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SOME PRINCIPLES OF MARITIME STRATEGY

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INTRODUCTION

The Theoretical Study of War —Its Use and Limitations

At first sight nothing can appear more unpractical, less promising of useful result, than to approach the study of war with a theory. There seems indeed to be something essentially antagonistic between the habit of mind that seeks theoretical guidance and that which makes for the successful conduct of war. The conduct of war is so much a question of personality, of character, of common-sense, of rapid decision upon complex and ever-shifting factors, and those factors themselves are so varied, so intangible, so dependent upon unstable moral and physical conditions, that it seems incapable of being reduced to anything like true scientific analysis. At the bare idea of a theory or "science" of war the mind recurs uneasily to well-known cases

where highly "scientific" officers failed as leaders. Yet, on the other hand, no one will deny that since the great theorists of the early nineteenth century attempted to produce a reasoned theory of war, its planning and conduct have acquired a method, a precision, and a certainty of grasp which were unknown before. Still less will any one deny the value which the shrewdest and most successful leaders in war have placed upon the work of the classical strategical writers.

The truth is that the mistrust of theory arises from a misconception of what it is that theory claims to do. It does not pretend to give the power of conduct in the field; it claims no more than to increase the effective power of conduct. Its main practical value is that it can assist a capable man to acquire a broad outlook whereby he may be the surer his plan shall cover all the ground, and whereby he may with greater rapidity and certainty seize all the factors of a sudden situation. The greatest of the theorists himself puts the matter quite frankly. Of theoretical study he says, "It should educate the mind of the man who is to lead in war, or rather guide him to self-education, but it should not accompany him on the field of battle."

Its practical utility, however, is not by any means confined to its effects upon the powers of a leader. It is not enough that a leader should have the ability to decide rightly; his subordinates must seize at once the full meaning of his decision and be able to express it with certainty in well-adjusted action. For this every man concerned must have been trained to think in the same

plane; the chief's order must awake in every brain the same process of thought; his words must have the same meaning for all. If a theory of tactics had existed in 1780, and if Captain Carkett had had a sound training in such a theory, he could not possibly have misunderstood Rodney's signal. As it was, the real intention of the signal was obscure, and Rodney's neglect to explain the tactical device it indicated robbed his country of a victory at an hour of the direst need. There had been no previous theoretical training to supply the omission, and Rodney's fine conception was unintelligible to anybody but himself.

Nor is it only for the sake of mental solidarity between a chief and his subordinates that theory is indispensable. It is of still higher value for producing a similar solidarity between him and his superiors at the Council table at home. How often have officers dumbly acquiesced in ill-advised operations simply for lack of the mental power and verbal apparatus to convince an impatient Minister where the errors of his plan lay? How often, moreover, have statesmen and officers, even in the most harmonious conference, been unable to decide on a coherent plan of war from inability to analyse scientifically the situation they had to face, and to recognise the general character of the struggle in which they were about to engage. That the true nature of a war should be realised by contemporaries as clearly as it comes to be seen afterwards in the fuller light of history is seldom to be expected. At close range accidental factors will force themselves into undue prominence and tend to obscure the true horizon.

Such error can scarcely ever be eliminated, but by theoretical study we can reduce it, nor by any other means can we hope to approach the clearness of vision with which posterity will read our mistakes. Theory is, in fact, a question of education and deliberation, and not of execution at all. That depends on the combination of intangible human qualities which we call executive ability.

This, then, is all the great authorities ever claimed for theory, but to this claim the chief of them at least, after years of active service on the Staff, attached the highest importance. "In actual operations," he wrote in one of his latest memoranda, "men are guided solely by their judgment, and it will hit the mark more or less accurately according as they possess more or less genius. This is the way all great generals have acted.... Thus it will always be in action, and so far judgment will suffice. But when it is a question not of taking action yourself, but of convincing others at the Council table, then everything depends on clear conceptions and the exposition of the inherent relations of things. So little progress has been made in this respect that most deliberations are merely verbal contentions which rest on no firm foundation, and end either in every one retaining his own opinion, or in a compromise from considerations of mutual respect—a middle course of no actual value."[1]

The writer's experience of such discussions was rich and at

[1] Clausewitz, *On War*, p. ix. The references are to Colonel Graham's translation of the third German edition, but his wording is not always followed exactly.

first hand. Clear conceptions of the ideas and factors involved in a war problem, and a definite exposition of the relations between them, were in his eyes the remedy for loose and purposeless discussion; and such conceptions and expositions are all we mean by the theory or the science of war. It is a process by which we co-ordinate our ideas, define the meaning of the words we use, grasp the difference between essential and unessential factors, and fix and expose the fundamental data on which every one is agreed. In this way we prepare the apparatus of practical discussion; we secure the means of arranging the factors in manageable shape, and of deducing from them with precision and rapidity a practical course of action. Without such an apparatus no two men can even think on the same line; much less can they ever hope to detach the real point of difference that divides them and isolate it for quiet solution.

In our own case this view of the value of strategical theory has a special significance, and one far wider than its continental enunciators contemplated. For a world-wide maritime Empire the successful conduct of war will often turn not only on the decisions of the Council chamber at home, but on the outcome of conferences in all parts of the world between squadronal commanders and the local authorities, both civil and military, and even between commanders-in-chief of adjacent stations. In time of war or of preparation for war, in which the Empire is concerned, arrangements must always be based to an exceptional degree on the mutual relation of naval, military, and political

considerations. The line of mean efficiency, though indicated from home, must be worked out locally, and worked out on factors of which no one service is master. Conference is always necessary, and for conference to succeed there must be a common vehicle of expression and a common plane of thought. It is for this essential preparation that theoretical study alone can provide; and herein lies its practical value for all who aspire to the higher responsibilities of the Imperial service.

So great indeed is the value of abstract strategical study from this point of view, that it is necessary to guard ourselves against over-valuation. So far from claiming for their so-called science more than the possibilities we have indicated, the classical strategists insist again and again on the danger of seeking from it what it cannot give. They even repudiate the very name of "Science." They prefer the older term "Art." They will permit no laws or rules. Such laws, they say, can only mislead in practice, for the friction to which they are subject from the incalculable human factors alone is such that the friction is stronger than the law. It is an old adage of lawyers that nothing is so misleading as a legal maxim, but a strategical maxim is undoubtedly and in every way less to be trusted in action.

What then, it will be asked, are the tangible results which we can hope to attain from theory? If all on which we have to build is so indeterminate, how are any practical conclusions to be reached? That the factors are infinitely varied and difficult to determine is true, but that, it must be remembered, is just what

emphasises the necessity of reaching such firm standpoints as are attainable. The vaguer the problem to be solved, the more resolute must we be in seeking points of departure from which we can begin to lay a course, keeping always an eye open for the accidents that will beset us, and being always alive to their deflecting influences. And this is just what the theoretical study of strategy can do. It can at least determine the normal. By careful collation of past events it becomes clear that certain lines of conduct tend normally to produce certain effects; that wars tend to take certain forms each with a marked idiosyncrasy; that these forms are normally related to the object of the war and to its value to one or both belligerents; that a system of operations which suits one form may not be that best suited to another. We can even go further. By pursuing an historical and comparative method we can detect that even the human factor is not quite indeterminable. We can assert that certain situations will normally produce, whether in ourselves or in our adversaries, certain moral states on which we may calculate.

Having determined the normal, we are at once in a stronger position. Any proposal can be compared with it, and we can proceed to discuss clearly the weight of the factors which prompt us to depart from the normal. Every case must be judged on its merits, but without a normal to work from we cannot form any real judgment at all; we can only guess. Every case will assuredly depart from the normal to a greater or less extent, and it is equally certain that the greatest successes in war have been the boldest

departures from the normal. But for the most part they have been departures made with open eyes by geniuses who could perceive in the accidents of the case a just reason for the departure.

Take an analogous example, and the province of strategical theory becomes clear at once. Navigation and the parts of seamanship that belong to it have to deal with phenomena as varied and unreliable as those of the conduct of war. Together they form an art which depends quite as much as generalship on the judgment of individuals. The law of storms and tides, of winds and currents, and the whole of meteorology are subject to infinite and incalculable deflections, and yet who will deny nowadays that by the theoretical study of such things the seaman's art has gained in coherence and strength? Such study will not by itself make a seaman or a navigator, but without it no seaman or navigator can nowadays pretend to the name. Because storms do not always behave in the same way, because currents are erratic, will the most practical seaman deny that the study of the normal conditions are useless to him in his practical decisions?

If, then, the theoretical study of strategy be approached in this way—if, that is, it be regarded not as a substitute for judgment and experience, but as a means of fertilising both, it can do no man harm. Individual thought and common-sense will remain the masters and remain the guides to point the general direction when the mass of facts begins to grow bewildering. Theory will warn us the moment we begin to leave the beaten track, and enable

us to decide with open eyes whether the divergence is necessary or justifiable. Above all, when men assemble in Council it will hold discussion to the essential lines, and help to keep side issues in their place.

But beyond all this there lies in the theory of war yet another element of peculiar value to a maritime Empire. We are accustomed, partly for convenience and partly from lack of a scientific habit of thought, to speak of naval strategy and military strategy as though they were distinct branches of knowledge which had no common ground. It is the theory of war which brings out their intimate relation. It reveals that embracing them both is a larger strategy which regards the fleet and army as one weapon, which co-ordinates their action, and indicates the lines on which each must move to realise the full power of both. It will direct us to assign to each its proper function in a plan of war; it will enable each service to realise the better the limitations and the possibilities of the function with which it is charged, and how and when its own necessities must give way to a higher or more pressing need of the other. It discloses, in short, that naval strategy is not a thing by itself, that its problems can seldom or never be solved on naval considerations alone, but that it is only a part of maritime strategy—the higher learning which teaches us that for a maritime State to make successful war and to realise her special strength, army and navy must be used and thought of as instruments no less intimately connected than are the three arms ashore.

It is for these reasons that it is of little use to approach naval strategy except through the theory of war. Without such theory we can never really understand its scope or meaning, nor can we hope to grasp the forces which most profoundly affect its conclusions.

PART ONE
THEORY OF WAR

CHAPTER ONE
THE THEORY OF WAR

The last thing that an explorer arrives at is a complete map that will cover the whole ground he has travelled, but for those who come after him and would profit by and extend his knowledge his map is the first thing with which they will begin. So it is with strategy. Before we start upon its study we seek a chart which will show us at a glance what exactly is the ground we have to cover and what are the leading features which determine its form and general characteristics. Such a chart a "theory of war" alone can provide. It is for this reason that in the study of war we must get our theory clear before we can venture in search of practical conclusions. So great is the complexity of war that without such a guide we are sure to go astray amidst the bewildering multiplicity of tracks and obstacles that meet us at every step. If for continental strategy its value has been proved abundantly, then for maritime strategy, where the conditions are far more complex, the need of it is even greater.

By maritime strategy we mean the principles which govern a

war in which the sea is a substantial factor. Naval strategy is but that part of it which determines the movements of the fleet when maritime strategy has determined what part the fleet must play in relation to the action of the land forces; for it scarcely needs saying that it is almost impossible that a war can be decided by naval action alone. Unaided, naval pressure can only work by a process of exhaustion. Its effects must always be slow, and so galling both to our own commercial community and to neutrals, that the tendency is always to accept terms of peace that are far from conclusive. For a firm decision a quicker and more drastic form of pressure is required. Since men live upon the land and not upon the sea, great issues between nations at war have always been decided—except in the rarest cases—either by what your army can do against your enemy's territory and national life or else by the fear of what the fleet makes it possible for your army to do.

The paramount concern, then, of maritime strategy is to determine the mutual relations of your army and navy in a plan of war. When this is done, and not till then, naval strategy can begin to work out the manner in which the fleet can best discharge the function assigned to it.

The problem of such co-ordination is one that is susceptible of widely varying solutions. It may be that the command of the sea is of so urgent an importance that the army will have to devote itself to assisting the fleet in its special task before it can act directly against the enemy's territory and land forces;

on the other hand, it may be that the immediate duty of the fleet will be to forward military action ashore before it is free to devote itself whole-heartedly to the destruction of the enemy's fleets. The crude maxims as to primary objects which seem to have served well enough in continental warfare have never worked so clearly where the sea enters seriously into a war. In such cases it will not suffice to say the primary object of the army is to destroy the enemy's army, or that of the fleet to destroy the enemy's fleet. The delicate interactions of the land and sea factors produce conditions too intricate for such blunt solutions. Even the initial equations they present are too complex to be reduced by the simple application of rough-and-ready maxims. Their right handling depends upon the broadest and most fundamental principles of war, and it is as a standpoint from which to get a clear and unobstructed view of the factors in their true relations that a theory of war has perhaps its highest value.

The theory which now holds the field is that war in a fundamental sense is a continuation of policy by other means. The process by which the continental strategists arrived at it involved some hard philosophical reasoning. Practical and experienced veterans as they were, their method is not one that works easily with our own habit of thought. It will be well, therefore, to endeavour first to present their conclusions in a concrete form, which will make the pith of the matter intelligible at once. Take, now, the ordinary case of a naval or military Staff

being asked to prepare a war plan against a certain State and to advise what means it will require. To any one who has considered such matters it is obvious the reply must be another question —What will the war be about? Without a definite answer or alternative answers to that question a Staff can scarcely do more than engage in making such forces as the country can afford as efficient as possible. Before they take any sure step further they must know many things. They must know whether they are expected to take something from the enemy, or to prevent his taking something either from us or from some other State. If from some other State, the measures to be taken will depend on its geographical situation and on its relative strength by land and sea. Even when the object is clear it will be necessary to know how much value the enemy attaches to it. Is it one for which he will be likely to fight to the death, or one which he will abandon in the face of comparatively slight resistance? If the former, we cannot hope to succeed without entirely overthrowing his powers of resistance. If the latter, it will suffice, as it often has sufficed, to aim at something less costly and hazardous and better within our means. All these are questions which lie in the lap of Ministers charged with the foreign policy of the country, and before the Staff can proceed with a war plan they must be answered by Ministers.

In short, the Staff must ask of them what is the policy which your diplomacy is pursuing, and where, and why, do you expect it to break down and force you to take up arms? The Staff has to

carry on in fact when diplomacy has failed to achieve the object in view, and the method they will use will depend on the nature of that object. So we arrive crudely at our theory that war is a continuation of policy, a form of political intercourse in which we fight battles instead of writing notes.

It was this theory, simple and even meaningless as it appears at first sight, that gave the key to the practical work of framing a modern war plan and revolutionised the study of strategy. It was not till the beginning of the nineteenth century that such a theory was arrived at. For centuries men had written on the "Art of War," but for want of a working theory their labours as a whole had been unscientific, concerned for the most part with the discussion of passing fashions and the elaboration of platitudes. Much good work it is true was done on details, but no broad outlook had been obtained to enable us to determine their relation to the fundamental constants of the subject. No standpoint had been found from which we could readily detach such constants from what was merely accidental. The result was a tendency to argue too exclusively from the latest examples and to become entangled in erroneous thought by trying to apply the methods which had attained the last success to war as a whole. There was no means of determining how far the particular success was due to special conditions and how far it was due to factors common to all wars.

It was the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars, coinciding as they did with a period of philosophic activity, that revealed the

shallowness and empirical nature of all that had been done up to that time. Napoleon's methods appeared to his contemporaries to have produced so strenuous a revolution in the conduct of land warfare that it assumed a wholly new aspect, and it was obvious that those conceptions which had sufficed previously had become inadequate as a basis of sound study. War on land seemed to have changed from a calculated affair of thrust and parry between standing armies to a headlong rush of one nation in arms upon another, each thirsting for the other's life, and resolved to have it or perish in the attempt. Men felt themselves faced with a manifestation of human energy which had had no counterpart, at least in civilised times.

The assumption was not entirely true. For although the Continent had never before adopted the methods in question, our own country was no stranger to them either on sea or land. As we shall see, our own Revolution in the seventeenth century had produced strenuous methods of making war which were closely related to those which Napoleon took over from the French Revolutionary leaders. A more philosophic outlook might have suggested that the phenomenon was not really exceptional, but rather the natural outcome of popular energy inspired by a stirring political ideal. But the British precedent was forgotten, and so profound was the disturbance caused by the new French methods that its effects are with us still. We are in fact still dominated by the idea that since the Napoleonic era war has been essentially a different thing. Our teachers incline to insist that

there is now only one way of making war, and that is Napoleon's way. Ignoring the fact that he failed in the end, they brand as heresy the bare suggestion that there may be other ways, and not content with assuming that his system will fit all land wars, however much their natures and objects may differ, they would force naval warfare into the same uniform under the impression apparently that they are thereby making it presentable and giving it some new force.

Seeing how cramping the Napoleonic idea has become, it will be convenient before going further to determine its special characteristics exactly, but that is no easy matter. The moment we approach it in a critical spirit, it begins to grow nebulous and very difficult to define. We can dimly make out four distinct ideas mingled in the current notion. First, there is the idea of making war not merely with a professional standing army, but with the whole armed nation—a conception which of course was not really Napoleon's. It was inherited by him from the Revolution, but was in fact far older. It was but a revival of the universal practice which obtained in the barbaric stages of social development, and which every civilisation in turn had abandoned as economically unsound and subversive of specialisation in citizenship. The results of the abandonment were sometimes good and sometimes bad, but the determining conditions have been studied as yet too imperfectly to justify any broad generalisation. Secondly, there is the idea of strenuous and persistent effort—not resting to

secure each minor advantage, but pressing the enemy without pause or rest till he is utterly overthrown—an idea in which Cromwell had anticipated Napoleon by a century and a half. Scarcely distinguishable from this is a third idea—that of taking the offensive, in which there was really nothing new at all, since its advantages had always been understood, and Frederick the Great had pressed it to extremity with little less daring than Napoleon himself—nay even to culpable rashness, as the highest exponents of the Napoleonic idea admit. Finally, there is the notion of making the armed forces of the enemy and not his territory or any part of it your main objective. This perhaps is regarded as the strongest characteristic of Napoleon's methods, and yet even here we are confused by the fact that undoubtedly on some very important occasions—the Austerlitz campaign, for example—Napoleon made the hostile capital his objective as though he believed its occupation was the most effective step towards the overthrow of the enemy's power and will to resist. He certainly did not make the enemy's main army his primary objective—for their main army was not Mack's but that of the Archduke Charles.

On the whole then, when men speak of the Napoleonic system they seem to include two groups of ideas—one which comprises the conception of war made with the whole force of the nation; the other, a group which includes the Cromwellian idea of persistent effort, Frederick's preference for the offensive at almost any risk, and finally the idea of the enemy's armed

forces as the main objective, which was also Cromwell's.

It is the combination of these by no means original or very distinct ideas that we are told has brought about so entire a change in the conduct of war that it has become altogether a different thing. It is unnecessary for our purpose to consider how far the facts seem to support such a conclusion, for in the inherent nature of things it must be radically unsound. Neither war nor anything else can change in its essentials. If it appears to do so, it is because we are still mistaking accidents for essentials, and this is exactly how it struck the acutest thinkers of Napoleonic times.

For a while it is true they were bewildered, but so soon as they had had time to clear their heads from the din of the struggle in which they had taken part, they began to see that the new phenomena were but accidents after all. They perceived that Napoleon's methods, which had taken the world by storm, had met with success in wars of a certain nature only, and that when he tried to extend those methods to other natures of war he had met with failure and even disaster. How was this to be explained? What theory, for instance, would cover Napoleon's successes in Germany and Italy, as well as his failures in Spain and Russia? If the whole conception of war had changed, how could you account for the success of England, who had not changed her methods? To us the answer to these questions is of living and infinite importance. Our standpoint remains still unchanged. Is there anything inherent in the conception of war that justifies that attitude in our case? Are we entitled to expect from it again

the same success it met with in the past?

The first man to enunciate a theory which would explain the phenomena of the Napoleonic era and co-ordinate them with previous history was General Carl von Clausewitz, a man whose arduous service on the Staff and the actual work of higher instruction had taught the necessity of systematising the study of his profession. He was no mere professor, but a soldier bred in the severest school of war. The pupil and friend of Sharnhorst and Gneisenau, he had served on the Staff of Blücher in 1813, he had been Chief of the Staff to Wallmoden in his campaign against Davoust on the Lower Elbe, and also to the Third Prussian Army Corps in the campaign of 1815. Thereafter for more than ten years he was Director of the General Academy of War at Berlin, and died in 1831 as Chief of the Staff to Marshal Gneisenau. For the fifty years that followed his death his theories and system were, as he expected they would be, attacked from all sides. Yet to-day his work is more firmly established than ever as the necessary basis of all strategical thought, and above all in the "blood and iron" school of Germany.

The process by which he reached his famous theory can be followed in his classical work *On War* and the *Notes* regarding it which he left behind him. In accordance with the philosophic fashion of his time he began by trying to formulate an abstract idea of war. The definition he started with was that "War is an act of violence to compel our opponent to do our will." But that act of violence was not merely "the shock of armies," as

Montecuccoli had defined it a century and a half before. If the abstract idea of war be followed to its logical conclusion, the act of violence must be performed with the whole of the means at our disposal and with the utmost exertion of our will. Consequently we get the conception of two armed nations flinging themselves one upon the other, and continuing the struggle with the utmost strength and energy they can command till one or other is no longer capable of resistance. This Clausewitz called "Absolute War." But his practical experience and ripe study of history told him at once that "Real War" was something radically different. It was true, as he said, that Napoleon's methods had approximated to the absolute and had given some colour to the use of the absolute idea as a working theory. "But shall we," he acutely asks, "rest satisfied with this idea and judge all wars by it however much they may differ from it—shall we deduce from it all the requirements of theory? We must decide the point, for we can say nothing trustworthy about a war plan until we have made up our minds whether war should only be of this kind or whether it may be of another kind." He saw at once that a theory formed upon the abstract or absolute idea of war would not cover the ground, and therefore failed to give what was required for practical purposes. It would exclude almost the whole of war from Alexander's time to Napoleon's. And what guarantee was there that the next war would confirm to the Napoleonic type and accommodate itself to the abstract theory? "This theory," he says, "is still quite powerless against the force of circumstances."

And so it proved, for the wars of the middle nineteenth century did in fact revert to the pre-Napoleonic type.

In short, Clausewitz's difficulty in adopting his abstract theory as a working rule was that his practical mind could not forget that war had not begun with the Revolutionary era, nor was it likely to end with it. If that era had changed the conduct of war, it must be presumed that war would change again with other times and other conditions. A theory of war which did not allow for this and did not cover all that had gone before was no theory at all. If a theory of war was to be of any use as a practical guide it must cover and explain not only the extreme manifestation of hostility which he himself had witnessed, but every manifestation that had occurred in the past or was likely to recur in the future.

It was in casting about for the underlying causes of the oscillations manifested in the energy and intensity of hostile relations that he found his solution. His experience on the Staff, and his study of the inner springs of war, told him it was never in fact a question of purely military endeavour aiming always at the extreme of what was possible or expedient from a purely military point of view. The energy exhibited would always be modified by political considerations and by the depth of the national interest in the object of the war. He saw that real war was in fact an international relation which differed from other international relations only in the method we adopted to achieve the object of our policy. So it was he arrived at his famous theory —"that war is a mere continuation of policy by other means."

At first sight there seems little enough in it. It may seem perhaps that we have been watching a mountain in labour and nothing but a mouse has been produced. But it is only upon some such simple, even obvious, formula that any scientific system can be constructed with safety. We have only to develop the meaning of this one to see how important and practical are the guiding lines which flow from it.

With the conception of war as a continuation of political intercourse before us, it is clear that everything which lies outside the political conception, everything, that is, which is strictly peculiar to military and naval operations, relates merely to the means which we use to achieve our policy. Consequently, the first desideratum of a war plan is that the means adopted must conflict as little as possible with the political conditions from which the war springs. In practice, of course, as in all human relations, there will be a compromise between the means and the end, between the political and the military exigencies. But Clausewitz held that policy must always be the master. The officer charged with the conduct of the war may of course demand that the tendencies and views of policy shall not be incompatible with the military means which are placed at his disposal; but however strongly this demand may react on policy in particular cases, military action must still be regarded only as a manifestation of policy. It must never supersede policy. The policy is always the object; war is only the means by which we obtain the object, and the means must always keep the end in

view.

The practical importance of this conception will now become clear. It will be seen to afford the logical or theoretical exposition of what we began by stating in its purely concrete form. When a Chief of Staff is asked for a war plan he must not say we will make war in such and such a way because it was Napoleon's or Moltke's way. He will ask what is the political object of the war, what are the political conditions, and how much does the question at issue mean respectively to us and to our adversary. It is these considerations which determine the nature of the war. This primordial question settled, he will be in a position to say whether the war is of the same nature as those in which Napoleon's and Moltke's methods were successful, or whether it is of another nature in which those methods failed. He will then design and offer a war plan, not because it has the hall-mark of this or that great master of war, but because it is one that has been proved to fit the kind of war in hand. To assume that one method of conducting war will suit all kinds of war is to fall a victim to abstract theory, and not to be a prophet of reality, as the narrowest disciples of the Napoleonic school are inclined to see themselves.

Hence, says Clausewitz, the first, the greatest and most critical decision upon which the Statesman and the General have to exercise their judgment is to determine the nature of the war, to be sure they do not mistake it for something nor seek to make of it something which from its inherent conditions it can never

be. "This," he declares, "is the first and the most far-reaching of all strategical questions."

The first value, then, of his theory of war is that it gives a clear line on which we may proceed to determine the nature of a war in which we are about to engage, and to ensure that we do not try to apply to one nature of war any particular course of operations simply because they have proved successful in another nature of war. It is only, he insists, by regarding war not as an independent thing but as a political instrument that we can read aright the lessons of history and understand for our practical guidance how wars must differ in character according to the nature of the motives and circumstances from which they proceed. This conception, he claims, is the first ray of light to guide us to a true theory of war and thereby enable us to classify wars and distinguish them one from another.

Jomini, his great contemporary and rival, though proceeding by a less philosophical but no less lucid method, entirely endorses this view. A Swiss soldier of fortune, his experience was much the same as that of Clausewitz. It was obtained mainly on the Staff of Marshal Ney and subsequently on the Russian headquarter Staff. He reached no definite theory of war, but his fundamental conclusions were the same. The first chapter of his final work, *Précis de l'art de la Guerre*, is devoted to "La Politique de la Guerre." In it he classifies wars into nine categories according to their political object, and he lays it down as a base proposition "That these different kinds of war will have

more or less influence on the nature of the operations which will be demanded to attain the end in view, on the amount of energy that must be put forth, and on the extent of the undertakings in which we must engage." "There will," he adds, "be a great difference in the operations according to the risks we have to run."

Both men, therefore, though on details of means they were often widely opposed, are agreed that the fundamental conception of war is political. Both of course agree that if we isolate in our mind the forces engaged in any theatre of war the abstract conception reappears. So far as those forces are concerned, war is a question of fighting in which each belligerent should endeavour by all means at his command and with all his energy to destroy the other. But even so they may find that certain means are barred to them for political reasons, and at any moment the fortune of war or a development of the political conditions with which it is entangled may throw them back upon the fundamental political theory.

That theory it will be unprofitable to labour further at this point. Let it suffice for the present to mark that it gives us a conception of war as an exertion of violence to secure a political end which we desire to attain, and that from this broad and simple formula we are able to deduce at once that wars will vary according to the nature of the end and the intensity of our desire to attain it. Here we may leave it to gather force and coherence as we examine the practical considerations which are its immediate

outcome.

CHAPTER TWO
NATURES OF WARS—
OFFENSIVE AND DEFENSIVE

Having determined that wars must vary in character according to the nature and importance of their object, we are faced with the difficulty that the variations will be of infinite number and of all degrees of distinction. So complex indeed is the graduation presented that at first sight it appears scarcely possible to make it the basis of practical study. But on further examination it will be seen that by applying the usual analytical method the whole subject is susceptible of much simplification. We must in short attempt to reach some system of classification; that is, we must see if it is not possible to group the variations into some well-founded categories. With a subject so complex and intangible the grouping must of course be to some extent arbitrary, and in some places the lines of demarcation will be shadowy; but if classification has been found possible and helpful in Zoology or Botany, with the infinite and minute individual variations with which they have to deal, it should be no less possible and helpful in the study of war.

The political theory of war will at any rate give us two broad and well-marked classifications. The first is simple and well known, depending on whether the political object of the war is

positive or negative. If it be positive—that is, if our aim is to wrest something from the enemy—then our war in its main lines will be offensive. If, on the other hand, our aim be negative, and we simply seek to prevent the enemy wresting some advantage to our detriment, then the war in its general direction will be defensive.

It is only as a broad conception that this classification has value. Though it fixes the general trend of our operations, it will not in itself affect their character. For a maritime Power at least it is obvious that this must be so. For in any circumstances it is impossible for such a Power either to establish its defence or develop fully its offence without securing a working control of the sea by aggressive action against the enemy's fleets. Furthermore, we have always found that however strictly our aim may be defensive, the most effective means of securing it has been by counter-attack over-sea, either to support an ally directly or to deprive our enemy of his colonial possessions. Neither category, then, excludes the use of offensive operations nor the idea of overthrowing our enemy so far as is necessary to gain our end. In neither case does the conception lead us eventually to any other objective than the enemy's armed forces, and particularly his naval forces. The only real difference is this—that if our object be positive our general plan must be offensive, and we should at least open with a true offensive movement; whereas if our object be negative our general plan will be preventive, and we may bide our time for our counter-attack. To this extent our

action must always tend to the offensive. For counter-attack is the soul of defence. Defence is not a passive attitude, for that is the negation of war. Rightly conceived, it is an attitude of alert expectation. We wait for the moment when the enemy shall expose himself to a counter-stroke, the success of which will so far cripple him as to render us relatively strong enough to pass to the offensive ourselves.

From these considerations it will appear that, real and logical as the classification is, to give it the designation "offensive and defensive" is objectionable from every point of view. To begin with, it does not emphasise what the real and logical distinction is. It suggests that the basis of the classification is not so much a difference of object as a difference in the means employed to achieve the object. Consequently we find ourselves continually struggling with the false assumption that positive war means using attack, and negative war being content with defence.

That is confusing enough, but a second objection to the designation is far more serious and more fertile of error. For the classification "offensive and defensive" implies that offensive and defensive are mutually exclusive ideas, whereas the truth is, and it is a fundamental truth of war, that they are mutually complementary. All war and every form of it must be both offensive and defensive. No matter how clear our positive aim nor how high our offensive spirit, we cannot develop an aggressive line of strategy to the full without the support of the defensive on all but the main lines of operation. In tactics it is the same. The

most convinced devotee of attack admits the spade as well as the rifle. And even when it comes to men and material, we know that without a certain amount of protection neither ships, guns, nor men can develop their utmost energy and endurance in striking power. There is never, in fact, a clean choice between attack and defence. In aggressive operations the question always is, how far must defence enter into the methods we employ in order to enable us to do the utmost within our resources to break or paralyse the strength of the enemy. So also with defence. Even in its most legitimate use, it must always be supplemented by attack. Even behind the walls of a fortress men know that sooner or later the place must fall unless by counter-attack on the enemy's siege works or communications they can cripple his power of attack.

It would seem, therefore, that it were better to lay aside the designation "offensive and defensive" altogether and substitute the terms "positive and negative." But here again we are confronted with a difficulty. There have been many wars in which positive methods have been used all through to secure a negative end, and such wars will not sit easily in either class. For instance, in the War of Spanish Succession our object was mainly to prevent the Mediterranean becoming a French lake by the union of the French and Spanish crowns, but the method by which we succeeded in achieving our end was to seize the naval positions of Gibraltar and Minorca, and so in practice our method was positive. Again, in the late Russo-Japanese War the main object of Japan was to prevent Korea being absorbed

by Russia. That aim was preventive and negative. But the only effective way of securing her aim was to take Korea herself, and so for her the war was in practice positive.

On the other hand, we cannot shut our eyes to the fact that in the majority of wars the side with the positive object has acted generally on the offensive and the other generally on the defensive. Unpractical therefore as the distinction seems to be, it is impossible to dismiss it without inquiring why this was so, and it is in this inquiry that the practical results of the classification will be found to lie—that is, it forces us to analyse the comparative advantages of offence and defence. A clear apprehension of their relative possibilities is the corner stone of strategical study.

Now the advantages of the offensive are patent and admitted. It is only the offensive that can produce positive results, while the strength and energy which are born of the moral stimulation of attack are of a practical value that outweighs almost every other consideration. Every man of spirit would desire to use the offensive whether his object were positive or negative, and yet there are a number of cases in which some of the most energetic masters of war have chosen the defensive, and chosen with success. They have chosen it when they have found themselves inferior in physical force to their enemy, and when they believed that no amount of aggressive spirit could redress that inferiority.

Obviously, then, for all the inferiority of the defensive as a drastic form of war it must have some inherent advantage which

the offensive does not enjoy. In war we adopt every method for which we have sufficient strength. If, then, we adopt the less desirable method of defence, it must be either that we have not sufficient strength for offence, or that the defence gives us some special strength for the attainment of our object.

What, then, are these elements of strength? It is very necessary to inquire, not only that we may know that if for a time we are forced back upon the defensive all is not lost, but also that we may judge with how much daring we should push our offensive to prevent the enemy securing the advantages of defence.

As a general principle we all know that possession is nine points of the law. It is easier to keep money in our pocket than to take it from another man's. If one man would rob another he must be the stronger or better armed unless he can do it by dexterity or stealth, and there lies one of the advantages of offence. The side which takes the initiative has usually the better chance of securing advantage by dexterity or stealth. But it is not always so. If either by land or sea we can take a defensive position so good that it cannot be turned and must be broken down before our enemy can reach his objective, then the advantage of dexterity and stealth passes to us. We choose our own ground for the trial of strength. We are hidden on familiar ground; he is exposed on ground that is less familiar. We can lay traps and prepare surprises by counter-attack, when he is most dangerously exposed. Hence the paradoxical doctrine that where defence is

sound and well designed the advantage of surprise is against the attack.

It will be seen therefore that whatever advantages lie in defence they depend on the preservation of the offensive spirit. Its essence is the counter-attack—waiting deliberately for a chance to strike—not cowering in inactivity. Defence is a condition of restrained activity—not a mere condition of rest. Its real weakness is that if unduly prolonged it tends to deaden the spirit of offence. This is a truth so vital that some authorities in their eagerness to enforce it have travestied it into the misleading maxim, "That attack is the best defence." Hence again an amateurish notion that defence is always stupid or pusillanimous, leading always to defeat, and that what is called "the military spirit" means nothing but taking the offensive. Nothing is further from the teaching or the practice of the best masters. Like Wellington at Torres Vedras, they all at times used the defensive till the elements of strength inherent in that form of war, as opposed to the exhausting strain inherent in the form that they had fixed upon their opponents, lifted them to a position where they in their turn were relatively strong enough to use the more exhausting form.

The confusion of thought which has led to the misconceptions about defence as a method of war is due to several obvious causes. Counter-attacks from a general defensive attitude have been regarded as a true offensive, as, for instance, in Frederick the Great's best-known operations, or in Admiral Tegetthoff's

brilliant counterstroke at Lissa, or our own operations against the Spanish Armada. Again, the defensive has acquired an ill name by its being confused with a wrongly arrested offensive, where the superior Power with the positive object lacked the spirit to use his material superiority with sufficient activity and perseverance. Against such a Power an inferior enemy can always redress his inferiority by passing to a bold and quick offensive, thus acquiring a momentum both moral and physical which more than compensates his lack of weight. The defensive has also failed by the choice of a bad position which the enemy was able to turn or avoid. A defensive attitude is nothing at all, its elements of strength entirely disappear, unless it is such that the enemy must break it down by force before he can reach his ultimate objective. Even more often has it failed when the belligerent adopting it, finding he has no available defensive position which will bar the enemy's progress, attempts to guard every possible line of attack. The result is of course that by attenuating his force he only accentuates his inferiority.

Clear and well proven as these considerations are for land warfare, their application to the sea is not so obvious. It will be objected that at sea there is no defensive. This is generally true for tactics, but even so not universally true. Defensive tactical positions are possible at sea, as in defended anchorages. These were always a reality, and the mine has increased their possibilities. In the latest developments of naval warfare we have seen the Japanese at the Elliot Islands preparing a real

defensive position to cover the landing of their Second Army in the Liaotung Peninsula. Strategically the proposition is not true at all. A strategical defensive has been quite as common at sea as on land, and our own gravest problems have often been how to break down such an attitude when our enemy assumed it. It usually meant that the enemy remained in his own waters and near his own bases, where it was almost impossible for us to attack him with decisive result, and whence he always threatened us with counterattack at moments of exhaustion, as the Dutch did at Sole Bay and in the Medway. The difficulty of dealing decisively with an enemy who adopted this course was realised by our service very early, and from first to last one of our chief preoccupations was to prevent the enemy availing himself of this device and to force him to fight in the open, or at least to get between him and his base and force an action there.

Probably the most remarkable manifestation of the advantages that may be derived in suitable conditions from a strategical defensive is also to be found in the late Russo-Japanese War. In the final crisis of the naval struggle the Japanese fleet was able to take advantage of a defensive attitude in its own waters which the Russian Baltic fleet would have to break down to attain its end, and the result was the most decisive naval victory ever recorded.

The deterrent power of active and dexterous operations from such a position was well known to our old tradition. The device was used several times, particularly in our home waters, to prevent a fleet, which for the time we were locally too weak

to destroy, from carrying out the work assigned to it. A typical position of the kind was off Scilly, and it was proved again and again that even a superior fleet could not hope to effect anything in the Channel till the fleet off Scilly had been brought to decisive action. But the essence of the device was the preservation of the aggressive spirit in its most daring form. For success it depended on at least the will to seize every occasion for bold and harassing counter-attacks such as Drake and his colleagues struck at the Armada.

To submit to blockade in order to engage the attention of a superior enemy's fleet is another form of defensive, but one that is almost wholly evil. For a short time it may do good by permitting offensive operations elsewhere which otherwise would be impossible. But if prolonged, it will sooner or later destroy the spirit of your force and render it incapable of effective aggression.

The conclusion then is that although for the practical purpose of framing or appreciating plans of war the classification of wars into offensive and defensive is of little use, a clear apprehension of the inherent relative advantages of offence and defence is essential. We must realise that in certain cases, provided always we preserve the aggressive spirit, the defensive will enable an inferior force to achieve points when the offensive would probably lead to its destruction. But the elements of strength depend entirely on the will and insight to deal rapid blows in the enemy's unguarded moments. So soon as the defensive ceases

to be regarded as a means of fostering power to strike and of reducing the enemy's power of attack it loses all its strength. It ceases to be even a suspended activity, and anything that is not activity is not war.

With these general indications of the relative advantages of offence and defence we may leave the subject for the present. It is possible of course to catalogue the advantages and disadvantages of each form, but any such bald statement—without concrete examples to explain the meaning—must always appear controversial and is apt to mislead. It is better to reserve their fuller consideration till we come to deal with strategical operations and are able to note their actual effect upon the conduct of war in its various forms. Leaving therefore our first classification of wars into offensive and defensive we will pass on to the second, which is the only one of real practical importance.

CHAPTER THREE
NATURES OF WARS—
LIMITED AND UNLIMITED

The second classification to which we are led by the political theory of war, is one which Clausewitz was the first to formulate and one to which he came to attach the highest importance. It becomes necessary therefore to examine his views in some detail—not because there is any need to regard a continental soldier, however distinguished, as an indispensable authority for a maritime nation. The reason is quite the reverse. It is because a careful examination of his doctrine on this point will lay open what are the radical and essential differences between the German or Continental School of Strategy and the British or Maritime School—that is, our own traditional School, which too many writers both at home and abroad quietly assume to have no existence. The evil tendency of that assumption cannot be too strongly emphasised, and the main purpose of this and the following chapters will be to show how and why even the greatest of the continental strategists fell short of realising fully the characteristic conception of the British tradition.

By the classification in question Clausewitz distinguished wars into those with a "Limited" object and those whose object was "Unlimited." Such a classification was entirely characteristic of

him, for it rested not alone upon the material nature of the object, but on certain moral considerations to which he was the first to attach their real value in war. Other writers such as Jomini had attempted to classify wars by the special purpose for which they were fought, but Clausewitz's long course of study convinced him that such a distinction was unphilosophical and bore no just relation to any tenable theory of war. Whether, that is, a war was positive or negative mattered much, but its special purpose, whether, for instance, according to Jomini's system, it was a war "to assert rights" or "to assist an ally" or "to acquire territory," mattered not at all.

Whatever the object, the vital and paramount question was the intensity with which the spirit of the nation was absorbed in its attainment. The real point to determine in approaching any war plan was what did the object mean to the two belligerents, what sacrifices would they make for it, what risks were they prepared to run? It was thus he stated his view. "The smaller the sacrifice we demand from our opponent, the smaller presumably will be the means of resistance he will employ, and the smaller his means, the smaller will ours be required to be. Similarly the smaller our political object, the less value shall we set upon it and the more easily we shall be induced to abandon it." Thus the political object of the war, its original motive, will not only determine for both belligerents reciprocally the aim of the force they use, but it will also be the standard of the intensity of the efforts they will make. So he concludes there may be wars of all

degrees of importance and energy from a war of extermination down to the use of an army of observation. So also in the naval sphere there may be a life and death struggle for maritime supremacy or hostilities which never rise beyond a blockade.

Such a view of the subject was of course a wide departure from the theory of "Absolute War" on which Clausewitz had started working. Under that theory "Absolute War" was the ideal form to which all war ought to attain, and those which fell short of it were imperfect wars cramped by a lack of true military spirit. But so soon as he had seized the fact that in actual life the moral factor always must override the purely military factor, he saw that he had been working on too narrow a basis—a basis that was purely theoretical in that it ignored the human factor. He began to perceive that it was logically unsound to assume as the foundation of a strategical system that there was one pattern to which all wars ought to conform. In the light of his full and final apprehension of the value of the human factor he saw wars falling into two well-marked categories, each of which would legitimately be approached in a radically different manner, and not necessarily on the lines of "Absolute War."

He saw that there was one class of war where the political object was of so vital an importance to both belligerents that they would tend to fight to the utmost limit of their endurance to secure it. But there was another class where the object was of less importance, that is to say, where its value to one or both the belligerents was not so great as to be worth unlimited sacrifices

of blood and treasure. It was these two kinds of war he designated provisionally "Unlimited" and "Limited," by which he meant not that you were not to exert the force employed with all the vigour you could develop, but that there might be a limit beyond which it would be bad policy to spend that vigour, a point at which, long before your force was exhausted or even fully developed, it would be wiser to abandon your object rather than to spend more upon it.

This distinction it is very necessary to grasp quite clearly, for it is often superficially confused with the distinction already referred to, which Clausewitz drew in the earlier part of his work —that is, the distinction between what he called the character of modern war and the character of the wars which preceded the Napoleonic era. It will be remembered he insisted that the wars of his own time had been wars between armed nations with a tendency to throw the whole weight of the nation into the fighting line, whereas in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries wars were waged by standing armies and not by the whole nation in arms. The distinction of course is real and of far-reaching consequences, but it has no relation to the distinction between "Limited" and "Unlimited" war. War may be waged on the Napoleonic system either for a limited or an unlimited object.

A modern instance will serve to clear the field. The recent Russo-Japanese War was fought for a limited object—the assertion of certain claims over territory which formed no part of the possessions of either belligerent. Hostilities were conducted

on entirely modern lines by two armed nations and not by standing armies alone. But in the case of one belligerent her interest in the object was so limited as to cause her to abandon it long before her whole force as an armed nation was exhausted or even put forth. The expense of life and treasure which the struggle was involving was beyond what the object was worth.

This second distinction—that is, between Limited and Unlimited wars—Clausewitz regarded as of greater importance than his previous one founded on the negative or positive nature of the object. He was long in reaching it. His great work *On War* as he left it proceeds almost entirely on the conception of offensive or defensive as applied to the Napoleonic ideal of absolute war. The new idea came to him towards the end in the full maturity of his prolonged study, and it came to him in endeavouring to apply his strategical speculations to the practical process of framing a war plan in anticipation of a threatened breach with France. It was only in his final section *On War Plans* that he began to deal with it. By that time he had grasped the first practical result to which his theory led. He saw that the distinction between Limited and Unlimited war connoted a cardinal distinction in the methods of waging it. When the object was unlimited, and would consequently call forth your enemy's whole war power, it was evident that no firm decision of the struggle could be reached till his war power was entirely crushed. Unless you had a reasonable hope of being able to do this it was bad policy to seek your end by force—that is, you ought not to

go to war. In the case of a limited object, however, the complete destruction of the enemy's armed force was beyond what was necessary. Clearly you could achieve your end if you could seize the object, and by availing yourself of the elements of strength inherent in the defensive could set up such a situation that it would cost the enemy more to turn you out than the object was worth to him.

Here then was a wide difference in the fundamental postulate of your war plan. In the case of an unlimited war your main strategical offensive must be directed against the armed forces of the enemy; in the case of a limited war, even where its object was positive, it need not be. If conditions were favourable, it would suffice to make the object itself the objective of your main strategical offensive. Clearly, then, he had reached a theoretical distinction which modified his whole conception of strategy. No longer is there logically but one kind of war, the Absolute, and no longer is there but one legitimate objective, the enemy's armed forces. Being sound theory, it of course had an immediate practical value, for obviously it was a distinction from which the actual work of framing a war plan must take its departure.

A curious corroboration of the soundness of these views is that Jomini reached an almost identical standpoint independently and by an entirely different road. His method was severely concrete, based on the comparison of observed facts, but it brought him as surely as the abstract method of his rival to the conclusion that there were two distinct classes of object.

"They are of two different kinds," he says, "one which may be called territorial or geographical … the other on the contrary consists exclusively in the destruction or disorganisation of the enemy's forces without concerning yourself with geographical points of any kind." It is under the first category of his first main classification "Of offensive wars to assert rights," that he deals with what Clausewitz would call "Limited Wars." Citing as an example Frederick the Great's war for the conquest of Silesia, he says, "In such a war … the offensive operations ought to be proportional to the end in view. The first move is naturally to occupy the provinces claimed" (not, be it noted, to direct your blow at the enemy's main force). "Afterwards," he proceeds, "you can push the offensive according to circumstances and your relative strength in order to obtain the desired cession by menacing the enemy at home." Here we have Clausewitz's whole doctrine of "Limited War"; firstly, the primary or territorial stage, in which you endeavour to occupy the geographical object, and then the secondary or coercive stage, in which you seek by exerting general pressure upon your enemy to force him to accept the adverse situation you have set up.

Such a method of making war obviously differs in a fundamental manner from that which Napoleon habitually adopted, and yet we have it presented by Jomini and Clausewitz, the two apostles of the Napoleonic method. The explanation is, of course, that both of them had seen too much not to know that Napoleon's method was only applicable when you could

command a real physical or moral preponderance. Given such a preponderance, both were staunch for the use of extreme means in Napoleon's manner. It is not as something better than the higher road that they commend the lower one, but being veteran staff-officers and not mere theorists, they knew well that a belligerent must sometimes find the higher road beyond his strength, or beyond the effort which the spirit of the nation is prepared to make for the end in view, and like the practical men they were, they set themselves to study the potentialities of the lower road should hard necessity force them to travel it. They found that these potentialities in certain circumstances were great. As an example of a case where the lower form was more appropriate Jomini cites Napoleon's campaign against Russia in 1812. In his opinion it would have been better if Napoleon had been satisfied to begin on the lower method with a limited territorial object, and he attributes his failure to the abuse of a method which, however well suited to his wars in Germany, was incapable of achieving success in the conditions presented by a war with Russia.

Seeing how high was Napoleon's opinion of Jomini as a master of the science of war, it is curious how his views on the two natures of wars have been ignored in the present day. It is even more curious in the case of Clausewitz, since we know that in the plenitude of his powers he came to regard this classification as the master-key of the subject. The explanation is that the distinction is not very clearly formulated in his first seven books,

which alone he left in anything like a finished condition. It was not till he came to write his eighth book *On War Plans* that he saw the vital importance of the distinction round which he had been hovering. In that book the distinction is clearly laid down, but the book unhappily was never completed. With his manuscript, however, he left a "Note" warning us against regarding his earlier books as a full presentation of his developed ideas. From the note it is also evident that he thought the classification on which he had lighted was of the utmost importance, that he believed it would clear up all the difficulties which he had encountered in his earlier books—difficulties which he had come to see arose from a too exclusive consideration of the Napoleonic method of conducting war. "I look upon the first six books," he wrote in 1827, "as only a mass of material which is still in a manner without form and which has still to be revised again. In this revision the two kinds of wars will be kept more distinctly in view all through, and thereby all ideas will gain in clearness, in precision, and in exactness of application." Evidently he had grown dissatisfied with the theory of Absolute War on which he had started. His new discovery had convinced him that that theory would not serve as a standard for all natures of wars. "Shall we," he asks in his final book, "shall we now rest satisfied with this idea and by it judge of all wars, however much they may differ?"[2] He answers his question in the negative. "You cannot determine the requirements of all wars from the Napoleonic

[2] Clausewitz, On War, Book viii, chap, ii

type. Keep that type and its absolute method before you to use *when you can* or *when you must*, but keep equally before you that there are two main natures of war."

In his note written at this time, when the distinction first came to him, he defines these two natures of war as follows: "First, those in which the object is the *overthrow of the enemy*, whether it be we aim at his political destruction or merely at disarming him and forcing him to conclude peace on our terms; and secondly, those in which our object is *merely to make some conquests on the frontiers of his country*, either for the purpose of retaining them permanently or of turning them to account as a matter of exchange in settling terms of peace."[3] It was in his eighth book that he intended, had he lived, to have worked out the comprehensive idea he had conceived. Of that book he says, "The chief object will be to make good the two points of view above mentioned, by which everything will be simplified and at the same time be given the breath of life. I hope in this book to iron out many creases in the heads of strategists and statesmen, and at least to show the object of action and the real point to be considered in war."[4]

That hope was never realised, and that perhaps is why his penetrating analysis has been so much ignored. The eighth book as we have it is only a fragment. In the spring of 1830—an anxious moment, when it seemed that Prussia would require all

[3] Ibid, Preparatory Notice, p. vii.

[4] Ibid, p. viii

her best for another struggle single-handed with France—he was called away to an active command. What he left of the book on "War Plans" he describes as "merely a track roughly cleared, as it were, through the mass, in order to ascertain the points of greatest moment." It was his intention, he says, to "carry the spirit of these ideas into his first six books"—to put the crown on his work, in fact, by elaborating and insisting upon his two great propositions, viz. that war was a form of policy, and that being so it might be Limited or Unlimited.

The extent to which he would have infused his new idea into the whole every one is at liberty to judge for himself; but this indisputable fact remains. In the winter in view of the threatening attitude of France in regard to Belgium he drew up a war plan, and it was designed not on the Napoleonic method of making the enemy's armed force the main strategical objective, but on seizing a limited territorial object and forcing a disadvantageous counter-offensive upon the French. The revolutionary movement throughout Europe had broken the Holy Alliance to pieces. Not only did Prussia find herself almost single-handed against France, but she herself was sapped by revolution. To adopt the higher form of war and seek to destroy the armed force of the enemy was beyond her power. But she could still use the lower form, and by seizing Belgium she could herself force so exhausting a task on France that success was well within her strength. It was exactly so we endeavoured to begin the Seven Years' War; and it was exactly so the Japanese successfully

conducted their war with Russia; and what is more striking, it was on similar lines that in 1859 Moltke in similar circumstances drew up his first war plan against France. His idea at that time was on the lines which Jomini held should have been Napoleon's in 1812. It was not to strike directly at Paris or the French main army, but to occupy Alsace-Lorraine and hold that territory till altered conditions should give him the necessary preponderance for proceeding to the higher form or forcing a favourable peace.

In conclusion, then, we have to note that the matured fruit of the Napoleonic period was a theory of war based not on the single absolute idea, but on the dual distinction of Limited and Unlimited. Whatever practical importance we may attach to the distinction, so much must be admitted on the clear and emphatic pronouncements of Clausewitz and Jomini. The practical importance is another matter. It may fairly be argued that in continental warfare—in spite of the instances quoted by both the classical writers—it is not very great, for reasons that will appear directly. But it must be remembered that continental warfare is not the only form in which great international issues are decided. Standing at the final point which Clausewitz and Jomini reached, we are indeed only on the threshold of the subject. We have to begin where they left off and inquire what their ideas have to tell for the modern conditions of worldwide imperial States, where the sea becomes a direct and vital factor.

CHAPTER FOUR
LIMITED WAR AND MARITIME EMPIRES—

Development of Clausewitz's and Jomini's

Theory of a Limited Territorial Object, and Its

Application to Modern Imperial Conditions

The German war plans already cited, which were based respectively on the occupation of Belgium and Alsace-Lorraine, and Jomini's remarks on Napoleon's disastrous Russian campaign serve well to show the point to which continental strategists have advanced along the road which Clausewitz was the first to indicate clearly. We have now to consider its application to modern imperial conditions, and above all where the maritime element forcibly asserts itself. We shall then see how small that advance has been compared with its far-reaching effects for a maritime and above all an insular Power.

It is clear that Clausewitz himself never apprehended the full significance of his brilliant theory. His outlook was still purely continental, and the limitations of continental warfare tend to veil the fuller meaning of the principle he had framed. Had he lived, there is little doubt he would have worked it out to its logical conclusion, but his death condemned his theory of limited war to remain in the inchoate condition in which he had left it.

It will be observed, as was natural enough, that all through his work Clausewitz had in his mind war between two contiguous or at least adjacent continental States, and a moment's consideration will show that in that type of war the principle of the limited object can rarely if ever assert itself in perfect precision. Clausewitz himself put it quite clearly. Assuming a case where "the overthrow of the enemy"—that is, unlimited war—is beyond our strength, he points out that we need not therefore necessarily act on the defensive. Our action may still be positive and offensive, but the object can be nothing more than "the conquest of part of the enemy's country." Such a conquest he knew might so far weaken your enemy or strengthen your own position as to enable you to secure a satisfactory peace. The path of history is indeed strewn with such cases. But he was careful to point out that such a form of war was open to the gravest objections. Once you had occupied the territory you aimed at, your offensive action was, as a rule, arrested. A defensive attitude had to be assumed, and such an arrest of offensive action he had previously shown was inherently vicious, if only for moral

reasons. Added to this you might find that in your effort to occupy the territorial object you had so irretrievably separated your striking force from your home-defence force as to be in no position to meet your enemy if he was able to retort by acting on unlimited lines with a stroke at your heart. A case in point was the Austerlitz campaign, where Austria's object was to wrest North Italy from Napoleon's empire. She sent her main army under the Archduke Charles to seize the territory she desired. Napoleon immediately struck at Vienna, destroyed her home army, and occupied the capital before the Archduke could turn to bar his way.

The argument is this: that, as all strategic attack tends to leave points of your own uncovered, it always involves greater or less provision for their defence. It is obvious, therefore, that if we are aiming at a limited territorial object the proportion of defence required will tend to be much greater than if we are directing our attack on the main forces of the enemy. In unlimited war our attack will itself tend to defend everything elsewhere, by forcing the enemy to concentrate against our attack. Whether the limited form is justifiable or not therefore depends, as Clausewitz points out, on the geographical position of the object.

So far British experience is with him, but he then goes on to say the more closely the territory in question is an annex of our own the safer is this form of war, because then our offensive action will the more surely cover our home country. As a case in point he cites Frederick the Great's opening of the Seven Years'

War with the occupation of Saxony—a piece of work which materially strengthened Prussian defence. Of the British opening in Canada he says nothing. His outlook was too exclusively continental for it to occur to him to test his doctrine with a conspicuously successful case in which the territory aimed at was distant from the home territory and in no way covered it. Had he done so he must have seen how much stronger an example of the strength of limited war was the case of Canada than the case of Saxony. Moreover, he would have seen that the difficulties, which in spite of his faith in his discovery accompanied his attempt to apply it, arose from the fact that the examples he selected were not really examples at all.

When he conceived the idea, the only kind of limited object he had in his mind was, to use his own words, "some conquests on the frontiers of the enemy's country," such as Silesia and Saxony for Frederick the Great, Belgium in his own war plan, and Alsace-Lorraine in that of Moltke. Now it is obvious that such objects are not truly limited, for two reasons. In the first place, such territory is usually an organic part of your enemy's country, or otherwise of so much importance to him that he will be willing to use unlimited effort to retain it. In the second place, there will be no strategical obstacle to his being able to use his whole force to that end. To satisfy the full conception of a limited object, one of two conditions is essential. Firstly, it must be not merely limited in area, but of really limited political importance; and secondly, it must be so situated as to be strategically isolated or to

be capable of being reduced to practical isolation by strategical operations. Unless this condition exists, it is in the power of either belligerent, as Clausewitz himself saw, to pass to unlimited war if he so desires, and, ignoring the territorial objective, to strike at the heart of his enemy and force him to desist.

If, then, we only regard war between contiguous continental States, in which the object is the conquest of territory on either of their frontiers, we get no real generic difference between limited and unlimited war. The line between them is in any case too shadowy or unstable to give a classification of any solidity. It is a difference of degree rather than of kind. If, on the other hand, we extend our view to wars between worldwide empires, the distinction at once becomes organic. Possessions which lie oversea or at the extremities of vast areas of imperfectly settled territory are in an entirely different category from those limited objects which Clausewitz contemplated. History shows that they can never have the political importance of objects which are organically part of the European system, and it shows further that they can be isolated by naval action sufficiently to set up the conditions of true limited war.

Jomini approaches the point, but without clearly detaching it. In his chapter "On Great Invasions and Distant Expeditions," he points out how unsafe it is to take the conditions of war between contiguous States and apply them crudely to cases where the belligerents are separated by large areas of land or sea. He hovers round the sea factor, feeling how great a difference it makes, but

without getting close to the real distinction. His conception of the inter-action of fleets and armies never rises above their actual co-operation in touch one with the other in a distant theatre. He has in mind the assistance which the British fleet afforded Wellington in the Peninsula, and Napoleon's dreams of Asiatic conquest, pronouncing such distant invasions as impossible in modern times except perhaps in combination with a powerful fleet that could provide the army of invasion with successive advanced bases. Of the paramount value of the fleet's isolating and preventive functions he gives no hint.

Even when he deals with oversea expeditions, as he does at some length, his grip of the point is no closer. It is indeed significant of how entirely continental thought had failed to penetrate the subject that in devoting over thirty pages to an enumeration of the principles of oversea expeditions, he, like Clausewitz, does not so much as mention the conquest of Canada; and yet it is the leading case of a weak military Power succeeding by the use of the limited form of war in forcing its will upon a strong one, and succeeding because it was able by naval action to secure its home defence and isolate the territorial object.

For our ideas of true limited objects, therefore, we must leave the continental theatres and turn to mixed or maritime wars. We have to look to such cases as Canada and Havana in the Seven Years' War, and Cuba in the Spanish-American War, cases in which complete isolation of the object by naval action was

possible, or to such examples as the Crimea and Korea, where sufficient isolation was attainable by naval action owing to the length and difficulty of the enemy's land communications and to the strategical situation of the territory at stake.

These examples will also serve to illustrate and enforce the second essential of this kind of war. As has been already said, for a true limited object we must have not only the power of isolation, but also the power by a secure home defence of barring an unlimited counterstroke. In all the above cases this condition existed. In all of them the belligerents had no contiguous frontiers, and this point is vital. For it is obvious that if two belligerents have a common frontier, it is open to the superior of them, no matter how distant or how easy to isolate the limited object may be, to pass at will to unlimited war by invasion. This process is even possible when the belligerents are separated by a neutral State, since the territory of a weak neutral will be violated if the object be of sufficient importance, or if the neutral be too strong to coerce, there still remains the possibility that his alliance may be secured.

We come, then, to this final proposition—that limited war is only permanently possible to island Powers or between Powers which are separated by sea, and then only when the Power desiring limited war is able to command the sea to such a degree as to be able not only to isolate the distant object, but also to render impossible the invasion of his home territory.

Here, then, we reach the true meaning and highest military

value of what we call the command of the sea, and here we touch the secret of England's success against Powers so greatly superior to herself in military strength. It is only fitting that such a secret should have been first penetrated by an Englishman. For so it was, though it must be said that except in the light of Clausewitz's doctrine the full meaning of Bacon's famous aphorism is not revealed. "This much is certain," said the great Elizabethan on the experience of our first imperial war; "he that commands the sea is at great liberty and may take as much or as little of the war as he will, whereas those that be strongest by land are many times nevertheless in great straits." It would be difficult to state more pithily the ultimate significance of Clausewitz's doctrine. Its cardinal truth is clearly indicated—that limited wars do not turn upon the armed strength of the belligerents, but upon the amount of that strength which they are able or willing to bring to bear at the decisive point.

It is much to be regretted that Clausewitz did not live to see with Bacon's eyes and to work out the full comprehensiveness of his doctrine. His ambition was to formulate a theory which would explain all wars. He believed he had done so, and yet it is clear he never knew how complete was his success, nor how wide was the field he had covered. To the end it would seem he was unaware that he had found an explanation of one of the most inscrutable problems in history—the expansion of England—at least so far as it has been due to successful war. That a small country with a weak army should have been able to gather to herself the most

desirable regions of the earth, and to gather them at the expense of the greatest military Powers, is a paradox to which such Powers find it hard to be reconciled. The phenomenon seemed always a matter of chance-an accident without any foundation in the essential constants of war. It remained for Clausewitz, unknown to himself, to discover that explanation, and he reveals it to us in the inherent strength of limited war when means and conditions are favourable for its use.

We find, then, if we take a wider view than was open to Clausewitz and submit his latest ideas to the test of present imperial conditions, so far from failing to cover the ground they gain a fuller meaning and a firmer basis. Apply them to maritime warfare and it becomes clear that his distinction between limited and unlimited war does not rest alone on the moral factor. A war may be limited not only because the importance of the object is too limited to call forth the whole national force, but also because the sea may be made to present an insuperable physical obstacle to the whole national force being brought to bear. That is to say, a war may be limited physically by the strategical isolation of the object, as well as morally by its comparative unimportance.

CHAPTER FIVE
WARS OF INTERVENTION —LIMITED INTERFERENCE IN UNLIMITED WAR

Before leaving the general consideration of limited war, we have still to deal with a form of it that has not yet been mentioned. Clausewitz gave it provisionally the name of "War limited by contingent," and could find no place for it in his system. It appeared to him to differ essentially from war limited by its political object, or as Jomini put it, war with a territorial object. Yet it had to be taken into account and explained, if only for the part it had played in European history.

For us it calls for the most careful examination, not only because it baffled the great German strategist to reconcile it with his theory of war, but also because it is the form in which Great Britain most successfully demonstrated the potentiality for direct continental interference of a small army acting in conjunction with a dominant fleet.

The combined operations which were the normal expression of the British method of making war on the limited basis were of two main classes. Firstly, there were those designed purely for the conquest of the objects for which we went to war, which were usually colonial or distant oversea territory; and secondly,

operations more or less upon the European seaboard designed not for permanent conquest, but as a method of disturbing our enemy's plans and strengthening the hands of our allies and our own position. Such operations might take the form of insignificant coastal diversions, or they might rise through all degrees of importance till, as in Wellington's operations in the Peninsula, they became indistinguishable in form from regular continental warfare.

It would seem, therefore, that these operations were distinguished not so much by the nature of the object as by the fact that we devoted to them, not the whole of our military strength, but only a certain part of it which was known as our "disposal force." Consequently, they appear to call for some such special classification, and to fall naturally into the category which Clausewitz called "War limited by contingent."

It was a nature of war well enough known in another form on the Continent. During the eighteenth century there had been a large number of cases of war actually limited by contingent —that is, cases where a country not having a vital interest in the object made war by furnishing the chief belligerent with an auxiliary force of a stipulated strength.

It was in the sixth chapter of his last book that Clausewitz intended to deal with this anomalous form of hostility. His untimely death, however, has left us with no more than a fragment, in which he confesses that such cases are "embarrassing to his theory." If, he adds, the auxiliary force were

placed unreservedly at the disposal of the chief belligerent, the problem would be simple enough. It would then, in effect, be the same thing as unlimited war with the aid of a subsidised force. But in fact, as he observes, this seldom happened, for the contingent was always more or less controlled in accordance with the special political aims of the Government which furnished it. Consequently, the only conclusion he succeeded in reaching was that it was a form of war that had to be taken into account, and that it was a form of limited war that appeared to differ essentially from war limited by object. We are left, in fact, with an impression that there must be two kinds of limited war.

But if we pursue his historical method and examine the cases in which this nature of war was successful, and those in which it was unsuccessful, we shall find that wherever success is taken as an index of its legitimate employment, the practical distinction between the two kinds of limited war tends to disappear. The indications are that where the essential factors which justify the use of war limited by object are present in war limited by contingent, then that form of war tends to succeed, but not otherwise. We are brought, in fact, to this proposition, that the distinction "Limited by contingent" is not one that is inherent in war, and is quite out of line with the theory in hand—that, in reality, it is not a *form* of war, but a *method* which may be employed either for limited or unlimited war. In other words, war limited by contingent, if it is to be regarded as a legitimate form of war at all, must take frankly the one shape or the

other. Either the contingent must act as an organic unit of the force making unlimited war without any reservations whatever, or else it should be given a definite territorial object, with an independent organisation and an independent limited function.

Our own experience seems to indicate that war by contingent or war with "a disposal force" attains the highest success when it approaches most closely to true limited war—that is, as in the case of the Peninsula and the Crimea, where its object is to wrest or secure from the enemy a definite piece of territory that to a greater or less extent can be isolated by naval action. Its operative power, in fact, appears to bear some direct relation to the intimacy with which naval and military action can be combined to give the contingent a weight and mobility that are beyond its intrinsic power.

If, then, we would unravel the difficulties of war limited by contingent, it seems necessary to distinguish between the continental and the British form of it. The continental form, as we have seen, differs but little in conception from unlimited war. The contingent is furnished at least ostensibly with the idea that it is to be used by the chief belligerent to assist him in overthrowing the common enemy, and that its objective will be the enemy's organised forces or his capital. Or it may be that the contingent is to be used as an army of observation to prevent a counterstroke, so as to facilitate and secure the main offensive movement of the chief belligerent. In either case, however small may be our contribution to the allied force, we are using the unlimited form

and aiming at an unlimited and not a mere territorial object.

If now we turn to British experience of war limited by contingent, we find that the continental form has frequently been used, but we also find it almost invariably accompanied by a popular repugnance, as though there were something in it antagonistic to the national instinct. A leading case is the assistance we sent to Frederick the Great in the Seven Years' War. At the opening of the war, so great was the popular repugnance that the measure was found impossible, and it was not till Frederick's dazzling resistance to the Catholic powers had clothed him with the glory of a Protestant hero, that Pitt could do what he wanted. The old religious fire was stirred. The most potent of all national instincts kindled the people to a generous warmth which overcame their inborn antipathy to continental operations, and it was possible to send a substantial contingent to Frederick's assistance. In the end the support fully achieved its purpose, but it must be noted that even in this case the operations were limited not only by contingent but also by object. It is true that Frederick was engaged in an unlimited war in which the continued existence of Prussia was at stake, and that the British force was an organic element in his war plan. Nevertheless, it formed part of a British subsidised army under Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick, who though nominated by Frederick was a British commander-in-chief. His army was in organisation entirely distinct from that of Frederick, and it was assigned the very definite and limited function of preventing

the French occupying Hanover and so turning the Prussian right flank. Finally it must be noted that its ability to perform this function was due to the fact that the theatre of operations assigned to it was such that in no probable event could it lose touch with the sea, nor could the enemy cut its lines of supply and retreat.

These features of the enterprise should be noted. They differentiate it from our earlier use of war limited by contingent in the continental manner, of which Marlborough's campaigns were typical, and they exhibit the special form which Marlborough would have chosen had political exigencies permitted and which was to become characteristic of British effort from Pitt's time onward. In the method of our greatest War Minister we have not only the limit by contingent but also the limit of a definite and independent function, and finally we have touch with the sea. This is the really vital factor, and upon it, as will presently appear, depends the strength of the method.

In the earlier part of the Great War we employed the same form in our operations in North-Western Europe. There we had also the limited function of securing Holland, and also complete touch with the sea, but our theatre of operations was not independent. Intimate concerted action with other forces was involved, and the result in every case was failure. Later on in Sicily, where absolute isolation was attainable, the strength of the method enabled us to achieve a lasting result with very slender means. But the result was purely defensive. It was not till the

Peninsular War developed that we found a theatre for war limited by contingent in which all the conditions that make for success were present. Even there so long as our army was regarded as a contingent auxiliary to the Spanish army the usual failure ensued. Only in Portugal, the defence of which was a true limited object, and where we had a sea-girt theatre independent of extraneous allies, was success achieved from the first. So strong was the method here, and so exhausting the method which it forced on the enemy, that the local balance of force was eventually reversed and we were able to pass to a drastic offensive.

The real secret of Wellington's success—apart from his own genius—was that in perfect conditions he was applying the limited form to an unlimited war. Our object was unlimited. It was nothing less than the overthrow of Napoleon. Complete success at sea had failed to do it, but that success had given us the power of applying the limited form, which was the most decisive form of offence within our means. Its substantial contribution to the final achievement of the object is now universally recognised.

The general result, then, of these considerations is that war by contingent in the continental form seldom or never differs generically from unlimited war, for the conditions required by limited war are seldom or never present. But what may be called the British or maritime form is in fact the application of the limited method to the unlimited form, as ancillary to the larger operations of our allies—a method which has usually been open to us because the control of the sea has enabled us to select a

theatre in effect truly limited.[5]

But what if the conditions of the struggle in which we wish to intervene are such that no truly limited theatre is available? In that case we have to choose between placing a contingent frankly at the disposal of our ally, or confining ourselves to coastal diversion, as we did at Frederick the Great's request in the early campaigns of the Seven Years' War. Such operations can seldom be satisfactory to either party. The small positive results of our efforts to intervene in this way have indeed done more than anything to discredit this form of war, and to brand it as unworthy of a first-class Power. Yet the fact remains that all the great continental masters of war have feared or valued British intervention of this character even in the most unfavourable conditions. It was because they looked for its effects rather in the threat than in the performance. They did not reckon for positive results at all. So long as such intervention took an amphibious form they knew its disturbing effect upon a European situation was always out of all proportion to the intrinsic strength employed or the positive results it could give. Its operative action was that it threatened positive results unless it were strongly met. Its effect, in short, was negative. Its value lay in its power of containing force greater than its own. That is

[5] Wellington's view of the essential factor was expressed to Rear Admiral Martin, who was sent to Spain by the Admiralty to confer with him in September 1813. "If anyone," he said, "wishes to know the history of this war, I will tell them it is our maritime superiority gives me the power of maintaining my army while the enemy are unable to do so." (*Letters of Sir T. Byam Martin*) [Navy Records Society], ii, p. 499.

all that can be claimed for it, but it may be all that is required. It is not the most drastic method of intervention, but it has proved itself the most drastic for a Power whose forces are not adapted for the higher method. Frederick the Great was the first great soldier to recognise it, and Napoleon was the last. For years he shut his eyes to it, laughed at it, covered it with a contempt that grew ever more irritable. In 1805 he called Craig's expedition a "pygmy combination," yet the preparation of another combined force for an entirely different destination caused him to see the first as an advance guard of a movement he could not ignore, and he sacrificed his fleet in an impotent effort to deal with it.

It was not, however, till four years later that he was forced to place on record his recognition of the principle. Then, curiously enough, he was convinced by an expedition which we have come to regard as above all others condemnatory of amphibious operations against the Continent. The Walcheren expedition is now usually held as the leading case of fatuous war administration. Historians can find no words too bad for it. They ignore the fact that it was a step—the final and most difficult step—in our post-Trafalgar policy of using the army to perfect our command of the sea against a fleet acting stubbornly on the defensive. It began with Copenhagen in 1807. It failed at the Dardanelles because fleet and army were separated; it succeeded at Lisbon and at Cadiz by demonstration alone. Walcheren, long contemplated, had been put off till the last as the most formidable and the least pressing. Napoleon had been looking for the attempt

ever since the idea was first broached in this country, but as time passed and the blow did not fall, the danger came to be more and more ignored. Finally, the moment came when he was heavily engaged in Austria and forced to call up the bulk of his strength to deal with the Archduke Charles. The risks were still great, but the British Government faced them boldly with open eyes. It was now or never. They were bent on developing their utmost military strength in the Peninsula, and so long as a potent and growing fleet remained in the North Sea it would always act as an increasing drag on such development. The prospective gain of success was in the eyes of the Government out of all proportion to the probable loss by failure. So when Napoleon least expected it they determined to act, and caught him napping. The defences of Antwerp had been left incomplete. There was no army to meet the blow—nothing but a polyglot rabble without staff or even officers. For a week at least success was in our hands. Napoleon's fleet only escaped by twenty-four hours, and yet the failure was not only complete but disastrous. Still so entirely were the causes of failure accidental, and so near had it come to success, that Napoleon received a thorough shock and looked for a quick repetition of the attempt. So seriously indeed did he regard his narrow escape that he found himself driven to reconsider his whole system of home defence. Not only did he deem it necessary to spend large sums in increasing the fixed defences of Antwerp and Toulon, but his Director of Conscription was called upon to work out a scheme for providing a permanent

force of no less than 300,000 men from the National Guard to defend the French coasts. "With 30,000 men in transports at the Downs," the Emperor wrote, "the English can paralyse 300,000 of my army, and that will reduce us to the rank of a second-class Power."[6]

The concentration of the British efforts in the Peninsula apparently rendered the realisation of this project unnecessary—that is, our line of operation was declared and the threat ceased. But none the less Napoleon's recognition of the principle remains on record—not in one of his speeches made for some ulterior purpose, but in a staff order to the principal officer concerned.

It is generally held that modern developments in military organisation and transport will enable a great continental Power to ignore such threats. Napoleon ignored them in the past, but only to verify the truth that in war to ignore a threat is too often to create an opportunity. Such opportunities may occur late or early. As both Lord Ligonier and Wolfe laid it down for such operations, surprise is not necessarily to be looked for at the beginning. We have usually had to create or wait for our opportunity—too often because we were either not ready or not bold enough to seize the first that occurred.

The cases in which such intervention has been most potent have been of two classes. Firstly, there is the intrusion into a war plan which our enemy has designed without allowing for our intervention, and to which he is irrevocably committed by his

[6] *Correspondance de Napoléon*, xix, 421, 4 September.

opening movements. Secondly, there is intervention to deprive the enemy of the fruits of victory. This form finds its efficacy in the principle that unlimited wars are not always decided by the destruction of armies. There usually remains the difficult work of conquering the people afterwards with an exhausted army. The intrusion of a small fresh force from the sea in such cases may suffice to turn the scale, as it did in the Peninsula, and as, in the opinion of some high authorities, it might have done in France in 1871.

Such a suggestion will appear to be almost heretical as sinning against the principle which condemns a strategical reserve. We say that the whole available force should be developed for the vital period of the struggle. No one can be found to dispute it nowadays. It is too obviously true when it is a question of a conflict between organised forces, but in the absence of all proof we are entitled to doubt whether it is true for that exhausting and demoralising period which lies beyond the shock of armies.

CHAPTER SIX
CONDITIONS OF STRENGTH IN LIMITED WAR

The elements of strength in limited war are closely analogous to those generally inherent in defence. That is to say, that as a correct use of defence will sometimes enable an inferior force to gain its end against a superior one, so are there instances in which the correct use of the limited form of war has enabled a weak military Power to attain success against a much stronger one, and these instances are too numerous to permit us to regard the results as accidental.

An obvious element of strength is that where the geographical conditions are favourable we are able by the use of our navy to restrict the amount of force our army will have to deal with. We can in fact bring up our fleet to redress the adverse balance of our land force. But apart from this very practical reason there is another, which is rooted in the first principles of strategy.

It is that limited war permits the use of the defensive without its usual drawbacks to a degree that is impossible in unlimited war. These drawbacks are chiefly that it tends to surrender the initiative to the enemy and that it deprives us of the moral exhilaration of the offensive. But in limited war, as we shall see, this need not be the case, and if without making these sacrifices

we are able to act mainly on the defensive our position becomes exceedingly strong.

The proposition really admits of no doubt. For even if we be not in whole-hearted agreement with Clausewitz's doctrine of the strength of defence, still we may at least accept Moltke's modification of it. He held that the strongest form of war—that is, the form which economically makes for the highest development of strength in a given force—is strategic offensive combined with tactical defensive. Now these are in effect the conditions which limited war should give—that is, if the theatre and method be rightly chosen. Let it be remembered that the use of this form of war presupposes that we are able by superior readiness or mobility or by being more conveniently situated to establish ourselves in the territorial object before our opponent can gather strength to prevent us. This done, we have the initiative, and the enemy being unable by hypothesis to attack us at home, must conform to our opening by endeavouring to turn us out. We are in a position to meet his attack on ground of our own choice and to avail ourselves of such opportunities of counter-attack as his distant and therefore exhausting offensive movements are likely to offer. Assuming, as in our own case we always must assume, that the territorial object is sea-girt and our enemy is not able to command the sea, such opportunities are certain to present themselves, and even if they are not used will greatly embarrass the main attack—as was abundantly shown in the Russian nervousness during their advance into the Liaotung

Peninsula, due to the fear of a counter-stroke from the Gulf of Pe-chi-li.

The actual situation which this method of procedure sets up is that our major strategy is offensive—that is, our main movement is positive, having for its aim the occupation of the territorial object. The minor strategy that follows should be in its general lines defensive, designed, so soon as the enemy sets about dislodging us, to develop the utmost energy of counter-attack which our force and opportunities justify.

Now if we consider that by universal agreement it is no longer possible in the present conditions of land warfare to draw a line between tactics and minor strategy, we have in our favour for all practical purposes the identical position which Moltke regarded as constituting the strongest form of war. That is to say, our major strategy is offensive and our minor strategy is defensive.

If, then, the limited form of war has this element of strength over and above the unlimited form, it must be correct to use it when we are not strong enough to use the more exhausting form and when the object is limited; just as much as it is correct to use the defensive when our object is negative and we are too weak for the offensive. The point is of the highest importance, for it is a direct negation of the current doctrine that in war there can be but one legitimate object, the overthrow of the enemy's means of resistance, and that the primary objective must always be his armed forces. It raises in fact the whole question as to whether it is not sometimes legitimate and even correct to aim directly at

the ulterior object of the war.

An impression appears to prevail—in spite of all that Clausewitz and Jomini had to say on the point—that the question admits of only one answer. Von der Goltz, for instance, is particularly emphatic in asserting that the overthrow of the enemy must always be the object in modern war. He lays it down as "the first principle of modern warfare," that "the immediate objective against which all our efforts must be directed is the hostile main army." Similarly Prince Kraft has the maxim that "the first aim should be to overcome the enemy's army. Everything else, the occupation of the country, &c., only comes in the second line."

It will be observed that he here admits that the process of occupying the enemy's territory is an operation distinct from the overthrow of the enemy's force. Von der Goltz goes further, and protests against the common error of regarding the annihilation of the enemy's principal army as synonymous with the complete attainment of the object. He is careful to assert that the current doctrine only holds good "when the two belligerent states are of approximately the same nature." If, then, there are cases in which the occupation of territory must be undertaken as an operation distinct from defeating the enemy's forces, and if in such cases the conditions are such that we can occupy the territory with advantage without first defeating the enemy, it is surely mere pedantry to insist that we should put off till to-morrow what we can do better to-day. If the occupation of the enemy's whole

territory is involved, or even a substantial part of it, the German principle of course holds good, but all wars are not of that character.

Insistence on the principle of "overthrow," and even its exaggeration, was of value, in its day, to prevent a recurrence to the old and discredited methods. But its work is done, and blind adherence to it without regard to the principles on which it rests tends to turn the art of war into mere bludgeon play.

Clausewitz, at any rate, as General Von Caemmerer has pointed out,[7] was far too practical a soldier to commit himself to so abstract a proposition in all its modern crudity. If it were true, it would never be possible for a weaker Power to make successful war against a stronger one in any cause whatever—a conclusion abundantly refuted by historical experience. That the higher form like the offensive is the more drastic is certain, if conditions are suitable for its use, but Clausewitz, it must be remembered, distinctly lays it down that such conditions presuppose in the belligerent employing the higher form a great physical or moral superiority or a great spirit of enterprise—an innate propensity for extreme hazards. Jomini did not go even so far as this. He certainly would have ruled out "an innate propensity to extreme hazards," for in his judgment it was this innate propensity which led Napoleon to abuse the higher form to his own undoing. So entirely indeed does history, no less than theory, fail to support the idea of the one answer, that it would seem that even in

[7] *Development of Strategical Science.*

Germany a reaction to Clausewitz's real teaching is beginning. In expounding it Von Caemmerer says, "Since the majority of the most prominent military authors of our time uphold the principle that in war our efforts must always be directed to their utmost limits and that a deliberate employment of lower means betrays more or less weakness, I feel bound to declare that the wideness of Clausewitz's views have inspired me with a high degree of admiration."

Now what Clausewitz held precisely was this—that when the conditions are not favourable for the use of the higher form, the seizure of a small part of the enemy's territory may be regarded as a correct alternative to destroying his armed forces. But he clearly regards this form of war only as a make-shift. His purely continental outlook prevented his considering that there might be cases where the object was actually so limited in character that the lower form of war would be at once the more effective and the more economical to use. In continental warfare, as we have seen, such cases can hardly occur, but they tend to declare themselves strongly when the maritime factor is introduced to any serious extent.

The tendency of British warfare to take the lower or limited form has always been as clearly marked as is the opposite tendency on the Continent. To attribute such a tendency, as is sometimes the fashion, to an inherent lack of warlike spirit is sufficiently contradicted by the results it has achieved. There is no reason indeed to put it down to anything but a sagacious

instinct for the kind of war that best accords with the conditions of our existence. So strong has this instinct been that it has led us usually to apply the lower form not only where the object of the war was a well-defined territorial one, but to cases in which its correctness was less obvious. As has been explained in the last chapter, we have applied it, and applied it on the whole with success, when we have been acting in concert with continental allies for an unlimited object—where, that is, the common object has been the overthrow of the common enemy.

The choice between the two forms really depends upon the circumstances of each case. We have to consider whether the political object is in fact limited, whether if unlimited in the abstract it can be reduced to a concrete object that is limited, and finally whether the strategical conditions are such as lend themselves to the successful application of the limited form.

What we require now is to determine those conditions with greater exactness, and this will be best done by changing our method to the concrete and taking a leading case.

The one which presents them in their clearest and simplest form is without doubt the recent war between Russia and Japan. Here we have a particularly striking example of a small Power having forced her will upon a much greater Power without "overthrowing" her—that is, without having crushed her power of resistance. That was entirely beyond the strength of Japan. So manifest was the fact that everywhere upon the Continent, where the overthrow of your enemy was regarded as the only admissible

form of war, the action of the Japanese in resorting to hostilities was regarded as madness. Only in England, with her tradition and instinct for what an island Power may achieve by the lower means, was Japan considered to have any reasonable chance of success.

The case is particularly striking; for every one felt that the real object of the war was in the abstract unlimited, that it was in fact to decide whether Russia or Japan was to be the predominant power in the Far East. Like the Franco-German War of 1870 it had all the aspect of what the Germans call "a trial of strength." Such a war is one which above all appears incapable of decision except by the complete overthrow of the one Power or the other. There was no complication of alliances nor any expectation of them. The Anglo-Japanese Treaty had isolated the struggle. If ever issue hung on the sheer fighting force of the two belligerents it would seem to have been this one. After the event we are inclined to attribute the result to the moral qualities and superior training and readiness of the victors. These qualities indeed played their part, and they must not be minimised; but who will contend that if Japan had tried to make her war with Russia, as Napoleon made his, she could have fared even as well as he did? She had no such preponderance as Clausewitz laid down as a condition precedent to attempting the overthrow of her enemy —the employment of unlimited war.

Fortunately for her the circumstances did not call for the employment of such extreme means. The political and

geographical conditions were such that she was able to reduce the intangible object of asserting her prestige to the purely concrete form of a territorial objective. The penetration of Russia into Manchuria threatened the absorption of Korea into the Russian Empire, and this Japan regarded as fatal to her own position and future development. Her power to maintain Korean integrity would be the outward and visible sign of her ability to assert herself as a Pacific Power. Her abstract quarrel with Russia could therefore be crystallised into a concrete objective in the same way as the quarrel of the Western Powers with Russia in 1854 crystallised into the concrete objective of Sebastopol.

In the Japanese case the immediate political object was exceptionally well adapted for the use of limited war. Owing to the geographical position of Korea and to the vast and undeveloped territories which separate it from the centre of Russian power, it could be practically isolated by naval action. Further than this, it fulfilled the condition to which Clausewitz attached the greatest importance—that is to say, the seizure of the particular object so far from weakening the home defence of Japan would have the effect of greatly increasing the strength of her position. Though offensive in effect and intention it was also, like Frederick's seizure of Saxony, a sound piece of defensive work. So far from exposing her heart, it served to cover it almost impregnably. The reason is plain. Owing to the wide separation of the two Russian arsenals at Port Arthur and Vladivostock, with a defile controlled by Japan interposed, the Russian naval

position was very faulty. The only way of correcting it was for Russia to secure a base in the Straits of Korea, and for this she had been striving by diplomatic means at Seoul for some time. Strategically the integrity of Korea was for Japan very much what the integrity of the Low Countries was for us, but in the case of the Low Countries, since they were incapable of isolation, our power of direct action was always comparatively weak. Portugal, with its unrivalled strategical harbour at Lisbon, was an analogous case in our old oceanic wars, and since it was capable of being in a measure isolated from the strength of our great rival by naval means we were there almost uniformly successful. On the whole it must be said that notwithstanding the success we achieved in our long series of wars waged on a limited basis, in none of them were the conditions so favourable for us as in this case they were for Japan. In none of them did our main offensive movement so completely secure our home defence. Canada was as eccentric as possible to our line of home defence, while in the Crimea so completely did our offensive uncover the British Islands, that we had to supplement our movement against the limited object by sending our main fighting fleet to hold the exit of the Baltic against the danger of an unlimited counter-stroke.[8]

[8] The strategical object with which the Baltic fleet was sent was certainly to prevent a counter-stroke—that is, its main function in our war plan was negative. Its positive function was minor and diversionary only. It also had a political object as a demonstration to further our efforts to form a Baltic coalition against Russia, which entirely failed. Public opinion mistaking the whole situation expected direct positive

Whether or not it was on this principle that the Japanese conceived the war from the outset matters little. The main considerations are that with so favourable a territorial object as Korea limited war was possible in its most formidable shape, that the war did in fact develop on limited lines, and that it was entirely successful. Without waiting to secure the command of the sea, Japan opened by a surprise seizure of Seoul, and then under cover of minor operations of the fleet proceeded to complete her occupation of Korea. As she faced the second stage, that of making good the defence of her conquest, the admirable nature of her geographical object was further displayed. The theoretical weakness of limited war at this point is the arrest of your offensive action. But in this case such arrest was neither necessary nor possible, and for these reasons. To render the conquest secure not only must the Korean frontier be made inviolable, but Korea must be permanently isolated by sea. This involved the destruction of the Russian fleet, and this in its turn entailed the reduction of Port Arthur by military means. Here, then, in the second stage Japan found herself committed to two lines of operation with two distinct objectives, Port Arthur and the Russian army that was slowly concentrating in Manchuria—

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results from this fleet, even the capture of St. Petersburg. Such an operation would have converted the war from a limited one to an unlimited one. It would have meant the "overthrow of the enemy," a task quite beyond the strength of the allies without the assistance of the Baltic Powers, and even so their assistance would not have justified changing the nature of the war, unless both Sweden and Russia had been ready to make unlimited war and nothing was further from their intention.

a thoroughly vicious situation. So fortunate, however, was the geographical conformation of the theatre that by promptitude and the bold use of an uncommanded sea it could be reduced to something far more correct. By continuing the advance of the Korean army into Manchuria and landing another force between it and the Port Arthur army the three corps could be concentrated and the vicious separation of the lines of operations turned to good account. They could be combined in such a way as to threaten an enveloping counter-attack on Liao-yang before the Russian offensive concentration could be completed. Not only was Liao-yang the Russian point of concentration, but it also was a sound position both for defending Korea and covering the siege of Port Arthur. Once secured, it gave the Japanese all the advantages of defence and forced the Russians to exhaust themselves in offensive operations which were beyond their strength. Nor was it only ashore that this advantage was gained. The success of the system, which culminated in the fall of Port Arthur, went further still. Not only did it make Japan relatively superior at sea, but it enabled her to assume a naval defensive and so to force the final naval decision on Russia with every advantage of time, place, and strength in her own favour.

By the battle of Tsushima the territorial object was completely isolated by sea, and the position of Japan in Korea was rendered as impregnable as that of Wellington at Torres Vedras. All that remained was to proceed to the third stage and demonstrate to Russia that the acceptance of the situation that had been set up

was more to her advantage than the further attempt to break it down. This the final advance to Mukden accomplished, and Japan obtained her end very far short of having overthrown her enemy. The offensive power of Russia had never been so strong, while that of Japan was almost if not quite exhausted.

Approached in this way, the Far Eastern struggle is seen to develop on the same lines as all our great maritime wars of the past, which continental strategists have so persistently excluded from their field of study. It presents the normal three phases —the initial offensive movement to seize the territorial object, the secondary phase, which forces an attenuated offensive on the enemy, and the final stage of pressure, in which there is a return to the offensive "according," as Jomini puts it, "to circumstances and your relative force in order to obtain the cession desired."

It must not of course be asked that these phases shall be always clearly defined. Strategical analysis can never give exact results. It aims only at approximations, at groupings which will serve to guide but will always leave much to the judgment. The three phases in the Russo-Japanese War, though unusually well defined, continually overlapped. It must be so; for in war the effect of an operation is never confined to the limits of its immediate or primary intention. Thus the occupation of Korea had the secondary defensive effect of covering the home country, while the initial blow which Admiral Togo delivered at Port Arthur to cover the primary offensive movement proved, by the demoralisation it caused in the Russian fleet, to be a distinct

step in the secondary phase of isolating the conquest. In the later stages of the war the line between what was essential to set up the second phase of perfecting the isolation and the third phase of general pressure seems to have grown very nebulous.

It was at this stage that the Japanese strategy has been most severely criticised, and it was just here they seem to have lost hold of the conception of a limited war, if in fact they had ever securely grasped the conception as the elder Pitt understood it. It has been argued that in their eagerness to deal a blow at the enemy's main army they neglected to devote sufficient force to reduce Port Arthur, an essential step to complete the second phase. Whether or not the exigencies of the case rendered such distribution of force inevitable or whether it was due to miscalculation of difficulties, the result was a most costly set-back. For not only did it entail a vast loss of time and life at Port Arthur itself, but when the sortie of the Russian fleet in June brought home to them their error, the offensive movement on Liao-yang had to be delayed, and the opportunity passed for a decisive counter-stroke at the enemy's concentration ashore.

This misfortune, which was to cost the Japanese so dear, may perhaps be attributed at least in part to the continental influences under which their army had been trained. We at least can trace the unlimited outlook in the pages of the German Staff history. In dealing with the Japanese plan of operations it is assumed that the occupation of Korea and the isolation of Port Arthur were but preliminaries to a concentric advance on Liao-yang, "which

was kept in view as the first objective of the operations on land." But surely on every theory of the war the first objective of the Japanese on land was Seoul, where they expected to have to fight their first important action against troops advancing from the Yalu; and surely their second was Port Arthur, with its fleet and arsenal, which they expected to reduce with little more difficulty than they had met with ten years before against the Chinese. Such at least was the actual progression of events, and a criticism which regards operations of such magnitude and ultimate importance as mere incidents of strategic deployment is only to be explained by the domination of the Napoleonic idea of war, against the universal application of which Clausewitz so solemnly protested. It is the work of men who have a natural difficulty in conceiving a war plan that does not culminate in a Jena or a Sedan. It is a view surely which is the child of theory, bearing no relation to the actuality of the war in question and affording no explanation of its ultimate success. The truth is, that so long as the Japanese acted on the principles of limited war, as laid down by Clausewitz and Jomini and plainly deducible from our own rich experience, they progressed beyond all their expectations, but so soon as they departed from them and suffered themselves to be confused with continental theories they were surprised by unaccountable failure.

The expression "Limited war" is no doubt not entirely happy. Yet no other has been found to condense the ideas of limited object and limited interest, which are its special characteristics.

Still if the above example be kept in mind as a typical case, the meaning of the term will not be mistaken. It only remains to emphasise one important point. The fact that the doctrine of limited war traverses the current belief that our primary objective must always be the enemy's armed forces is liable to carry with it a false inference that it also rejects the corollary that war means the use of battles. Nothing is further from the conception. Whatever the form of war, there is no likelihood of our ever going back to the old fallacy of attempting to decide wars by manoeuvres. All forms alike demand the use of battles. By our fundamental theory war is always "a continuation of political intercourse, in which fighting is substituted for writing notes." However great the controlling influence of the political object, it must never obscure the fact that it is by fighting we have to gain our end.

It is the more necessary to insist on this point, for the idea of making a piece of territory your object is liable to be confused with the older method of conducting war, in which armies were content to manoeuvre for strategical positions, and a battle came almost to be regarded as a mark of bad generalship. With such parading limited war has nothing to do. Its conduct differs only from that of unlimited war in that instead of having to destroy our enemy's whole power of resistance, we need only overthrow so much of his active force as he is able or willing to bring to bear in order to prevent or terminate our occupation of the territorial object.

The first consideration, then, in entering on such a war is to endeavour to determine what the force will amount to. It will depend, firstly, on the importance the enemy attaches to the limited object, coupled with the nature and extent of his preoccupations elsewhere, and, secondly, it will depend upon the natural difficulties of his lines of communication and the extent to which we can increase those difficulties by our conduct of the initial operations. In favourable circumstances therefore (and here lies the great value of the limited form) we are able to control the amount of force we shall have to encounter. The most favourable circumstances and the only circumstances by which we ourselves can profit are such as permit the more or less complete isolation of the object by naval action, and such isolation can never be established until we have entirely overthrown the enemy's naval forces.

Here, then, we enter the field of naval strategy. We can now leave behind us the theory of war in general and, in order to pave the way to our final conclusions, devote our attention to the theory of naval warfare in particular.

PART TWO
THEORY OF NAVAL WAR

CHAPTER ONE
THEORY OF THE OBJECT —COMMAND OF THE SEA

The object of naval warfare must always be directly or indirectly either to secure the command of the sea or to prevent the enemy from securing it.

The second part of the proposition should be noted with special care in order to exclude a habit of thought, which is one of the commonest sources of error in naval speculation. That error is the very general assumption that if one belligerent loses the command of the sea it passes at once to the other belligerent. The most cursory study of naval history is enough to reveal the falseness of such an assumption. It tells us that the most common situation in naval war is that neither side has the command; that the normal position is not a commanded sea, but an uncommanded sea. The mere assertion, which no one denies, that the object of naval warfare is to get command of the sea actually connotes the proposition that the command is normally

in dispute. It is this state of dispute with which naval strategy is most nearly concerned, for when the command is lost or won pure naval strategy comes to an end.

This truth is so obvious that it would scarcely be worth mentioning were it not for the constant recurrence of such phrases as: "If England were to lose command of the sea, it would be all over with her." The fallacy of the idea is that it ignores the power of the strategical defensive. It assumes that if in the face of some extraordinary hostile coalition or through some extraordinary mischance we found ourselves without sufficient strength to keep the command, we should therefore be too weak to prevent the enemy getting it—a negation of the whole theory of war, which at least requires further support than it ever receives.

And not only is this assumption a negation of theory; it is a negation both of practical experience and of the expressed opinion of our greatest masters. We ourselves have used the defensive at sea with success, as under William the Third and in the War of American Independence, while in our long wars with France she habitually used it in such a way that sometimes for years, though we had a substantial preponderance, we could not get command, and for years were unable to carry out our war plan without serious interruption from her fleet.

So far from the defensive being a negligible factor at sea, or even the mere pestilent heresy it is generally represented, it is of course inherent in all war, and, as we have seen, the paramount

questions of strategy both at sea and on land turn on the relative possibilities of offensive and defensive, and upon the relative proportions in which each should enter into our plan of war. At sea the most powerful and aggressively-minded belligerent can no more avoid his alternating periods of defence, which result from inevitable arrests of offensive action, than they can be avoided on land. The defensive, then, has to be considered; but before we are in a position to do so with profit, we have to proceed with our analysis of the phrase, "Command of the Sea," and ascertain exactly what it is we mean by it in war.

In the first place, "Command of the Sea" is not identical in its strategical conditions with the conquest of territory. You cannot argue from the one to the other, as has been too commonly done. Such phrases as the "Conquest of water territory" and "Making the enemy's coast our frontier" had their use and meaning in the mouths of those who framed them, but they are really little but rhetorical expressions founded on false analogy, and false analogy is not a secure basis for a theory of war.

The analogy is false for two reasons, both of which enter materially into the conduct of naval war. You cannot conquer sea because it is not susceptible of ownership, at least outside territorial waters. You cannot, as lawyers say, "reduce it into possession," because you cannot exclude neutrals from it as you can from territory you conquer. In the second place, you cannot subsist your armed force upon it as you can upon enemy's territory. Clearly, then, to make deductions from an assumption

that command of the sea is analogous to conquest of territory is unscientific, and certain to lead to error.

The only safe method is to inquire what it is we can secure for ourselves, and what it is we can deny the enemy by command of the sea. Now, if we exclude fishery rights, which are irrelevant to the present matter, the only right we or our enemy can have on the sea is the right of passage; in other words, the only positive value which the high seas have for national life is as a means of communication. For the active life of a nation such means may stand for much or it may stand for little, but to every maritime State it has some value. Consequently by denying an enemy this means of passage we check the movement of his national life at sea in the same kind of way that we check it on land by occupying his territory. So far the analogy holds good, but no further.

So much for the positive value which the sea has in national life. It has also a negative value. For not only is it a means of communication, but, unlike the means of communication ashore, it is also a barrier. By winning command of the sea we remove that barrier from our own path, thereby placing ourselves in position to exert direct military pressure upon the national life of our enemy ashore, while at the same time we solidify it against him and prevent his exerting direct military pressure upon ourselves.

Command of the sea, therefore, means nothing but the control of maritime communications, whether for commercial or military purposes. The object of naval warfare is the control

of communications, and not, as in land warfare, the conquest of territory. The difference is fundamental. True, it is rightly said that strategy ashore is mainly a question of communications, but they are communications in another sense. The phrase refers to the communications of the army alone, and not to the wider communications which are part of the life of the nation.

But on land also there are communications of a kind which are essential to national life—the internal communications which connect the points of distribution. Here again we touch an analogy between the two kinds of war. Land warfare, as the most devoted adherents of the modern view admit, cannot attain its end by military victories alone. The destruction of your enemy's forces will not avail for certain unless you have in reserve sufficient force to complete the occupation of his inland communications and principal points of distribution. This power is the real fruit of victory, the power to strangle the whole national life. It is not until this is done that a high-spirited nation, whose whole heart is in the war, will consent to make peace and do your will. It is precisely in the same way that the command of the sea works towards peace, though of course in a far less coercive manner, against a continental State. By occupying her maritime communications and closing the points of distribution in which they terminate we destroy the national life afloat, and thereby check the vitality of that life ashore so far as the one is dependent on the other. Thus we see that so long as we retain the power and right to stop maritime communications, the analogy

between command of the sea and the conquest of territory is in this aspect very close. And the analogy is of the utmost practical importance, for on it turns the most burning question of maritime war, which it will be well to deal with in this place.

It is obvious that if the object and end of naval warfare is the control of communications it must carry with it the right to forbid, if we can, the passage of both public and private property upon the sea. Now the only means we have of enforcing such control of commercial communications at sea is in the last resort the capture or destruction of sea-borne property. Such capture or destruction is the penalty which we impose upon our enemy for attempting to use the communications of which he does not hold the control. In the language of jurisprudence, it is the ultimate sanction of the interdict which we are seeking to enforce. The current term "Commerce destruction" is not in fact a logical expression of the strategical idea. To make the position clear we should say "Commerce prevention."

The methods of this "Commerce prevention" have no more connection with the old and barbarous idea of plunder and reprisal than orderly requisitions ashore have with the old idea of plunder and ravaging. No form of war indeed causes so little human suffering as the capture of property at sea. It is more akin to process of law, such as distress for rent, or execution of judgment, or arrest of a ship, than to a military operation. Once, it is true, it was not so. In the days of privateers it was accompanied too often, and particularly in the Mediterranean

and the West Indies, with lamentable cruelty and lawlessness, and the existence of such abuses was the real reason for the general agreement to the Declaration of Paris by which privateering was abolished.

But it was not the only reason. The idea of privateering was a survival of a primitive and unscientific conception of war, which was governed mainly by a general notion of doing your enemy as much damage as possible and making reprisal for wrongs he had done you. To the same class of ideas belonged the practice of plunder and ravaging ashore. But neither of these methods of war was abolished for humanitarian reasons. They disappeared indeed as a general practice before the world had begun to talk of humanity. They were abolished because war became more scientific. The right to plunder and ravage was not denied. But plunder was found to demoralise your troops and unfit them for fighting, and ravaging proved to be a less powerful means of coercing your enemy than exploiting the occupied country by means of regular requisitions for the supply of your own army and the increase of its offensive range. In short, the reform arose from a desire to husband your enemy's resources for your own use instead of wantonly wasting them.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.