402-426, 481-495.

reach Vladivostok, it was his only option since Port Arthur had been taken, and the Russian admiral had three straits to choose from: Tsugaru, La Pérouse, and Tsushima. Tsugaru was narrow with powerful currents; it would have taken the Russians at least eight hours to traverse with no chance at avoiding detection from land. Togo could have waited at the exit and blasted them to pieces when they came out. La Pérouse would have extended the journey to an unacceptable degree for the exhausted sailors, so Tsushima was Rozhdestvenski's only real option. Unfortunately for the Russians, Togo was well-aware of the conditions of the local seas (it was his backyard, after all) and made the same assessment.[214]

Rozhdestvenski entered the Straits of Tsushima on the night of May 26-27 under an overcast sky and through mist-cloaked waves. The Russian admiral felt blessed by the fog, hoping against everything that it would allow him to slip past the Japanese and reach Vladivostok undetected. Later in the night, the Russians picked up scattered Japanese messages that suggested they had found their general location, but were unsure what their specific positions were. When no Japanese ships materialized their confidence retuned, one officer remarking that so long as the fog held, they would slip right through. At 3:30 am, the fog lifted briefly, allowing a Japanese armed merchant cruiser to spot them, which immediately sped off and reported to Admiral Togo. By 5:00am, the First, Second and Fourth divisions of the Japanese navy steamed out of Masan, Togo and the Battleship *Mikasa* in the lead, on-course to intercept.[215]

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[214] Warner and Warner, *The Tide at Sunrise*, 494-497.

[215] Warner and Warner, *The Tide at Sunrise*, 497-499.

By the time the mist lifted at 7:00am, a Japanese cruiser was trailing the Russians, and at 9:00am, Rozhdestvenski swung northeast to enter the final stretch to Vladivostok. Forty-five minutes later, Admiral Kataoka Shichiro's Third Division appeared. Fearing an attack, Rozhdestvenski ordered his ships into line of battle. Before Rozhdestvenski could order his ships to cease fire, some thirty shots were fired at the cruisers in panic, which then broke off and left the area. As the Russians were passing Tsushima Island at noon, Rozhdestvenski realized the cruisers had gone to report the Russian position. Confusion set in as the Russian Admiral ordered his formation changed to meet a threat from the north, rather than his left, and the Russian fleet ended up in two parallel lines. Then, at 1:19pm, Togo with all his ships appeared to the north and right of the Russians. Togo brilliantly cut in front of the Russian lines, then executed a sharp maneuver and "crossed the T," bringing the full broadsides of his ships to bear against Rozhdestvenski's fleet. The Russians did not stand a chance. After a pitched battle, the Russians, though putting up quite a fight, were savaged. Russia suffered eight battleships and fourteen other ships sunk, with four battleships captured. The Japanese lost three torpedo boats. This amounted to the total destruction of the entire Second Pacific Squadron, bringing a decisive end to the naval part of the Russo-Japanese War, and thus handing victory to the Japanese. Togo more than earned his title of "the Nelson of the East."[216]

In this case, the issue of tactics and maneuvers on land is second to the issue of grand strategy, itself largely the reason why this is an exception to the rule that the defender usually wins. Firstly, neither Japan nor Russia was truly facing an existential

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[216] Warner and Warner, *The Tide at Sunrise*, 499-520.

threat. The local Russians did have the motivation of their home being threatened, but that is not enough to muster national *Will*. And yes, Tsar Nicholas II was contending with revolutionaries at home, but Japan could never threaten the destruction of Russia, and Russia could never successfully invade Japan. This war was a question of Imperial expansion for both parties, thus the primary driving force of *Will* that has been discussed up to this point, threat, is not particularly applicable. *Will*, therefore, comes down to a question of patriotism, and between the rising revolutionary sentiments in Russia against the Imperial Cult of Japan, that's not even a debate.[217] Thus the advantage of *Will*, in this case, falls to the attacker, *not* the defender, an uncommon state of affairs in modern war. *Means*, likewise, was a serious issue for the European Great Power.

The main problem for Russia as it relates to *Means* was one of logistics. Russia is massive, and the theater of war happened to be on the side of the country that was less-developed. As such, the Russian military needed to deploy its forces from one side of a continent to the other, whereas Japan was operating in its own backyard. The only way for Rozhdestvenski to get his ships to the battlefield was by sailing them half-way around the globe, giving Togo plenty of time to refit and prepare for his arrival. Russia, likewise, would have to transport troops across the entirety of its landmass to reinforce the ground troops on its Pacific coast. Japan, of course, was much closer. Japan has its own issues, as it is an island and must cross water to reinforce its troops, but even that is faster than Russia's logistical nightmare. However, if Russia could maintain naval superiority, they may have been able to prevent the Japanese from deploying new

[217] "Imperial Cult" here is literal and not derogatory. The Roman Empire and China provide other examples of Imperial Cults.

divisions to the continent. Thus, the war would be decided by who could control the sea. The minute the Japanese claimed naval superiority, it was all over. The loss of the First Pacific Squadron was a heavy blow, and Rozhdestvenski's unqualified defeat at Tsushima ended any hope for a Russian victory. If a side cannot keep up its *Means* of fighting, then it has no way to carry on resisting.

So, here we see that for an attacker to win a war, several things must align. Firstly, *Will* must be either equal or in their favor. Second, *Distance* plays a significant factor: the closer the attacker is to the front relative to the defender's reinforcements, the better a position they are in. Logistics are seriously hampered by distance as Napoleon learned firsthand in 1812. If the attacker can prevent the defender from rearming or receiving aid as the Japanese did in this example, then the likelihood of victory swings to them. Third, the Japanese attacked with celerity and little warning. If a defender can be overpowered quickly and their strength diminished, then victory falls yet further in favor of the attacker. This was Napoleon's favorite tactic: rapid advances to destroy the fighting strength of the enemy. An advantage in *Will* is the most difficult to achieve, but if such can be maintained, *Means* are not lost, and the enemy overpowered before the threat of their annihilation animates the general populace, the attacker can, and likely may, win. The greatest conflict of the twentieth century proves this as well. Both the rule and its exception are validated on the battlefields of France and the Soviet Union.

Likely the single most studied conflict of the twentieth century, perhaps even of all human history, the Second World War was the culmination of centuries of European tension at last exploding. Regardless of the effects of the Treaty of Versailles on Germany

and whether or not its harsh terms facilitated the rise of Hitler, the simple fact is that in September 1939 the Nazis invaded Poland.[218] This conclusively makes them the aggressors of the conflict. It can be argued that the war started earlier, depending on whether one counts the Italian invasion of Abyssinia in 1935 or the Japanese invasion of China in 1931.[219] However, the Nazi invasion of Poland is what brought other Great Powers, France and the United Kingdom, into the conflict; thus 1939 is commonly held as the start and Hitler as the instigator. Once again, we see that Europe despises hegemony.

The Nazi conquest of Poland in three weeks stunned the world, revealing technologies no one knew the Nazis had. The tactics they employed, the rapid advancement of armored divisions, excellent air-ground coordination (particularly with the *Stuka* dive-bomber) and assault teams of "well-articulated" infantry, while not necessarily new, were a drastic change from the trench fighting of the First World War.[220] Recall that Moltke had essentially fought a *blitzkrieg* against France in 1870, simply without the tanks and planes.[221] Likewise, Napoleon pioneered in modern warfare the very concept of *blitzkrieg* with the rapid advances, maneuvers and sudden strikes for which he became feared.[222] The tactics used had been seen before, but the combination of tactics and technology is what made it so startling.

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[218] Craig, *Germany*, 714-715.

[219] Craig, *Germany*, 687; David M. Gordon, "Historiographical Essay: The China-Japan War, 1931-1945," *The Journal of Military History* 70, no. 1 (2006), 137–82.

[220] Craig, *Germany*, 715.

[221] Moltke, *Moltke on the Art of War*, 69-73; Craig, *Germany*, 28-29.

[222] Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic* Wars. See any of the chapters dealing with Napoleon's campaigns; even when losing, he tried to use *blitzkrieg*.

Prior to this, the use of tanks had largely been determined by the French experience, which essentially directed that armor should be used to support an infantry advance.[223] However, German observation of British maneuvers during the interwar period led them to decide that tank forces could be detached from the infantry as their own units or accompanied by other mechanized troops.[224] The German operational division under Werner von Fritsch concluded that swift-moving tanks would likely become the primary offensive weapon in a future war, and thus would be most effective when concentrated into their own brigades independent of the infantry.[225] This form of tank warfare was enthusiastically adopted by the general staff, including one officer by the name of Heinz Guderian, and training began on operationally independent armored units.[226] This, coupled with the power of the new *Luftwaffe* (the German air force), created a formidable military force with rapid-strike capabilities that would have stunned both Moltke and Napoleon.

The initial Nazi strategy was essentially a repeat of the World War One Schlieffen Plan with some minor variations, which would have had the *blitzkrieg* strike through Belgium and the Netherlands into northern France.[227] This plan changed for a few reasons. First, a Nazi aircraft carrying the *Luftwaffe* plans for the invasion went down in

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[223] Michael, Geyer, "German Strategy in the Age of Machine Warfare, 1914-1945," in *Makers of Modern Strategy*, ed. by Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986): 559.

[224] Geyer, "German Strategy in the Age of Machine Warfare," 559.

[225] Geyer, "German Strategy in the Age of Machine Warfare," 559.

[226] Geyer, "German Strategy in the Age of Machine Warfare," 559.

[227] Craig, *Germany*, 718.

Belgium and said plans were captured by the Allies.[228] While it is debated how much of an effect this had on the changes the Nazis made to their strategy, it did convince the Allies that they were going to face the Schlieffen Plan once again.[229] Hitler was also not satisfied with a repeat of World War One strategy; he had something of an epiphany on October 25, 1940, and asked his generals whether or not it would be possible to organize an armored breakthrough via the "supposedly impassable" Ardennes Forest instead.[230]

Plan Yellow, as it was known, "was an unqualified success."[231] A coordinated assault against the Dutch forced them to capitulate in a grand total of five days, and the Belgians were made to retreat despite their support from the French and British.[232] The situation grew dire when Nazi tanks suddenly appeared from the Ardennes, "spearheaded by the armoured corps of Guderian and Reinhardt."[233] Guderian turned north and, supported by motorized infantry, made a sprint for the English Channel in an attempt to fully encircle the bulk of the French and British armies.[234] While the Allies fought a skillful rearguard action, they were only saved from total annihilation by the heroics of the Royal Navy and British people during the evacuation of Dunkirk.[235] While not a total victory in the Clausewitzean sense (as much of the British and a large part of the French

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[228] Richard K. Smith, "A Matter of Laundry, a Schaetzchen, and an East Wind That Blew No Good," *Air Power History* 63, no. 2 (2016): 41–47.

[229] Smith, "A Matter of Laundry," 41-47.

[230] Craig, *Germany*, 718-719.

[231] Craig, *Germany*, 719.

[232] Craig, *Germany*, 719.

[233] Craig, *Germany*, 719.

[234] Craig, *Germany*, 719.

[235] Craig, *Germany*, 719.

forces survived to fight another day), tanks were soon rolling into Paris, knocking France out of the war.[236]

The Nazi victory in France was essentially perfect. A swift assault overpowered one of their enemies, preventing them from contributing before anyone essentially knew what was happening, followed by a powerful thrust through the Low Countries. While the British and French were moving to meet this attack, the Nazi forces swept through an area thought totally impassable to begin what amounted to a full encirclement. The masterful strategic maneuvering was pure Napoleon. This is not to say there were not problems, the issues seen in Poland surrounding the German armored units were still present in France, and a large part of the Allied army survived, making the victory somewhat dangerous.[237] Moreover, Britain was still in the war, and as Napoleon learned, as long as Britain has the ability to fight, it will.

Regardless, Plan Yellow was a textbook example of how an offensive operation should be run. The swift and punishing assault through the weak point in the Allied defenses prevented them from instituting an effective Strategic Defense. Such requires time to set up and prepare, time the Allies lost the moment Guderian's armor showed up on their flanks. The speed of the attack made it impossible for France to take advantages of the weaknesses in the Nazi advance, which cut a very long, very thin line through France that, theoretically, could have been cut by a proper counterattack at the proper time. The French tried but were beaten off. The victory over France was essentially

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[236] Craig *Germany*, 719-720.

[237] Craig, *Germany*, 719-720.

complete, though Britain's bravery in the face of destruction and stubborn determination to hang on would be a continuing problem for Hitler's war effort.[238] This form of war, naturally, requires speed and the ability to outmaneuver and destroy one's enemy. While Allied troops escaped, they *were* neutralized at the time. Again, Napoleon was the first practitioner of this, and the Nazis managed to successfully recreate his strategies with the technology of the time. A similar trend was seen in the Russo-Japanese War, as already discussed, with rapid attacks leading to a swift victory for the attacker. Though, it must be said that the Nazi conquest of France was dramatically faster than the operations of the Japanese in 1904-1905. Of course, winning a quick and decisive battle is the cornerstone of *blitzkrieg*, whether employed by Hitler or Napoleon, and failing to do so can cause very serious problems for any campaign. This is when the Führer made one of his greatest mistakes, the same mistake that Napoleon had made over a century before.

On June 22, 1941, Hitler ordered his troops into Russia, marking the second time a major, hegemonic European power attempted to kill the Russian bear while it was hibernating.[239] The initial drive of the operation, unlike Napoleon's, was incredibly successful. The *Luftwaffe* had won "uncontested control of the skies," and within a fortnight, Riga and Minsk had fallen and Nazi army groups were rapidly rolling on towards Leningrad (today St. Petersburg) and Smolensk.[240] This remarkable sprint resulted in the capture of well over a hundred-thousand Russian soldiers, some twelve-hundred tanks and six-hundred large artillery pieces, but here Hitler ran into the same

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[238] Craig, *Germany*, 719-730.

[239] Craig, *Germany*, 730.

[240] Craig, *Germany*, 730.

problems that Napoleon had over a century before.[241] Russia is, putting it lightly, enormous, and though invading in June, for the Nazi war plan to have been a success, Moscow needed to have fallen before winter. The moment the first snows began to fall, the Russians would have an enormous advantage over nearly any invader.

One of Hitler's army groups, led by General Fedor von Bock, faced intense resistance at Smolensk and was pinned down by Soviet troops for three months that the Nazi's could not spare before he was able to resume his advance on Moscow.[242] Another army, under General Wilhelm Ritter von Leeb, was likewise delayed and did not reach the Neva River outside Leningrad in time.[243] Worse, in November a brutal, early winter set in, immobilizing armor and stopping the *blitzkrieg* dead.[244] The Nazi forces were totally unprepared and unequipped for so brutal a cold to set in at such an early date, and this is when Marshal Georgy Zhukov began to counterattack.[245]

In 1928, the "head of the operations administration of the Red Army staff," one Vladimir Triandifilov, developed a theory of "successive operations," or the idea that (based on the trench warfare of World War I) a decisive victory could only be won if the enemy did not have time to regroup.[246] It was the idea that after a breakthrough occurred, the speed and momentum of modern technology should be used to strike a continuing

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[241] Craig, *Germany*, 730.

[242] Craig, *Germany*, 730.

[243] Craig, *Germany*, 730.

[244] Craig, *Germany*, 730.

[245] Craig, *Germany*, 730.

[246] Condoleezza Rice, "The Making of Soviet Strategy," in *Makers of Modern Strategy*, ed. Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 664.

series of blows against the enemy.[247] This is, again, nothing really new: similar strategies have been employed in the past to varying degrees of success, the motorization of armies simply made it easier. Triandifilov also recognized the importance of operating against an enemy's lines of support and communication, something both Moltke and Napoleon did often and successfully to win their greatest victories.[248] This doctrine, in the years before World War II, was changed by the Soviet general staff and a theory of positional warfare put in its place.[249] This, however, made it so that the Soviet army was trained for a war of maneuver, but planning for a war of positions, and thus "[was] not ready for either."[250] This was made readily apparent in the Winter War against Finland, and the relative military chaos in the Red Army was only made worse by Josef Stalin's purges of the upper ranks that essentially crippled its command structure.[251]

Once war actually broke out and the Red Army suffered its first string of catastrophic defeats, experience began to teach the Soviets what they needed to know.[252] War is a crucible: incompetent leaders began dying, and steadily the people who needed to be in command got to where they were supposed to be.[253] The Red Army learned to defend aggressively without resorting to static lines, they learned how to retreat in good order, and through this they learned how to counterattack — all the hallmarks of a

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[247] Rice, "The Making of Soviet Strategy," 664.

[248] Rice, "The Making of Soviet Strategy," 664.

[249] Rice, "The Making of Soviet Strategy," 669.

[250] Rice, "The Making of Soviet Strategy," 669. Brackets added by author for clarity.

[251] Rice, "The Making of Soviet Strategy," 669-670.

[252] Rice, "The Making of Soviet Strategy," 672-673.

[253] Rice, "The Making of Soviet Strategy," 672-673.

Clausewitzean Strategic Defense.[254] Stalingrad was the turning point, when the entire attacking Nazi force around the city was encircled and crushed.[255]

Seeing his chance, taking advantage of the stalled Nazi offensive, and understanding winter war better than his enemies ever would, Marshal Zhukov unsheathed Clausewitz's "flashing sword of vengeance." Sensing disaster, the Nazi command staff urged a general withdrawal to regroup which Hitler flatly refused to authorize, citing that it would take time his armies did not have. He then made the worst decision in a long chain of terrible ones by firing Walter von Brauchitsch, overall commander in the East at the time, and taking operational command himself. The Nazi armies dug in to await the spring, handing initiative further into the hands of Zhukov. The Russian Marshal took advantage similar to Tsar Alexander I in 1812, only he had to force the Nazis out rather than pursue a retreating army.[256]

Russia, though given a reprieve by the long winter, had been badly mauled. When 1941 ended, they had suffered somewhere around 4.5 million casualties, and in the spring of 1942 a renewed Nazi effort gave Hitler the last, real glimmer of hope he had for the war in the East. This pushed into the oil fields of the Caucasus, overran Crimea, and Army Group A closed in on Stalingrad. In November of that same year, however, the Nazi Sixth Army at Stalingrad, part of Army Group A, was (as mentioned) surrounded and later destroyed. As the winter of 1942 began to set in, Hitler refused to allow his troops to retreat and Zhukov pressed his advantage. The Sixth Army capitulated in

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[254] Rice, "The Making of Soviet Strategy," 672-673.

[255] Rice, "The Making of Soviet Strategy," 672-673.

[256] Craig, *Germany*, 730.

February of 1943, and in the same month the Russians recaptured 185,000 square miles of territory, including Rostov, Kursk and Kharkov.[257]

The main difference between Russian strategy in 1812 and 1941 was the issue of initial intent. In 1812, Tsar Alexander deliberately used Russia's massive size to wear down and overextend Napoleon's Grande Armée. In 1941, the Soviets were taken totally off-guard and forced into a defensive posture due to the chaos of the attack. The Nazi *blitzkrieg* kept them on the back-foot, but their resources and manpower reserves were so massive that even 4.5 million casualties was not enough to cripple the ability of the USSR to fight. In other words, Soviet *Means* were so great that so long as they had the *Will* to fight, the Nazis could not possibly win; a quick and decisive knockout blow was Hitler's only hope and it failed. It took the Red Army time to learn, but once they figured out how to fight defensively, it simply became a question of time. The Russians waited through the winter for the Nazis to overextend and exhaust themselves, then took full advantage and drove the invaders back.

On the question of *Will*, one hardly needs reminding that the Soviet Union was fighting the Nazis. While the issue of the concentration camps was not unveiled until the USSR began to sweep through Poland, Hitler had made it eminently clear that he was fighting for *lebensraum*, or "living-room," in which to ruthlessly Germanize. To do so, he was employing a particularly apocalyptic form of total war that included the murder of many thousands at the hands of the *Einsatzgruppen*, the paramilitary death squads of the Nazi *Schutzstaffel*. Moreover, in speeches past, Hitler made abundantly clear that he

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[257] Craig, *Germany*, 752-754.

considered Communism to be the ultimate enemy of Nazism, and fully intended to wipe it out. It is difficult to find a clearer case of fighting an existential threat than a Nazi invasion. There was no way that the Soviet people would lose the *Will* to fight in the face of what could be reasonably described as an apocalypse.[258]

Momentum then swung around, with the Red Army counterattacking into Nazi held territory, crossing the German border and penetrating as far as Berlin. The Soviets were able to muster 5.7 million soldiers to the Nazi's 3 million, and their supply of munitions and materiel seemed to be unending. The Soviets committed mass atrocities and war crimes in the territory they advanced through, including but not limited to murder, plunder and rape. This advance was also when the first concentration and death camps were discovered by the Red Army, and the deepest depravities of the Nazi regime were shown to the world. As they were pushed back, the German forces defending their homeland never really lost their *Will* to fight, as the Soviet invasion seemed suddenly as apocalyptic as their own had been. However, the difference here lies in *Means*, which ultimately explains the collapse of German resistance.[259]

It must be remembered that the Iron Calculus has two variables, both of much must be maintained for any hope of victory. A people can have all the *Will* to fight in the world, but if they lack the *Means* to match that *Will*, little will come of it. The Germans fought until the end, through the ruined streets of Berlin as the Soviet red standard was being hoisted over the blasted remains of the Reichstag, but they were down to dregs at

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[258] Craig, *Germany*, see chapters 16-20 for Nazi politics and foreign policy; Geyer, "German Strategy in the Age of Machine Warfare," 527-597.

[259] Craig, *Germany*, 757-764; Atkinson, *The Guns at Last Light*.

that point. Their *Will* in the face of Soviet invasion and atrocity remained strong, but they didn't have the *Means* to continue fighting.

A third conflict in the twentieth century provides further proof of these theories of war. It demonstrates that a war can be fought indefinitely so long as *Means* and *Will* are maintained. It shows that a disparity in military strength does not guarantee victory for an attacker. It shows that the longer a war drags on, the more in favor of the defender it swings. It shows that with sufficient threat, the *Will* of a defender can become unbreakable. The conflict in question is, of course, the Vietnam War.

When considering the sheer disparity between North Vietnam and the United States, it could come as no surprise to think that latter dramatically overpowered the former. This is not a question or a debate, it is simply a fact. On one hand, you have a global superpower who aided in the defeat of Nazi Germany and almost single-handedly laid low the Empire of Japan. A nation with nuclear weapons, technology, reserves of manpower and resources an order of magnitude greater than most other countries could muster. On the other hand, you have a small, Southeast-Asian state who had just recently thrown off the shackles of renewed French colonialism after suffering a brutal Japanese occupation after they kicked out the French the first time. In other words, it was a nation at the peak of its global power against a nation that had been colonized for the better part of a century. The United States had 8.8 million troops worldwide, 3.4 million in Southeast Asia, with 540,000 active military in Vietnam at the peak of the conflict in 1968 with all the munitions and materiel they could possibly ever use. The Vietnamese had, according to CIA estimates, an effective strength of 380,000-470,000 with a

potential further 3.25 million as militia or paramilitary fighters (including the Viet Cong). They received aid from both the USSR and China, but nowhere near enough to match the industrial might of the US. By way of *Means*, this isn't even a question. But therein lies the trap: *Means* is not the only metric to determine victory, and war is not purely a game of numbers.[260]

Firstly, it must be stated who is the aggressor in the conflict. Now, we are dealing with a nation that had just thrown off the yolk of its colonial oppressor, claiming victory over the French at the climactic battle of Dien Bien Phu. Ho Chi Minh, the Vietnamese leader, idolized the United States and took much of his inspiration from the American 1776 revolutionary movement, and was a consistent and effective ally against the Japanese in the Second World War. Unfortunately, for the prospects of an American alliance, he was also a believer in communism, the Great Red Menace that haunted US Domino Theory for the latter half of the twentieth century. Ironically, here we have a communist who would have happily been a US ally rather than a Soviet one if given the choice. The 1954 Geneva Conference on Vietnam, after Dien Bien Phu, stipulated the withdrawal of French troops, French recognition of Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam, as well as the partitioning of Vietnam into a nationalist south and communist north with elections following soon after to reunify the country. The South and the North, however, had two different objectives: the North wanted reunification as stipulated under the 1954 Geneva

[260] Department of Veterans Affairs, *America's Wars* (Washington, District of Columbia: Office of Public Affairs, 2019); Stephen Zunes and Jesse Laird, *The US Anti-Vietnam War Movement* (International Center on Non-Violent Conflict, 1964-1973); Central Intelligence Agency, *North Vietnamese Potential for Fighting in South Vietnam*, (Washington, District of Columbia: Central Intelligence Agency, July 7, 1966).

Agreement, the South wanted to retain its independence. The United States declared its intent to support the South, especially in light of the ongoing global Cold War.[261]

Taking this all into account, you have a nation forcibly partitioned by the Great Powers, one of whom then declares they're supporting the continued division of said nation in the name of Containment, thinly veiled under the guise of "self-determination," essentially replacing the colonial oppressor said nation *just* fought a war to drive off. The other US *casus belli*, the Gulf of Tonkin incident, is so vague and confused that one would have an easier time seeing the truth in thick fog during a blizzard at night. It was believed at the time that a destroyer, USS *Maddox*, was threatened by three North Vietnamese torpedo boats in the Gulf of Tonkin. President Johnson ordered air strikes on North Vietnam and Congress passed a resolution authorizing wider military action very shortly after the incident, leading to the war as we know it. That historians still *hotly* debate whether these reports are real, misinterpretations or a fabricated c*asus belli* underscores the flimsiness of the excuse. Regardless of whether the event was genuine, the sheer disparity in power taken in conjunction with the interventionist assertions of the US makes it evident that the North Vietnamese were not the overall aggressor. A war of national unification and independence in the face of powerful foreign colonial intervention cannot be considered a war of aggression, regardless of who fires the first shot. Such reasons well clear the qualifying threshold for "existential threat." To be clear, the North Vietnamese were not aggressing against the South Vietnamese people, but

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[261] Vu Hong Lien and Peter Sharrock, *Descending Dragon, Rising Tiger: A History of Vietnam* (London: Reaktion Books, Limited, 2015), see chapters 12–14.

instead against the United States and the US backed regime (see: puppet state) in the South.[262]

The North Vietnamese were acutely aware of the power disparity, anyone not living under a rock would have been, and thus fought in the only way they could. Instead of facing a superior power muzzle-to-muzzle on the field, guaranteed suicide, they slowly began to bleed American forces using irregular tactics. Whether or not Ho Chi Minh molded his plans on Napoleonic history is not something that this author knows, however the actions of the North Vietnamese were very much reminiscent of Anglo-Iberian tactics used during the Peninsular War against the vastly superior French military. This can be qualified as a form of Strategic Defense, where the defender refuses to give a decisive battle, but instead tries to hemorrhage their enemy with a thousand small cuts.[263]

This sort of tactic is risky for a number of reasons. First, while you are damaging the enemy, the enemy is damaging you: casualties are unavoidable in a war. If you cannot maintain your *Means*, your more powerful foe will eventually take the advantage. Second, winning with irregular tactics alone is nigh-impossible. You will need to launch a major offensive at some point in order to seize territory, force your enemy back or destroy their ability to fight. Harken back to Clausewitz: the goal is to disarm the enemy. If you cannot do this, then it is a question of *Time* and, again, *Means*. The reason why the North Vietnamese strategy worked so brilliantly is because the war dragged on and on with no end in sight despite the reassurances of US military authorities. The variable a

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[262] Lien and Sharrock, *Descending Dragon, Rising Tiger*, 224-226.

[263] Lien and Sharrock, *Descending Dragon, Rising Tiger*, ch. 15; Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars*, chapters 12 and 22, for the Peninsular War and its ending.

less-powerful combatant must target, the only one it can realistically compete in, is the question of *Will*, which the North Vietnamese did very well. In spite of the massive bombing campaign directed against them (a greater tonnage of bombs was dropped on Vietnam than during the entirety of World War II) and the relentless land campaign, the North Vietnamese stubbornly held on, reducing any US gain. Then, on January 20, 1968 the North launched the Tet Offensive on the Lunar New Year.[264]

This sudden and massive counterattack was the *Flashing Sword* of the North Vietnamese. They had spotted an opening and took it, launching attacks across the South, showing to the stunned US that all the fighting of the past years, all of the munitions spent, had not made an impact on their ability to fight the war. While it did not succeed in disarming the United States and South Vietnam, the offensive did substantial damage to *Will*. During this period, a massive anti-war movement emerged in the US, protesting what was viewed as both an unwinnable and fundamentally unjust war. The Tet Offensive only amplified this perception of the conflict. The US government was failing to balance the Trinity. They had the military *Means* to carry out their goals (skill is another issue, and one should *seriously* question the competence of General William Westmoreland and Secretary Robert McNamara, but that is a whole other topic), but they were rapidly losing the people. As the Trinity grows unbalanced, *Will* starts to collapse, and if *Will* collapses, the ability of a country to fight ends regardless of the *Means* still at their disposal. What is seen here is essentially an inverse of the latter phases of World War II. The US had

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[264] Lien and Sharrock, *Descending Dragon, Rising Tiger*, chapter 15; Melden E. Smith, "The Strategic Bombing Debate: The Second World War and Vietnam," *Journal of Contemporary History* 12, no. 1 (1977): 175–91; Clausewitz, *On War*, 5.

more than enough materiel to fight on, but were losing the *Will*, whereas the Germans fought to the end, but their *Means* could not possible match those of the Soviet Union.[265]

In this case, the North Vietnamese did not need to win a decisive victory in the field that destroyed the forces facing them. Such a victory would not have mattered anyway, as the United States possessed the *Means* to fight almost indefinitely. It very quickly became an issue of *Will* and *Time*. As has been established, North Vietnam was fighting for its very existence, as well as resisting what seemed to be yet another colonial occupier. This motivation led to its *Will* being ironclad and essentially unbreakable, especially in light of American tactics. The United States, on the other hand, had to justify its intervention in Vietnam to a public whose skepticism was growing rapidly. The Tonkin Incident was flimsy, and "Domino Theory," the idea that one country falling to communism will unleash a tide of revolution that leads to communist domination of the world, was unconvincing to begin with. McNamara himself recognized this in 1993 when he said in an address to the Council of Foreign Relations that he "made a mistake… The war was unwinnable from the start. The Domino Theory was ridiculous. Nationalism had been confused with communism… [and] there had never been a serious threat to U.S. security."[266]

The United States, without question, had the *Means* to overcome North Vietnam. The ability of its generals, while questionable, likely would have seen them through in

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[265] Lien and Sharrock, *Descending Dragon, Rising Tiger*, ch. 15; Zunes and Laird, *The US Anti-Vietnam War Movement*; Clausewitz, *On War*, 18.

[266] Chris Mason, "The Strategic Lessons Unlearned From Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan: Why the Afghan National Security Forces Will Not Hold, and the Implications for the U.S. Army in Afghanistan," (Strategic Studies Institute: US Army War College, 2015), 195.

the end. But the *Will* of the people was the problem. Vietnam serves as one of the best examples of a Great Power losing badly to a nation that could not hope to match its *Means*. It serves as one of the best demonstrations that without a suitable justification for war, and the longer a conflict goes on, the more war exhaustion begins to set in. As long as a smaller power can hold on militarily, an extended conflict will eventually swing in their favor as the *Will* of the enemy to fight steadily decreases. *Distance* mattered less in this case as modern methods of transport are vastly superior to those of the past, but still, the North Vietnamese were operating in their backyard and the Americans had to cross an Ocean. Technology can reduce the effects of *Distance*, but it's a factor that will always play in the favor of whoever's base of power is closest to the battlefront. This remans critical, especially as it relates to *Time*. Thus, we come to the final piece of the question, and the most recent war faced by the West.

Chapter Five: The State of Current War

Warfare has changed dramatically over the two centuries between Waterloo and today. The tide of advancing technology has necessitated changes in tactics, and experience in war has taught hard-learned lessons on how to fight. Despite this, the fundamental principles of war remain consistent, largely unchanged from the days of Napoleon. This chapter shall discuss three wars in relation to current warfare, starting with the Gulf War: a conflict that has one foot in 20th century warfare, and the other in 21st century warfare. The US-Afghanistan War will be discussed briefly, as both an exception to the general rule, and a conflict that proves it. Lastly, the current Russo-Ukrainian War shall be discussed in some detail, as its course up to this point has been one essentially predicted by Clausewitz.

First, to make absolutely clear: *nothing is certain in war*. This is one of the few permissible absolutisms in the study of history. No matter what experts insist, what generals say, or what historians assert, war is the very agent of chaos, and chaos by definition is unpredictable. There are trends that can be seen in the study of military history, the weight of *Means* and *Will* can help to predict the eventual winner of a conflict, yes. Yet, there are plenty of examples of conflicts with surprising outcomes due to various contingencies. If going by the views of the moment, Vietnam, by all rights, should have been over in two months. Napoleon's *Grande Armée* should have crushed Russia in 1812. France and Britain should have held against the Nazis during Operation Yellow. Putin should have taken Kiev in a week in 2022. Or so many (as it relates to the

last one), including this writer, assumed. All of this is to simply say that while the trend of history and military theory supports one or two particular outcomes for the Russo-Ukrainian War, there is no guarantee what will happen. Anyone who asserts they have a model that can predict the future with *absolute* certainty is either deliberately deceptive or naive. As the saying goes, there are three types of lies: lies, damned lies, and statistics. The following predictions might be proven right in the end, and this writer certainly believes they will be, but one must always consider that the unexpected could happen in relation to war. In short, no predictive model is perfect. Before Ukraine is discussed, however, two other wars will be briefly explored.

On August 2, 1990, Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein ordered his forces over the Kuwaiti border. With surprising alacrity, the *blitz* swept through the small emirate, swiftly seizing control of the country. By the following day, the Iraqi military had already reached the Saudi-Kuwait border. With the invasion facing near-global condemnation, Saddam deployed another quarter of a million men to reinforce his troops in Kuwait as the standoff continued and hopes for a diplomatic solution began to shrink. In just over two months, it became clear that the previous policy of economic sanctions and containment implemented by the UN was insufficient to address the crisis, and that force would be needed to expel the Iraqis. On November 29, 1990, the UN gave Saddam a deadline of January 15, 1991, to withdraw or there would be war. All diplomatic efforts to

avoid armed conflict failed, and on January 17, a U.S.-led coalition began offensive operations against the Iraqi forces in Kuwait.[267]

The resulting war was relatively quick. The Coalition began with targeted air strikes on Iraqi installations, destroying radar systems, airfields, and missile sites. This gave air superiority to the Coalition, and as a tactic is very different from Strategic Bombing, something that will be discussed later. With command of the skies, they were able to start targeting Iraqi ground forces. Air power typically cannot comprehensively destroy armies on the ground, but it can deal enough damage to make the work of ground troops substantially easier. In under 100 hours after the first offensive operations began, and with their forces in full retreat, the Iraqis abandoned Kuwait and sued for peace, making the conflict one of the shortest and most comprehensive discussed in this piece.[268]

The conflict acutely demonstrates the problem of overwhelming force in all stages. Initially, Kuwait had no chance to resist the Iraqi invasion. Saddam had too many soldiers, too many tanks and too much firepower. No matter what *Will* the citizens of Kuwait may have had, it simply could never have been enough in the face of the invasion. This is an example similar to the Nazis in World War Two, or the Japanese in the Russo-Japanese War; a swift, crushing assault that gives the enemy no time to organize a strategic defense. Again, the best chance for an attacker to win a modern war is in the opening days, weeks and months of the conflict. The longer the defender has to get organized, the worse off the attacker will be. Of course, there is a certain power

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[267] Walter D. Givhan, "The Gulf War," *The Time Value of Military Force in Modern Warfare: The Airpower Advantag*e (Air University Press, 1996); Peter C. Hunt, "The Persian Gulf War," *Coalition Warfare: Considerations for the Air Component Commander* (Air University Press, 1998).

[268] Givhan, "The Gulf War;" Hunt, "The Persian Gulf War."

disparity that, once reached, makes any resistance impossible in the first place, and that is the case with the initial invasion.

The Coalition response reinforced the same pattern, only with the roles in reverse. The Iraqis were defending, the Coalition attacking. Saddam bit off more than he could chew with this invasion, and once the UN green-lit offensive operations, the conflict ended quickly. The Iraqi military was large and powerful on paper, but under constant pressure from the air, then facing a massive ground assault across its front line, it collapsed like a house of cards. The operational combat phase of a war lasting less than 100 hours is practically unheard of, and indicates the sheer power arrayed against the Iraqis. The question of *Means* in the two phases of this war was answered in each case respectively before the fighting ever really began. *Will* is another story entirely, because neither Iraq nor the Coalition were fighting for their existence, and the Kuwaitis lasted for barely enough time to surrender.

In this case, as Iraq was not being invaded, Saddam did not have an existential reason to justify his war. It is rare that an invader can use that reason. No matter his excuses, it was pretty clear that the invasion was to secure Iraqi control of oil in the region, and thus was a war of conquest for an economic resource; one of the hardest types of war to justify, and something that will crop up again soon. Kuwait did not last long enough to fight, but only they could realistically have used an existential threat as the reason to fight. The Coalition, regardless of what their actual reasons were (oil), could motivate their troops with the idea that they were liberating a small nation victimized by

a tyrant, even if such was only an illusion.[269] Accordingly, much like the Russo-Japanese War, two sides fought without the impact of an existential threat on *Will*, so neither side had the motivation of fighting for one's very existence. Shock in war has an effect on *Will* (see: any blitzkrieg in history), and thus it should come as a surprise to no one that the Iraqi military fell apart in the face of such a sudden and overwhelming offensive. This is not to say the Coalition victory was preordained. Had Iraq immediately pushed into Saudi Arabia after taking Kuwait, the war would likely have been much longer and very different. By stopping, they gave the Coalition time to build up their military forces in anticipation of such a rapid offensive. The pause killed the Iraqi war effort.[270]

Here we see a further example of how a rapid attack can overcome the ability of a defender to use their natural advantages. This is further proof that there is a point at which the power of an attacker is simply too much. A dramatic preponderance of *Means* can, and does, prevent *Will* from becoming a serious factor. This, of course, assumes that one is fighting a conventional war. Insurgencies complicate everything, a prime example of this being the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan.

On September 11, 2001, Al-Qaeda extremists hijacked four commercial airliners in flight. One crashed in a Pennsylvania field, one was rammed into the Pentagon in Washington DC, and the final two were flown into the two towers of the World Trade Center in New York City. Thousands of people were killed in a very visible attack that traumatized the nation. The Bush Administration subsequently declared a "War on

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[269] Robert J. Lieber, "Oil and Power after the Gulf War," *International Security* 17, no. 1 (1992): 155–76. Oil is the reason for most, if not all, modern conflict in the Middle East.

[270] Lieber, "Oil and Power in the Gulf War."

Terror," and launched Operation Enduring Freedom. U.S. Special Operations Forces, air power and intelligence assets aided allied Afghan forces and overwhelmed the Taliban. The Taliban government was quickly overthrown and a government for the Afghans was quickly set up as the United States pursued a nation-building program. Combat, however, stretched on for over twenty years, becoming a quagmire of a Great Power attempting to fight a guerrilla war with poor anti-insurgency tactics. Success in war is one thing that, in many ways, speaks for itself. If a modern Great Power with the most advanced weaponry and powerful military in the world cannot win a war in two decades, it is clearly doing something wrong.[271]

In summer 2021, the Biden Administration announced the long-awaited full withdrawal of U.S. forces from Afghanistan. Shortly after, the Taliban launched a sudden counterattack that swept through the country with essentially no resistance from the Afghan National Security Forces. The advance was so swift it took the world by surprise, and the Taliban, supposedly driven to the edge of the abyss in the past decades of war, instead regained almost total control of the country in August 2021. The United States scrambled to evacuate as many American citizens and Afghan allies as it could, but the operation could not be completed before the Taliban closed in on Kabul. The Afghan government crumbled in a matter of days, and the ANSF folded, essentially ceasing to exist without giving any substantive resistance.[272]

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[271] Alexander Salt, "Transformation and the War in Afghanistan," *Strategic Studies Quarterly* 12, no. 1 (2018), 98–126; Mason, "The Strategic Lessons Unlearned."

[272] Kelly Atkinson, "Mission Injury: The Force After Afghanistan," *Æther: A Journal of Strategic Airpower & Spacepower* 2, no. 1 (2023): 73–83; Chayanika Saxena, "The American Exit, the Fall of Afghanistan and the Indian Dilemmas," *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses* 13, no. 4 (2021): 8–13.

There are myriad reasons for this particular outcome, but before they are discussed, a few things must be made eminently clear. One, none of this is to disparage the courage of the service-members whose "love made undaunted the final sacrifice," to quote Sir Cecil Spring Rice. Two, regardless of one's feelings politically, ending a seemingly-endless war that likely should not have been started in the first place was the right decision. Continued American interference in Afghanistan would have only prolonged the problem. Conclusively defeating the Taliban required one of three things, a competent Afghan military that is not corrupt, a dramatic change in U.S. strategy, or an indefinite American occupation. A change in strategy was blown when the United States alienated swathes of the Afghan populace: already a difficult prospect given that the U.S. invaded and locals generally do not feel positively towards an occupying force. A competent Afghan military is something the U.S. utterly failed to build in the aftermath of the invasion, and instead of introducing reforms, essentially ignored the problem. An indefinite occupation would have been untenable both economically and on the front of the *Will* of the American people. Afghanistan was an initial military victory, but an utter failure of policy.[273]

Moreover, what we see in the U.S.-Afghanistan conflict is a severe underestimation of the defender's *Will*. The conventional war was over quickly, with the Taliban regime collapsing in a matter of weeks. Yet, the war ground on for twenty-years with little American success at stamping out the last of Taliban resistance. The *Will* of the Taliban never broke, and the moment the U.S. declared it was pulling out of the country,

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[273] Mason, "The Strategic Lessons Unlearned."

they launched a counterattack that seized all but two of the nation's regional capitals and quickly overran Kabul. It was made eminently clear that the Taliban had not been defeated at all, and were simply waiting for the right moment. They knew they could not overcome the United States, so they bided their time until they knew that they would have to face only the incompetent Afghan National Security Forces instead of the U.S. Military. This conflict is probably one of the most extraordinary examples of *Will* keeping a movement alive long after the conventional war had unquestionably been lost. Regardless of one's opinion on the Taliban, one must acknowledge the suddenness and skill with which they reconquered Afghanistan. It proves the effectiveness of a long-term asymmetric war, and raises questions about what state of affairs should arise if the forces of Vladimir Putin ever claim victory in Ukraine.

On February 25, 2022, Vladimir Putin sent his armed forces storming across the borders of Ukraine in what he termed a "special military operation" with the intent of "denazifying" the smaller country. Many people, this writer included, assumed that the war would be over in a week, as Russia seemed to be the far more powerful of the two. This view was quickly proven wrong, as the Russian advance toward Kiev was destroyed, and the Ukrainians would go on to retake swaths of territory. This included Kherson, the only regional capital that Russia had been able to seize. The early direction of this conflict, and its current trajectory, serve as proof that Clausewitz's theories remain

pertinent to this day, and that the trend of the defender having the upper hand is likely to continue well into the future.[274]

Now, as has become standard, the question of who started this war must be answered before anything can be discussed. There are two main school of thought relating to this, one primarily in the West, the other trumpeted by Putin to win over allies. The latter view asserts that the legitimate Ukrainian government was overthrown by revolution in 2014, replacing it with a regime of supposed neo-Nazis. Never mind that this government is no longer in power, and the Ukrainians elected someone else entirely. The ousted government was, to no one's surprise, pro-Kremlin, making Putin's displeasure at the revolution very clear. Putin asserts that this new Ukraine is a tangible threat to the security of Russia. The Western view is that Putin's invasion is a war of aggression and totally illegal, which is the interpretation this author believes the most reasonable. There is a credible argument for Putin's concern at the growing closeness between Ukraine and NATO if one is worried about global power projection and the game between the Great Powers. Which Putin, of course, is. From an objective perspective, however, Ukraine cannot be an actual existential threat to Russia, and NATO is not going to pick a fight. Thus, it is easy to see that Putin in this case is unequivocally the aggressor.[275]

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[274] Anton Troianovski and Neil MacFarquhar, "Putin Announces Start to 'Military Operation' Against Ukraine," *New York Times*, February 23, 2022, accessed March 11, 2023, https://www.nytimes.com/2022/02/23/world/europe/ukraine-russia-invasion.html; Carol Landry, "Russia Orders a Retreat from Kherson," *New York Times*, November 9, 2022, accessed March 11, 2023, https://www.nytimes.com/2022/11/09/briefing/russia-ukraine-war-kherson.html;

[275] Vladimir Putin, "Speech on Ukraine, Feb 24 2022," President of Russia, Moscow: February 24, 2022, accessed March 18, 2023, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67843.

The war began on February 25, 2022, when Vladimir Putin deployed his military in a multi-pronged attack across the borders of Ukraine. Several quick thrusts speared into the country from troops massed in Occupied Crimea, Russia and Belarus, quickly making gains as they advanced deeper into Ukraine. Smaller detachments separate from the main force began to spread out, seizing roads and junctions. This strategy was intended to throw the Ukrainian military into confusion, as well as encircle large parts of the defensing forces. Had this been successful, it very likely would have resulted in either the surrender or destruction of a significant portion of the Ukrainian armed forces. Moltke used a similar strategy in 1870-1871, and the results of that particular war and the efficacy of Moltke's actions have already been covered in detail. These initial Russian advances eventually resulted in the capture of the regional capital of Kherson, as well as the Ukrainian oblasts that border Russia, before slowing. The northern arm of the invasion, a 60km long column of troops and armor intended to seize Kyiv, curiously ground to a halt before reaching its primary objective. In this case, Putin was attempting to launch a *blitzkrieg*. He wanted to seize territory in the east, depose President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, cause the Ukrainian military to collapse and end the war before the West could respond. This, of course, didn't happen.[276]

Seeing an opportunity, the Ukrainians struck at the northern arm of the Russian invasion, stalled badly miles outside of Kyiv. With the Russians unable to move due to

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[276] Koffman and Evans, "Interpreting the First Few Days of the Russo-Ukrainian War;" Moltke, *Moltke on the Art of War*, 52-68, 129-130, and elsewhere; Michael Schwirtz and Richard Pérez-Peña, "First Ukrainian City Falls as Russia Strikes More Civilian Targets," *New York Times*, March 2, 2022, accessed March 16, 2023, https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/02/world/europe/kherson-ukraine-russia.html; David Vergun, "Russian Troops Bogged Down in Face of Stiff Ukraine Resistance, Says DOD Official," *DOD News*, March 16, 2022, accessed March 16, 2023, https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/2969010/russian-troops-bogged-down-in-face-of-stiff-ukraine-resistance-says-dod-official/.

logistical problems, the Ukrainians took advantage of the moment and counterattacked, dealing heavy blows to the unwieldy formation which eventually broke up and retreated, having utterly failed to complete its mission. The attempts at encirclement in the east, likewise, largely failed, resulting in much of the Ukrainian military surviving the initial attacks and preserving them for future combat. This would give Ukraine the ability to institute a Strategic Defense, in which the first few weeks or months of the campaign are the most crucial. Should the defender survive past the initial offensive with both *Means* and *Will*, then the likelihood of their defense succeeding grows much higher. Since that point, the Russians have been driven out of the north of the country, a large part of the east, and have lost control of Kherson. That the potential collapse of the Ukrainian military did not occur speaks volumes about their *Will* to resist, and suggests that Russia is in for a long and protracted war should a peace settlement not be reached. Moreover, Ukraine retains the advantage of interior lines, easing any strain on their logistics against that of the Russians, an issue that will be discussed in more depth shortly. Thus, we see that the use of a Strategic Defense on the part of Ukraine is working to keep them alive, again proving the effectiveness of the tactic.[277]

Interestingly, due to his lack of success, Putin has been employing a secondary tactic that has been in the Russian playbook for over a century: mass bombardment, specifically of civilians, primarily via missiles fired from within Russia. Strategic bombing, the term used to describe this type of strategy, has been a tactic since the advent

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[277] Koffman and Evans, "Interpreting the First Few Days of the Russo-Ukrainian War;" Michael Koffman and Ryan Evans, "Ukraine's Military Advantage and Russia's Stark Choices," April 27, 2022, *In War on the Rocks*, podcast, accessed March 12, 2023, https://warontherocks.com/2022/04/ukraines-military-advantage-and-russias-stark-choices/; Craig, *Germany*, 718-719; Manchester, *The Arms of Krupp*, 129-137; Clausewitz, *On War*, 318.

of air power in the First World War. It was heavily emphasized in the Second World War, and while Putin is not using planes to deliver warheads, the tactics are one and the same. Just as in both World Wars, Putin is using this as a weapon of *Will*; by targeting Ukrainian civilians, he hopes to break the country's *Will* to fight. This is an enormous waste of military resources. Strategic bombing proved to be utterly ineffective in past wars. It was shocking in the First World War, as the British public had not seen anything like it, but it had no demonstrable effect on the front. In the Second World War, the efforts of neither the *Luftwaffe* nor the Royal Air Force did anything to shorten the conflict: in actuality they seemed to galvanize resistance. The final, damning indictment of the tactic is in Vietnam. As has been stated, more bombs were dropped on Vietnam than during the entire course of World War Two, and the Vietnamese still drove the United States out.[278]

It is thus somewhat baffling as to why Russia is still using this tactic. It is waste of military resources and has offered no gains except to increase the abject suffering of the Ukrainian people. Moreover, the deliberate targeting of civilians is a war crime under the Geneva Conventions. The Fourth Geneva Convention outright made it illegal to "[take] any measure of such a character as to cause the physical suffering or extermination of protected persons in their hands."[279] "Protected Persons" in this case is defined as civilians or soldiers who have surrendered and can no longer be considered active

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[278] Kostan Nechyporenko, Olga Voitovych, Victoria Butenko and Lianne Kolirin, "Russian missiles bombard cities across Ukraine, hitting power and water infrastructure," *CNN*, October 31, 2022, accessed March 19, 2023, https://www.cnn.com/2022/10/31/europe/russian-missile-strikes-ukraine-intl/index.html; Jeffrey W. Legro, "Strategic Bombing," In *Cooperation under Fire: Anglo-German Restraint during World War II* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995) 94-143; Smith, "The Strategic Bombing Debate."

[279] International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), *Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War (Fourth Geneva Convention)*, 12 August, 1949, 75 UNTS 287, accessed March 15, 2023, https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b36d2.html, art. 32.

combatants.[280] A 1997 amendment to the original 1949 agreement, titled Protocol I, states that "the Parties to the conflict shall at all times distinguish between the civilian population and combatants and between civilian objects and military objectives and accordingly shall direct their operations only against military objectives."[281] This article makes it eminently cleat that to target civilians or civilian infrastructure is a war crime. Period. It likewise declares that deliberately indiscriminate attacks are not acceptable, especially those in direct proximity to civilians and non-military infrastructure.[282] This makes strategic bombing as a tactic outright illegal: "an attack by bombardment by any methods or means which treats as a single military objective a number of clearly separated and distinct military objectives located in an town, city, village or other area containing a similar concentration of civilians or civilian objects."[283] As of now, Russia is a signatory, and as they have not been removed from ICRCs list it suggests they are still party to it; though, this is now somewhat academic as Putin has already been declared a war criminal.[284]

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[280] ICRC, *Fourth Geneva Convention*, 1-2: art. 3.

[281] Cross (ICRC). *Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and Realating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol I), of 8 June* 1977, 8 June, 1977, accessed Match 15, 2023, https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/atrocity-crimes/Doc.34_AP-I-EN.pdf, 256: art. 48.

[282] ICRC, *Protocol I*, 256-257: art. 51.

[283] ICRC, *Protocol I*, 256: art. 51.

[284] International Committee of the Red Cross, *Treaties, States Parties and Commentaries - States Parties - Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and Relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflict (Protocol I), 8 June, 1997*, accessed March 15, 2023, https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/ihl-treaties/api-1977/state-parties; International Criminal Court, "Situation in Ukraine: ICC judges issue arrest warrants against Vladimir Vladimirovitch Putin and Maria Alekseyevna Lvova-Belova," *International Criminal Court*, March 17, 2023, accessed March 19, 2023, https://www.icc-cpi.int/news/situation-ukraine-icc-judges-issue-arrest-warrants-against-vladimir-vladimirovich-putin-and.

The power of the Geneva Conventions to limit the use of destructive, illegal strategies in war is limited at best. Clausewitz writes that "the use of force [is] theoretically without limits," his point being that the ability to limit the effects of war lies solely with the national characters of the belligerents.[285] In other words, war cannot be restrained during a conflict by international law: those involved will fight however, going as far as they believe necessary in order to achieve victory. Moltke agrees: "thus, not much weight should be attached to international agreements. What third power will resort to arms solely because one or the other of two belligerents has violated the laws of war? There is no earthly tribunal."[286] There have been loud and frequent exclamations of international outrage over Putin's attacks on civilians, but no other state has taken up arms to punish him: supplying weapons in this case does not count. There are multiple reasons, foremost the prevention of a global nuclear war, but that does not change the fact that Moltke is correct. This is not to say that other nations have not gotten involved, but there have been no direct, military actions taken by the international community or the UN to halt Putin's attacks on civilians.

So why has Putin adopted this strategy? Militarily it is a waste, as strategic bombing does not work, and as a war-crime it will only further alienate the international community. There are only two reasons that can be seen as possible rationale for the continuance of this strategy. First, Putin understands the drawbacks of the tactic, but punishing Ukrainian civilians for their resistance is something that he values more than

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[285] Clausewitz, *On War*, 3-4.

[286] Moltke, *Moltke on the Art of War*, 23.

tactical success. Second, he still, genuinely, believes that strategic bombing is useful for the campaign. The latter is more believable, seeing as how Putin opened his invasion with missile strikes not only on military targets, but also civilian ones.[287] He is trying to wear down the *Will* of the Ukrainians, to make their lives so difficult that surrender seems the better option. Of course, this directly shows that Putin hasn't learned from history, as strategic bombing has failed to impact *Will* every time it has been used. However, what can be seen is that Putin's liberal use of artillery and other long-range weapons connects to historical Soviet Military thought, which he has fully embraced.

The primary offensive style of the Soviets was to use as much infantry, armor and artillery as possible as possible in a coordinated assault to rapidly overcome their enemy: the doctrine of combined arms.[288] Weapons were simply tools with a specific purpose in their eyes, and all tools have a use. This view created a worrying "tendency to discuss nuclear weapons as a method of waging warfare, almost indistinguishable from conventional weaponry," something Putin has inherited.[289] The Soviets also kept up a strong, almost Moltkeian, emphasis on maneuver and surprise, spelling from strategic lessons they learned in the Second World War.[290] Putin has opened his war in a textbook Soviet manner, by using surprise and combined arms to rapidly assault Ukrainian

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[287] Natalia Zinets, and Alexsandar Vasovic, "Missiles rain down around Ukraine," *Reuters,* February 24, 2022, accessed March 17, 2023, https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/putin-orders-military-operations-ukraine-demands-kyiv-forces-surrender-2022-02-24/.

[288] Condoleezza Rice, "The Making of Soviet Strategy," in *Makers of Modern Strategy*, ed. Peter Paret, 648-676 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 674.

[289] Rice, "The Making of Soviet Strategy," 674; Helene Cooper, Julian E. Barned and Eric Schmitt, "Russian Military Leaders Discussed Use of Nuclear Weapons, U.S. Officials Say," *New York Times,* November 2, 2022, accessed March 18, 2023, https://www.nytimes.com/2022/11/02/us/politics/russia-ukraine-nuclear-weapons.html.

[290] Rice, "The Making of Soviet Strategy," 674.

positions in an attempt to overwhelm them. He gambled on a war of maneuver in the Soviet style, and largely failed.

The Ukrainian strategy has thus far been paying off. Not only have they retaken significant amounts of territory, but they have survived the winter. By the end of autumn, 2022, Russia launched a long-awaited, major offensive in the East of the country, raising fears that the momentum of the war was about to swing in their favor. The Ukrainians, however, held. The fighting over the winter months proved to be the bloodiest and most vicious of the war up to this point, and the Russians made no significant gains whatsoever. At the end of March, 2023, Ukraine successfully used long-range Western weapons to knock out power in occupied Melitopol. Rumors of a Ukrainian counterattack have been rising, and now would be the perfect time to do it.[291]

Little is more demoralizing for an army than watching your divisions march to their deaths against the guns of an enemy with little to show for it, and such is precisely the result of Russia's winter attack. This serves as a further blow to Russian military and civilian morale, a factor already difficult for an attacker to maintain. Ukraine thus holds the upper hand in *Will*, both on and off the battlefield, and it seems as though the question of *Means* may be swinging around to them as well. The Russian economy, buoyed by extreme measures during the early days of the war, seems finally to be feeling the weight of Western sanctions. Russia's GDP has fallen, inflation is rising, and trade in goods and services is declining significantly. There are not signs, necessarily, of economic collapse,

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[291] Olena Harmash, "Ukraine hits Russian-held city deep behind front as talk of counteroffensive grows," Reuters, March 29, 2023, accessed March 30, 2023, https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/russian-forces-making-no-headway-bakhmut-avdiivka-ukraine-says-2023-03-28/.

but all wars cost money and this economic issue could amount to a serious shift in the war when taken in conjunction with another problem; thanks to Putin's strategic bombing, Russia's weapon stockpiles are running out. There are reports that Russian infantry have been sent to die, unsupported, against Ukrainian positions armed with rifles and entrenching tools. Russian cruise missiles and artillery munitions seem to be dwindling, and Ukraine has claimed to have destroyed thousands of Russian armored vehicles. One assessment suggests that Russia will have burned through its supply of munitions by the end of spring. If a percentage of this is true, then Russia is about to run into a serious problem with *Means*. Even if Putin can keep his troops on the front line, without the weapons to fight the Ukrainians will go through them like an industrial fan though paper. The issue remains as to whether or not Putin can maintain *Means* and *Will*.[292]

The question of *Will* in the Russo-Ukrainian War is similarly quite interesting, because here we see the same problem that any attacker faces when launching an invasion. Putin has made the issue of *Will* very easy for the Ukrainians: he has declared them Neo-Nazis, against any evidence, and made evident his intent of overthrowing their democratically elected government in order to replace it with a puppet regime. This makes his threat to Ukraine existential, and thus the *Will* of the Ukrainians should be

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[292] Kim Hjelmgaard, "Russia will be out of 'military tools' by spring, Ukraine's top military spy says." *USA Today*, March 2, 2023, accessed March 17, 2023, https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2023/03/02/war-top-ukraine-spy-says-russia-out-of-military-tools/11310628002/; Joe Saballa, "Russia Running Low on Ammunition, Fighting With 'Shovels': UK Intel," *The Defense Post*, March 8, 2023, accessed March 17, 2023, https://www.thedefensepost.com/2023/03/08/russia-ammunition-shovels-intel/; Council of the European Union, "Infographic - Impact of sanctions on the Russian economy." *European Council*, March 17, 2023, accessed March 19, 2023, https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/infographics/impact-sanctions-russian-economy/.

largely unbreakable. If a county is forced into a war for its existence, the likelihood of its surrender is infinitesimal. Putin, on the other hand, needs to construct a narrative to keep his troops on the battlefield, and his people willing to support the war. Totalitarian regimes tend to have an easier time maintaining a war effort with flagging *Will*, as they have the option to employ some good, old-fashioned Iron-Fisting. Yet, there is only so much soldiers can take before they will retreat, regardless of how many political commissars are standing behind them.[293]

And constructed a narrative Putin has, a Chimaera of three primary reasons he hopes will motivate his people and armies. Firstly, he accused the Ukrainian government of committing genocide in the Donbas region. Specifically, he referenced the mass-killing of native Russian speakers. This provided a direct connection with the term he uses to describe the Ukrainian government: neo-Nazis. Such a descriptor harkens back to Russia's "Great Patriotic War" (World War Two) and gives his armies a very clear, delineated evil to fight against. Putin's accusations are particularly insidious because they are based in some historical reality. The Ukrainians suffered so badly under Stalin's regime that in the Second World War the Germans were initially welcomed as liberators, and a number of Ukrainian figures collaborated with the Nazis. There is no indication whatsoever that the current Ukrainian government is either composed of Nazis or

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[293] Putin, "Speech on Ukraine;" Vladimir Putin, "On the Historical Unity of Russia and Ukraine," President of Russia, Moscow: July 21, 2020, accessed March 18, 2023, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/66181; Vladimir Putin, "Address by the President of the Russian Federation," President of Russia, Moscow: March 18, 2014, accessed March 17, 2023, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20603; Anna Reid, "Putin's War on History: the Thousand-Year Struggle Over Ukraine" *Foreign* Affairs, May/June 2022.

committing genocide, but Putin is hoping the rhetoric will engender the same kind of zealous patriotism in his soldiers that the Red Army displayed in World War Two.[294]

Putin's war justification, secondly, harkens back to the Cold War, and Western "treachery" in the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union.[295] In conjunction with powerful rhetoric, Putin points to a pseudo-empire constructed by the United States post-dissolution, and calls out the United States for hypocrisy.[296] Again, this is particularly sinister because it is not untrue, as the United States has behaved hypocritically, simultaneously espousing support for national self-determination while, as an example, launching an invasion of Iraq.[297] This necromantic conjuring of the long-dead wraith of the USSR serves to push the narrative that Russia remains the victim of Western imperialism. Further, according to Anna Reid, journalist and Eastern-Europe specialist, a significant piece of Putin's motivation stems from his own trauma experienced during the collapse.[298] For the first time in centuries, Ukraine had been made independent from Russia, thus, "Moscow lost its west" and a significant jewel was prized from Russia's

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[294] Putin, "Speech on Ukraine;" Sergey Radchenko, "Vladimir Putin Wants to Rewrite the History of World War II," *Foreign Policy*, January 21, 2020, https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/01/21/vladimir-putin-wants-to-rewrite-the-history-of-world-war-ii/; Serhii Plokhy, *The Gates of Europe: A History of Ukraine* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2015), 256-276.

[295] Putin, "Speech on Ukraine, Feb 24 2022," 3.

[296] Putin, "Speech on Ukraine, Feb 24 2022," 1-4.

[297] Putin, "Speech on Ukraine, Feb 24 2022," 1-4.

[298] Reid, "Putin's War on History: the Thousand-Year Struggle Over Ukraine."

imperial crown.[299] Putin, with this war, thus seeks to rebuild the lost glory of the powerful nation he faithfully served before and during its dissolution.[300]

The third aspect of this tripartite Chimaera, and the most fascinating, is Putin's deployment of Imperial Russian history to validate his territorial claims. Ukraine has been a part of Russia hundreds of years, only separating, as mentioned, after the 1991 dissolution of the Soviet Union. Both nations have ties to the Ancient Rus and the invasion of Batu Khan, but the crux of their cultural disagreement stems from a divergent over where the center of Rus civilization fled. Russia believes that the Rus fled to Moscow, leading to the creation of Russia. Ukraine maintains that the Rus stayed in Kyiv, and that the Muscovite tradition that developed in their neighbor is something totally different. This difference helps to explain how the Ukrainians view themselves as separate from the Russians, as well as demonstrate the Russian belief that Ukraine is fundamentally Russian. The term "Ukrainian" also originally referred to imperial border guards, further lending weight to Putin's assertions. It is a particularly insidious argument because Putin is not entirely wrong. Anna Reid, however puts it best: "saying that Ukraine doesn't really exist is as absurd as saying that Ireland doesn't exist because it was long under British rule, or that Norwegians are really Swedes." This last point is intended to convince the Russian people and the world that Putin is not trying to conquer a sovereign state, but instead is trying to reunify a country that was torn apart by an imperialist West. He is trying to paint himself as a liberator and a unifier, as well as instill

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[299] Reid, "Putin's War on History: the Thousand-Year Struggle Over Ukraine."

[300] Fiona Hill and Clifford G. Gaddy, *Mr. Putin: Operative in the Kremlin* (Washington, DC, Brookings Institution, 2013), 200-202, 264-265.

in Russians the idea that they have been stolen from, thus mobilizing their anger. It is a tried and true tactic used by dictators when making territorial claims, and most saw through it immediately.[301]

Thus, we have a situation where a modern "Great Power" has invaded its smaller neighbor and apparently run head first into a wall. As is the case with any blitz, if the initial thrust can be staved off, the chances of the defender become much stronger. In all of the exceptions to the rule of "the defender usually wins" that have been discussed in this thesis, the attackers quickly overpowered their armed forces. It was the hallmark of Napoleon: face his enemies in the field and destroy them before the (generally) superior numbers of the Coalition could tip the scales. Japan crippled Russia's navy with stunning alacrity before sweeping though Korea. The Nazis outmaneuvered and surrounded the Anglo-French armies in World War Two and would have comprehensively destroyed them if not for the Miracle at Dunkirk. In 2022, Russia needed a quick victory over Ukraine, otherwise it would be dragged into an extended conflict. Once that happens, attrition of *Means* and *Will* becomes a major factor.

Russia has no chance at matching Ukraine in regard to *Will*. Putin can bluster all he wants about the Western threat, but it is not Russia that is being invaded. The Ukrainians are facing a blatantly, *unapologetically*, existential threat that is waging a particularly apocalyptic form of war. There is no way Putin's Chimaera of propaganda could ever motivate the Russian people as significantly as the destruction of their very

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[301] Putin, "On the Historical Unity of Russia and Ukraine;" Putin, "Address by the President of the Russian Federation;" Plokhy, *The Gates of Europe*; Reid, "Putin's War on History: the Thousand-Year Struggle Over Ukraine."

country could motivate the Ukrainians. All Putin can do is hope to keep his people's *Will* from collapsing and high enough to keep them fighting Ukraine rather than his government. Putin must contest the war with *Means*, and that is already proving to be an issue. By the time Russian troops crossed the Ukrainian border, Putin's military claimed to have over one-million soldiers available for deployment, in addition to substantial advantages over Ukraine in materiel and fighting vehicles.[302] This apparent disparity, taken in conjunction with international outrage, led to military aid rapidly pouring into Ukraine from foreign powers such as the United States and the nations of Europe.[303] As early as August 2022, over ninety billion euros in aid had been sent to Ukraine to help fight the war, as well as hundreds of armored vehicles, tens of thousands of man-portable anti-air/armor missile systems, hundreds of tanks, combat drones, and some aircraft.[304] The deliveries of aid have only been increasing since, with the Congress of the United States passing a 13.7 billion dollar package in September; this trend is unlikely to change.[305] In addition to this, Russia has taken substantial losses, with many thousands of armored fighting vehicles captured or destroyed, and over 100,000 soldiers wounded or

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[302] Miodrag Soric, "Russia's Army: An overestimated power," *Deutsche Welle,* September 29, 2022, accessed March 20, 2023, https://www.dw.com/en/russias-army-an-overestimated-power-in-the-war-against-ukraine/a-63264441.

[303] Steven Pifer, "The Russia-Ukraine War and its Ramifications for Russia," *Brookings,* December 8, 2022, accessed March 21, 2023, https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-russia-ukraine-war-and-its-ramifications-for-russia/; Arianna Antezza et al., "The Ukraine Support Tracker: Which Countries Support Ukraine and How?" (working paper, Kiel Institute for the World Economy, Kiel, Germany, no. 2218, August 2022, accessed March 21, 2023, https://www.ifw-kiel.de/fileadmin/Dateiverwaltung/IfW-Publications/-ifw/Kiel_Working_Paper/2022/KWP_2218_Which_countries_help_Ukraine_and_how_/KWP_2218_Version5.pdf).

[304] Antezza et al., "The Ukraine Support Tracker," 1-28.

[305] Mark F. Cancian, "Aid to Ukraine Explianed in Six Charts," *Center for Strategic & International Studies*, November 18, 2022, accessed March 21, 2023, https://www.csis.org/analysis/aid-ukraine-explained-six-charts.

killed.[306] These estimates are acknowledged to be potentially low, and Russia's losses in actuality could be substantially higher. The Russian military is starting to rely on old technology, such as tanks fifty-years out-of-date, along with purchases of artillery shells from North Korea and drones from Iran, which are already starting to run out.[307]

As it stands, Russia's rising economic problems both domestically and internationally put it in a very difficult position. Their purchasing power will continue to fall, making their ability to replenish their stocks of munitions difficult. Ukraine, on the other hand, has access to the vast arsenals of the West, and it is likely such access will not end any time soon. Russia is also going to run into manpower problems. Putin's military seems increasingly reliant on a mercenary company known as the "Wagner Group," which is essentially a penal legion based on the number of convicts they recruit into their ranks in exchange for reduced sentences.[308] Conscript armies tend to perform worse than volunteer or professional ones, and convicts tend to perform worse than conscripts. One can see where this is headed. Worse yet, hundreds of thousands of conscription age men are fleeing Russia to avoid fighting in Ukraine.[309] The estimate in October of 2022 was that 700,000 young men had left the country to avoid the draft, and this number has likely

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[306] Pifer, "The Russia-Ukraine War and its Ramifications for Russia."

[307] Pifer, "The Russia-Ukraine War and its Ramifications for Russia;" Saballa, "Russia Running Low on Ammunition;" Hjelmgaard, "Russia will be out of 'military tools' by spring."

[308] Erin Banco, "U.S. officials: Russia is increasingly relying on Wagner in Ukraine," *Politico*, December 22, 2022, accessed March 20, 2023, https://www.politico.com/news/2022/12/22/russia-wagner-ukraine-prisoners-00075276.

[309] Reuters, "Factbox: Where have Russians been fleeing to since conscription began?" *Reuters*, October 6, 2022, accessed March 20, 2023, https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/where-have-russians-been-fleeing-since-mobilisation-began-2022-10-06/.

risen in recent months.[310] This is not a problem Ukraine will have: people tend to fight to the death to defend their homes.

In short, Putin has his work cut out for him. He is facing a deficit in *Will*, and it looks like his *Means* are dwindling quickly. All of this, of course, assumes two things: first, that some unforeseen variable does not suddenly crop up and change everything, which can happen in war; and second: that Putin does not deploy his nuclear arsenal. In the case of the former, there is no way to predict the unpredictable. As to the latter, if Putin uses nukes the world is over; none of this will matter to the ashes of eight billon souls, leaving the argument academic and to hiss with the wind through the shattered ruins of humanity. If the conflict continues on the track that it is, then Putin's likelihood of victory shrinks with every Russian soldier killed and every shell fired. It is just a matter of time to see whether or not this conflict will adhere to the rule or be an exception. With *Time* being on the side of the defender, Putin is rapidly running out of his.

[310] Reuters, "Factbox: Where have Russians been fleeing to since conscription began?"

Chapter Six: Conclusion

And so we reach the end of the question. The rule of a defender's victory is defined by the issues of *Means* and *Will*, as moderated by the effects of *Time* and *Distance*. Napoleon's successes were always so stunning for the reason that he had the *Means* to claim a quick victory and refused to allow a war to become protracted. He naturally understood the art of war, allowing him to take advantage of these factors in conjunction with his strategic and tactical *Genius* to become the greatest military mind of his age. Of course, his successes could only go on for so long. Europe waited and watched, learning from their constant defeats and few victories. Eventually, a commander would rise who could take Napoleon's measure and turn his strength into weakness. Wellington began the process in Spain, leading to the Russians embracing the Strategic Defense and handing Napoleon his first true defeat since his coronation. The Coalition would complete this trend first in 1813, then finally in 1815 when Wellington and Blücher brought Napoleon down for the final time at Waterloo.

Helmuth von Moltke would use the concept of the Strategic Defense to launch a shattering offensive in 1870-71. Noticing a crippling weakness in the French even before the fighting began, Moltke would shatter French power before they could fully ready themselves. *Means* shone brightly in the Franco-Prussian War, as the discrepancies between Prussian and French technology seriously impacted the performance of both armies. *Will* played a substantial role as well. Despite the Prussians launching an

offensive first, the political situation made the French fully the aggressors and instigators of the conflict, allowing the Prussian leadership to present the war as one of survival.

The Russo-Japanese War proves the exception to the rule, that under the right circumstances an attacker can, and will, triumph. If *Will* is at least even between the two, *Distance* falls in favor of the attacker, and the problem of *Time* is mitigated through swift action, then the defining factor becomes *Means*. In the case of this war, the Japanese had the superior navy and were dramatically underestimated by their Russian enemy. This underestimation and advantage in quality allowed the Japanese to gain the initial upper hand, and *Distance* did the rest. The local nature of the war allowed the Japanese to reinforce their armies and navy long before the Russian could do the same, proving the axiom that a defender can be overpowered before any defensive strategy can wear down the attacker.

World War Two manages to prove the rule and its exceptions at the same time. Nazi Germany, by taking advantage of speed and power, were able to overwhelm France and Britain before the Allies were able to implement a Strategic Defense, driving them into the English Channel. The Nazi victory would have been essentially complete had the Miracle at Dunkirk not occurred. Operation Barbarossa proved to be a functional repeat of Napoleon's 1812 Campaign. While the details diverge, as the Russians were taken completely off-guard, the size of Russia allowed them to fall back before the Nazi tide and learn lessons that were lost in the Revolution and Stalin's Purges. They forced the Nazis into over-extension, and once in a sufficiently weak position, struck back. In France, the Nazis won a crushing victory over the relatively short distances that Central

Europe provides, winning before the French could develop a proper Strategic Defense and grind the assault to a halt. Such a swift conclusion was nearly impossible in Russia, and so the *Will* of the Russian people to resist an obviously existential threat came into play. World War II is also demonstrable proof of simple truth of the Iron Calculus: the Germans fought until the end, their *Will* unbroken, but once you lose the *Means* to fight, your ability to effectively resist collapses.

The Vietnam War, one of the greatest upsets of modern military history serves the same purpose. With the United States in the position as aggressor, one can understand the motivations of the recently decolonized North Vietnamese who saw only a new oppressor in the Americans. This was the pinnacle of uneven warfare, as the resources and manpower of the United States vastly exceeded that of Vietnam, and if such were the only measures important to victory, this conflict should have been over in a month. Instead, what occurred was a perfect example of the power of *Will* over combatants. North Vietnam was able to prevent the vast *Means* of the United States from wearing them down, thus allowing every week the war dragged on, and every U.S. Soldier sent home in a flag-draped coffin, to do their work for them. Then, seeing a glaring weakness, launched the Tet Offensive and made it clear to the American people that the war was likely unwinnable. It did not take long for the U.S. to withdraw from Saigon in chaos, even as the North Vietnamese troops were entering the city.

The Gulf War is notable in that it is comparatively short in both major operational phases. The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait was swift and crushing, and the Coalition counterattack was just as overwhelming and launched with similar alacrity. Like the

Russo-Japanese War, neither major combatant was under an existential threat. Instead, Saddam's excuse was one of territorial right, whereas the Coalition deployed to return to the independence of the Kuwaitis. *Will* was mostly even, though somewhat tilted toward the Coalition ("freedom" is a powerful motivator when those fighting for it believe), *Distance* was not a question as the Coalition used Saudi Arabia as their base of operations, *Time* wasn't yet an issue, thus the question fell to *Means*. There no contest could exist, as a significant part of the world stood united against a single nation.

The Afghanistan War, like the Gulf War, was apparently over quickly. The Taliban simply could not stand against the might of the American military and their regime fell apart in a matter of months. Yet, *Will*, again, made the difference. The Taliban held on with an insurgent Strategic Defense through two decades of conflict as the *Will* of the American people slowly turned against a war with no visible gains, regular casualties and no sign of ending. It took only a moment for the U.S. withdrawal to be announced, and in that moment a counterattack was launched. The Afghan government collapsed as their military failed to put up any fight, and the U.S. withdrew in a chaos reminiscent of their flight from Saigon a half-century before.

So, these examples serve as evidence that if a defender can match or hold against an attacker's *Means*, their own advantage in *Will* should carry the war. These examples show that *Time* is on the side of the defender, and a long war leads to problems in *Will* for the attacker. A defender in modern conflict has their very existence as reason to fight, but the longer a war goes on the more difficult it becomes for an attacker to justify it. *Distance* proves a problem with logistics, as the farther one is from the front the more

difficulty one will have deploying reinforcements to counter the enemy. A properly executed Strategic Defense forces the attacker to lengthen their supply lines, putting the *Distance* advantage in the hands of the defender, and allows the defender to play for *Time*, mitigating any potential disadvantage in *Means*. Thus, the defender, so long as they are not overpowered in the first weeks or months of the war, is likely to be the one to see victory.

Where does this leave Ukraine? Their resistance to an unprovoked invasion has been nothing short of heroic, and their *Will* to resist is cast of iron. Putin, contrariwise, has been forced to construct a chimaera of a justification, making his reasons for this war a rocky foundation at best. Thanks to Western aid, the issue of *Means* seems to be relatively equal, though that might change if the rumors of Russian supply shortages are true. *Distance* has already worked in Ukraine's favor, as their initial retreats before Russian offensives has led to the destruction of the northern arm of Moscow's assault, and the liberation of an enormous amount of territory. The Ukrainian Strategic Defense has caused the Russian military machine to stall, leaving open the potential for counterattacks that have already seen success. The question of *Time* is still ongoing, as it has been just a little over a year since the war began, but if history is any indicator, *Time* is on Ukraine's side.

In the end, the never-ending march of technology forces changes in tactics and strategy. The battlefield must change with the ages. Yet, there are universal truths that can been seen throughout the history of human conflict. The trend of history shows us that the words of theoreticians nearly two-centuries dead touched on a timeless wisdom that can

still teach us about the workings of war. That Carl von Clausewitz can help to explain the successes and failures of both sides in a war two-hundred years after the end of Napoleon goes to prove this fact indisputably, and it shows that the study of war is necessary to understand current events. To fail to acknowledge the darkness in our past, to dismiss it as a study of violence for the sake of violence, is to render one's self willfully blind to an intrinsic part of humanity. To work against something, one must understand it. Otherwise one will be doomed to repeat the mistakes of the past, and war is something that will never disappear from our character until we stand united under a single flag. And perhaps not even then. Societies, cultures, civilizations, governments and nations change, rising and falling with the fickle whims of humanity, but conflict remains one of the sole constants in the human character. How we fight shifts as we do, like patterns in sand with the tides. Impermanent, transient, ephemeral. But the heart, the truth, of war? That never changes.

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