

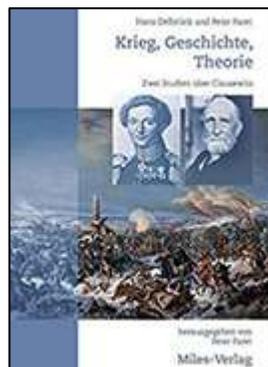
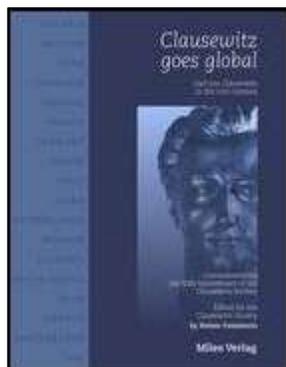


ClausewitzStudies.org

Professor Yu Tiejun, "The Western Master and Bible of War: Clausewitz and His On War in China," pp.43-60 in Clausewitz Gesellschaft [Hamburg, Germany], Reiner Pommerin, ed., *Clausewitz Goes Global: Carl von Clausewitz in the 21st Century*, Commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the Clausewitz Gesellschaft (Berlin: Carola Hartmann Miles Verlag, 2011), ISBN: 9783937885414.

YU TIEJUN is Associate Professor in the School of International Studies and general secretary for the Center for International and Strategic Studies at Peking University. Previously, he served as visiting fellow at the Center for International Security and Cooperation at Stanford University in 2005, and also as visiting scholar at the Fairbank Center for East Asian Research at Harvard University in 2005-06. Dr. Yu has published a variety of articles focused on international relations theory and military alliances in East Asia. He is also the Chinese translator of *Myths of Empire* by Jack Snyder (Beijing: Peking University Press, 2007) and *Discord and Collaboration: Essays on International Politics* by Arnold Wolfers (Beijing: World Affairs Press, 2006), among other works. He teaches International Security and Strategic Studies at Peking University. His research interests include IR theory, East Asian Security, and Military History. Dr. Yu received a Ph.D., M.A. and B.A. from the School of International Studies at Peking University. E-mail: yutiejun@pku.edu.cn.

This article is posted to *The Clausewitz Homepage* and to *ClausewitzStudies.org* with the kind permission of the publisher, **Miles Verlag (Berlin)**, and of the **Clausewitz Gesellschaft**. See [two reviews in German](#).



SEE ALSO: Hans Delbrück and Peter Paret: *Krieg, Geschichte, Theorie. Zwei Studien über Clausewitz*. Herausgegeben von Peter Paret (Berlin: Miles-Verlag, 2018), 76 Seiten, erschienen als Hardcover mit Schutzumschlag und Paperback. Paperback: ISBN 978-3-945861-82-0, Preis: 16,80 Euro. Hardcover: ISBN 978-3-945861-80-6

IN THE USA:

<https://www.amazon.com/Krieg-Geschichte-Theorie-Studien-Clausewitz/dp/3945861802/>

<https://www.amazon.com/Clausewitz-goes-global/dp/3937885412/>

THE WESTERN MASTER AND BIBLE OF WAR: CLAUSEWITZ AND HIS “*ON WAR*” IN CHINA

Yu Tiejun

INTRODUCTION

Since Clausewitz’s *On War* was published in 1832, it has been translated into many languages such as English, French, Japanese, Russian, and Chinese, etc., and circulated widely around the world, greatly impacting the world’s military history. It is exactly one hundred years ago when Clausewitz was first introduced into China. Ever since then, Clausewitz was generally regarded as the most famous Western military thinker and *On War* was viewed as the cannon of Western military science, no matter it is at the times of the Republic of China or People’s Republic of China. Though the times have changed a lot, and the Revolution of Military Affairs (RMA) is overwhelmingly sweeping China as in other countries, Clausewitz and his *On War* still holds an indispensable position in the Chinese military thinking, education, strategic planning and policy implementation.

This chapter will first examine the history of Clausewitz being introduced into China, and then analyze the role that Clausewitz plays in the formation of the Mao Zedong’s military thought which is still a dominant and orthodox framework and an essential part of the current military strategic thinking in China. In the following part, I will discuss Clausewitz and *On War* in contrast to Sun Tzu and *the Art of War*, trying to show how Chinese understand and interpret Clausewitz’s *On War*. In the next part, I will focus on the relevance of Clausewitz to China in theory and practice. I will conclude this chapter with a brief discussion of the prospect of Clausewitz’s military thought to China.

Journey of a Century: the Translation and Spread of *On War* in China

The first Chinese version of *On War* was published in 1911, titled *Daxhan Xueli*.¹ It was mainly translated by the Military Consultant Department of the Qing Government from the Japanese version of *On War*. This first Chinese version was not a complete one and was not openly published to the public

audience, but only circulated in a small circle for research reference. Nevertheless, it is the first time that Clausewitz (though even his name was not mentioned) and his *On War* was introduced to China. In the preface of this Chinese version, the translators said, “This book is composed of many chapters. It is deeply thought, richly elaborated and clearly illustrated. It is completely different from those superficial military books in general, and thus should be an indispensable reference for our military comrades. Everyone should own a copy.”² From this, we can see that *On War* was highly evaluated and was regarded as an unusual book from the very beginning.

In 1915, *On War* was re-translated from a Japanese version of *On War* and openly published for the first time in two volumes by Beijing Wuxueguan Xuju, still titled *Dazhan Xueli*. In the prefaces to this version, Clausewitz was acclaimed as a master military philosopher, and the posthumous *On War* was the best military work of Germany. According to the translator,³ the book was based on Clausewitz’s lifetime war experience, clearly and fully elaborated on the relationship between strategy and policy, and far surpassed the military works in China and other countries in its depth and thoroughness.⁴

In the following decades, *On War* had been re-translated and republished for many times,⁵ especially during the Chinese War against Japan in 1930s and 1940s, when China was facing a hard time and military studies were urgent and highly demanded. These translations had been based on Japanese, Russian, English or German versions of *On War*. A very popular Chinese version at this time is *Dazhan Xueli* translated by Huang Huanwen, a veteran researcher of military thought. Although this version is not a complete and literal translation but only an abridged version with essential text and translator’s summary, it has been very popular for several reasons. Firstly, Huang’s translation was concise and easy to understand. He reorganized and streamlined *On War* according to his own understanding and provided some annotation, thus reducing the difficulty of reading Clausewitz for the average people. Secondly, in this version there were a short biography of Clausewitz and several prefaces very useful to help readers understand Clausewitz from different perspectives. *On War* was acclaimed as “not only military, but also scientific...not only scientific, but also philosophical; not only philosophical, but also psychological; not only psychological, but also of art and literature.”⁶ In the following editions of this version, book remarks praising Clausewitz and *On War* by statesmen and generals like Lenin and A. G. von Schlieffen were also included. The book was

regarded as a world well known masterpiece and was included the famous Commercial Press Series in 1944.⁷

The most important and the best Chinese version was published from 1964 to 1965 in three volumes after PRC was established.⁸ In 1960, under the instruction of the Central Military Commission of the CPC and with the leadership of Marshal Ye Jianying,⁹ the Academy of Military Sciences (AMS) of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) began to organize a team to translate *On War* into Chinese. In order to guarantee the quality of translation, AMS, with the help of the Publicity Department of CPC, mobilized the best and brightest of China's German academics. Except for the military researchers from AMS, the translation team also included nine excellent German translators from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Xinhua News Agency and 10 top professors and experts on German literature and philosophy from the universities and other cultural and educational units around the country. Mainly based on the *On War* published in 1957 in East Germany with reference to the Russian, Japanese, French, English and several previous Chinese versions, the new version proved to be a very successful enterprise after three years of hard work.¹⁰ It is a complete and high quality translation with more than 200 endnotes explaining the historical background and military terminology, and indexes of names of people and places mentioned in *On War* with brief introduction. This version was published by the Publishing Bureau of the PLA General Staff Department and internally distributed for PLA officers' use. To make it more user-friendly, in 1977, AMS also published an abridged version of *On War*, heavily condensing the three volumes to a slim book, but still for the internal use.¹¹ It was until 1978 that the complete AMS version became openly published by the Commercial Publishing House of China, and then in 1985 by Jiefangjun Press with minor revision. The most up-dated edition was published in 2005. Although there are many other translations of *On War* before and after this version, the AMS translation is still regarded as the best Chinese version of *On War* today.

In the early of 1980s, the General Staff Department of PLA listed the *On War* as a must read for the high-ranking officers to improve their level of military thinking.¹² This is a big push to the development of study of Clausewitz's military theory and the spread of *On War*. Many books and hundreds of articles on Clausewitz and *On War* have been published in China in the past three decades corresponding with the Reform and Opening up policy taken by PRC since 1978.¹³ Except for the effort of translation, annotation and publication of *On War*, a dozen of research monographs and edited volumes

have got printed,¹⁴ and at least four biographies of Clausewitz have been published in China.¹⁵ In *China Military Encyclopedia*, Clausewitz was emphasized in almost every related sub-field.¹⁶ In the military education system, Clausewitz was an indispensable part for generations of military officer corps of almost all levels. Clausewitz's military thought was praised as the apex of the capitalist military thought, an essential part of the development of Mao Zedong's military thought, and still relevant to the strategic thinking and military doctrine of contemporary China.

In terms of translation, publication, spreading, studying and persisting influence, it is not exaggerated that in China there is no other foreign person or writing in the military field that could compete with Clausewitz and his *On War* in the past century.¹⁷

Clausewitz's Influence on Mao Zedong's Military Thought

There are many reasons why Clausewitz's *On War* has been so widely spread and received so much attention in China for the past century and is still viewed as the bedrock of Western military science in the nuclear and information age. Except for his comprehensive, profound and systematic examination of war, the huge and enduring impact of Clausewitz in China should also be understood from the role he played in the development of Lenin and Mao Zedong's military thought.

Similar to the situation in the former Soviet Union, Friedrich Engels who had a particular interest and expertise on the military studies was usually the first to be cited in the discussion of Clausewitz in China. Engels praised Clausewitz to be the first-rate figure in the Prussian military academies, and "the world-widely recognized authority on the military aspects, like Jomini."¹⁸ In his correspondence with Marx, he wrote, "Now I am reading Clausewitz's *On War*. A remarkable way of philosophizing about the question, but the book itself is very good."¹⁹ Marx replied with equal approval. However, neither Engels nor Marx paid attention to the concept of "War as the Continuation of Politics by others means" which was stressed and highly acclaimed by Lenin later. "This dictum," Lenin wrote, "was uttered by one of the profoundest writers on the problems of war. Marxists have always rightly regarded this thesis as the theoretical basis of views on the significance of any war."²⁰ He further explained, the character of every war was "not determined at the point where the opposing armies take their stand, [but by] what policy is carried on

by the war, what class is conducting the war and what objectives it is pursuing on the course of it.”²¹ Lenin had studied *On War* very seriously and left behind him lots of reading notes. These reading notes had been edited and published as a book in China in 1978.²²

In the case of China, Clausewitz’s popularity did not start from Mao Zedong, as we have seen above, but there is no doubt it was reinforced by Mao’s appreciation of the Prussian strategist. In the Yan’an era when the Long March of the Red Army had ended, Mao Zedong began to conclude the revolutionary experience and think about the future of Chinese strategy facing the new situation of the Resistant War against a militarily stronger Japan and Nationalist KMT regime. Clausewitz entered Mao’s vision in the early of 1930s when he was still at Jiangxi,²³ but it was at Yan’an that Mao began to study Clausewitz. He wrote to General Guo Huaruo, suggesting him to read Clausewitz if he wanted to study strategy at the end of 1937.²⁴ He himself also began to read *On War* and wrote down some reading notes. In 1938, Mao Zedong even organized a weekly study group on Clausewitz’s *On War* at Yan’an, enrolling some comrade generals to listen to He Sijing’s interpretation of Clausewitz’s *On War* from a German text, followed by a group discussion.²⁵ According to the recalling of a participant, Mao Zedong was an enthusiastic listener and a serious note-taker at that time, and had talked on issues like concentrations of forces. Mao Zedong himself also mentioned at several different occasions after PRC was established that he has read *On War* in order to conclude the experiences of Chinese revolutionary war. Mao Zedong also expressed his disagreement with Stalin’s remark on Clausewitz that he was a “representative of the hand-worker era” who had nothing to teach the industrial age, saying that one should not stop reading Clausewitz because Germany was defeated in the Great Wars.²⁶

The influence of Clausewitz on Mao Zedong could be found in some works of Mao Zedong during this period. In *On Protracted War* delivered in May 1938, Mao for the first time cited Clausewitz’s views like “war is the continuation of politics” and “the law of probability” while making some important theoretical innovations based on his rich practices of revolutionary war. “‘War is the continuation of politics.’ In this sense war is politics and war itself is a political action;” Mao wrote, “But war has its own particular characteristics and in this sense it cannot be equated with politics in general... When politics develops to a certain stage beyond which it cannot proceed by the usual means, war breaks out to sweep the obstacles from the way... It can therefore be said

that politics is war without bloodshed while war is politics with bloodshed.”²⁷ Regarding “law of probability,” in Chapter one of *On War*, Clausewitz argued, “not only its objective but also its subjective nature makes war a gamble,” and “absolute, so-called mathematical, factors never find a firm basis in military calculations.”²⁸ In this case, Mao pointed out, “We admit that the phenomenon of war is more elusive and is characterized by greater uncertainty than any other social phenomenon, in other words, that it is more a matter of ‘probability.’ Yet war is no way supernatural, but a mundane process governed by necessity... (W)hatever the situation and the moves in a war, one can know their general aspects and essential points. It is possible for a commander to reduce errors and give generally correct direction, first through all kinds of reconnaissance and then through intelligent inference and judgment.”²⁹ In the eyes of Chinese commentators, these arguments were considered as having made Clausewitz’s original accounts deeper, more complete and scientific.³⁰ In this event, Clausewitz functioned as a link in the development of Marx-Leninist and Mao Zedong’s military thought, a status that no other foreign military theorist enjoyed or could compete for.

Mao Zedong’s military thought is still the guideline of China’s military strategy and military doctrine today. It may be reasonable to draw a conclusion that so long as Marx-Leninism and Mao Zedong thought remain the orthodox ideology in China, Clausewitz and his *On War* will keep on enjoying a privileged and unparalleled position compared with other Western military thinkers in the future.

Clausewitz and *On War* as a Counterpoise to Sun Tzu and *The Art of War*

In China, Clausewitz and *On War* is often juxtaposed with Sun Tzu and *The Art of War*, called “Zhongxi Shuangbi”(, Sino-Western Twin Jades).³¹ The former is extolled as the Western Master and bible of war and the other is adored as the Eastern Sage and treasure of military art. However, in terms of time, geographic conditions, culture, writing style, and book length,³² the gap between Clausewitz’s *On War* and Sun Tzu’s *The Art of War* could hardly be wider. But as the representatives of the West and the East in military thinking, people cannot help being curious about comparing the two masters of war: Did they say anything different? And if they did, on which points? Who is more convincing? Why they are different? Do they share anything fundamen-

tally? Who is better and on what matters? These questions arise naturally in a comparative study. This kind of comparison is much valuable, because “it demonstrates the basic unity of the study of strategy and war, and also allows us to better understand these works on their own terms: each can be viewed from a broader perspective, and issues that would otherwise be obscured can be clarified.”³³

When comparing Clausewitz and Sun Tzu, British strategist Liddell Hart’s seemingly paradoxical comments in his foreword to *The Art of War* translated by Samuel Griffith are well known. On one hand, he observed that Clausewitz’s *On War* “...did not differ so much from Sun Tzu’s conclusions as it appeared to do on the surface,” and on the other hand he asserted that “Sun Tzu has clearer vision, more profound insight, and eternal freshness” and suggested that “Sun Tzu’s realism and moderation form a contrast to Clausewitz’s tendency to emphasize the logical ideal and ‘the absolute’...”³⁴ Liddell Hart’s preference to Sun Tzu and depreciation of Clausewitz may result from his biased understanding of Clausewitz, his distaste for Clausewitz’s writing style, or that he was happy to find there was a consonant from Sun Tzu to his “indirect strategy.” But he admitted anyway that “(a)mong all the military thinkers of the past, only Clausewitz is comparable.”³⁵

Liddell Hart’s commentary on Sun Tzu and Clausewitz has been welcomed and echoed among Chinese Clausewitz experts.³⁶ However, there is no consensus regarding the comparison of *The Art of War* and *On War*. Zhai Dongsheng and Shi Yinhong have used Clausewitz’s war theory to criticize Sun Tzu. Based on Clausewitz’s argumentation that war by nature is a trinity of violence, probability, and policy instrument, they examined Sun Tzu’s related observations, and draw a conclusion that there existed an unwarranted confidence and optimism about war in Sun Tzu’s writing. It seems that the authors regarded Clausewitz as more convincing.³⁷

In contrast, Xue Guoan, a professor of PLA’s National Defense University asserted that although Sun Tzu and Clausewitz enjoyed some commons like concentration of forces, combination of the defensive and attack, and emphasis of generalship, generally speaking, there are more differences than similarities between the two masters in war view, strategic thinking, and military doctrine. According to Xue, Sun Tzu appreciates rationality while Clausewitz extols violence; Sun Tzu seeks strategy while Clausewitz emphasizes forces; Sun Tzu stresses changes while Clausewitz thinks much of rules.³⁸ Xue attributed these differences to the different military culture and way of thinking

between the East and West, advocating both sides should learn from each other.

Niu Xianzhong, a prominent Taiwanese strategic scholar compared *The Art of War* and *On War* and draw a conclusion that they are both immortal masterpieces but with different characteristics, and they are more essentially complementary than contradicted. In the view of Niu, the biggest advantage of *The Art of War* lies in its clarity, while the biggest weakness of *On War* is its obscurity. Clausewitz emphasizes the relationship between war and politics while Sun Tzu attaches more attention to the relationship between war and economy; Clausewitz likes historical examples while Sun Tzu thinks more of geographical factors; when talking about military genius, Clausewitz ranks “courage” the foremost virtue while Sun Tzu chooses the “wisdom” as the most important quality of the commander; Sun Tzu stresses intelligence and surprise attack while Clausewitz dwells more on “friction” and “the fog of war”. Nevertheless, Niu Xianzhong still thinks, in general, there are more similarities than differences between Sun Tzu and Clausewitz.³⁹ And there is no gulf between the East and West in strategic thinking, though Chinese usually like to put Clausewitz in the East-West division.

Niu Xianzhong’s finding was shared by Michael Handel. After conducting a comprehensive, structural and rigorous comparison between *On War* and *The Art of War*, Handel more persuasively proved that despite their apparent differences in terms of time, place, cultural background, and level of material/technological development, all had much more in common than previously supposed. The logic of waging war and of strategic thinking seems universal as well as timeless.⁴⁰

The Continuing Relevance of Clausewitz to China in Theory and Practice

Since *On War* was published for the first time in Germany in 1832, almost 180 years has past; since it was translated into Chinese, 100 years has past. The military setting has changed so fast, with RMA occupying the central stage of military affairs around the world. Under such circumstances, are those points expressed by Clausewitz in his *On War* still viable and useful? Isn’t it already anachronistic considering we have entered the so-called nuclear, information, and space age, and we have so many fancy theories, models, technologies, and war machines? In short, is Clausewitz still relevant to us nowadays? This is not

a new question. At the beginning of the last century, this kind of question had already been raised in his motherland Germany and other European countries,⁴¹ and it has been continuously asked afterwards.

In China, the majority answer to this question is: some of Clausewitz's arguments may be out-of-dated in the new military environment, but his general theory on war and his dialectic way of thinking are still relevant. In China, the following arguments of Clausewitz are usually regarded as innovative, insightful, and valuable, and continued to be part of China's military strategic thinking, though the list may not be complete:⁴²

- War is the continuation of politics by other means.
- War is a paradoxical trinity - composed of primordial violence, hatred, and enmity; of the play of chance and probability; and of its element of subordination, as an instrument of policy. These three tendencies are like three different codes of law, deeply rooted in their subject and yet variable in their relationship to one another. People's task is to develop a theory that maintains a balance between these three tendencies.⁴³
- Destroying the enemy's forces and preserving our own forces, these two efforts always go together; they interact. They are integral parts of a single purpose.⁴⁴
- Theory cannot equip the mind with formulas for solving problems, nor can it mark the narrow path on which the sole solution is supposed to lie by planting a hedge of principles on either side. But it can give the mind insight into the great mass of phenomena and of their relationships, and help people to seize on what is right and true.⁴⁵ Because age had its own kind of war, its own limiting conditions, and its own peculiar preconditions, the theorists must scrutinize all data with an inquiring, a discriminating, and a classifying eye. He must always bear in mind the wide variety of situations that can lead to war. If he does, he will draw the outline of its salient features in such a way that it can accommodate both the dictates of the age, and those of the immediate situation.⁴⁶
- The moral elements are among the most important in war. The effects of physical and psychological factors form an organic whole, which is inseparable by chemical processes. The principal moral elements are: the skill of the commander, the experience and courage of the troops,

and their patriotic spirit.⁴⁷

- As an important war phenomenon, a popular uprising is a broadening and intensification of the fermentation process known as war.⁴⁸
- Defense and attack are interdependent, interactive, mutually inclusive and conversable. The defensive form of war is not a simple shield, but a shield made up of well-directed blows.
- There is no higher and simpler law of strategy than that of keeping one's forces concentrated.⁴⁹

Like many other countries, lots of debates remain around Clausewitz and his *On War* in China. These debates may simply arise from the abstractness of *On War*. Liddell Hart's comment on Clausewitz may be a little bit biased and exaggerated, but at least on one point he is right: Clausewitz's thought is obscure, and his argument "often turned back from the direction which it seemed to be taking."⁵⁰ In addition, *On War* is a posthumous work and it was not finished before Clausewitz died, so there are some places in *On War* appearing incoherent or even contradictory. But a more important reason may lie in that different people tend to interpret Clausewitz differently.

In the past three decades, Chinese scholars have debated on the intellectual sources of Clausewitz's war theory, on his categorization of "absolute war and real war,"⁵¹ on his argument that "war is the continuation of politics by other means," on the "law of probability,"⁵² on the war purpose of "destroying the enemy's forces and preserving our own forces," and on the problem of "the defensive form of warfare is intrinsically stronger than the offensive."⁵³ There was an especially hot debate on the viability of "war is the continuation of politics" under the nuclear condition. Some scholars completely denied the viability of the argument, some doubted or partially denied the viability, and still others insist on the universal viability.⁵⁴ These debates, like Peter Paret said, "Remind us once more of the manner in which Clausewitz formed and refined his ideas. They also suggest the vitality of these ideas, which never coalesced into a finite system, but led to hypotheses that ... have shown the capacity for continuing growth that Clausewitz believed to be the mark of true theory."⁵⁵

For the Chinese military professional nowadays, Clausewitz has not only theoretical implication, but also practical significance. Some of them have

begun to apply Clausewitz's concepts and way of thinking to shape their arguments in recent years. For instance, when analyzing the purpose of the US conduct of war in Iraq, Su Enze, a retired major general questioned whether those American generals had forgotten Clausewitz's dictum that "war is the continuation of politics by other means", because according to Clausewitz, military purpose cannot take place of the political purpose of a state, but what the US army had done in Iraq seemed to have simply violated the principle.⁵⁶ Another major general Jin Yinan cited Clausewitz's analysis of the reasons why the Prussian army failed in 1806, asserting that the most deadly damage to a nation is the lack of enterprising spirit.⁵⁷ Li Yong examined "the fog of war" under the condition of high technology, arguing that the development of military technology may eliminate the traditional "fog of war," but under the new technological situation, the new "fog of war" will arise from the new technology, information explosion and pollution. The commanders have to face a new dilemma when making a strategic decision.⁵⁸ Still others have utilized Clausewitz's observation on the military virtue to explore the significance, contents, and means to develop the personality of military virtue among the officer corps.⁵⁹ These efforts show that Clausewitz remains rather relevant in the new setting in China.

Unfortunately, though Clausewitz lost none of his popularity in China today, the related research on Clausewitz is still limited in several aspects. Firstly, the study of "Clausewitz Studies" is not enough, especially those civilian scholarships from other countries. For instance, the four seminal essays included in the English version of *On War* which were written by Peter Paret, Michael Howard, and Bernard Brodie have barely been mentioned in China. And some excellent studies on Clausewitz like Michael Handel's *Masters of War*, Raymond Aron's *Clausewitz: Philosopher of War*, and Peter Paret's *Clausewitz and the State*, have not yet been seriously introduced into China even though some of them have been published for decades.⁶⁰ One reason for this may lie in the scarcity of communication between China and other countries in the field of Clausewitz studies, the lack of exchange between military scholars and civilian scholars in China, and the rarity of civilian scholars who work on Clausewitz.⁶¹ This situation needs to be changed. Otherwise it may impede the improvement of China's research level and limit the further knowledge accumulation in the studies of Clausewitz. China needs to open its door to the outside world while encourage and strengthen the communication between the military and civilian scholars domestically in the field of Clausewitz studies.⁶²

Secondly, the focus of Chinese Clausewitz studies should be moved to how to apply his war theory and strategic thinking to the real world instead of merely canonic reinterpretation. Methodologically, Clausewitz extremely stressed the importance of studying historical examples and approaching reality in the course of establishing his theory. With the rise of China and the increasing of China's strategic practices, Clausewitz should be more applicable and gain more audience.

Conclusion

In the preface of the AMS version of *On War*, it says “*On War* written by Carl von Clausewitz, the Prussian military theorist in the 19th century, is a classic of capitalist military theory. It reflects the progressive tendency and innovative spirit in the military thought of the capitalists at the early stage. It has put forwards some correct point of views regarding the nature of war, and greatly pushed the development of military thought. Thus this book is still extolled in the military of the capitalist countries ... Owing to the time limit, some views expressed in the book are no longer correct. Some views, especially those specific issues on the military doctrine are no longer coincidental with the objective reality. However, the author is the first military strategist who consciously made use of dialectics to study war, and draw some conclusions still viable ... Therefore, this book is not only a great help for our study of capitalist military thought, but also beneficial for us to study the general problems of war.”⁶³

If we put the ideological tone aside, this remark still viably holds today. Considering the role of Clausewitz and his *On War* playing in the system of Mao Zedong's military thought, its complementing value to Sun Tzu and *the Art of War* - the traditional way of strategic thinking in China - and its persistent relevance to contemporary strategic thinking, there is almost no uncertainty here that his influence will stay large in the foreseeable future. With the rise of China facing an increasingly complicated international environment and new challenges of RMA, Clausewitz will still be a source of theoretical inspiration and practical guide. Clausewitz's knowledge is still vital to survival, and *On War* will remain an extraordinary book for Chinese readers. The problem is how to combine the new reality with the philosophical thinking of Clausewitz in a new environment and make it more applicable, especially in a Chinese context.

Notes:

¹ *Dazhan Xueli* [*Theory of Great War*], Lujun Jiaoyu Yanjiushe Yiyin [Translated and Published by the Army Education and Research Society], 1911.

² *Ibid.*, Preface.

³ The translator, Qu Shouti, had participated in the translation of the first Chinese version of *On War*. He was a graduate of Beiyang Army Crash School, and then became an instructor at Baoding Army College, two of the earliest and prominent military colleges in modern China.

⁴ Gelusaiweizhi [Clausewitz], *Dazhan Xueli* [*Theory of the Great War*], Qu Shouti tran., Beijing: Beijing Wuxueguan Shuju [Beijing Military Science House Publisher], 1915.

⁵ For a more detailed examination of the evolution of Chinese versions of *On War*, see Xia Zhengnan, “Kelaosaiweici *Zhanzhenglun* zai Zhongguo de Liu-chuan” [The Spread of Clausewitz’s *On War* in China] *Zhongguo Junshi Kexue* [*China Military Science*], No. 5, 2004.

According to Xia Zhengnan’s study, there are 33 Chinese versions of *On War* until 2005, see Xia Zhengnan, *Jiedu Zhanzhenglun* [*Interpreting On War*] (2nd edition), Beijing: Jiefangjun Chubanshe [The PLA Press], 2005, pp. 680-682.

⁶ Kelaosaiweici [Clausewitz], *Dazhan Xueli* [*Theory of the Great War*] (vol.1), Huang Huanwen ed. and tran., Guilin: Guofang Shudian [National Defense Bookstore], 1941, p. 9.

⁷ Kelaosaiweici [Clausewitz], *Dazhan Xueli* (or *Zhanzheng Lun*) [*Theory of the Great War*, or *On War*], Huang Huanwen ed. and tran., Shanghai: Shangwu Yinshuguan [The Commercial Press], 1944.

⁸ Kelaosaiweici [Clausewitz], *Zhanzhenglun* [*On War*] (PLA Academy of Military Sciences translated), Beijing: PLA General Staff’s Publishing Bureau, 1964-1965.

⁹ At that time, Marshal Ye Jianying was the President of the AMS. See Song Zi, “Yeshuai Zhidao Women Fanyi Zhanzhenglun” [Marshal Ye Instructed Us to Translate *On War*], *Zhongguo Shehui Kexuebao* [*China Social Science Newspaper*], January 6, 2011, p. 9.

¹⁰ Xia Zhengnan, *Jiedu Zhanzhenglun* [*Interpreting On War*], p. 21.

¹¹ The remaining parts include the nature of war, the theory of war, strategy in general, the engagement, the principles of defense and the attack, and war plan.

Kelaosaiweici [Clausewitz], *Zhanzhenlun* (abridged)[*On War*], Beijing: Zhongguo Renmin Jiefangjun Junshi Kexueyuan [PLA Academy of Military Sciences], 1977.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 22.

¹³ A good summary of the literature on Clausewitz study, see Xia Zhengnan, *Jiedu Zhanzhenlun* [*Interpreting On War*], pp. 680-693.

¹⁴ Among the most notable works are Xia Zhengnan, *Kelaosaiweici Zhanzhen Zhexue Yanjiu* [*Study of Clausewitz's War Philosophical Thoughts*], Beijing: Jiefangjun Chubanshe [The PLA Press], 1989; Wu Qiong, *Zhanzhenlun Quanshi* [*Interpreting On War*], Beijing: Huawen Press, 2001; Xia Zhengnan, *Jiedu Zhanzhenlun* [*Interpreting On War*] (2nd edition), 2005; and Wu Qiong and Xia Zhengnan, eds., *Lun Kelaosaiweici Zhanzhenlun* [*On Clausewitz's On War*], Shanghai: Shanghai Jiaoyu Chubanshe [Shanghai Education Press], 1999.

¹⁵ Two of these biographies are translated works written by German authors, two are written by Chinese scholars. See Fulanci Fabian [Franz Fabian], *Kelaosaiweici Zhuan* [*Clausewitz*], The Foreign Military Research Department of AMS tran., Beijing: Zhongguo Duiwai Fanyi Chunban Gongsi [China Foreign Translation and Publishing Company], 1984; Weilian feng Shilamu [Wilhelm von Schramm], *Kelaosaiweici Zhuan* [*Clausewitz*], Wang Qingyu et al., trans., Beijing: Shangwu Yinshuguan [The Commercial Press], 1984; Xue Guoan, *Kelaosaiweici Zhuan* [*A Biography of Clausewitz*], Shijiazhuang: Hebei Renmin Chubanshe [Hebei People's Press], 1997; Xia Zhengnan, *Kelaosaiweici* [Clausewitz], Kunming: Yunnan Jiaoyu Chubanshe [Yunnan Educational Press], 2008.

¹⁶ In the new edition of *China Military Encyclopedia*, Clausewitz and his *On War* is present in the sub-field of Military Philosophy, Foreign Military Figures, Foreign Military Works, Mao Zedong's Military Thought, and Military Scientific Research, etc. See the related volumes published by Zhongguo Dabaiké Quanshu Chubanshe [Encyclopedia of China Publishing House] in 2006-2007.

¹⁷ In the Western military science, Jomini is usually regarded as standing on the same foot with Clausewitz. But Jomini's position and influence in China is obviously less prominent than Clausewitz. Jomini's *Summary of the Art of War* was not fully translated into Chinese until 1986, and related literature is far less than Clausewitz. The author has used "Kelaosaiweici (Clausewitz)" and "Ruomini (Jomini)" as the keywords to search the CNKI electronic journal database, and got a result of 447 entries related to "Clausewitz" and 10 entries re-

lated to “Jomini” during the period from 1980 to 2010 (searched on January 7, 2011).

¹⁸ *Makesi Engesi Junshi Wenji* [*Military Writings of Marx and Engels*], Vol. 1, Beijing: Zhanshi Chubanshe [Soldier’s Press], 1981, p. 258.

¹⁹ *Makesi Engesi Junshi Wenji* [*Military Writings of Marx and Engels*], Vol. 5, Beijing: Zhanshi Chubanshe [Soldier’s Press], 1981, p. 495.

²⁰ *Liening Junshi Wenji* [*Military Writings of Lenin*], Beijing: Zhanshi Chubanshe [Soldier’s Press], 1981, p. 231.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 333.

²² Liening [Lenin], *Kelaosaiweici Zhanzhenglun Yishu Zhailu he Pizhu* [*Excerpts and Annotation of Clausewitz’s On War*], Beijing: Renmin Chubanshe [People’s Press], 1978.

²³ Song Zi, “Yeshuai Zhidao Women Fanyi Zhanzhenglun” [Marshal Ye Instructed Us to Translate *On War*]

²⁴ General Guo Huaruo is a prominent military theorist and strategist of PLA and a renowned expert on Sun Zi. In December 1937 when Mao Zedong wrote to him, he was helping Mao Zedong in Yan’an to write on strategy against the Japanese aggression. General Guo was the vice president of the AMS from 1973 to 1982.

²⁵ He Sijing, a famous Marxist intellectual who was a graduate of the University of Tokyo and an expert on German philosophy and theory of law. He died in 1968 during the Cultural Revolution of China.

²⁶ See Xia Zhengnan, *Jiedu Zhanzhenglun* [*Interpreting On War*], pp. 23-24.

²⁷ *Selected Military Writings of Mao Tse-tung*, Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1967, pp. 226-227.

²⁸ Clausewitz, *On War*, pp. 96-97.

²⁹ *Selected Military Writings of Mao Tse-tung*, p. 238.

³⁰ Xia Zhengnan, “Mao Zedong: Junshi Bianzhengfa Sixiang zhi Jidachengzhe” [Mao Zedong: A Master of Military Dialectic Thought], *MaoZedong Sixiang Yanjiu* [*Studies of Mao Zedong Thought*], No. 1 (1996), pp. 87-88; Yang Xin, “Shilun Mao Zedong Junshi Zhanlue Siwei Chansheng de Kexuejichu” [On the Scientific Foundations of the Birth of Mao Zedong’s Military Thought], *Junshi Lishi Yanjiu* [*Military History Studies*], No. 2 (2002), p. 26.

³¹ I have used “Kelaosaiweici (Clausewitz) and Sun Zi (Sun Tzu)” as keywords to search the CNKI journal article database, and found 52 related entries from 1980-2010 (searched on January 7, 2011). There are some monographs on this topic, see for instance, Xue Guoan, *Sunzi Bingfa yu Zhanzhenglun Bijiao Yanjiu* [*The Art of War and On War: A Comparative Study*], Beijing: Junshi Kexue Chubanshe [Military Science Press], 2003. This approach has been shared by some Western scholars. See Michael I. Handel, *Masters of War: Classical Strategic Thought*, 3rd edition, London: Routledge, 2001. The first and second editions of the book were published in 1992 and 1996, respectively.

³² *The Art of War* was written in the 5th century BC while *On War* was published in 1832; *The Art of War* has only over 5,000 Chinese characters or fewer than 40 pages in English translation while *On War* is close to 600 pages long or over 690,000 Chinese Characters in translation.

³³ Handel, *Masters of War*, p. 4.

³⁴ B. H. Liddell Hart, “Foreword,” in Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, translated and with an introduction by Samuel B. Griffith, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963, pp. v-vi.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. v.

³⁶ Niu Xianzhong, *Zhangluejia* [*The Strategist*], Nanning: Guangxi Shifan Daxue Chubanshe [Guangxi Normal University Press], p. 150; Zhai Dongsheng and Shi Yinhong, “Dui Sunzi de Kelaosaiweicishi de Pipan” [A Clausewitzian Criticism of Sun Tzu], *Zhanglue yu Guanli* [*Strategy and Management*], No. 5 (2003), p. 30.

³⁷ Zhai Dongsheng and Shi Yinhong, “Dui Sunzi de Kelaosaiweicishi de Pipan” [A Clausewitzian Criticism of Sun Tzu], pp. 30-35.

³⁸ Xue Guoan, *Sunzi Bingfa yu Zhanzhenglun Bijiao Yanjiu* [*The Art of War and On War: A Comparative Study*], pp. 206-226.

³⁹ Niu Xianzhong, *Zhangluejia* [*The Strategist*], p. 149.

⁴⁰ Among the aspects of *On War* and *The Art of War* compared by Handel are “their frameworks; methodologies and styles; positions on the primacy of politics in the formulation of strategic policies and the decision to go to war; and analyses of a field commander’s responsibilities compared with those of a political leader. Also examined are their evaluations of intelligence and deception; quantitative superiority; the relationship between the offense and the defense;

friction; chance, luck and uncertainty in war; and the rational calculus of war.” See Handel, *Masters of War*, p. 21.

⁴¹ Michael Howard, “The Influence of Clausewitz,” in Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 35.

⁴² See, Xia Zhengnan, *Kelaosaiweici Zhanzheng Zhexue Yanjiu* [Study of Clausewitz’s War Philosophical Thoughts], pp. 334-335; idem, Xia Zhengnan, *Jiedu Zhanzhenglun* [Interpreting On War], pp. 7-16.

⁴³ Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 101.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 112.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 698-699.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 717-718.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 216-218.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 578

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 240.

⁵⁰ Liddell Hart, “Foreword,” p. vi.

⁵¹ Ni Lexiong, “Dui Kelaosaiweici Junshi Xueshuo de Jidian Kanfa” [Several Points on Clausewitz’s Military Doctrine], *Xueshu Jie* [Academics in China], No. 2 (2002), pp. 155-162.

⁵² Li Jijun, “Mao Zedong Junshi Sixiang de Tedian he Lishi Diwei” [The Characteristics and Historical Position of Mao Zedong’s Military Thought], in Li Jijun, *Junshi Lilun yu Zhanzheng Shijian* [Military Theory and War Practices], Beijing: Junshi Kexue Chubanshe [Military Science Press], 1994, pp. 40-53; Wu Qiong, “Mao Zedong Junshi Sixiang yu Zhanzhenglun zhong de ‘Gairanxing’ Lilun” [Mao Zedong’s Military Thought and the Law of Probability in *On War*], *Nanjing Zhengzhi Xueyuan Xuebao* [Journal of Nanjing College of Politics], No. 4 (1987), pp. 56-62.

⁵³ Kong Lingtong, et al, “Fangyu shi ‘Yizhong Jiaoqiang de Zuozhan Xingshi’” [The Defensive Is ‘a Stronger Form of Warfare’], in Wu Qiong and Xia Zhengnan, eds., *Lun Kelaosaiweici Zhanzhenglun* [On Clausewitz’s *On War*], pp. 219-235; Guo Weitao, “Fangyu shi Yizhong Jiaoqiang de Zuozhan Xingshi Ma?” [Is the Defensive a Stronger Form of Warfare?], in Wu and Xia, eds., *Lun Kelaosaiweici Zhanzhenglun* [On Clausewitz’s *On War*], pp. 223-225.

⁵⁴ See three papers in Wu and Xia, eds., *Lun Kelaosaiweici Zhanzhenglun* [*On Clausewitz's On War*], pp. 52-83.

⁵⁵ Peter Paret, "The Genesis of *On War*", in Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 28.

⁵⁶ Su Enze, "Buyao Wangle Kelaosaiweici" [Don't Forget Clausewitz], *Zhongguo Huofangbao* [*China National Defense Newspaper*], August 14, 2007, p. 6.

⁵⁷ Jiny Yinan, "Shenme shi Minzu de Zhimingshang" [What is a Nation's Deadly Damage], *Jiefangjun Bao* [*Jiefangjun Daily*], February 9, 2010.

⁵⁸ Li Yong, "'Zhangzheng Miwu' Bing Wei Sanqu" ["Fog of War" has not Disappeared Yet], *Zhongguo Guofangbao* [*China's National Defense Newspaper*], July 18, 2002.

⁵⁹ Xu Xing, Wude Renge [The Personality of Military Virtue], *Junshi Lishi Yanjiu* [*Studies of Military History*], No. 3 (2003), pp. 144-152.

⁶⁰ Michael I. Handel, *Masters of War: Classical Strategic Thought*, 3rd edition, London: Routledge, 2001; Raymond Aron, *Clausewitz: Philosopher of War*, N.J. Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1985; and Peter Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976.

⁶¹ In China, most of the writings on Clausewitz have been done by military scholars or scholars who used to work in the military. There are few exceptions like Shi Yinhong at Beijing and Ni Lexiong at Shanghai.

⁶² Within the author's reading limitation, the earliest and also the only literature review on foreign studies of Clausewitz and *On War* is Zhang Yuanlin, "Guoneiwai dui Kelaosaiweici jiqi Junshi Sixiang Yanjiu Zongshu" [A Comprehensive Review of Foreign Studies on Clausewitz and his Military Thought], in Wu Qiong and Xia Zhengnan, eds., *Lun Kelaosaiweici Zhanzhenglun* [*On Clausewitz's On War*], 1999, pp. 320-334. Many important researches had been absent. In contrast, a Japanese scholar has done a much more comprehensive and up-dated historiography of Clausewitz. See Yasuyuki Kawamura, "Historiography: For the Study on Clausewitz," *The Journal of Strategic Studies* (Japan), No. 1, 2003, pp. 111-171.

⁶³ Kelaosaiweici [Clausewitz], *Zhanzhenglun* [*On War*], Vol. 1, pp. I-II.