

Peer Review

Review of: "Clausewitz's Conceptual Relationship Among Tactics, Strategy, and the Conduct of War (Kriegführung)"

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Dear Ami-Jacques Rapin, dear colleagues,

This is a well-written essay based on a remarkably broad literature with a reasonable and convincing core thesis (p. 1). Its particular strength lies in its consideration of the various approaches around 1800 to defining the concepts of strategy and tactics. This broadens the horizon and also shows the difficulties Clausewitz faced in forming a meaningful conceptualisation.

In detail, however, the argumentation is somewhat unclear. In part, the handling and translation of terms also show potential for optimisation.

It is confusing that the author repeatedly translates 'Zweck' with 'aim' and not, as would actually be useful and obvious, with "purpose" or, if required, with 'end'. (Cf. p. 7-11)

Further points that should be checked and considered are:

p. 11 Clausewitz's essay portrait of Scharnhorst was, as far as I know, written in 1817. (Cf. Clausewitz, *Kleine verstreute Schriften*, 1979, p. 205)

p. 12 Strategy and higher tactics – the decisive criterion is the „Gebrauch der Streitkräfte im Gefecht“, which is why the deployment of very large bodies of troops in combat / in a battle also falls within the scope of tactics.

p. 13 'conceptual triad of tactics/engagement/strategy' – What makes the author think that Clausewitz had such a triad? Is there a source reference? In my opinion, there is no such triad in Clausewitz, because the 'Gefecht'/'engagement' is already the constitutive element for Clausewitz's concept of tactics.

p. 13 Small war as part of tactics – Here one should ask how Clausewitz came to this assessment. In his lectures at the Kriegsschule in Berlin 1810–1812, he primarily considers the elements of small war in the army’s immediate environment (reconnaissance and safeguarding), which per se can only be of a tactical nature. It is significant, however, that he does not repeat this assessment in ‘Vom Kriege’ (Cf. especially chapter VI.26.), because in the meantime he was able to think about the Spanish guerrillas, experienced the Russian campaign of 1812, and, with the Wallmoden Corps in 1813/14, largely independently conducted extensive small-scale warfare – which then also had a kind of strategic dimension – the organisation of the individual battles in time and space.

p. 20 It should be noted here that Clausewitz only uses ‘Ziel’/“aim” very selectively (in I.1. and I.2.) and ultimately only represents a purpose or means in the purpose-means cascade.

In comparison to the ‘Strategie von 1804’, the role of political factors in war is considered much more in ‘Vom Kriege’. This also leads to an – implicit – expansion of the concept of strategy, which now clearly goes beyond the ‘use of battles for the purpose of war’ and cannot be conceptually separated from “Kriegführung”. In this context, and bearing in mind the experiences in Russia in 1812 and in Spain 1808–1814, the role of battle for the outcome of the war (Cf. ‘höchstes Gesetz der Waffenentscheidung’) is also relativised. Instead, other factors – diplomacy, propaganda, economy/logistics, etc. – are recognised, but without explicitly expanding the definition of strategy.

I am already looking forward to the final version of the essay.

Best regards,

Christian Th. Müller

Declarations

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.