The Acme of Skill: Clausewitz, Sun Tzu and the Revolutions in Military Affairs

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Every age had its own kind of war

Clausewitz

During the 2000 US presidential campaign George W. Bush made much of the allegation that the Clinton administration had been squandering the military resources of the United States by committing military forces to peace-keeping as well as peace-enforcement operations from Haiti to Kosovo. Post-Cold War military terminology refers to such use of military force as 'operations other than war'.[1] It was time, Bush argued, for the armed forces to concentrate on what he perceived to be their core function: to 'fight and win wars'.[2] But how is one to fight and win wars in the twenty-first century?

Bush points to the need to prepare for the wars the twenty-first century might have in store for us. The way he singles out war and the conventional forces used to fight them, shows he believes that future armed conflicts will be fought and won on Clausewitzian terms. 'War,' Carl von Clausewitz famously asserted, 'is simply the continuation of political intercourse, with the addition of other means.'[3] By that dictum Clausewitz described and defined a modern Western way of warfare that emphasised the need to seek a military decision to irreconcilable differences between nations in pitched battles. Is that what the twentieth-first century holds in store for us? At the present, the development in information technology is making Western armed forces in general but the US armed forces in particular transcend their former warfighting paradigm. This has in many ways made the 1990s a 'Clausewitzian moment' enabling especially the American military to fight, or prepare to fight, 'pure war'.[4] The Clausewitzian moment may soon be over, however, as the practice of information warfare moves the focus of war from decisive battles to the control of information. Furthermore, the Clausewitzian moment may come to an end because of a paradigm shift in Western modernity. As Western societies transform from the modern era to a late-modern, or post-modern, era, they transcend the political reason that made war its instrument.

Together, the two 'paradigm shifts' constitute revolutions in military affairs (RMA) far more fundamental than the one the term has come to signify in the 1990s. The revolution in military affairs has become a way to describe the crushing American military superiority in the post-Cold War world. This essay argues, first, that there are two revolutions in military affairs: a technological paradigm shift and a social paradigm shift. Two processes that feed on one another. Second, it is argued that these revolutions seem to bring about a new strategic culture. A strategic culture focused on operations other than war as the Clausewitz defined it.

The ancient Chinese maxims of war by Sun Tzu provide an avenue for understanding the nature of these new operations. Sun Tzu's priorities in warfare are completely different from those of Clausewitz. Where Clausewitz focused on applying overwhelming force at the centre of gravity, Sun Tzu argued one could win without fighting. 'To subdue the enemy without fighting,' Sun Tzu asserted,

'is the acme of skill.'[5] According to Sun Tzu, the first priority in warfare should be to attack the enemy's strategy, the second priority to attack the enemy's alliances and only thirdly one should move to attack the enemy's army.[6]

This essay seeks to map the operational environment created by the revolutions in military affairs by means of Sun Tzu's three priorities. First, the essay explores the possibility RMA-technology gives for realising Sun Tzu's idea of attacking strategies rather than armies. Second, Sun Tzu's notion of attacking alliances is used to show how the dichotomy between politics and war breaks down in late-modernity, and how the Western practice of intervention following the Cold War illustrates this point. Third, it is argued that direct attacks – Sun Tzu's third priority – is no longer defined in terms of enduring interests of grand strategy but is the product of what is termed 'grand tactics'.

This essay seeks to map the strategic paradigm that has developed in the 1990s taking the West beyond war towards a practice 'of operations other than war'. Sun Tzu serves as the point of departure of this exercise. This is not to say that *The Art of War* should replace *On War* as the constitutive text of the Western way of warfare. Where Clausewitz was constituted by and constitutive of the modern Western way of warfare, Sun Tzu's *The Art of War* was written more than 2,000 years ago. The distance in time and space makes it impossible for Sun Tzu to serve the same purposes of double hermeneutics as an analysis of Clausewitz can.[7] *The Art of War* serves a heuristic purpose: Sun Tzu is the conceptual crowbar that enables one to transcend the Clausewitzian paradigm. Furthermore, *The Art of War* serves an analytical purpose. Sun Tzu focuses on a number of elements of warfare that, though they have had some importance in the Western way of warfare previously, have never before had the importance they have now. Sun Tzu's thoughts can help us to rediscover their importance.

Thus, the essay is an exercise in mapping rather than analysis. It seeks to identify a problematique by linking a number of issues, rather than researching one or more issues in depth. Depth has been sacrificed for breath in order to link a number of issues that are important and mutually reinforcing elements of the strategic discourse of the moment, but rarely brought together. A number of examples may serve to illustrate this. Sun Tzu is often quoted in relation to the technological RMA, but the implications of Sun Tzu's thoughts for the practice of warfare, and thereby the rationale of the use of armed force itself is seldom explored. Clausewitz and Sun Tzu are often compared. However, the comparison is rarely linked to the growing research programme on strategic culture. The study of new practices of security following the Cold War is seldom linked to the discussion on RMA. The essay attempts to place these and other issues on one conceptual map in the hope that this map may serve as a guide for broader discussion as well as deeper analysis.

Before the essay turns to mapping the strategic environment of the revolutions of military affairs, the implications for strategic thought of the research into military culture will be briefly sketched and the differences between Clausewitz and Sun Tzu highlighted.

Cultures and Strategies

What is the revolution in military affairs revolutionising? The most obvious subject of revolution is the conduct of military operations themselves. Most definitions of RMA focuses on the way information technology transforms what the RAND Cooperation terms the 'paradigm' by which operations are conducted. From that point of view the result of the revolution in military affairs is 'operations other than war', the transformation of war as previously understood. The transformation of the meaning of the concept of war. However, the technocratic definition of RMA is merely the point of departure for a number of observers and practitioners who regard the introduction of information technology into military affairs as a part of paradigm shift in Western society. From that point of view the RMA is the effect of an overall transformation of Western society. The new military paradigm is part of a new social paradigm. In other words, the RMA is an episteme as well as a techne.

The construction of the present strategic developments in terms of the RMA has made historical comparison pivotal for understanding the present. The notion of the RMA itself is an allusion to the 'military revolution' in the sixteenth and seventh century. As this revolution played an important part in the creation of sovereign states in Europe and gave these states a crushing military superiority over the rest of the world, signifying present developments by the same term is some indication of the importance placed on the RMA.[8] The historical perspective, however, is rarely used to put the strategic thinking revolutionised into perspective. Focusing on the future, few takes the time to evaluate whether the concepts by which the transformation is measured in fact belongs to the very paradigm being transformed. But one ought to.

There are no universal strategic concepts. The concept of strategy itself is the product a military culture that Clausewitz did so much to describe and define. If one are to understand the significance of the present RMAs one must appreciate the historicity of military thought. In doing so one will realise that innovations in strategic thought, at least in the case of Sun Tzu and Clausewitz, are the product of RMAs. The following sections will first argue the case for a cultural approach, and then turn to Sun Tzu and Clausewitz.

Culture

In the past two centuries Carl von Clausewitz defined the Western conception of war. According to Clausewitz, war is the 'continuation of political intercourse, with the addition of other means'.[9] The 1990s' application of military force for 'cosmopolitan' interventions are constructed as 'operations other than war' because they do not live up to Clausewitz' definition of war. As such, they are only of fleeting significance because Clausewitz' definition of war is universal. Clausewitz defined the very reason for using military force. 'Operations other than war' do not follow that reasoning, and therefore they have little future importance. As John Keegan and Martin van Creveld have pointed out, however, far from being universal the Clausewitzian paradigm is the expression of a particular Western and modern conception of war. Clausewitz' genius was not to find the essence of war, but on the one hand to describe and on the other hand to define a modern paradigm for what Keegan terms the Western way of warfare.[10]

The Western way of warfare is transforming. The enemies which the West believes it will face in the future are no longer exclusively, or indeed primarily, nation-states. At the same time, the West is very conscious about the way information technology transforms the practice of warfare, and the immense implications such a transformation can have. Introducing some of the conclusion's of the United States' military's *Quadrennial Defense Review*, which defined the development of the United States' armed forces in terms of the RMA, Secretary of Defense William Cohen, told of his impression of an exercise at Fort Irwin utilising RMA-technology:

> 'It was clear to me that just as the longbow, the pike and gunpowder eventually forced the armored knight from the field, so are we now witnessing the triumph of the microchip in warfare, transforming it in ways we are only beginning to comprehend.'[11]

The transformation is comprehended in terms of 'the Revolution in Military Affairs'. A RMA, Richard Hundley of the RAND Cooperation argues, 'involves a paradigm shift in the nature and conduct of military operations.'[12] RAND's definition of a paradigm is confined to the military doctrine by which a certain technology is put to military use. A revolution in military affairs is not, however, only the case of technology enabling military establishments to transcend a previous strategic situation. The really significant RMAs are the result of a paradigm shift in society in general. In other words, RMAs are not only the result of a new techne, but also of a new episteme.

As Thomas Kuhn pointed out, paradigms are 'incommensurable'.[13] In terms of the Clausewitzian paradigm, military operations other than war are indeed not what military force is all about. To capture the strategic reality of the RMA, one

will therefore have to turn somewhere else. A lot of people dealing with strategy seek to describe the late-modern practices of war with the pre-modern scholarship of Sun Tzu: 'Some attribute current interest in Sun Tzu, the Chinese strategist and philosopher of war, to the advent of the information age and its military subset, "information war".'[14] Unfortunately, Sun Tzu is more often than not used to show the new importance of speed or information new technology rather than used to reverse the entire Clausewitzian paradigm. One finds the reason for this if one goes beyond Kuhn to Berger and Luckmann's argument that paradigms are 'incommensurable' because knowledge is socially constructed.[15]

The Clausewitzian paradigm is not only a way to know the world it is constuted by a certain 'world' and constitutive of that 'world'. *On War* is the manifestation of a certain type of knowledge (modern science) and a certain type of social organisation (the nation-state). The concept of culture is used to show how social construction defines practice.[16] The Clausewitzian paradigm is not only a theory, but, as Keegan and Creveld argues, a culture of warfare. A culture that defines how wars are fought, why they are fought and for what reasons military force is employed.[17] In other words, the concepts of strategy, military force, military organisations etc. we normally take for granted are defined by this paradigm. Most of what we know of war is defined by the history of the Clausewitzian paradigm.

It is within that paradigm that military organisations learn their lessons for how to conduct military operations successfully. For that reason military personnel, or the research institutes associated with them, emphasise the continuity of warfare: they seek to accumulate lessons rather that look for discontinuities that may discard some, or all, of the lessons on which they base their conduct of operations. This makes them accomplished learners within a paradigm, but at the risk of being insensitive to discontinuity and thus prone to plan for the previous war rather than the next war.

Emphasising continuity, Sun Tzu is used to describe one aspect of war (e.g., speed or information)[18] or simply to signify the importance of this aspect.[19] The problem is that there might not be continuity of military paradigms. The RMA Sun Tzu is used to describe is not only a revolution in military technology. It also transcends the Clausewitzian paradigm by which the military is defined. The RMA not only presents the West with new technology. It also signifies the arrival of new types of adversaries and new conditions for conducting security policy. In that case the accumulative approach to military strategy can no longer give good advise. Recent studies in military culture suggests that when a military establishment stress continuity and old lessons in a time for transformation, the practice of war itself may hold some nasty surprises.[20]

In the following the paradigm Clausewitz described and defined will be sketched with the point of departure in Clausewitz' intellectual biography. The same approach will be adopted when briefly outlining Sun Tzu's thoughts. The sections are to illustrate not only the very different cultures Clausewitz and Sun Tzu represent, but also that paradigmatic transformations are accompanied by new strategic thought. A significant observation in a time constructed as revolutionary.

Clausewitz: the Logic of War

The concept of strategy Clausewitz came to define was the result of a revolution in military affairs. Strategy was the product of an Enlightenment belief in the possibility of establishing a science of war. As a science, the principles of war '… could be discovered, laid down in a "system", and taught in the military academies that were just beginning to open their doors'.[21] Strategy was a new paradigm of warfare, as it represented a new way of knowing what war was, as well as a new approach to how one could wage it. Where this paradigm shift was in tune with the modernisation of Western society, the way modern military culture was to play out was to a large extent determined by the Napoleonic wars.

The Napoleonic wars were constitutive of how Clausewitz defined war. Clausewitz first saw battle in 1793 against the French revolutionary armies, and formed his political views in opposition to France and in favour of German nationalism.[22] Clausewitz' famous – to some notorious – definition of war as 'simply a continuation of political intercourse, with the addition of other means' must be understood as a way to synthesis his experience of the Napoleonic wars.[23]

Clausewitz described the Napoleonic wars as total wars in which the entire existence of nations came to depend on the outcome of war.[24] The French revolution had made the constitution of the state a strategic question. As students of nationalism has pointed out, making the constitution of the state a strategic question the French state had to create a French nation, and being threatened by France other European nations came into being as political forces.

To Clausewitz, the Napoleonic wars were thus the 'extreme' manifestation of the possibility for mobilising states to war in an anarchical international system of nation-states. War was a means used by states against other states in order to achieve political victories. War was not about booty, religion, honour or other of the time-honoured reasons for going to war. War was a means to achieve the state's political ambitions. Strategy made war something more than mere violence. 'Its grammar, indeed, may be its own,' Clausewitz wrote of war, 'but not its logic.'[25] War had a meaning no other act of violence had because it was

defined as a means to ends beyond the acts of violence themselves. The logic of war was politics.

By arguing that war was a means to achieve political ends Clausewitz established a praxeology of war.[26] Strategy was not only a matter of establishing a theory of war, but establishing a theory after which wars could be successfully waged. Clausewitz thus sought to define the means and ends of war in order to establish the causality of war: the rationale by which war was made. So doing, he could determine the rules of war and point to the optimal way of utilising these rules.

Sun Tzu: Wisdom in War

Sun Tzu's *The Art of War* represents a paradigm of knowledge completely different from Clausewitz' modern approach. The most illustrative example of this is that we do not know whether Sun Tzu in fact ever existed, let alone if he ever wrote *The Art of War*. It has been argued that Sun Tzu is a homerian figure: the mythical author of a work that in fact is the compilation of the work of a number of authors in a certain tradition. Others have argued that Sun Tzu indeed was, as claimed in the text, a successful Chinese general who wrote down his maxims some time in the period 400-320 BC. Within the culture of knowledge *The Art of War* is written, however, the question of whether Sun Tzu lived or not is of little consequence.[27]

The Art of War is not a work in the Western culture of science in which knowledge is supposedly derived by the power of a single intellect. *The Art of War* is a claim on wisdom rather than science. Wisdom is generated from experience, and thus *The Art of War* takes its point of departure in the story of a successful general: Sun Tzu. Sun Tzu's story serves, however, only as the point of departure for a tradition. *The Art of War* consists of a number of maxims attributed to Sun Tzu and a number of authoritative commentaries added in the course of time. As such, *The Art of War* is better understood as a tradition rather than a study. The purpose of tradition is to mediate knowledge across time. That is what wisdom is all about: to apply the experience of the past to new problems. As such, *The Art of War* makes a claim on timeless knowledge, but not in the universal sense of Clausewitz. Sun Tzu and the commentator's knowledge make a claim of relevance because of its continuity in time, not because it transcends time.

As in the case of Clausewitz' paradigm, Sun Tzu' paradigm was the lesson of a RMA. In terms of military technology, iron-weapons were taken the place of bronze-weapons, cavalry the place of chariots and large infantry formations were being deployed for the first time.[28] These developments transformed Chinese

warfare from largely ritualised skirmishes between noble-men into much more complicated operations which demanded new skills of generalship. *The Art of War*, and the other military tracts completed at that time, were to guide rulers in the use of this new military techne. As in the case of many military revolutions, new technology also increased the economic and social costs of warfare. The production of iron weapons, the breeding, feeding and training of a large number of cavalry horses and the troops to use them must have strained the finances of the Chinese rulers. Where noble warriors in chariots had been specialised in warfare, and their campaigns therefore of no great consequence to the rest of society, the levy of peasants to fight as infantry did not only strain the economy of an agricultural society, it also brought social instability to the countryside that could result in discontent and, in the worst case, rebellion. Discontent might also arise from the expenses of provisioning troops. Little wonder Sun Tzu states that 'those adept in waging war do not require a second levy of conscripts nor more than one provisioning'.[29]

If he existed, Sun Tzu probably belonged to the professional officer class that developed to deal with the mounting complexity of war. And the Chinese needed officers, because at this point China was not a unified empire but consisted of a number of states that each strove to establish empire. Hence the reference to the period as the period of the 'warring states'. As in early-modern Europe, the warring states kept the rising costs of war down by disbanding at least some of the army in peacetime and then re-employing mercenaries when the time for war came. Officers like Sun Tzu thus travelled China offering their services to different kings. The famous story of the concubines in which Sun Tzu drills the King of Wu's concubines in order to show his flair for generalship – a flair he demonstrates by executing two of the concubines for insubordination – shows how these travelling professionals had to prove themselves.[30] Being outsiders to the court they did not have the political capital to cover up defeat. They had to deliver the victory they were hired to achieve, at minimal costs. It was not for them to squander millions of lives, as their successors in Europe's national armies would do in the twentieth century.

One might speculate that *The Art of War*, and similar texts, originated as an ancient equivalent of the glossy brochures consultants use today to advertise their qualifications to potential clients. As today's consultants use fashionable sociological and psychological theories to legitimise their advice, travelling officers, like Sun Tzu, applied taoist philosophy to military affairs. As Taoism, Sun Tzu has a holistic world-view. Sun Tzu also stresses the importance of harmony. Sun Tzu regards war as a way to restore harmony rather than the result of inherent opposites, as the Western tradition holds. Furthermore, *The Art of War* expresses a taoist conception of agency, as it rejects the decisive action so important to Clausewitz. Sun Tzu does not share Clausewitz' Enlightenment

concept of being able to establish the nature of things and act on that knowledge. It is also in line with taoist philosophy that Sun Tzu regards the strategic environment as ever changing, and argues that strategy should use these changes to achieve victory. To Sun Tzu, the pivotal element of war is to dominate the progression of the war itself rather than particular engagements which is Clausewitz' focus.

In the following three sections, I will use the differences between Clausewitz and Sun Tzu's conceptions of conflict to explore the new military practice created by the revolutions in military affairs.

Revolutionising Clausewitz?

Sun Tzu argued that attacking the enemy's strategy was the best course of action in war. 'He who excels in conquering his enemies,' Tu Mu comments in *The Art of War*, 'triumphs before threats materialize.'[31] This approach to war is radically different from the Western way of warfare. Clausewitz found that the practice of war was violence. 'Essentially war is fighting, for fighting is the only effective principle in the manifold activities generally designated as war,' Clausewitz argued. 'Fighting in turn, is a trial of moral and physical forces through the medium of the latter.'[32] To Clausewitz, violence is a means in search of an end, as war is an end in search of means. His study was to explain how means and ends met by virtue of the means-end rationality of politics.

To Clausewitz war was therefore a symmetrical enterprise: 'the collision of two living forces.'[33] Physically, the forces colliding were of the same kind. They were armies organised by the same principles and they deployed their forces for similar objectives. 'Morally' the colliding forces were guided by similar political considerations. Defeating an enemy, Clausewitz argued, was thus a matter of striking the enemy's 'centre of gravity'. The centre of gravity was the point from which 'the moral and physical forces' of the enemy were derived and without which it could not fight on. One example of the centre of gravity could be the enemy's capital, another the command and control of the army.

In that sense war was simple: A commander should plan for striking the centre of gravity. 'Everything in war is very simple,' Clausewitz noted, 'but the simplest thing is difficult.'[34] The plan for striking the centre of gravity would probably not be fully executed because the friction of war. One of the greatest passages in *On War* is where Clausewitz takes his reader on a trip from the edge of the battlefield to its centre in order to show how the ability to ascertain what is happening and making clear-headed decisions gradually diminishes, at the same time as weather, terrain and logistics limits the number of things it is actually

possible to do.[35] Clausewitz terms it friction. Friction made warfare like walking in water: the simple tasks of battle were made extremely difficult to execute.[36]

What if one could lift the fog of war? In that case one could precisely identify and take out the enemy's centre of gravity. One could make war simple for oneself and extremely difficult for the enemy. There are those in the US armed forces that argues that is exactly what the RMA enables militaries that embraces it to do. 'Vastly reducing the fog of war,' William Cohen argues, information technology will enable the United States' armed forces '… to collect and distribute a steady flow of information to US forces throughout the battlespace, while denying the enemy the ability to do the same.'[37] The US military terms this information system the system of systems.[38] The system of systems is to integrate existing military systems, like tanks and aircraft carries, into a single information system that will allow them 'dominant battlespace knowledge'. With that knowledge forces will no longer need to take the road Clausewitz described. Not knowning what lay ahead, and not being able to direct forces in the heat of battle, Western militaries have traditionally massed forces to overwhelm any obstacle ahead. The system of systems makes that unnecessary. 'Instead of relying on massed forces and sequential operations,' the Joint Chiefs of Staff's *Joint Vision 2010* states, 'we will achieve massed effects in other ways.'[39] By removing friction it becomes possible to apply the right force, at the right place and at the right time. It becomes possible for US forces, Cohen argues, 'to manoeuvre and engage the enemy at the times and places of our choosing throughout the entire battlespace.'[40]

According to their Clausewitzian culture, the American military finds that information technology can be used to create the perfect symmetrical battle. A battle in which the relationship of plan and battle is approaching 1:1. A battle in which the full thrust of forces can be used against the enemy's centre of gravity, while protecting one's own centre of gravity. RAND's definition of RMA reflects this way of thinking: RMAs are producing technology that enables the realisation of certain strategic paradigms (in this case the Clausewitzian paradigm).

This construction of the RMA reflects the belief that the post-Cold War era is 'a period of strategic opportunity'.[41] Or as Lawrence Freedman puts it, a situation in which the West 'can choose their enemies and are not obliged to fight on anybody else's terms'.[42] The system of systems is thus the RMA of the present. The future may be very different. Time plays an important part in the American military's reflections on the RMA. At the present, it may be possible to fight and win wars by symmetrical means. In the future, however, the RMA could be used to fight asymmetrical.

It is the very belief in the effectiveness of the system of systems that makes the United States fear that future enemies might remove the foundation of the

system of systems: information. Their Clausewitzian focus on the practice of war soon makes Western strategic planers realise that allowing for a symmetrical encounter is tantamount to surrender. An enemy would therefore be wise to adopt RMA-technology, but not to engage it a symmetrical battle with US forces it cannot possibly win. Instead, it should use RMA-technology to transcend the 'spectrum' of the battlespace the US dominates. *The Quadrennial Defense Review* is aware that 'U.S. dominance in the conventional military arena may encourage adversaries to use such asymmetric means to attack our forces and interests overseas and Americans at home'.[43]

Clausewitz described friction as water that disabled the execution of military operations as planned. By achieving 'full spectrum dominance', the system of systems is to 'drain' the strategic environment. Asymmetrical strategies are to pour water back in. In that case, RMA technology will not be about removing friction but about using friction. This takes military operations beyond Clausewitzian logic; and places them right at the heart of Sun Tzu's concept of war.

Where Clausewitz used water as a metaphor for what comes in the way of 'real' war, Sun Tzu uses water as a metaphor for war itself. 'An army may be likened to water,' *The Art of War* states, 'for just as flowing water avoids the heights and hastens to the lowlands, so an army avoids strength and strikes weakness.'[44] Sun Tzu rejects the direct approach (Cheng) in favour of the indirect approach (Ch'i).[45] Instead of offering battle, Sun Tzu argues that one should avoid battle unless one is absolutely certain to win. Otherwise one should focus on depriving the enemy the possibility for carrying out its strategy.

Opposing the system of systems, an enemy will probably find that the centre of gravity will be heavily defended and a digitalised force will have the ability to repulse a direct attack. Then why attack it directly? If the key to the system of system is perfect information, then the strategic objective must be to make information imperfect.

One of the maxims most often quoted from Sun Tzu is that 'all warfare is based on deception'.[46] In the Gulf War of 1991, which are often credited as the first RMA-war, the Iraqi side did little to deceive the Coalition.[47] The Iraqi army offered a symmetrical battle, and suffered a devastating defeat. Since then, lessons have been learnt. During the on going confrontation between Iraqi air defences and Western fighters that followed the Gulf War, the Iraqi forces learned to deny the West battle by not turning on its air defence radars, thus not offering the Western planes targets. During NATO's air campaign in Kosovo in 1999 this strategy was perfected. The Yugoslav air defences did not actively engage the Western planes, thus forcing NATO to use resources hunting down air defences. The Yugoslav defences primarily came on line when a catch was sure, as in the case of the F-117 the Yugoslavs were able to down to NATO's

great discomfort. The Yugoslav side also used a large number of decoys making NATO believe that it had destroyed great numbers of amour and artillery, when it had in fact wasted its efforts on cardboard.[48] The more the RMA allows Western armed forces to go precisely after the points they believe make up the centre of gravity, the easier it becomes to derail the entire campaign by misinformation.

The most complete asymmetrical strategy, however, is to deny the West a centre of gravity to be targeted by the system of systems. If there is no vital infrastructure to bomb and no massed forces to annihilate, the West is not able to use precision, but will have to mass infantry in order to manage the situation. The 1990s provided a scenario for such a strategy that haunts American policy-makers: Somalia.

In Somalia the enemy was so low-tech that the United States had no other way to take it out than to engage it on its own terms. As Sun Tzu would have advised, the Somali fighters took war to the back-alleys of Mogadishu where technology offered little advantage and where there was no centre of gravity to identify. They mixed with the population, thus denying the American forces obvious allies, and finally defeated the American forces who ventured out to get their leader believing him to be the centre of gravity.

The Quadrennial Defense Review not only constructs asymmetrical responses to RMA-forces as something that will take place in foreign battlefields. It crucially notes that these threats might not only face American forces in the field, but also 'Americans at home'. Firstly, this refers to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction that according to the Pentagon may give even minor powers, or sub-state groups, the ability to reflect an American projection of conventional force back to the United States by unconventional means.

A further unconventional weapon might be the information technology that makes the RMA possible in the first place. The RMA is the military reflection of a transformation of the entire organisation of Western society. On one hand, information technology is taking over existing functions within the existing division of labour in Western societies. On the other hand, information technology is creating a new division of labour making information technology an indispensable resource. Information has become a strategic target just like factories were at the height of modernity. Where factories were physically bombed in the world wars, information can be targeted much more subtly through the information infrastructure (e.g., the World Wide Web) itself.

Where tactical information warfare is a central ingredient in the system of system, as information is gained at the enemy's expense, the United States' military constructs strategic information warfare as a threat rather than a strategic opportunity.[49] In *The Quadrennial Defense Review* information warfare is thus defined as 'attacks on *our* infrastructure through computer-based information

networks', and described as 'a growing threat'.[50] Though one can hardly expect a official document to praise new opportunities for offensive strategic warfare, the main reason for the American construction of strategic information warfare as a threat appears to be the realisation that it is advanced late-modern societies like the United States that are most vulnerable to information warfare. 'Cyberattacks,' Steven Metz notes, 'might erode the traditional advantage large and rich states hold in armed conflict.'[51] For example, in the 1930s, the insurgents the RAF bombed in Iraq were unable to strike back at Britain. They did not have the bombers to strike at British infrastructure and production; only nation-states like Germany had that. Today, Iraqis wishing to strike back at Britain and the United States after a bombing raid by the RAF and the USAF could use the internet to acutely damage the infrastructure of these countries.

In Western strategic thinking this prospect is very much placed in the future. But then the future is believed to be realised at the moment. In a survey of the United States' vulnerability to strategic information warfare RAND thus concludes that 'if the United States is to be defeated militarily in the near future, it will most likely be because an enemy successfully uses an "asymmetric" strategy'.[52]

Where the United States finds the present strategic environment defined by its ability to prevail in a symmetrical conflict of its own choosing, the future is constructed in asymmetrical terms. The serious strategic challenges to American forces in the field and the American home front are not constructed as symmetrical (that kind of threats can be dealt with) but as asymmetrical. Pursuing a Clausewitzian strategy American forces might be defeated because their strategy presupposes a symmetrical engagement the other side will strive to deprive it. The fear that this might happen makes the RMA the final triumph of Clausewitzian rationality, as well as its end. The Clausewitzian moment RMA-technology offers is to be taken away. By perfecting their strategic culture the RMA faces Western militaries with the limits of that culture. While these limits are identified in the discourse, they are placed in the future. Time makes it easier to fathom the hard choices a Sun Tzu-conception of military forces faces the organisation and doctrines of a Western military with.

A Cosmopolitan Routine

After destroying the enemy's strategy, Sun Tzu held that the next best thing was to 'disrupt his alliances'.[53] Sun Tzu identifies politics as one of the ways to prevail in conflict. In Sun Tzu's strategic universe armed force is blended with other kinds of force, including the diplomatic, political, social and economic pressure that the enemy's allies can be placed under to make them desert the

common cause, thereby leaving the enemy weakened. A weakness that might force the enemy to give in. The dichotomy between means and ends, as well as the means-end rationality that gives them a causal connection, was not for Sun Tzu. It is here we most clearly see the difference between Clausewitz' modern paradigm and the pre-modern paradigm of Sun Tzu. Martin van Creveld argues:

> 'Clausewitz' way of thought goes back at least to Aristotle and is based on the distinction between means and ends. By contrast, it is a fundamental characteristic of Chinese thought that such a distinction is absent – to Lao Tzu and his follows, admitting its existence would constitute a departure from *Tao*. Accordingly, the Chinese texts regard war not as an instrument for the attainment of this end or that but as the product of stern necessity, something which must be confronted and coped with and managed and brought to an end.' [54]

With its holistic conception of force (military as well as political) *The Art of War* may provide a guide to the rationality by which military force is applied in the late-modern, post-sovereign world. Sun Tzu may be able to describe the logic of 'operations other than war'.

Clausewitz' analysis begins with the identification of war as a distinct social practice, a practice of violence. Identifying the effect (war) he then goes on to look for the cause, and finds it in politics. The result is a universal theory of the causes that produce war.[55] So arguing Clausewitz separates the practice of war from the practice of politics at the same time as he links them causally. Rationality makes war subject to the 'logic' of politics, but the conduct of war has its own 'grammar'. 'The aim of policy,' Clausewitz argues, 'is to unity and reconcile all aspects of internal administration as well as of spiritual values, and whatever else the moral philosopher may care to add.'[56]

One may argue that the philosopher in question is Hegel. At the very least, Clausewitz and Hegel draw on the same romantic ideas about the nature of politics and war. So Hegel might speak for Clausewitz where Clausewitz has least to say: on the nature of politics. According to Hegel, the politics of each polity negate each other. 'The state is an individual,' Hegel argued, 'and the negation is the essential component of individuality.'[57] The state can be equated with 'an individual' because it is, in Hegel's view, an organic community constituted by a coherent national identity. As Clausewitz, Hegel expressed the conception radicalised by the Napoleonic wars that political community is a national community. A community that by definition excludes other communities.

Hegel rejected the Kantian idea of creating a cosmopolitan peace by integrating liberal states in an international community.[58] Hegel saw no possibly of an international identity that might transcend national identities. Unable to

transcend their different identities, Hegel argued, the difference of identities would necessarily lead nations to war. Therefore, war was an inherent characteristic of human existence; and to some extent desirable for the 'ethical health of nations'.[59] The creation of 'perpetual peace' was impossible. On the contrary, history offered a perpetual fight between nations. A fight that would end only when one national idea proved victorious over the rest.[60]

For Hegelians like Francis Fukuyama the end of the Cold War led to the conclusion that history has come to an end. There is no more reason in war when the world had accepted Western rationality.[61] Though one may disagree in Fukuyama's idea of what the future will (not) bring, there seems to be little reason to dispute that the construction of politics with Hegel embodied has come to an end.[62] The 'ethical health of nations' is no longer seen as a function of its victories on the battlefield, but as a function of its ability to prosper in a globalised world. An international order has been created that has more in common with Kant's cosmopolitan system than with Hegel's clash of nations. Kant defined a cosmopolitan system as an international order based on the liberal values of its constituent societies. An international order that institutionalised liberal values in common institutions, thus making inclusive liberal values, rather than exclusive national values, the rationale of war and peace. In Kant's view that would make war among liberal societies unlikely, and enable liberal societies to defend themselves against non-liberal societies.

When it comes to war the cosmopolitan system offers a paradox. *On War* illustrates that the modern construction of politics separated war and politics. As the construction of politics in the exclusive terms of the nation-state comes to an end, so does the separation between war and politics. The distinct political space occupied by nations disappears, and so does the space war occupied. War is no longer a distinct practice, but an element of other practices. When neither war nor politics are distinct practices then the ability to connect war and politics causally disappears. Politics becomes war, and war becomes politics.

Though this is a conceptual point, it is a conceptual point appreciated in the US military establishment. The construction of the present military organisation and the threats of the future in terms of the RMA highlights the temporal contingency of the military's concept of strategy. Therefore, many conclude that the transformation of the technological paradigm is the supplemented by an over all paradigm shift. In other words, 'the social RMA' not only grows of the technological development. It is a phenomenon in its own right.

The US Marine Corps Warfighting Laboratory concludes that:

> '…for the last three centuries, we have approached war as a Newtonian system. That is mechanical and ordered. In fact, it is probably not. The more likely model is a complex system that is open-ended, parallel, and very sensitive to initial conditions and continued "inputs".'[63]

True to the military fetish for continuity, the Marine Corps prefers rewriting the history of war for the last three centuries to concluding that, while the Newtonian system reflected the modern construction of warfare, times have now become post-Newtonian. The fact that the Marine Corps starts thinking that way, however, is in itself an expression of the transformation of the social paradigm of war. Perhaps it is no coincidence that it is the Marine Corps that air post-Newtonian conceptions of war. In the post-Cold War era it has been the Marine Corps' ability to 'respond quickly to the complex spectrum of crises and conflicts, and gain access or prosecute forcible entry operations' that has been in high demand. It is this ability that is useful for conducting 'operations other than war'.[64]

George W. Bush presumably criticizes the commitment to 'operations other than war' because he believes that the execution of these missions do not allow the military to concentrate on preparing for warfighting. The Marines point out that war is no longer a 'Newtonian system' in which military forces are instruments of policy. The 'inputs' military forces receive are no longer directed by one (means-end) rationality towards one (political) end. The inputs are, as the Marines note, complex and contingent rather than straightforward and causal.

Following the work of sociologists like Scott Lash, Anthony Giddens and Ulrich Beck, one might argue that the Marines are in fact describing the new reflexive rationality of late-modernity.[65] This reflexive rationality is intimately connected to the emerging cosmopolitan order. Like Hegel's philosophy explains the cultural constitution of Clausewitz' connection between means-end rationality and the nation-state, one might argue that Kant's philosophy explains the link between reflexive rationality and cosmopolitan culture. 'If there is a Kantian *polis*,' Jens Bartelson argues, 'this is a *cosmopolis* under perpetual construction and reconstruction, not a transcendent principle.'[66] Foucault points out that Kant regarded the very purpose of modern rationality to set people free from established truth.[67] The cosmopolitan system was to set peoples and there governments free from the 'truth' that international relations had to be constituted by war. Thus breaking the established rules of international intercourse the politics of the cosmopolitan system constitutes what Kant termed reflexive judgement. The cosmopolitan system is understood as a radical new departure that is to be understood by a new rationality. A reflexive rationality that prevails in the rest of late modern society as well.[68]

With his pre-modern conception of War, Sun Tzu can be used to describe a reflexive, post-Newtonian conception of warfare. *The Art of War* heralds 'operations other than war' as the main tool of strategy. Sun Tzu wanted to avoid the Clausewitzian causality that leads from a policy to a strategy and then to a battle. Sun Tzu's focus on avoiding a pitched battle has often been lauded as a

strategy for making war less bloody than the direct attack on the centre of gravity that Clausewitz recommends. However, it is often overlooked that Clausewitz went for the decisive battle because he regarded war and politics as two separate practices. As a distinct practice of violence, war offered no other solution to conflict than violence. Violence was unavoidable. Clausewitz therefore put the greatest primium on getting the battle over with by attacking the centre of gravity, and thus avoiding needless casualties.

Sun Tzu regarded military forces as an integrated part of the business of government. *The Art of War* contains countless examples of the use of extreme force against one's own side in order to impose discipline in the army or to prove a point to the enemy. Armed force was a means of governance on every level of Chinese society in Sun Tzu's day, whereas Clausewitz' conception of armed force as the purview of the non-political was the product of the creation of the modern state.[69] So whereas Clausewitz saw war as an expection to the rule, Sun Tzu regarded the means of war as something that should be continously employed. While Sun Tzu's war thus may be less bloody than Clausewitz, Sun Tzu believed war to be a regular state of affairs.

The cosmopolitan system is not a world state, but it does present a form of international governance. A kind of governance that has more in common with the pre-modern one described in *The Art of War* than the modern one described in *On War*. As Creveld notes, Sun Tzu regards war a necessity rather than an instrument. Conflict is a problem that has to be managed and brought to an end. Similar, in the cosmopolitan system conflict itself is the problem. Conflicts are supposed to be dealt with by the dialogue of democratic societies.[70] Believing serene discourse to be the essence of Cosmopolitanism conflict itself is a problem.

The Kosovo campaign is perhaps the clearest example of the rationale for using military force to maintain the 'tao' of the cosmopolitan system. To the West what happened in far away Kosovo, to a people of which the West knew little, gained major symbolic importance worthy of a war because the Serbian regime was seen to violate the spirit of cosmopolitanism. Thus the British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook:

> 'There are now two Europes competing for the soul of our continent. One still follows the race ideology that blighted our continent under the fascists. The other emerged fifty years ago out from behind the shadow of the Second World War. The conflict between the international community and Yugoslavia is the struggle between these two Europes.'[71]

In the West's eyes, Milosevics' regime followed the rules Hegel had described. The Serbian idea was to defeat its historic enemies. The West on the other hand, insisted to have created another, cosmopolitan, Europe, where such rules no

longer applied. The Kosovo war was to prove that point.[72]

The Kosovo campaign itself was in many ways fought by means of the system of systems, and might thus be regarded as a Clausewitzian campaign.[73] The introduction of a NATO peace-keeping force in Kosovo after the war (KFOR), as well as the similar peace-keeping force in Bosnia (SFOR), is an example of 'operations other than war' for a cosmopolitan purpose. So are the Western interventions in, for example, Haiti, Somalia and Sierra Leone. These operations represent a way to use military force to manage the cosmopolitan system. From a Clausewitzian point of view these operations make little sense, as they have no clear political objective, as Clausewitz understood the term. The West stands nothing to gain from a Clausewitzian perceptive. However, the interventions are not to be regarded as means to achieve particular ends. As in Sun Tzu's times, armed force has become an integrated part of the management of the cosmopolitan system.

Perhaps George W. Bush's term in office will make him realise this. The first use of military force by the United States in his presidency was the bombing of Iraqi military installations in the vicinity of Baghdad. President Bush told the press that the bombing was a 'routine mission'.[74] During the 1990s, this kind of 'operations other than war' has become part of the way the West manages international order. They are 'routine'. A cosmopolitan routine.

One might argue that 'routine bombings' far from constituting something new shows that the United States is behaving like dominating powers always do. Indeed, one might regard the United States' bombing of Iraq as the present version of the British doctrine of 'control without occupation' whereby the British were able to use technological advantages to minimise the costs of empire.[75] If the United States has an empire, however, it is of a kind very different from the British. The *Pax Americana* is not maintained by direct political control. It is an empire of Ch'i rather than of Cheng. Therefore, the 'routine missions' are not instruments in service of a political organisation imposed on the area bombed. They are not the instruments of sovereign control. The bombings are used to manage the international environment, to make the world safe for the cosmopolitan system. In the words of the Department of Defense, the US military 'has an essential role to play in shaping the international security environment in ways that promote and protect U.S. national interests'.[76] Military force is not merely to promote particular interests in face of particular threats, but to shape the entire international environment to avoid that threats arise or proliferate.

As the US military is keenly aware, these are times of change. The way the West fought the Kosovo campaign shows that war and 'military operations other than war' exist side by side. At the moment. In this section it has been argued that 'military operations other than war' may be in the process of becoming

'routine'. Where wars were the means by which the West sought to achieve peace in the twentieth century, 'operations of other than war' is the way the West manages the cosmopolitan peace it believes to have found following the end of the Cold War. The following section will explore how this makes warfare serve a purpose different from the strategical one Clausewitz identifies.

Grand Tactics

If the enemy has not been defeated by attacks on his strategy and alliances, Sun Tzu believes one will have to 'attack his army'.[77] Obviously, the defining question is what purpose an attack is to serve. 'Strategy' made it conceptually possible to answer that question by defining a number of ends so important that their realisation had, if necessary, to be served by military force. The political side of strategy was to identify what the state needed to prevail in the price fight of history. The military side would then realise these ends. In the twentieth century this *a priori*-element of strategy came to be defined as 'grand strategy' in order to distinguish it from purely military strategy. Synthesising a number of classical definitions, Paul Kennedy argues that grand strategy is '… the capacity of the nation's leaders to bring together all the elements, both military and non-military, for the preservation and enhancement of the nation's long-term (that is, in wartime *and* peacetime) best interests'.[78] As war ceases to be a means of national policy and becomes a contingent part of international governance, strategy ceases to be the guide for the use of military action. Instead of serving grand strategy, military force is applied to serve what one may term grand tactics.[79]

The real point about Clausewitz' dictum that war is the 'continuation of politics, with the addition of other means' was, Liddell Hart argued, that a state would end up in conflict for basically the same reasons throughout its history. Though he was no fan of *On War*, Liddell Hart appreciated the Hegelian logic according to which modern war played out. Nations were defined by an enduring idea and engaged in a perpetual battle for realising that idea.[80] Politics were constant and so the causes of war remained the same. Therefore, one was to a large extent able to foresee with whom and about what one would fight next. The strategic universe was the mechanical Newtonian system described by the Marine Corps Warfighting Laboratory. A grand strategy was therefore necessary, and possible, to ensure a favourable position in the war(s) to come. Of course, that line of reasoning makes grand strategy a self-fulfilling prophecy to a very large extent.

Strategy was a science, and as such grand strategy was perceived as an equation. Grand strategy was the application of the right means, through the trial

and error of history, to the properly calculated ends. From that point of view the use of armed force was not only rational, but also necessary and unavoidable. Being unavoidable, conflicts might as well be settled by war at moments of opportunity. What Liddell Hart probably did not realise considering his distain for total war, the grand strategical line of argument led right to total war. If interests were permanent and conflicts about them unavoidable, it made little sense to compromise in a war in which one's vital interests were at stake. The conflict would remain, unless resolved on the battlefield: not resolving it now would only leave the problem for later, and perhaps less advantageous, times.

Constructing itself a science, strategy instructed governments what needed to be done. In the post-Newtonian age of the Marine Warfighting Laboratory, security policy is so complicated that Jean-Marie Guéhenno argues that 'the strategist of tomorrow may well look more like a meteorologist'.[81] Threats and opportunities are no longer constructed as a part of a mechanical system in which agents have to play their part – or else. Perhaps because of the construction of these as times of change, the strategic environment is seen to offer a number of different paths for governments to follow. The point is that neither of them is necessary and none of them risk free. Strategy offered a recipe for success. In a world of many different 'inputs' no such assurance is offered. The paradigm *The Quadrennial Defense Review* offers for US military strategy is thus not about how a number of key interests are to be defended. The 'defense strategy' the Defense Review defines focuses on managing a process of change. The outcome of this process is uncertain. The only thing the Pentagon leaves no doubt about is that the future will be different, perhaps radically different, from the present.[82] This is an example of the fact that today Western governments do not have grand strategies. The West pursues grand tactics.

Like meteorology, grand tactics is about predicting the course of an ever-changing environment. An environment where the 'inputs' are so many and the system so complex that decision-makers will never have the information to predict what will happen, let alone how to react on it. What they can do is to monitor the situation as it arises and then shape the response to the situation in a way that makes them prevail. In order to do so one must engage in any environment from which a storm of insecurity might arise. *The Quadrennial Defense Review* thus strongly rejects the view that:

> '… we [the US] would be best served as a nation by focusing our energies at home and only committing military forces when our nation's survival is at stake … This is, in essence, a 19th century view of the world, which ignores the impact of global events on our nation, the growing interdependence of the world economy, and the acceleration of the information technology revolution.'[83]

Note how 'growing' and 'acceleration' signify the times. These are times of change, and the United States' security depends on being able to forecast the conflicts that may arise, and develop the tools to deal with them. These prospective conflicts are neither set in a historical mould nor calculable. They will appear as consequences of the processes of globalisation and transformations of industrial modernity. The enemies the United States will have to attack are not yet known, the United States only believes to know the 'weather systems' of conflict from which they will appear. This is a radical departure from the historical and prospective approach of grand strategy.

As suggested above, strategy is a social construction. A way to give the use of armed force meaning. As such, strategy might be said to have been a self-fulfilling prophecy. Grand tactics is no less constructed. The use of meteorology as a metaphor for late-modern strategy illustrates this well. A weather report is a scenario for what might happen given the shape of the weather systems at a given moment. But though the weather reported is not as yet real, is shapes agency from minor changes in behaviour, such as the fact that people take umbrellas with them when they go out, to actions have greater impact on events, such as the evacuation of the inhabitants of costal areas. Expecting certain security threats to arise in the future, the United States is structuring its armed forces in a certain way and American foreign policy directed at certain issues. As such, grand tactics give meaning to international events that might otherwise have meant something else. 'Strategy then is no more than a pattern of action,' Guéhenno notes referring to what I term grand tactics, 'linking together situations that are otherwise disjointed.'[84]

Grand Strategy constructed security interests in terms of a national purpose and a national idea that supposedly transcended party lines and political ideologies. Grand tactics do not have this transcending quality. The absence of a historical blueprint for the construction of threats makes a vision of the future the only guide to security policy. A government does not inherit a guide to security policy, it has to create security policy of its own vision of the future. If grand tactics produce a coherent policy, it is because of the meaning the present government gives present developments. This is not to say that changes of government have not previously meant a transformation of threat perceptions or defence priorities. Obviously that is not the case. What is changing, however, is the way such transformations are constructed. Before, changes in policy were largely justified by a claim that the policy to be changed had not served the nation's enduring interests, whereas the policy proposed would. Now, the argument goes that interests have changed.[85]

British Prime Minister Tony Blair's argument for the Kosovo campaign presents a powerful example of this new line of argument. 'Twenty years ago,' Blair told the Economic Club of Chicago in April 1999, 'we would not have

been fighting in Kosovo.' The reason why NATO presently fought for Kosovo, Blair argued, was 'that today more than ever before we are mutually dependent, that national interest is to a significant extent governed by international collaboration.' To Blair, globalisation was not just an economic phenomenon. It has a reconfiguration of political space. The dichotomy between national and international was breaking down and therefore national policy needed to 'find its own international echo'. Where Blair regarded his 'third way'-platform as a way to make community count along side the market, he regarded the intervention in Kosovo as 'the beginnings of a new doctrine of international community', which was to supplement the market forces of economic globalisation that hitherto had been the dominating doctrine of cosmopolitan society. In party political terms, Blair presented a Labour vision for security policy, as opposed what he perceived as an old fashion Tory vision of nation-states with conflicting interests.[86]

The debate on the expediency of the Kosovo air-campaign in the West did to a large extent follow this pattern. Liberals and certain elements of the Left were in favour of the war, whereas the conservatives (left and right) were largely against.[87] Because the necessity of war is becoming politicised the conduct of operations becomes politicised as well. The idea of strategy was that political aims should be identified, and the military then supply the means necessary.[88] Grand tactics make even minor operational details a matter of policy decision. The revolution in military affairs makes it increasingly possible for the highest political authorities to guide the battle in real time, or something approximating real time. And constructing the campaign is a continuation of their domestic policy with other means, political leaders wants control of the campaign to ensure it reflects favourably on them. Consequently, they direct operations in a way that can deliver clear-cut victories, fast. The national consensus on which grand strategy was based legitimised long engagements. When military operations becomes part of the zero-sum game of the election cycle of democratic societies then Sun Tzu's maxim that 'what is essential in war is victory, not prolonged operations' becomes the guide of governments.[89]

This development began with the Vietnam War. The war that gave the impetus to the restructuring of the US armed forces that became the revolution in military affairs. Following that lesson the RMA-conflicts of the 1990s, from the Gulf War in 1991 to the Kosovo air campaign in 1999, have been guided by the need to produce closure. The result is that a number of issues are left unresolved. Because the Bush administration wanted the Gulf War to end before the carnage on 'the highway of death' deligitimised American victory, and because that would neatly end the war in a hundred days, the Iraq Republican Guard was never annihilated, thus leaving it able to protect Saddam Hussein's regime after the war. Because NATO wanted the air campaign over with in order to avoid introducing ground troops, the status of Kosovo was left largely unresolved.

Hence the need for American and British bombers to conduct 'routine missions' over Iraq and for NATO to commit thousands of troops to the Balkans.

Conclusions

'For the foreseeable future, there are few who will have the power to match us militarily or economically,' William Cohen notes, 'but they will be students of Sun Tzu and The Art of Warfare, dedicated to exploiting the weaknesses of our very strength.'[90] Perhaps not only the West's enemies should be reading Sun Tzu. The revolutions in military affairs might make Sun Tzu a more central figure to Western military thought than Clausewitz.

There seem to be some reason to believe that the innovations of military thought arise from the attempts to come to terms with revolutions in military affairs. We do not know whether Sun Tzu regarded *The Art of War* as the conceptual result of the introduction of iron and larger armies in Chinese warfare, and Taoist philosophy. Clausewitz' certainly regarded *On War* as an explanation of war in the age of national armies and nation-states fit for an age of reason. Whatever the intentions of their authors, both works served not only as descriptions of a new reality of war, they also served to construct the strategic practice of the culture in which they wrote.

Today military affairs are constituted in terms of revolution. The conception of these as times of change is shared by armed forces all over the world. Those who believe to be carrying out the RMA in the US armed forces, as well as those who fear the effects of the American RMA in, for example, China's PLA, believe to be in the midst of a military revolution. But how are they to perceive that revolution? It is an important question because as the present is defined in terms of the future it is one's vision of the future that are to determine one's present actions. It is the belief in certain RMA-technologies and the belief in what strategy these technologies can be utilised for that determines the way armed forces are reorganised. Thus it is the present belief in a future military practice that creates that practice.

At present, the RMA might be regarded as Clausewitz's ultimate success. The RMA enables Western armed forces to 'lift the fog of war'. Information technology can reduce friction to a minimum, thus enabling a strike at the centre of gravity with great precision and measured force. One of the many visionary elements of *On War* is Clausewitz' focus on war as a practice. Thinking within that paradigm the American thinking on the RMA seems to be realising that while the RMA might enable the United States to fight pure war, the RMA's focus on information opens innumerable possibilities for enemies to adopt asymmetrical strategies. As Cohen argues, the present strength that the RMA

gives the US military might be eroded because the practice of war will be that the other side denies US forces symmetrical battle.

At this Clausewitzian moment, Sun Tzu may be regarded the strategist of the armed forces not yet to have completed the military revolution or without the resources to begin it. Their practice of asymmetrical battle might force the West to adopt Sun Tzu strategies. All the more so because the RMA itself imposes that practice. If one is up against an enemy with RMA-technology one needs to deprive that enemy information; that is true whether one has RMA technology or not. At the moment, only the United States will be able to deploy completely 'digitalised'-forces in the near future. But constructing its own military future in terms of the RMA, the United States is very much aware of the possibility of future enemies acquiring RMA-technology. Considering the possibilities of RMA-war, US strategic thinking slowly moves a way from Clausewitz.

The asymmetrical responses from present low-tech enemies and possible future high-tech enemies are eroding the Clausewitzian concept of war. This is within the traditional understanding of the RMA. The RAND definition of the RMA focuses on what Clausewitz terms the 'grammar' of war. According to this conception of the RMA, the revolution is the product of information technology only. Technology makes new strategic paradigms possible. In the elements of US strategic thinking that considers the practice of the RMA, the revolution in military affairs is regarded as a part of a revolution in social affairs in general. These analysts argue that information technology is pivotal to a much more profound transformation of the way society is organised. This conception of RMA has a much broader understanding of what a strategic paradigm is than RAND. This understanding of paradigms refers to what Clausewitz termed the logic of war. The logic Clausewitz identifies was shaped by a means-end rational conception of politics based on an Enlightenment ideal of causal, scientific knowledge. As Lyotard points out, information technology epitomises a new way of knowing that profoundly transforms society.[91] The RMA is not only a paradigm shift of techne, but also of episteme.

An important part of the epistemic logic by which Clausewitz defined war was the notion of the nation-state as reason for war. In a time that called for causality, Clausewitz defined the causality of war in terms of the state as the embodiment of a national idea that produced certain interests that could only be realised in war. Though the West does not embrace transformations in conceptions of governance as easy as it embraces technological transformation, there seems to be a general consensus that the days of the nation-state – at least in the way Clausewitz and Hegel understood it – are over. The post-Cold War era has been defined by the constitution of a cosmopolitan international society. In the post-Cold War era military force has primarily been used for operations other than the clashes between national wills Clausewitz defined as war. These

'operations other than war' have served as a means of governance. That is the way *The Art of War* constructs military force. Sun Tzu might not only offer guidance to the grammar of information warfare, but also to the very logic by which military force is to be used in the future.

Because the logic of war is transforming so is the decision-making process by which military force is put to use. Grand strategy seems to be receding as grand tactics become the name of the decision-making game. Where the strategists operated by a Newtonian logic, the grand tactician operates by the reflexive logic of meteorology. Threats are no longer believed to everlasting, calculable and predictable results of national interests. Now, threats arise in the moment. One can forecast a threat and device ways to deal with the threats forecasted, but threats are never predestined. No longer the property of history, threats become politicised. George W. Bush's insistence that the US military should concentrate on fighting and winning wars was, at least partly, a part of an overall strategy to argue that he had values different from the Clinton administration. The military was an issue on which Bush could show that he had a more conservative approach to social change than the Clinton administration.

The analysis underpinning George W. Bush's argument is that the favourable strategic circumstances that allowed the West to intervene in the 1990s cannot be expected to last. The post-Cold War era is coming to an end. The strategic environment we can glimpse on the horizon does indeed look more bellicose than the 1990s. War in the traditional understanding of the term, however, is probably not returning. It is the rationale of 'operations other than war' that will guide most of the military engagements the West envisions. Therefore, the pre-modern logic of Sun Tzu makes a better guide to late-modern military thinking than the modern logic of Clausewitz. If the Bush administration prepares the United States' armed forces for fighting and winning wars in the Clausewitzian understanding of the term they might face serious problems fighting and winning the military operations of the future.

Notes

[1] The NATO abbreviation is MOOTW – Military Operations Other Than War. The Allied Joint Doctrine defines it as 'a wide range of activities where military capabilities are used for purposes other than large-scale combat operations'. NATO, *Allied Joint Doctrine*, September 1998.

[2] George W. Bush, *Governor Bush Addresses American Legion*, Milwaukee, Wis., Wednesday, September 6, 2000.

[3] Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, edited and translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976 [1832-34]), 605.

[4] 'Pure concept of war,' Clausewitz, *On War*, 78.

[5] Sun Tzu, *The Art of* War, translated and with an introduction by Samuel B. Griffith, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), III, 3.

[6] Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, III, 4, 5 and 6.

[7] Giddens finds that there exists a 'double hermeneutic' relationship between social reality and the construction of it. Giddens argues that a description of a social phenomenon, for example a work of social science, is constituted by the times in which it is written. At the same time such a study offers an interpretation of social reality that might shape it, see Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society. Outline of the Theory of Structuration* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1984).

[8] In conceptual terms (according to Admiral Owens, who was a driving force behind Pentagon's embrace of the RMA in the mid-1990s), the RMA started out as the Military-Technical Revolution. A term used by the Soviet military from the late 1970s to press the need for catching up with American technological superiority by describing how far ahead the United States was in military technology. The term was briefly adopted in the United States, but replaced in the early 1990s by the RMA, see Bill Owens, *Lifting the Fog of War* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Groux, 2000), 80-85. For the early-modern military revolution, see Geoffrey Parker, *The Military Revolution. Military Innovation and the Rise of the West 1500-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988). For an account of how 'states made war and war made states' because of the military revolution, see Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital and European States, AD 990-1990* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990).

[9] Clausewitz, *On War*, 605.

[10] John Keegan, *A History of Warfare* (London: Pimlico, 1994 [1993]); Martin van Creveld, *On Future War* (London: Brassey's, 1991).

[11] William S. Cohen, *Remarks as Prepared for Delivery Secretary of Defense William S. Cohen National Defense University Joint Operations Symposium QDR Conference, Fort McNair Washington D.C., June 23, 1997*(Washington DC: Office of Assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs), 1997).

[12] Richard O. Hundley, *Past Revolutions, Future Transformations: What Can the History of Revolutions in Military Affairs Tell Us About Transforming the U.S. Military?* (Santa Monica, Cal.: RAND, 1999), xiii.

[13] Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1962).

[14] Ryan Henry and C. Edward Peartree, 'Military Theory and Information Warfare', *Parameters*, Autumn 1998.

[15] Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality. A Treaties in the Sociology of Knowledge* (London: Penguin Books,1967 [1966]).

[16] For an introduction to the cultural approach to International Relations in general, see Peter J. Katzenstein (ed.), *The Culture of National Security. Norms and Identity in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996). For a review of cultural approach to military organisation, see Theo Farrell, 'Culture and Military Power', *Review of International Studies*, 24:3 (July 1998).

[17] What this essay refers to as military culture, Creveld terms 'the war convention'. He defines the war convention in terms of a number of functional questions it answers: 'by whom it [war] is fought, what it is all about, how it is fought, what it is fought for, and why it is fought', Creveld, *On Future War*, ix.

[18] Michael I. Handel, *Masters of War: Sun Tzu, Clausewitz and Jomini* (London: Frank Cass, 1992). See also Colin S. Gray, *Modern Strategy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

[19] The winners of the 'Sun Tzu Essay Competition' of the US National Defense University thus analyse the issues of information, speed and deception in war without using the thoughts of Sun Tzu as anything but illustration, see Robert E. Neilson (ed.), *Sun Tzu and Information Warfare: A Collection of Winning Papers from the Sun Tzu Art of War in Information Warfare Competition* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 1997).

[20] Kier describes how strategic culture made Britain and France unable to take advantage of strategies for mechanised warfare in the 1930s. An inability that proved most costly when the Second World War began, Elizabeth Kier, *Imagining War: French and British Military Doctrine Between the Wars*, (Princeton, NJ.: Princeton University Press, 1997).

[21] Creveld, *On Future War*, 96.

[22] Peter Paret, 'The Genesis of *On War*', in Clausewitz, *On War*.

[23] Clausewitz, *On War*, 605.

[24] Clausewitz notes that this 'tremendous development' meant that 'the people became participant in war; instead of governments and armies heretofore, the full weigth of the nation was thrown into the balance', Clausewitz, *On War*, 592.

[25] Clasewitz, *On War*, 605.

[26] Raymond Aron, 'Reason, Passion, and Power in the Thought of Clausewitz', *Social Research. An International Quarterly of the Social Sciences*, 39, 1972, see also his *Clausewitz: Philosopher of War* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983).

[27] On the authorship of *The Art of War*, see Samuel B. Griffith, 'Introduction', Sun Tzu, *The Art of War* .

[28] Griffith, 'Introduction', Chapter IV. Martin van Creveld, *The Art of War. War and Military Thought* (London: Cassell, 2000), 26.

[29] Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, II, 9.

[30] Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, 57-59.

[31] Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, III, 4.

[32] Clausewitz, *On War*, 127.

[33] Clausewitz, *On War*, 77.

[34] Clausewitz, *On War*, 119.

[35] Clausewitz, *On War*, 113-114.

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

[37] Cohen, *at the National Defense University*.

[38] Admiral Owens developed the concept of the system of systems and was instrumental in making the guiding concept of what he terms 'the American Revolution in Military affairs', see Owens, *Lifting the Fog of War*.

[39] Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Vision 2010* (Washington DC: Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1997), 17.

[40] Cohen, *at the National Defense University*.

[41] William S. Cohen, *Report of the Quadrennial Defense Review* (Washington DC: Department of Defense, 1997), section two.

[42] Lawrence Freedman, *The Revolution in Strategic Affairs*, Adelphi Paper 318, (Oxford: The International Institute of Strategic Studies, Oxford University Press, 1998), 77.

[43] Cohen, *QDR*, Section two.

[44] Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, VI, 27

[45] Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, V, 11. Liddell Hart thus believed Sun Tzu to be an early exponent of his own 'indirect approach', B. H. Liddell Hart, 'Foreword', Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*.

[46] Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, I, 17.

[47] One exception to the Iraqi forces willingness to wage a symmetrical battle has the way SCUD missile launchers were hidden form Coalition air forces. After the war, Iraq expanded the use of such evasive tactics.

[48] Attempting to verify the 'kills' reported by pilots during the conflict the USAF unofficially revised the number of targets destroyed to 'a tiny fraction of those claimed: 14 tanks, not 120; 18 armored personnel carriers, not 220; 20 artillery pieces, not 450,' John Barry and Evan Thomas, 'The Kosovo Cover-Up', *Newsweek*, May 15, 2000.

[49] At the time of writing, the United States is reported for the first time to be developing a paradigm for offensive information war in OPLAN 3600. As this contingency plan neither seem to involve the strategic use of information weapons nor challenge the belief that the United States is more vulnerable to information warfare than most prospective enemies, the construction of information warfare as a threat rather than an opportunity remains. In fact, OPLAN 3600 seems to be a means to strike back following an information attack rather than a plan for first use of information warfare. See, 'United States: Vulnerable to Cyber Attack', *Stratfor*, 31 March 2001, <http://www.stratfor.com/europe/commentary/0103302345>.

[50] Cohen, *QDR*, section two – my italics.

[51] Steven Metz, *Armed Conflict in the 21st Century: The Information Revolution and Post-Modern Warfare* (Carlisle, Pa.: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2000), xviii

[52] Roger C. Molander, Peter A Wilson, David A. Mussington and Richard F. Mesic, *Strategic Information Warfare Rising* (Santa Monica, Cal.: RAND, 1998), 28.

[53] Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, III, 5.

[54] Creveld, *The Art of War*, 118-119.

[55] Clausewitz, *On War*, 157-159.

[56] Clausewitz, *On War*, 606.

[57] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, Allen W. Wood (ed.), translated by H. B. Nisbet, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991 [1821]), §324. On Hegel's notion of international relations, see Zbigniew Pelczynski, 'Hegel and International History', Philip Windsor (ed.), *Reason and History: or only a History of Reason* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1990).

[58] *Ibid*. On Kant's notion of a cosmopolitan system, see Immanuel Kant, 'Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose' and 'To Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch', in *Kant's Political Writings*, edited by Hans Reiss and translated by H. B. Nisbet, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970).

[59] *Ibid.*

[60] On the construction of war in modernity, see Christopher Coker, *War and the 20th Century. The Impact of War on the Modern Consciousness* (London: Brassey's, 1994).

[61] Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (London: Penguin Books, 1992). For the 'antithesis' of Fukuyama's Hegelian understanding of the post-Cold War World, see David MacGregor, *Hegel and Marx After the Fall of Communism* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1998).

[62] I have elaborated on this point in Mikkel Vedby Rasmussen, *A Time for Peace*, Ph.D. Thesis, (Copenhagen, Institute of Political Science, University of Copenhagen, 2001), chapter six.

[63] Quoted in Metz, *Armed Conflict in the 21st Century*, 34.

[64] United States Marine Corps, *Strategy 21* (Washington DC: Department of the Navy, Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 2000), 1.

[65] For an introduction to 'reflexive modernity', see Ulrich Beck, Anthony Giddens and Scott Lash, *Reflexive Modernization: Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994), Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity. Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991). Scott Lash, *Another Modernity. A Different Rationality* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999).

[66] Jens Bartelson, 'The Trial of judgment: A Note on Kant and the Paradoxes of Internationalism', *International Studies Quarterly*, 39, 272 – italics in original.

[67] Michel Foucault, 'What is Enlightenment?', Paul Rabinow (ed.), *The Foucault Reader* (London: Penguin Books, 1984).

[68] Lash, *Another Modernity*, chapter nine.

[69] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

[70] One might argue that the main point of many Western international institutions is to create fora in which conflicts can be solved by negotiation rather than war. Hence German foreign minister Fisher's remark at the negotiations of the Nice treaty that the issues now bitterly discussed in council would previously had brought countries to war. The same is true of the United Nations where the Security Council are to serve as a place where the major powers have to discuss issues of peace and security.

[71] Robin Cook, 'It is Fascism that We are Fighting', the *Guardian*, Wednesday, 5 May 1999.

[72] I have elaborated on that point in '"War is Never Civilised": Civilization, Civil Society and the Kosovo-War', Peter van Ham and Sergei Medvedev (eds.), *Mapping European Security After Kosovo: Outlines for the New European Order* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, forthcoming).

[73] The West's campaign was fought by the systems of systems. As pointed out above, the Yugoslav side attempted to counter the Western air campaign by asymmetrical means. In fact, the nature of the conflict is probably best

appreciated if one regards it as a struggle between the West's attempt to create a symmetrical battle and Yugoslavia's attempt to make the confrontation asymmetrical. I have elaborated on this point, in Danish, in 'Kampen om Strategien i Kosovo: Calusewitz og Sun Tzu', *Militært Tidsskrift*, 128:4, November 1999.

[74] *Remarks by President George W. Bush and President Vicente Fox of Mexico in Joint Press Conference*, Rancho San Cristobal, San Cristobal, Mexico, February 16, 2001, (Washington DC: The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 2001).

[75] Chris Hables Gray, *Postmodern War: The New Politics of Conflict* (London: Routledge, 1997), 131.

[76] Cohen, *QDR*, section three.

[77] Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, III, 10.

[78] Paul Kennedy, 'Grand Strategies in War and Peace: Toward a Broader Definition', Paul Kennedy (ed.), *Grand Strategies in War and Peace* (New Haven, Mass.: Yale University Press, 1991), 5 – italics in original.

[79] Grand tactics is sometimes used to refers to large-scale military manoeuvres like the redeployment of a fleet or an army. That is not the sense employed here.

[80] Kennedy, *Grand Strategies*, 4.

[81] Jean-Marie Guéhenno, 'The Impact of Globalisation on Strategy', *Survival*, 40:4, Winter 1998-1999, 14.

[82] William S. Cohen, *QDR*, section three.

[83] *Ibid.*

[84] Guéhenno, 'The Impact of Globalisation', 14.

[85] A political establishment may share a vision of the future. However, most often a new government in a Western society is elected on a new vision society. It wants to demonstrate that it can make the future something different from the past constructed by previous governments.

[86] Tony Blair, *Prime Minister's Speech to Economic Club of Chicago*, Chicago, 23 April, 1998, (Chicago, Prime Ministers' Office, 1999).

[87] The discussion between Michael Ignatieff and Robert Skidelsky in *Prospect* illustrates important positions in this discussion, 'Is Military Intervention over Kosovo Justified', *Prospect*, June 1999. For a broader selection on Western views on Kosovo campaign, see William Joseph Buckley (ed.), *Kosovo. Contending Voices on Balkan Interventions* (Grand Rapids, Mi.: Wm. E. Eerdmans Publishing Group, 2000), chapters IV-VI.

[88] Clausewitz did realise that a 'feed-back mechanism' was necessary, and therefore recommended that the commander-in-chief was a member of the cabinet. However, this was to ensure control of the aims of the campaign. Grand Strategy provided an enduring guideline to national interests, see Clausewitz, *On War*, 607-609.

[89] Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, II, 21.

[90] William S. Cohen, *1998 Eisenhower Institute Leadership Dinner*, Tuesday, April 28, 1998, (Washington DC: Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs), 1998).

[91] Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, translated by Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986 [1979]).

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