

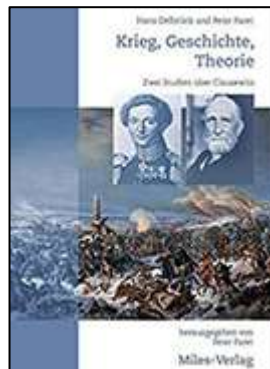


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CLAUSEWITZ IN THE 21ST CENTURY JAPAN

Takeshi Oki

In the 21st century Japan, the understandings of Clausewitz's thought on war vary from the practical to the academic and speculative. If a foreign student who is studying Clausewitz visits a Japanese bookshop, he would likely be astonished to see a book titled "To Understand Clausewitz's 'On War' with Cartoons". Such a phenomenon has its roots in the belief of ordinary Japanese people that Clausewitz's thought on war and strategy could apply to their business and daily life like Sun Tzu's.

On the other hand, how the Clausewitz's theories should be understood in the post-Cold War age is seriously discussed in academic circles and Jieitai (Japan Self-Defense Force, SDF).

The purpose of this article is to provide a general outline and background of the situation regarding the understanding of Clausewitz's thinking in Japan.

Historical Background

The first mention of Clausewitz in Japan is found in a letter from a scholar who was interested in western civilization, Shozan Sakuma, to the Statesman of the Late Tokugawa Shogunate Kaishu Katsu in 1859. "I received the Clausewitz's book recommended by you. This book impressed me as being very interesting". It is not clear if Sakama could understand Clausewitz's ideas precisely. The Clausewitz book he had was a Dutch edition.

After the end of Shogunate and the Meiji Restoration of Tenno (The Emperor) Rule in 1868, the army of the new Japanese nation state was transformed. The model for the army changed from the French Republic's army -- which had been a model of modern warfare for the Shogun's troops and the Japanese Army of the early Meiji era (reign of the Meiji Emperor lasted from 1868 to 1912) -- to the Imperial German Army. The sweeping victory of the Prussian Army during the Franco-Prussian War made a great impression on the leaders of the Imperial Japanese Army, and they therefore sought to learn the secret behind the German Victory. They thought that secret was Clausewitz.

In 1886, an army officer who was studying modern strategy and tactics in Germany, Iyozo Tamura, later the chief of the army general staff, visited one of the great authors of modern Japan and who was also a military doctor, Rintaro Mori, in Berlin (Mori was also a resident student in Germany from Japan). Tamura was eager to learn the essential principles of “On War” from Mori, who was adept in many foreign languages, especially German.

After his return to Japan, Mori started a translation of “On War” into Japanese. Based on MORI's translation, Rikugun Shikan Gakko (the military academy) completed the translation of the entire volume in 1903. This first Japanese edition was confidential and published only within army circle, but it was widely read by army officers¹.

A Japanese military historian has pointed out that the translation of “On War” was urgently needed at that time. This was because Major Klemens Jacob Meckel, the German officer hired by the Japanese government as a lecturer to Japanese young staff officers, taught the elements of warfare only on the divisional level but not at the corps-army operational or strategic level².

The Japanese efforts to understand Clausewitz's thought bore fruit: victory over Russia in 1905 - or so it appeared. Many military theorists around the world regarded the Japanese as the foremost student of Clausewitzian theory, but in reality, the Imperial Japanese Army inclined more and more to the canonization of the operational understanding of Clausewitz. “On War” was not as a book on theory, but one on doctrine, which taught how operations and tactics were conducted.

Such a rigid understanding extended into the making of the Tosui Koryo (Principles of Command) in 1914. This Program was an extension of the Schlieffen like Annihilation Strategy formulated before the First World War, and it was essentially a guide for conducting military operations. Thus Clausewitz's famous maxim that “War is not merely a political act, but also a political instrument, a continuation of political relations, a carrying out of the same by other means”, was not seriously discussed in the Japanese Army any longer³. In the period between the two world wars, this excessive indoctrination of the staff officers continued⁴. As a result they pursued an overly “operation-oriented strategy” and brought the disaster of 1945 to their nation and country.

After Japan's defeat in the Second World War, the study of Clausewitz's theory in Japan was sluggish. There were several reasons. As is widely known, the post-war Constitution of Japan has forbidden the nation

from the use of war as a political instrument. Assuming this Constitution is rigidly applied, Japan will never be able to conduct a war henceforth. Therefore, Clausewitz's ideas were regarded as useless. Moreover, it was judged in Japan in the late 1940s and 1950s when a pacifistic tendency took hold - just like the social trend in Europe after World War I - that the beginning of the nuclear war age brought the end to the Clausewitzian understanding of war. But some former army officers and several officers of Jieitai, Japan Self-Defense Force reexamined their understandings of Clausewitz's ideas in their own reflection on the defeat of World War II. In addition, military theorists whose thinking was based on Marxism-Leninism deepened their study of Clausewitz from their standpoints as well.

But the economic revival of Japan in 1960s changed the situation. From 1965 to 1969 three new translations of "On War" were published successively, and they were read by both the management side and the union side of many enterprises besides members of SDF J⁵. Apparently this Clausewitzian "civil needs" were based on the demand for an instrumental model of strategy, namely how to act in business wisely.

As pointed out in the introduction of the article, these tendencies -- while military theorist and the officers study Clausewitz theoretically and systematically, there is also a public demand for the practical use of "On War" have continued up to this present day.

Coming of the New Age Scholars

However a new generation of scholars appeared in 1990's. Before the fall of the East European communist countries and the Soviet Union, the pacifistic tendency and the aversion to war, already mentioned above, dominated the academic world in Japan. Therefore the study of Clausewitz's ideas in the universities was discouraged, if not prohibited. But the end of the Cold War and the fact that nevertheless wars will never disappear, as exemplified by the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia, made the younger generation of Japanese scholars pay attention to Clausewitz again. They began to cooperate with the lecturers of Boei Kennkyuujō (National Institute for Defense Studies), Kanbu Gakko (the Staff Colleges of Japan Self-Defense Force) and Boei Daigakko (National Defense Academy). This would have been unimaginable in the 1960s or 1970s. Their new approaches greatly advanced the study of Clausewitz in

Japan and improved the understanding of Clausewitz's thought generally in the society with the publications of their works.

The author would like to point to the volume of essays, „Clausewitz and ‘On War’”⁶ in 2008 as an example of such a “new wave”. Three foreign scholars (Martin van Creveldt, Jan Willem Honig and Williamson Murray) took part in the project, but the other articles are all written by Japanese scholars.

In the part I “Clausewitz and ‘On War’”, Takichi Shimizu, one of the translators of “On War” in Japan, described the life of Clausewitz and Yasuyuki Kawamura explained the essence of “On War”⁷.

The four articles in the part II “Clausewitz and his times” explored the age of the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars, in which Clausewitz lived and developed his thoughts on war. After the introduction by Masaki Miyake that surveyed the German literature about Clausewitz, Akashi Araya discussed the transformation of wars (from limited war or cabinet war to unlimited war between nation states) in the French Revolutionary Wars and the Napoleonic Wars. Hiroto Maruhata reexamined the development of Clausewitz's thought on war through a study of the making of Prussian general conscription system and Tadashi Suzuki discussed the meaning of the military reform in Prussia after the defeat of Jena-Auerstedt, with an emphasis on the formation of Freikorps⁸.

The articles in part III “the legacies of Clausewitz” took up the issue of the influence of Clausewitzian thought on military theorists in the 19th and 20th centuries. Hiroki Nakajima explored the understandings of Clausewitz in the Prussian-German army from Moltke the elder to Schlieffen, and pointed out the inclination of the German officers to use Clausewitz's thoughts. Jun Kozutsumi took the three examples of German generals and military theorists, Ludendorff, Seeckt and Beck, and discussed the influence of Clausewitz on them. Tomoyuki Ishizu compared Clausewitz and Liddell Hart and reached the conclusion that the latter inherited -- contrary to the widely accepted view -- the several elements of the Clausewitzian thinking⁹.

In the last part “Clausewitz and wars of our days”, Satoshi Nagasue discussed the relations between the Clausewitzian thought and technology through the example of air power¹⁰.

Thus the studies of Clausewitz's thoughts in the 21st century Japan are extricating themselves from the peculiar situation formed by the social trends of post-war Japan and the volume edited by Shimizu and Ishizu showed that

Japanese academicians can develop new and “normal” approaches like colleagues of other countries. With the turning of the tide, it is expected that more positivistic studies of Clausewitzian thoughts will proceed in Japan. And this progress should help to improve the general understanding of Clausewitz in Japanese society that is rather inclined to the pragmatic interpretations.

Clausewitz in the educations of Jieitai Officers

Finally, the author would like to sketch how Clausewitz’s thought is presented in the education of SDF Officers.

In Rikujo Jieitai (Japan Ground Self-Defense Force, JGSDF), Clausewitz is taught in Shiki Bakuryo Katei (the command and general staff course) for captains and majors and in Kanbu Kokyu Katei (the advanced command and general staff course) for colonels and lieutenant colonels of Rikujo Jieitai Kanbu Gakko (the Staff College of JGSDF). However Clausewitz is not presented as a separate subject, but as a part of the “Yohei Shiso Si” (The History of strategic Thoughts) along with Frederic the Great, Napoleon, Jomini, Moltke the elder and Liddell Hart. In the lectures, the Clausewitzian philosophical reflections on “what is war” and his understanding of war as a phenomenon, which is unable to predict, are emphasized¹¹.

Kaijo Jieitai (Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force, JMSDF) attaches importance to Mahan and Corbett and does not provide lectures on Clausewitz. In Koku Jieitai, Clausewitz is more appreciated than by the JGSDF, much more than JMSDF, because the U.S. Air Force, the most important partner of JASDF and the most progressive air force in modern air warfare, adopts the Clausewitzian thinking on war as one of the nucleus elements of its strategy. Therefore the officers of JASDF must understand Clausewitz’s thoughts and are required to read “On War” repeatedly. Of course Clausewitz is lectured in all officer-education courses of the JASDF¹².

Notes:

¹ Yugo Asano, *Clausewitz to kindai nibon* (Clausewitz and the Modern Japan) 3-1, Rikusen Kenkyu (Studies of the Land Warfare), No. 328, 1981 (cite as Asano I), pp. 27-30.

² Ibid., p. 30. Cf.; Georg Kerst, *Jacob Meckel. Sein Leben, sein Wirken in Deutschland und Japan*, Göttingen 1970.

³ Asano I, 33-35. Cf., Tohru Maehara, *Nihon rikugun e no Clausewitz no eikyou* (The Influence of Clausewitz upon Imperial Japanese Army) 1, Gunji-Shigaku (Military History Studies), Vol .19. No.1, 1983, especially pp. 20-25.

⁴ Clausewitz's thoughts as a theory was not lectured even in Rikugun Daigakko (the military academy). Asano I, p. 34.

⁵ Yugo ASANO, *Clausewitz to kindai nihon* (Clausewitz and the Modern Japan) 3-2, Rikusen Kenkyu (Studies of the Land Warfare), No. 329, 1981, pp. 11-14.

⁶ Takichi Shimizu/Tomoyuki Ishizu (ed.), *Clausewitz to sensoron* (Clausewitz and 'On War'), Tokyo, 2008 (cite as S/I).

⁷ Takichi Shimizu, *Clausewitz no shogai--Clausewitz to Napoleon sennso* (The Life of Clausewitz - Clausewitz and the Napoleonic Wars); Yasuyuki Kawamura, *Clausewitz no 'sensoron toba nanika* (What is Clausewitz's 'On War'), both in S/I.

⁸ Masaki Miyake, *Doitsu ni okeru Clausewitz kennkyushu o chusin to site* (Introduction of the literature on Clausewitz focusing on the studies in Germany); Takashi Araya *Jyukyuseiseikyotou no yoroppa senryakukankyou to puroisen* (The European strategic environment and Prussia in the beginning of the 19th century); Hiroto Maruhata, *Clausewitz and the age of the general conscription system*; Tadashi Suzuki, *Puroisen Gunseikaikaku - gaikan to tenbo* (Prussian military reform - an outline and the prospect), all in S/L.

⁹ Hiroki Nakajima, *Puroisen-doitsu gun to Clausewitz* (The Prussian-German army and Clausewitz); Jun Kozutsumi, *Sennryaku naki jidai no Clausewitz - Sennkannki no doitu o chusin ni* (Clausewitz in the era without strategy - With the emphasis on Germany between the World Wars); Tomoyuki Ishizu, *Clausewitz to Liddell Hart - 'Zettai senso' to 'Seigen senso' no sokoku?* (Clausewitz and Liddell Hart - An antagonism between 'Unlimited War' and 'Limited War?'), all in S/L.

¹⁰ Satoshi Nagasue, *Clausewitz no sennryakugainen to air power* (Clausewitzian concepts of strategy and air power), in S/L.

¹¹ "Yohei Shiso si" Kyoiku Yotei Hyo (The curriculum of "History of strategic Thoughts"), Rikujo Jieitai Kanbu Gakko; The informations from the lecturer of Koku Jieitai Kanbugakko (the Staff College of Japan Air Self Defense Force); Maj.Gen. (ret.) Takashi Genda by E-Mail of October 12, 2010.

¹² Ibid. Cf., Takashi Genda, *Posuto reisen jidai no bei kuugun senryaku - Warden taisa no kokuu senryaku siso o chusin ni* (U.S. air strategy in the age of post-Cold War - based on colonel Warden's thoughts on air strategy), *Shin Boei Ronsyuu* (New Defense Studies), Vol. 28, No. 1 (2000).