

The Genesis of Clausewitz's *On War* Reconsidered

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ABSTRACT

This article will introduce and discuss the early versions and manuscripts of Clausewitz's On War. Two manuscripts were recently discovered in the papers of Werner Hahlweg. On top of that, Clausewitz's almost unknown publication Aphorisms on War and Warfare could be of great importance to the collective understanding of the genesis of On War and the development of Clausewitz's key ideas such as the instrumental character of war, the paradoxical trinity and the dual nature of war. This is not only very interesting from a historical point of view, but also has conceptual consequences.

Introduction

It has been two hundred years since Carl von Clausewitz first started writing his now famous *On War*, which was first published in 1832, a year after his death, by his widow Marie von Clausewitz. Following Napoleon's final defeat in 1815, Clausewitz and his wife spent nearly three years in Koblenz and, according to her, this is where he wrote the first draft of *On War*. Fourteen years later in Berlin, he prematurely ended his writing and revision process to become the commanding officer of the Second Artillery Inspection in Breslau, but shortly afterwards he died of cholera. The unfinished status of *On War* has created debates among readers and researchers ever since. Recently, three original texts have emerged that provide a deeper insight into Clausewitz's work. Firstly, there is an almost forgotten text, also published right after his death, which seems to be the first draft of *On War*, already conceived of in Koblenz. Second, it appears that two of the six 'books' that Clausewitz used for his 1827 to 1830 revision of the unpublished *On War* have survived. Finally, two unknown early manuscripts have been found which are contextually connected to the revision of *On War*. Together, these texts will help to reconstruct the writing process of *On War* in more detail. This has conceptual consequences. After the sequence between them has been established, the various texts will clarify how Clausewitz's thought evolved and that will provide valuable insight into how *On War* should be interpreted. This could even solve some of the existing debates surrounding this work.

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Two contrasting visions of the genesis of *On War*

Until recently, our knowledge of Clausewitz's writing process was primarily based on a very limited range of sources: the preface by his widow, and the three notes by the author himself, which are all included in the book.¹ In his undated First Note, Clausewitz wrote that there were three versions of *On War*; specifically mentioning the French philosopher Montesquieu as his role model when he was writing the first version. In the Second Note, dated 10 July 1827, he clearly states that he was not satisfied with his work although by then, six of the eight books of *On War* had been written in clean handwriting. However, Clausewitz also noted his intent to revise these eight books to incorporate two new ideas. The revision should highlight the 'two types of war' with more clarity, and should emphasise that 'war is nothing but the continuation of policy with other means'. The undated Third Note is the most controversial because Clausewitz wrote in it that he regarded only the first chapter of Book I as finished. This statement has evoked an enduring dispute between the various researchers, as it implies that *On War* as a whole was unfinished in the eyes of the author.

It is not possible to provide a complete overview of the conflicting standpoints of all of Clausewitz's interpreters so this paper will focus on four of the most important in shaping the scholarship: Peter Paret, Raymond Aron, Azar Gat and Werner Hahlweg. The debate started in Germany around 1930 and later received a tremendous boost when Paret and Aron each published books in 1976.² Both commentators assume there were three versions of *On War*. According to Paret, the first version consisted of loosely connected essays, all but one of which now seem to have been lost.³ Neither Paret nor Aron devote much attention to the second version, which was undiscovered at the time, so their focus is on the third version and its subsequent revision, which took place between 1827 and 1830. The question that remains is to what extent had this process been completed, or in other words how finished was *On War*?

Raymond Aron, in particular, believed that Clausewitz did not have enough time to finish his final revision of *On War* and because of that he insisted that scholars exercise caution in how they interpret the text. According to Aron, we should

¹ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, Michael Howard and Peter Paret trans. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), pp. 61-71. The sequence in this translation is slightly different from the original German version.

² Paret, *Clausewitz and the State: The Man, His Theories and His Times* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1985); Raymond Aron, *Clausewitz: Den Krieg Denken*. (Frankfurt am Main: Propyläen, 1980).

³ Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, p. 330. The essay is titled: *Über das Fortschreiten und den Stillstand der kriegerischen Begebenheiten*.

always relate our reading of the whole text to the one chapter that Clausewitz was considered complete: the first chapter of Book I.⁴ A few years later, in 1989, Azar Gat came to a completely different conclusion. He claimed that Marie von Clausewitz had mistakenly put the undated Third Note *behind* the Second Note, dated 10 July 1827. If this was indeed the case, then Clausewitz's statement, that he was only satisfied with the first chapter of Book I, could no longer be considered his most up to date opinion. This also means that there was enough time between 1827 and 1830 for Clausewitz to almost finish his revision. Thus Gat argued that scholars are entitled to a much broader interpretation of the great work. Furthermore, he considered Clausewitz to have developed most of his now famous ideas during the dramatic revision of 1827, while Paret and Aron believed that these ideas originated much earlier.⁵

Regrettably Clausewitz's archive was lost during the Second World War so Paret, Aron and Gat could only rely on the three notes and Marie's preface when they wrote their books. Fortunately, a few earlier manuscripts have survived. These important texts were rediscovered and most of them were published by the German researcher Werner Hahlweg but for unclear reasons Hahlweg did not reveal all the manuscripts that he had found. After Hahlweg's death, his collection was carefully categorised at the *Wehrtechnische Studiensammlung* of the *Bundeswehr* in Koblenz and it is there that the author recently found two unknown manuscripts which will be discussed later.

Although Hahlweg had all the earlier versions of *On War* we have today, he never tried to develop a coherent vision of the genesis of Clausewitz's *magnum opus*. In fact, he left such matters unresolved, with the exception of ascribing the various manuscripts to a certain period, and, by doing so, indicating a certain sequence. He did not investigate whether this was actually in line with what else is known about the genesis of *On War*, nor did he, to any meaningful extent, go into the conceptual development between the various texts. Finally, there is an almost unknown publication by Clausewitz to which Hahlweg only devoted one brief sentence in his entire work. This text is called *Aphorisms on War and Warfare* and was first published in a German military journal, just after Clausewitz has passed away.⁶ Hahlweg's first

⁴ Aron, *Clausewitz: Den Krieg Denken*, p.25 & p.103.

⁵ Azar Gat, *A History of Military Thought: From the Enlightenment to the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

⁶ Carl von Clausewitz, 'Aphorismen über den Krieg und die Kriegführung', *Zeitschrift für Kunst, Wissenschaft und Geschichte des Krieges*, Acht und zwanzigster Band, Viertes Heft, 1833 up to and including Fünf und dreißigster Band, Siebentes Heft, 1835.

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volume only states that it is a collection ('Auszüge') from *On War*.⁷ This would imply that this text was written *after* the masterpiece but Hahlweg did not provide any proof for that claim. It is argued here that this publication is in all likelihood the *first* version of *On War*, or to put it more precisely, the first draft.⁸

The first version of *On War* according to Hahlweg

Little was known about the first version of *On War* until the second volume of Hahlweg's main work was published posthumously in 1990. In this work an incomplete manuscript was made public which could be an earlier version of *On War*. According to Hahlweg, Clausewitz probably started on this text before the Napoleonic wars had concluded. His phrase, 'which could have been originated from the years 1809 until 1812', indicates that Hahlweg was not completely sure, but unfortunately, he did not substantiate this in more detail before his own death.⁹ This early periodisation stands in clear contradiction to the statement from Marie von Clausewitz that her husband wrote the first version approximately six years later, when they were living in Koblenz.

As Clausewitz did not give the manuscript a title himself, Hahlweg called it *Design and Preparations on On War*.¹⁰ This name indicates his belief that it should be viewed as the first draft. The incomplete manuscript consists of two attempts by Clausewitz to write a book on the theory of warfare, an aspect that is only dealt with in Book II of *On War*. Both versions are far from complete in that they comprise some introductory paragraphs and a few unconnected chapters. The abrupt ending of the text and the absence of other chapters leads one to suspect that at some point Clausewitz was dissatisfied with this approach and started all over again. As this manuscript was only published in 1990, neither Paret, Aron nor Gat could have used it in their studies.

While Marie von Clausewitz mentioned a different starting date in her preface to *On War*, both she and her husband were very clear about the special literary form of the first version, which is quite different from the appearance of *Design and Preparations on On War*. According to Marie, her husband wrote his views down in 'short, loosely

⁷ Carl von Clausewitz, *Schriften - Aufsätze - Studien - Briefe*, vol. I. Werner Hohlweg, ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966), p. 29.

⁸ See also: Paul Donker, *Aphorismen über den Krieg und die Kriegführung as the first version of Clausewitz's masterpiece: A textual comparison with Vom Kriege* (Breda, NLDA research paper 108, May 2016).

⁹ Clausewitz, *Schriften - Aufsätze - Studien - Briefe*, vol. 2. Werner Hahlweg, ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1990), p. 18.

¹⁰ 'Entwürfe und Vorarbeiten zum Werk „Vom Kriege“', in Clausewitz, *Schriften - Aufsätze - Studien - Briefe*, vol. 2, pp. 17-99.

connected statements' ('kurzen, untereinander nur lose verbundenen Aufsätzen').¹¹ Clausewitz was even more explicit about the form and content at the beginning of his First Note:

In my opinion, the propositions ('Sätze') here set down touch on the main issues that constitute what is known as strategy. I still saw them as merely materials and had pretty well got so far as to blend them into a whole.

That is to say, these materials were actually originated without any prior plan. My intention in the beginning was, without any consideration of system or strict connection, to write down what I had determined by myself about the most important points of this subject, in quite short, precise, compact sentences ('in ganz kurzen, präzisen, gedrunghenen Sätzen'). I had dimly in mind the way that Montesquieu had dealt with his subject. I thought that such short chapters full of meaning or wisdom — which initially I wished only to call grains ('Körner') — would attract the ingenious just as much by what more could be developed from them, as by what they themselves established; thus, what I had in mind was an ingenious reader, already familiar with the matter.¹²

From these two reliable sources there can be no doubt that the first version was written 'in quite short, precise, compact sentences' in 'the way that Montesquieu had dealt with his subject' and that strategy was the major subject. The text was intended for an expert audience and originally Clausewitz considered calling the chapters *Körner*, or grains, a word the reader should keep in mind. We have to conclude that *Design and Preparations on On War*, which Hahlweg proposed placing right at the beginning of the genesis, does not match this literary style in any way. That manuscript was designed as an extended argument consisting of chapters, and it certainly does not comprise 'grains' of concise sentences. Moreover, it is an elaborate exposé on the theory of warfare as a scientific discipline rather than a collection of unconnected, succinctly formulated ideas on strategy, which were specifically intended for experts. Therefore, there is no reason to follow Hahlweg in his belief that this manuscript is the first version of *On War*.

¹¹ Carl von Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*. 19th ed, Werner Hahlweg, ed. (Bonn: Fred. Dümmers Verlag, 1980 [1832]), p. 174.

¹² *Ibid.*, p.175. Translation PD.

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Clausewitz's *Aphorisms on War and Warfare*

In addition to Clausewitz's First Note and Marie's preface, there are two letters that provide other important clues regarding the first version. One is a short note that Clausewitz dispatched from Koblenz to his friend Carl von der Gröben, most likely on 17 May 1816. In this letter, he mentions that he had been working on a project on strategy since the winter. Gröben had already seen some of that material and had apparently asked Clausewitz how the work was progressing. Clausewitz, however, was far from satisfied with it and asked his friend not to tell anyone about it.¹³ Less than one year later, on 4 March 1817, Clausewitz sent a longer letter to August von Gneisenau. Attached to the letter was the essay that Peter Paret rightly believes is a remnant of the first version. More importantly, Clausewitz wrote in the accompanying letter:

When I believe, as in this case, that the disquisition has become too long, I take just the results out and place it in a short concise form in my shorter work and throw the rest away in the fire pit, just like wood shavings.¹⁴

Both letters support the claim that Clausewitz started writing when he and his wife lived in Koblenz and that the first version was about strategy and not about the theory of war. The letter to Gneisenau once again confirms the distinctive literary form.

This specific combination of form and content can be found in an almost forgotten text from Clausewitz titled: *Aphorisms on War and Warfare*.¹⁵ This text consists of 177 aphorisms published between 1833 and 1835 in a number of consecutive issues of the German *Journal for Art, Science and History of War*.¹⁶ This magazine appeared between 1824 and 1861 with a frequency of nine issues per year and was published in Berlin by Ernst Siegfried Mittler. Of the three magazine founders it is known that at least two of them were personal friends of Clausewitz.¹⁷

¹³ The letter has been attached to Eberhard Kessel's article; 'Zur Genesis der Modernen Kriegslehre: Die Entstehungsgeschichte von Clausewitz' Buch "Vom Kriege". *Wehrwissenschaftliche Rundschau, Zeitschrift für die Europäische Sicherheit* 3. Jahrgang 1953 Heft 9, pp. 420-421.

¹⁴ 'Über das Fortschreiten und den Stillstand der kriegerischen Begebenheiten'. Letter and essay in: Clausewitz, *Schriften - Aufsätze - Studien - Briefe*, vol. 2, pp. 243-255.

¹⁵ Clausewitz, *Aphorismen über den Krieg und die Kriegführung*.

¹⁶ *Zeitschrift für Kunst, Wissenschaft und Geschichte des Krieges*. Digital at: <http://digital.slub-dresden.de/werkansicht/dlf/51104/1/cache.off>

¹⁷ The first editors were: C. von Decker, F. von Ciriacy and L. Blesson.

The publication of *Aphorisms on War and Warfare* and the original first German edition of *On War* coincide, from which we can assume they were both coordinated by Clausewitz's widow. Her husband died on 16 November 1831 and in the months that followed she signed a contract with the publisher Ferdinand Dümmler to publish his collected works in ten volumes. The first three volumes are collectively known as *On War*, the remaining seven are historical works. The first volume was published after the summer of 1832, volume two in 1833 and volume three in 1834. In the meantime, the *Journal for Art, Science and History of War* started publishing Clausewitz's 177 aphorisms in 1833, and continued to do so up to and including 1835. The full German title was *Aphorismen über den Krieg und die Kriegführung (Aus den hinterlassenen Schriften des Generals von Clausewitz)*; remarkably similar to the original title of the collected works: *Hinterlassenes Werke des Generals Carl von Clausewitz über Krieg und Kriegführung*. The overlap of the publication dates and the similarity between the titles indicate that Marie prepared them for publication together and we know from her writing that she felt impelled to publish her late husband's work.¹⁸ Furthermore, her strong character and her high social standing make it very unlikely that an unknown writer dare make a collection of *On War* and publish it under Clausewitz's name. So, there is no reason to question the authenticity of the authorship of *Aphorisms on War and Warfare*.

It also seems likely that the simultaneous publishing of both texts is one of the reasons that *Aphorisms on War and Warfare* fell into oblivion so soon. After all, why would one read this short text if the complete *On War* was also available? Furthermore, the publication has rarely been mentioned since 1835 and is next recorded in 1922 in a list of Clausewitz's publications, which the German researcher Hans Rothfels included in his book.¹⁹ This is important; Rothfels still had access to the complete Clausewitz archive before its destruction during the Second World War. Other German writers, including Hahlweg, followed Rothfels and also included this work in their publication lists.²⁰

Moreover, the specific term 'aphorism' also occurs in Clausewitz's archive list, which was retrieved and published by Hahlweg in 1990. According to the anonymous archivist there once existed a folder number 40, entitled *Strategic and Tactical*

¹⁸ Vanya Eftimova Bellinger, *Marie von Clausewitz: The Woman Behind the Making of On War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

¹⁹ Hans Rothfels, *Carl von Clausewitz, Politische Schriften und Briefe* (München: Drei Masten Verlag, 1922) pp.246-247.

²⁰ Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, p.1343.

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Aphorisms.²¹ As it is unclear whether Clausewitz himself had already titled the text, it is quite possible that he had stored the original manuscript in that particular folder.

Having said that, there is another, possibly crucial, indication in the first sentence of Clausewitz's First Note which begins with the intriguing words, 'the propositions *here set down*' [author's italics].²² Two sentences later Clausewitz mentions, 'these materials'. This cannot be a coincidence since Marie von Clausewitz indicated in her preface that this note was *among* his papers. In all probability, Clausewitz's First Note was in the same folder as the manuscript of *Aphorisms on War and Warfare*. With this in mind, it is important to discuss the possible dating of this note. According to Marie, the First Note seemed ('scheint') to be written in 'those early days'.²³ For some commentators this is reason enough to date the note to the period that the couple lived in Koblenz. Herbert Rosinski, one of the first to study the genesis, also felt that the document indicates that Clausewitz was abandoning his scientific work. From this he concluded that it must have been written shortly before the move to Berlin, when Clausewitz still believed he would land a very busy job as director there.²⁴ What Rosinski and Marie von Clausewitz seemed to have missed is that the note not only mentions the first version, but also a second and even an extensive third version. It follows therefore that this must have been written in the mid-eighteen twenties, when Clausewitz was working on the later versions of *On War*. The fact, too, that he mentioned 'the propositions *here set down*', lends support to the assumption that the note was even inserted as late as 1830, when Clausewitz tidied his papers one last time before sealing them.

Finally, Rosinski is also the first researcher to reveal that Clausewitz's own preface to *On War* is somewhat odd, because it is unfinished and is not to the point. Particularly the remark that the chapters were only weakly connected gave him the impression that this preface was from an earlier version, in his opinion the first one written in Koblenz.²⁵ Howard and Paret accepted this conclusion and placed this preface at the very beginning of their own translation.²⁶ What makes this so interesting is that Clausewitz twice used the special term *Körner* in his own preface, a word he also

²¹ Clausewitz, *Schriften - Aufsätze - Studien - Briefe*, vol. 2, pp.1173-1174.

²² 'Durch die hier niedergeschriebenen Sätze [...]' Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, p.175.

²³ '[...] scheint auch aus jener früheren Zeit herzustammen.' Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, p.174.

²⁴ Herbert Rosinski, 'Die Entwicklung von Clausewitz' Werk 'Vom Kriege' im Licht seiner 'Vorreden' und 'Nachrichten' In *Historische Zeitschrift*, Bd. 152, 1935, pp.278-293.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 281.

²⁶ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, Edited & Translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), pp.61-62.

used in his First Note. This suggests a firm connection between his preface, the First Note and the first version of *On War*. It is plausible that all three of them were kept in the same folder 40, *Strategic and Tactical Aphorisms*.

Could Aphorisms on War and Warfare be the first version of On War?

By now, the pieces of the puzzle are beginning to fall into place. As Hahlweg did not substantiate his claim that *Aphorisms on War and Warfare* is just a later collection of *On War*, neither in his work nor in his legacy, we do not have to follow him. We also have to be very careful in proposing such a sequence between these two texts, as that would make *Aphorisms on War and Warfare* Clausewitz's final text and as we will see, there is no substantive reason for doing so.

The other hypothesis, that Clausewitz wrote his 177 aphorisms immediately after the Napoleonic Wars, is far more likely. In a recently published biography, Donald Stoker shows that Clausewitz's own military experience was much more important for his theoretical work than most researchers had previously thought.²⁷ Again, as Clausewitz mentioned in his first note, he initially planned to make his thoughts available to experts in short and concise language. The contents and the form are therefore in line with and fit the image of a military man putting his experiences to paper.

The secondary documents from Clausewitz and his spouse also strongly support the hypothesis that *Aphorisms on War and Warfare* is the first version of *On War*. We know from the letter Clausewitz wrote to Gröben on 17 May 1816 in Koblenz that he had started writing a manuscript on strategy that winter. His wife confirmed this in her preface, claiming that this would become the first version of *On War*. The accompanying letter to the preliminary study Clausewitz sent on 4 March 1817 to Gneisenau shows how he had gone about it. The essence of the disquisition, or essay, had been brought across in a concise form ('in gedrängter Kürze') in that particular work, Clausewitz wrote. Marie confirmed that the first version consisted of 'short, loosely connected statements' ('kurzen, untereinander nur lose verbundenen Aufsätzen'). In his First Note, too, Clausewitz is absolutely clear about the specific literary form. He wrote that his thoughts had been written down 'in quite short, precise, compact sentences' ('in ganz kurzen, präzisen, gedrungenen Sätzen'), mentioning Montesquieu as his role model. He had wanted to call the chapters *Körner*, or grains, a term he used only in his own preface, which was probably also written in Koblenz. In all likelihood, the original, handwritten manuscript of what would become the first version of *On War* was kept by Clausewitz in folder 40, *Strategic and Tactical Aphorisms*, together with the First Note

²⁷ Donald Stoker, *Clausewitz: His Life and Work* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014)

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and his own preface. After his death, his widow seems to have published this text virtually simultaneously with the ten-volume work, almost identically entitled *Collected Work*. It is quite possible that she gave it the name *Aphorisms on War and Warfare*.

In light of these indications from Clausewitz himself and his widow, and in the absence of evidence to the contrary, we can assume that Clausewitz, after three years of intensive war service 'without any prior plan' and 'without any consideration of system or strict connection' wrote down in Koblenz 'the most important points of this subject' in 177 aphorisms.

Aphorisms on War and Warfare compared with On War

A reader would have little trouble recognising Clausewitz's hand in this work. At first glance, the writing style, the subjects, the argumentation and even the text itself are all very similar to those in *On War*. The complete text is about 8,750 words long and is written in a succinct, forceful and, on occasion, somewhat ironic style. Contrary to Montesquieu, who, in his famous work *The Spirit of Laws*, often supplies profound argumentations for his aphorisms, Clausewitz usually presents his propositions without further explanation. Thus, only occasionally does he refer to a historic example or a famous general.

Due to Clausewitz using so few historical examples, we cannot use them as examples to determine when he wrote this document. Only aphorism 145 gives us a reference to the time, as we are told that war had changed in forty years.²⁸ As the French Revolutionary Wars started in 1792, this would imply that Clausewitz might have written this text as late as 1832, but that would be a year after his death in 1831. So, we should remember that we are dealing with a printed version of the text published by his widow. In all probability, she or the editors of the magazine changed the reference to fit the date of publication.

It is significant that *Aphorisms on War and Warfare* has virtually the same sequence of subjects as *On War*.²⁹ However, it is also striking that the content only matches as far as the first four books of *On War* are concerned. There are no equivalent aphorisms in Books V up to and including Book VIII. Additionally, Clausewitz divided the 177 aphorisms into four chapters or *Körners*, which have exactly the same titles as the first four books. Furthermore, from these four books there are eight whole chapters

²⁸ *Der Krieg hat in den letzten vierzig Jahren durch die ungeheuren Nationalkräfte, welche dabei in Tätigkeit gesetzt wurden, einen ganz andern Charakter angenommen, und es können mithin die früheren Mittel nicht mehr zu denselben Resultaten führen.*

²⁹ Only the three aphorisms on a pause in warfare are located towards the end of *On War* in Book III, chapter 16, and in an adjusted form.

for which there is no corresponding equivalent aphorism.³⁰ Of the 177 aphorisms, 6 are verbatim and 56 are virtually verbatim with *On War*. This means that the text of 115 aphorisms is different. Thirteen of these aphorisms could not be found in *On War* at all, or contain unique sentences or remarks that are not included in the first four books.³¹ A nice illustration is number 153, in which Clausewitz states that the concept of manoeuvre war is a chimera, an issue which is absent in *On War*.³²

This brings us to the conceptual comparison between the two texts. None of the 177 aphorisms appear to be a further development of *On War*. Conversely, in at least eleven cases the corresponding text in *On War* seems to be a further improvement of the ideas or texts from the relevant aphorism.³³ A nice example of this is aphorism 22, which at first glance appears to be a clear copy of the famous paradoxical trinity from the first chapter of *On War*. However, the text of this aphorism is not as comprehensively explained. The concerning notion ('wunderliche Dreifaltigkeit') is still omitted and there is also no mention of the 'people', 'the commander and his army' or 'the government', which are clearly stated in *On War*. On top of that, aphorism 22 is missing the well-known quotation 'war is a true chameleon', which is also very prominent in the text of the trinity within *On War*.

Clausewitz's concepts of 'absolute versus real war' and 'war is a true political instrument' are not found in *Aphorisms on War and Warfare*. On the other hand, the two famous notions that 'war is an act of force to compel the enemy to do our will and thus the continuation of policy by other means' are already mentioned in aphorism 1. In aphorisms 12 and 13 he also dealt with the complicated relationship between the political end of the war and the military aim. In *On War*, all of these connected ideas are far more developed and augmented.

In aphorism 2, Clausewitz discusses his idea of the 'two mean types of war' ('zwei Hauptarten des Krieges'), a subject of much controversy. It is notable in that the text is an almost verbatim copy of the Second Note. The description of the two types is exactly the same in both texts. The former concerning the complete overthrow of the enemy's will or power to resist and the latter to inflict limited territorial occupation. This is important in the ongoing discussion about the genesis of *On War*, as it would mean that Clausewitz had already formulated this idea around 1817, and not, as some researchers think, quite some time later.

³⁰ In Book I Chapter 8 is missing, in Book II Chapter 3, in Book III Chapter 10 and in Book IV chapters 1, 2, 12, 13 and 14.

³¹ Aphorisms no: 2, 48, 66, 82, 83, 89, 90, 118, 140, 142, 148, 153 and 168.

³² [...] *Der Begriff eines Manöverkriegs ist also ein Hirngespinnst, ein Unding.*

³³ Aphorisms no: 1, 5, 6, 19, 22, 58, 65, 103, 139, 158 and 162.

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To conclude, most of the similarities and differences between the two texts are truly factual and seem to indicate that *Aphorisms on War and Warfare* was written first and support the contention that *On War* was developed from it. In the ten years after he had written his aphorisms, Clausewitz could have easily conceived of the eight absent chapters and the four missing books. During the process of writing *On War* Clausewitz only used 6 aphorisms verbatim, slightly rephrased 56 aphorisms and changed 115 others or omitted them entirely. In at least eleven cases, Clausewitz appears to have improved his ideas from the corresponding aphorisms. He also introduced new concepts in *On War* that cannot be found in *Aphorisms on War and Warfare*. Finally, none of the aphorisms looks like a development from the corresponding text in *On War*. Nevertheless, scholars should continue to treat the *Aphorisms* with caution. With only the printed document rather than the original handwritten manuscript it is impossible to rule out the possibility that Clausewitz made some adjustments to one or more of his aphorisms after 1818.³⁴

The 1827 Revision of *On War*

The rediscovery of *Aphorisms on War and Warfare* means that we have to question Hahlweg's dating of another manuscript. He has called it *Transcripts of On War* and stated that it was written sometime between 1816 and 1830.³⁵ This rather long period is a problem as it covers the years Clausewitz lived in Koblenz and wrote the very first version. According to Hahlweg, the manuscript consists of four 'groups' of earlier chapters of *On War*. He describes all four groups as draft versions of the final *On War*. However, after examining the original handwritten manuscripts in Berlin a more plausible conclusion might be offered.³⁶ What Hahlweg refers to as Group 1 and Group 2 are not simply draft versions of the chapters in Book I and Book II of *On War*. Both groups are written in *Reinschrift*, or clear legible handwriting on higher quality folded paper and the folded sheets are stitched together as a kind of 'book'. The actual text of these two books has three layers. The main text is written in *Reinschrift*, which is the first and most important layer. In the margins of some of the chapters handwritten remarks can be found showing how Clausewitz planned to improve the content. The third layer consists of remarks with large brackets in the same margin in which he noted text fragments that could be used in other parts of *On War*. From this we have to conclude that these two books were originally

³⁴ For an extended description see: Paul Donker, *Aphorismen über den Krieg und die Kriegführung as the first version of Clausewitz's masterpiece: A textual comparison with Vom Kriege*.

³⁵ *Niederschriften des Werkes 'Vom Kriege'* Clausewitz, *Schriften - Aufsätze - Studien - Briefe*, vol. 2, pp. 623-717.

³⁶ The original manuscript is housed in the Staatsbibliothek in Berlin (Clausewitz Hdschr. 7).

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only kept one chapter (*Art of War of Science of War*) from that older version and wrote five new chapters and three of them have survived.³⁸

The Manuscripts of *On War* in Koblenz

This brings us to the two unknown manuscripts, which Hahlweg did not publish.³⁹ The author recently discovered these two in Hahlweg's personal papers in Koblenz and they should, in the author's view, be placed between *Transcripts of On War* and the final printed version of *On War*. Hahlweg bought them at an auction in 1963, but for reasons that remain unknown he never made their existence public.⁴⁰

The first 66-page manuscript consists of two fragments concerning Chapters 1, 2 and 3 of Book I.⁴¹ It is a draft version and the content is identical to the final text in *On War*. We can assume this was written during the years of the final revision. These three chapters fit exactly between the 1827 printer's version of Book I and the final printed version. This manuscript includes the original handwritten draft version of Clausewitz's famous first chapter, *What is War?* Regretfully, the text is incomplete, and only two fragments have survived.

The second manuscript of 281 pages consists of two hand-stitched 'books' concerning Book I and Book II of *On War*.⁴² They are both written in *Reinschrift*, or clear legible handwriting, just as the two 'books' in Berlin were, but the handwriting is not Clausewitz's. At first glance the text is a verbatim copy of *On War* and these two 'books' seem to have been used to print the first edition in 1832.

By this point we almost have the complete revision of Book I and Book II. We can take for granted that what Hahlweg called Group 1 and Group 2 represent the situation on 10 July 1827, as we now know that these two 'books' are in fact the printer's versions Clausewitz mentioned in his Second Note. The three Koblenz chapters and the three chapters from Group 4 are the intermediate draft versions of the eight chapters that Clausewitz revised completely. We are only missing the draft versions of Chapters 4 and 5 of Book II. The revised versions can be found in the printer's copy of Book I and Book II. In all likelihood, his widow asked an unknown clerk to rewrite these two clean copies in 1832.

³⁸ There is a small note from Clausewitz in which he described this final composition of Book II. Clausewitz, *Schriften - Aufsätze - Studien - Briefe*, vol. 2, p.648.

³⁹ Together with Andreas Herberg-Rothe the author is writing an article on the manuscripts in Koblenz, their origin and their content.

⁴⁰ See the original purchase note. Wehrtechnische Studiensammlung, Koblenz. NWH. A 0029.

⁴¹ WTS, Pz/3.

⁴² WTS, Pz/3.

These findings are not only important from a historical point of view but they also give us new insights into the conceptual development of the two books during Clausewitz's final revision. Contrary to the opinion of many researchers, Clausewitz changed Book II entirely by rewriting five chapters and only maintaining one chapter from the 1827 version.

The fact that Clausewitz created three new chapters for Book I, including the famous first chapter, and kept five others is also important for the controversy surrounding the undated Third Note. The crucial passage in this note is: 'The first chapter of Book One alone I regard as finished. It will at least serve the whole by indicating the direction I meant to follow everywhere.'⁴³

If this note was written *before* the Second Note this would pertain to the *old* version of Chapter I. That is the version we possess in what Hahlweg called Group I. However, we now also know Clausewitz changed that particular chapter completely and left five others from the same Book untouched. Furthermore, it is not logical that the old version of Chapter I should be used to *improve* the rest of *On War*, as it already existed when these other chapters and books were written. Conversely, it is feasible that Clausewitz revised the first three chapters and was satisfied with only one of them. Especially as we presume that Clausewitz wrote these three chapters at a very late moment, it is quite possible that he was only satisfied with only one chapter of his entire *On War*. Therefore, the manuscripts in Berlin and Koblenz seem to support the assumption by Marie von Clausewitz and Aron that the Third Note was written *after* the Second Note.

In all likelihood, Clausewitz reached back to his *Aphorisms on War and Warfare* during the revision of *On War*. It is interesting to note that he used many aphorisms in the new chapters he wrote during that period. There are no corresponding aphorisms in the printer's version of 1827 of Book II or in old version of Chapter I and 2 of Book I. In the printer's version of 1832, we can find the aphorisms in all chapters with the exception of the short concluding chapter of Book I and Chapter 3 of Book II, *Art of War or Science of War*. This could be an indication that this particular chapter originated from an earlier version of *On War*, probably the second one.

If, for instance, we look how Clausewitz rewrote the important first chapter of Book I, it seems that he merged some of the text of the old chapter with 18 aphorisms. First, he made a few remarks for himself in the margins of the printer's version of 1827. He then started his new text using the opening paragraphs of this older

⁴³ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, Edited & Translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), p.70.

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version. In the rest of the new chapter he incorporated one aphorism almost verbatim and changed 17 others.⁴⁴ It is also important to note that eight subparagraphs in the final version are completely new, as there are no corresponding aphorisms.⁴⁵ Thus, the famous notion that war is a true political instrument in §24, *War is merely the continuation of policy by other means*, was conceived of during the revision. However, the basic idea had already been laid down in aphorism I.

Toward a new reconstruction of the writing process of *On War*

The rediscovery of the earlier manuscripts gives us a better understanding of the genesis of *On War*. We can now reconstruct important parts of the writing process with more clarity, as we have consecutive versions of that text, especially from Book I and Book II.

In all probability, *Aphorisms on War and Warfare* is the first version of *On War*; both the secondary material (the notes, letters and the two prefaces) and the textual comparison point in this direction. This is also the most likely scenario. Having returned from the war, Clausewitz put his findings on paper in 177 short and forceful aphorisms. These aphorisms reflect his military experience, and form the basis of his more detailed theories. He returns to this often in his writings; *Aphorisms on War and Warfare* is therefore a guide and a touchstone.

The problem with this scenario, however, is that certain aphorisms contain concepts that some researchers believe Clausewitz conceived at a much later date. In their view, the 'two mean types of war', 'war as the continuation of policy by other means' and the 'paradoxical trinity' are three concepts that only emerged during the revision of 1827. However, *Aphorisms on War and Warfare* tends to substantiate the opposite view, in which Clausewitz conceived of most of his concepts quite early on in his life, although it then took a long time for him to develop them as a whole. As we only have the printed version of this text and not the original handwritten manuscripts, the precise evolution of these concepts cannot be reconstructed. Though the secondary material does not indicate that Clausewitz adjusted any of his aphorisms after 1818, it is still possible that he did.

To return to the history of *On War*, Clausewitz most likely started his second version of the book when serving as director of the *Allgemeine Kriegsschule* in Berlin, after which he realised how much time and attention the position demanded. It is quite possible that the manuscript Hahlweg refers to as *Design and Preparations on On War* is the surviving remnant of this version. We still do not know why and when

⁴⁴ Aphorisms no. 1, 3-13 and 17-22. Only no. 20 is almost verbatim.

⁴⁵ §1, 14-16, 23, 25-27.

Clausewitz started his third version. His First Note suggests that this version was increasingly expanded from a single work to eight books.

The original manuscripts in Berlin and Koblenz are of great significance for our understanding of the revision of 1827. We now know the exact nature of the situation on 10 July 1827 in Book I and Book II and it is possible to see how the revision of these two books progressed. Clausewitz rewrote the first three chapters of Book I and kept five chapters. In contrast to what was previously thought, he drastically revised Book II in particular. He compressed his thoughts into five new chapters and kept only one of them. Based on the fact that Clausewitz did not write the printer's version of 1832 himself, we can safely assume that the revision of 1830 had not yet been completed.

The conceptual development during the revision is even more important because it hints at how *On War* should be interpreted today. The position of *Aphorisms on War and Warfare* plays a crucial role here, too. If we can assume with some certainty that this was indeed the first version of *On War*, the ideas and concepts that Clausewitz developed and formulated in Koblenz become clearer. This would mean that he conceived of the ideas of 'two mean types of war', 'war as the continuation of policy by other means' and 'the paradoxical trinity' shortly after returning from war in 1815, but only developed them during the later revision. The concepts of absolute and real war as well as war as an instrument of policy are, however, new.

Together, *Aphorisms on War and Warfare* as the first version and the different revision stages make it clear that *On War* underwent significant theoretical development between 1816 and 1830. However, in all likelihood Clausewitz was not satisfied when he stored the manuscript in 1830. This would mean Ramon Aron was right in recommending that we should be cautious about the way we interpret *On War*.

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