

The Diverging Military Theories Of Clausewitz And Jomini

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Introduction

The art of war, in the eyes of Baron Jomini, a system-oriented thinker, has some significant maxims, which include strategy and grand tactics that would have wide applications on the battlefield. However, Clausewitz regarded the essence of strategy as the necessary and decisive response to the inescapable realities of achieving competitive advantages on the battlefield. Jomini focused more on the area of military strategy than Clausewitz and, therefore, deserved the title of a modern military strategist. This essay examines the notions of the seminal theorists and strategists Clausewitz and Jomini about deriving moral and political principles congenial to military leaders on the battlefield.

Strategy in Historical Wars

Jomini regarded war as an “art”, not a science or any kind of politics, as compared to Clausewitz, who considered war as some action between science and art, a kind of like “politics.” Jomini dissected Napoleonic wars from the French perspective, whereas Clausewitz, as Jomini’s polar opposite, drew his Napoleonic war experience from the Prussian perspective. Jomini, in the “Art of War”, defined strategy on the battlefield as “the political art” of sustaining, planning, and moving military forces. Mendell translated Jomini’s thinking as “Strategy decides where to act.” On the other hand, Howard translated Clausewitz’s military mantra about strategy as “Intelligence precedes operations” to refer to the central idea that military commanders should be agile in their decisions and activities on the battlefield to outperform their competitors. Strategy, according to Clausewitz, is picking a specific doctrine; however, he drew tactics as the successful execution of the use of armed forces in any particular war. To be clear, strategy, according to Clausewitz, was holistic in defining a winning proposition, whereas tactics were all about successfully executing the wars.

War as an Art vs. War as Violence

Howard translated the unity of Clausewitz’s “On War” about the nature of war and concluded the discussion with the theme of actual Napoleonic combat to emphasize the thinking of war as an act of “violence.” Building on his notion regarding the aspect of war, as Clausewitz stated, “War is an act of violence”, I inevitably agree that war is a violent tool of enforcing physical force devoid of moral principles. With the contrastive argument, Jomini viewed war as a simplistic scientific phenomenon just to disarm the opponent and to make the subjects submit to the conqueror’s domination.

However, Clausewitz argues that an essential motive of instinctive hostility led civilized nations to become savage ones and pushed them to wage wars in the world. Moreover, Clausewitz clarified his argument regarding the violent nature of war that despite physical force and violence, war is an inevitable reciprocal action that must be calculated before a military leader enters the realm of the battlefield and must be well-planned to achieve effectiveness in enforcing the act of war.

Clausewitz and Jomini's Similar and Differing War Ideas

The substantial similarity Clausewitz and Jomini shared was that both stood out along with Napoleon and, therefore, were the products of the Napoleonic Wars. Apart from the similarity that they both had in differing relationships with Napoleon, their differing ideas of the historical nature, process, and role of the military have major significance. Jomini was simplistic in his notion of war, whereas Clausewitz viewed war and history as in relative categories, rejecting absolute standards. Clausewitz drew his theoretical and practical prescription of the battlefield from Napoleon as Napoleon viewed the process of [war as organized violence](#). Therefore, Clausewitz saw the Revolutionary War phenomenon as a "continuation of politics." Jomini, while breaking the obvious connection between the French Revolution and Napoleon, drew strategy as a prescriptive technique to dominate subjects through military planning and thinking. His approach to the 'scientific' aspects of warfare to succeed on the battlefield was like a chess game by envisioning the extent of diplomacy in war as he envisioned 'strategy' as the "art of making war upon the map." He addressed that diplomatic aspects in war and politics became unalterably linked as statesmen, like unleashed dogs, stood aside watching armies while carrying out particular war strategic objectives. On the other hand, Clausewitz envisioned a Napoleonic military strategy with little use for diplomatic statesmen, as Napoleon majorly relied on his "sheer intellect" to dominate the subjects during battle.

Clausewitz's Politics of War

Both strategists praised Napoleon for his enveloping attacks and for executing the fights through exterior lines. However, Jomini, at times, blurred the obvious inescapable distinction between Napoleonic tactics and strategy. Sometimes, it seems hard to distinguish the application of Jomini's scientific principles or when subordinate military units could defend or violate them as a successful strategic plan on the battlefield. Clausewitz's concept of politics has broader boundaries in modern war history than Jomini's, as he included the convergence of domestic war and power struggles towards centralized political leadership, as Napoleon did.

Conclusion

In a nutshell, it is undeniable that Clausewitz, who fought against Napoleon as a Prussian General, drew his theoretical and practical underpinnings regarding military strategy and war from Napoleon. Drawing on Napoleon's practical experiences of war on the battlefield, Clausewitz put the most provocative framework of military strategy. As compared to Jomini's thinking of war, Clausewitz lacked economic components and international law. Therefore, his idea of war could not explain much about imperial or post-imperial fights happening after the Napoleonic Wars all around the world. Both Jomini and Clausewitz, as the prominent products of the Napoleonic Wars, offered a compelling and timeless underpinning regarding war to influence and aid military professionals of the modern war world regarding where to draw their inspiration from.

References

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