

UNIVERSIDAD SAN FRANCISCO DE QUITO

Colegio de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades

**Realist analysis of war between “The Art of War” of Sun Tzu
and “On War” of Carl von Clausewitz: Different cultural
perspectives of war**

Artículo Académico

Sheyla Nicole Nieto Naranjo

Relaciones Internacionales

Trabajo de titulación presentado como requisito para la
obtención del título de Licenciada de Relaciones
Internacionales

Quito, 3 de mayo del 2017

UNIVERSIDAD SAN FRANCISCO DE QUITO

Colegio de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades

**HOJA DE CALIFICACIÓN
DE TRABAJO DE TITULACIÓN**

Realist analysis of war between “The Art of War” of Sun Tzu and “On War” of Carl von Clausewitz: Different cultural perspectives of war

Sheyla Nicole Nieto Naranjo

Calificación:

Nombre del profesor, Título académico Carlos Espinosa Fernández de Córdova, Ph.D.

Firma del profesor

Quito, 3 de mayo del 2017

DERECHOS DE AUTOR

Por medio del presente documento certifico que he leído todas las Políticas y Manuales de la Universidad San Francisco de Quito USFQ, incluyendo la Política de Propiedad Intelectual USFQ, y estoy de acuerdo con su contenido, por lo que los derechos de propiedad intelectual del presente trabajo quedan sujetos a lo dispuesto en dichas Políticas.

Asimismo, autorizo a la USFQ para que realice la digitalización y publicación de este trabajo en el repositorio virtual, de conformidad a lo dispuesto en el Art. 144 de la Ley Orgánica de Educación Superior.

Firma de la estudiante: _____

Nombres y apellidos: Sheyla Nicole Nieto Naranjo

Código: 00128443

Cédula de Identidad: 1719088401

Lugar y fecha: Quito, 3 de mayo del 2017

Resumen

Las guerras han sido un fenómeno global que a través de los años han afectado no solo a ciertas civilizaciones, sino al mundo entero. Por esta razón, el siguiente trabajo examina la importancia de aprender e investigar sobre temas bélicos a través de la visión de dos de los más reconocidos estrategas de la guerra, Sun Tzu y Carl von Clausewitz, utilizando los libros que escribieron siglos atrás. En este sentido, describiré el contenido de cada libro para analizar la guerra desde ambas perspectivas, oriental y occidental. Después, estableceré las similitudes y las diferencias entre ellos, tomando en cuenta factores que los influenciaron a hacer escrito sus libros como la época, o la realidad social a la que se enfrentaron en aquel entonces. Posteriormente, realizaré un análisis profundo para explicar la cercana convergencia que estas obras maestras tienen bajo la teoría del realismo, sostenida por los principios e ideas de Kenneth Waltz y Hans Morgenthau, para demostrar la relevancia de su trabajo dentro del campo de las relaciones internacionales. Finalmente, concluiré por establecer la vital importancia de estudiar acerca de temas bélicos a través de las diferentes visiones de los autores previamente mencionados, incluso estando en el siglo XXI, para entender de una mejor manera al mundo en el que vivimos hoy.

Palabras Clave: Guerra, estudios de guerra, estrategias de combate, Sun Tzu, Carl von Clausewitz, teoría del realismo, teoría del neorrealismo, Hans Morgenthau, Kenneth Waltz.

Abstract

Wars have been a global phenomenon that throughout the years have affected not only several civilizations, but the entire world. For this reason, the present paper examines the relevance of learning and investigating about war affairs through the eyes of two of the most well-known strategists of war, Sun Tzu and Carl von Clausewitz, by using the books they wrote centuries ago. In this sense, I will describe the content of each book to analyze war from both, an Eastern and a Western perspective. Then I will establish the similarities and differences between them taking into account factors that have influenced them to write their books, like the epoch, or the social reality that they were facing at that time. After that, I will make a deeper analysis by explaining the narrow convergence that their masterpieces have under the theory of realism, sustained by the principles and ideas of Kenneth Waltz and Hans Morgenthau, to show the relevance of their work in the field of international relations. Finally, I will conclude by stating the vital importance of studying war affairs through the different visions of the aforementioned authors even at the 21st century to understand in a better manner, the world in which we live today.

Key Words: War, war studies, combat strategies, Sun Tzu, Carl von Clausewitz, theory of realism, theory of neorealism, Hans Morgenthau, Kenneth Waltz.

Table of Contents

Introduction	7
State of Art	9
The “Art of War” and “On War” a brief description	12
Realist comparison between Clausewitz, Tzu, and Waltz	15
Closer to realism: Sun Tzu vs Carl von Clausewitz.....	23
Conclusion.....	27
References	31

Realist analysis of war between “The Art of War” of Sun Tzu and “On War” of Carl von Clausewitz: Different cultural perspectives of war

Introduction

One of the main aspects that has influenced in the development or debacle of civilizations is war. War has certainly been present throughout the history of the world as a method of conflict resolution that has arisen due to the unstoppable impulse to attain power. For this reason, there have been important strategists and theorists of war that have analyzed from different points of view the causes and consequences of war, and the optimum strategies to win battles. This research paper will be focused on analyzing and comparing two of the most well-known masterpieces about strategies of war written by Carl von Clausewitz and Sun Tzu, authors that have contributed to the study of warfare since ancient times. They present an Eastern and Western perspective on war, allowing a comparison that involves their different cultural prospects regarding conflict. From the international relations stand point, it is also interesting to see how these interpretations of war may be compared with realist theory. Because of this, the following analysis will also identify and explain the relation between the books of both strategists and the theory of neorealism of Kenneth Waltz and classical realism of Hans Morgenthau. In this sense, I will develop the hypothesis that Carl von Clausewitz was closer to the realist approach than Sun Tzu and I will prove this by comparing them to the six principles that Hans Morgenthau proposed in his book “Politics Among Nations,” and to Kenneth Waltz’s book, “Man, the State and War.” It is necessary to remember that war has always been a fundamental part of a decision-making process to determine the future of entire kingdoms, empires, nations, and actually, states. Because of this, the importance of this research paper relies on the premise that learning and

investigating about war would be something necessary to understand the deeper reflections about this phenomenon, and so the relationship between both books “The Art of War” and “On War” would be a great contribution to the theory of realism.

In order to conduct a proper study of both masterpieces, I will use a methodology called textual analysis. Textual analysis is a qualitative method which allows the researcher to undertake a deep investigation about a certain topic on the basis of written sources, such as books, magazines, or papers that had already been done by some authors (MkGee 2003 in Brainbridge 2016: 224). “Textual analysis is a way for researchers to gather information about how other human beings make sense of the world. It is a methodology a data-gathering process for those researchers who want to understand the ways in which members of various cultures and subcultures make sense of who they are, and of how they fit into the world in which they live” (MkGee 2003 in Brainbridge 2016: 224). This method specifically was selected in this research paper, because it is important to analyze and interpret qualitative data with the material provided by two of the main books about war. Thus, it is necessary to take into account that “When we perform textual analysis on a text, we make an educated guess at some of the most likely interpretations that might be made of that text (McKee 2003 in Brainbridge 2016: 224). McKee was one of the researchers that developed several studies using textual analysis as a tool and a methodology to study and interpret qualitative data, he states that:

Performing textual analysis, then, is an attempt to gather information about sense-making practices - not only in cultures radically different from our own, but also within our own nations. It allows us to see how similar or different the sense-making practices that different people use can be. And it is also possible that this can allow us to better understand the sense-making cultures in which we ourselves live by seeing their limitations, and possible alternatives to them (McKee 2003: 14).

Therefore, this methodology was chosen in this research paper as a method to compare two works on the same issue. In this sense, textual analysis will be used in the paper mainly to help interpret and establish relationships between the selected texts (in this case, the books “The Art of War” and “On War”) and the theory of realism.

State of Art

“The Art of War” of Sun Tzu and “On War” of Carl von Clausewitz have been two of the most ancient masterpieces in the study and interpretations of war. Because of this, there have been many theorists and scholars that have studied their writings and have commented on their work. Perhaps the most recognized critic who has compared Tzu and Clausewitz is Michael Handel.

Michael Handel was a professor of Strategy in the U.S. Naval War College who has published extensively on war, national security and defense, diplomacy, intelligence, leadership, and strategy. In 1991, he wrote “Sun Tzu and Clausewitz: The Art of War and On War Compared,” where he stated the most important characteristics and assumptions of both books, to understand how those ancient strategies are relevant to the field of war of nowadays. This can be seen in his book where the following is stated,

Sun Tzu and Clausewitz identify the immutable "human" dimensions of warfare so essential for victory. It is ironic that the greatest works on war—the one human activity which continues to affect the future of mankind more than any other—were written *before* the industrial age (Cerjan 1991 in Handel 1991, iii).

It is undeniable that Sun Tzu and Clausewitz have affinities, taking into account their differences. Because of this, Handel considers the necessity of comparing their masterpieces with the objective “to discover the extent to which they are actually contradictory, similar, or complementary” (1991, 1). Moreover, it is important to understand that even if Sun Tzu represents the Chinese and Carl von Clausewitz

represents the Western perspective of war, Handel says that those “two seemingly divergent approaches actually have as much in common as what presumably separates them and that their *fundamental strategic logic is often the same*” (1991, 2). This fact is interesting to acknowledge, as both authors developed their books in completely distinct eras, as a result of the economic and socio-political aspects that were happening at that time.

Also, something really important that Handel points out, is related to the structure of both books. On one hand, he talks about the importance of the sequence that Clausewitz presents in his book and the author’s use of a complex content. Handel mentions that “for example, Chapter One of Book I - "What Is War?" - cannot be understood easily even after several readings; yet this chapter is the key to comprehending Clausewitz's framework and methodology” (Handel 1991, 3). In contrast, Sun Tzu wrote his book in a way in which the readers can understand everything in an easier manner even if they are reading each chapter independently. In this sense, Handel says that “*The Art of War* does not offer the reader a systematic explanation or step-by-step reconstruction of the *logical process* through which concepts are developed” (1991, 3). Understanding how each author wrote his book, is helpful for the reader to comprehend the ideas that are constantly proposed on each page.

One of the most heated discussions within the field of international relations has been between those realists who argue that war is considered to be science, and those who view it as art. According to Handel, even if Clausewitz and Sun Tzu have some differences they “would probably agree on the fundamental methodological assumption that war is an art and not a science- that each military problem has many potentially correct solutions (not just a single optimal solution)” (1991, 6). This is important to point out because both authors see war from the perspective of art, which derives from

the “imagination, creativity, and intuition of the military leader” (Handel 1991, 6). To be a strategist means having the imagination to design new plans according to the situation that is constantly changing. Also, the leader needs to be creative to avoid leading his army to destruction, wise to know how to save resources, and strategic enough to avoid committing mistakes. Because of this, Clausewitz and Sun Tzu do not treat war as something related to science, as there is no way to “formulate a positive theory of war even if certain laws or maxims are suggested” (Handel 1991, 6). For instance, each leader would know how to interpret and make decisions based on the situation they are experiencing, and they would take the best move from all, to attack or defend themselves and their army.

Uncertainty is another characteristic of war that is recognized as important in the books of Sun Tzu and Clausewitz. Handel says that both “recognize that the complexity and unpredictability of war are created by the process of interaction...nothing is constant or predictable in war” (1991, 8). Due to the fact that nothing is predictable in war affairs, it is necessary to make effective strategies in order to know when and how to attack and defend. In this sense,

Both agree that success in war depends on the talent of what Clausewitz terms the military genius- and on his *coup d’oeil* (or artistic intuition) which can be honed through experience but which cannot be developed by those without the innate ability (Handel 1991, 8).

The abilities acquired by the leader or the general who commands an army could only increase with experience. The more battles a commander fights, the better tactics and strategies he would develop. Handel states that “Success in war hinges not on a rote mastery of theory but on its judicious application, which in turn depends on the intuition of the military commander” (1991, 8). The intuition of the military commander is vital for having more chances to win wars and this is something that Clausewitz and Sun Tzu

recognize in their books.

Clausewitz and Sun Tzu have been seen as two ancient strategists of war that throughout their books tried to explain the same phenomenon from different perspectives and because of this, they are believed to have distinct interpretations of it. Nevertheless, Michael Handel does a great work pointing out how both authors instead of contradicting each other, can complement each other's arguments. Probably, Clausewitz and Sun Tzu have been closer than they seem, starting with how they consider war to be art and not science. They studied war and provided some strategies to win battles and solve conflicts in a shorter time, with more effective tactics that would reduce not only uncertainty, but also material and human costs. It is true that success during warfare can only be acquired if the commander could lead his army wisely, but victory can only be reached with expertise and the intuition of the leader.

The “Art of War” and “On War” a brief description

The study of warfare through the usage of books has been helpful for centuries, because within them may be found the main concepts, assumptions, and thoughts of their authors. At the same time, these books have become a pillar to understanding the advancements and changes throughout the years in what concerns war studies. For this reason, analyzing the structure and components of both books, “The Art of War” and “On War” would be helpful in order to state the main arguments and strategies of Sun Tzu and Carl von Clausewitz.

To begin with, “The Art of War” is a book written by Sun Tzu (544 – 496 BC), a Chinese military general and a Taoist philosopher who lived about 2500 years ago, and who is “regarded as the founding father of military science in China” (Rusong and

Xianling 1999 in Tzu 1999, 23). He lived in a period when China was constantly facing external invasions and also threatened by domestic rebellions, due to the fact that “the country was beginning its transition from a time of slave-owning society to feudalism” (Rusong and Xianling 1999 in Tzu 1999, 21). His military strategies were focused on reaching victory in all those confrontations that tried to destabilize the kingdom he used to serve. Without a doubt, one of his greatest contributions was his book, which is composed of a total of thirteen chapters, in which he explains the most important strategies to win any kind of war. The thirteen chapters are: “Making Assessments,” “Waging War,” “Attacking by Stratagem,” “Disposition”, “Momentum”, “Weakness and Strengths”, “Contest to Gain the Initiative,” “Varying the Tactics,” “Deploying the Troops,” “The Terrain,” “Nine Regions,” “Attacking by Fire,” and “Using Spies”. All his chapters cover one specific area in warfare, for example, defense, resources, human lives, geography, strategy of attack, and uncertainty and espionage. Also, this book, which originally was written in bamboo strips because at that time the paper was not created yet, has not only been used in the studies of war and military strategies, but also in different fields of knowledge like in economics, marketing, philosophy, business and enterprise, and politics; as a consequence of this, it has been translated into 27 different languages. Without a doubt,

The art of war can be described as an outstanding example of the Chinese cultural heritage. Representing the quintessence of Chinese military thinking, it summarizes the rich experiences of ancient wars and analyses them from political, economic, social, and cultural angles. Thus is often regarded as the military classic of the ancient world (Rusong and Xianlin 1999 in Tzu 1999, 25).

In this sense, studying “The Art of War” is vital to try to understand the Chinese perspective of warfare from the strategies that an ancient military general who fought many battles proposed in his writings. Thus, the analysis of this book also remains under the precept that “The world can certainly benefit today and in the future from

these legacies of Chinese military thinking... for the sake of defending peace and in raising high the banner of fighting a just war for the sake of opposing aggression” (Rusong and Xianlin 1999 in Tzu 1999: 25).

Similarly, “On War” is a book written by Carl von Clausewitz (1780-1831), who was a Prussian general and military thinker during the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars. During his lifetime he wrote many books, but “On War” is perhaps his masterpiece. His contributions were mainly focused in joining politics to warfare in order to win armed conflicts. Based on his arguments, in his book he proposes interesting assumptions about disarming, defeating, and destroying the enemy. “On War” is divided in three main parts where he addresses three main topics: the nature of war, armed forces, and attack. All of them contain different chapters where he explains what he considers to be war, its risks, means and ends, the role of uncertainty, strategy, perseverance, weapons, shelter, defense, the power of force, attacks, war planning, and politics. According to Gabriel Cardona, a professor of University of Barcelona, “in this complex moment of world politics, the reading of the Prussian general can help to understand some of the most difficult problems of peace, of war, and of collective violence” (Cardona 2004 in Clausewitz 1832, XXVII).

As can be seen, Sun Tzu and Carl von Clausewitz are authors that have developed interesting theories about war. Both have many similarities and they may be considered to be similar to realism, but also they differ in how they take on certain topics. Even if they address common issues of war like uncertainty, the nature of war, defense and attack, and resources, both give a different vision of them. It is clear that they belong to distinct eras and cultural backgrounds, but their masterpieces have been studied throughout the years and they have influenced the study of warfare that have been applied until now, especially in different worldwide academies dedicated to analyzing

aspects like war-planning by the use of strategies and military advances, national defense studies, and securitization.

Realist comparison between Clausewitz, Tzu, and Waltz

After having faced many wars between nations, severe economic crisis, massive deaths as a result of man-made disasters, failed states, and other problems that have affected entire societies, researchers of different schools of thought have proposed and explained several theories that lie in the field of international relations, which try to understand the world from different perspectives. In general terms, the purpose of studying and developing those different paradigms, is not only to safeguard peace and security, and limit wars and conflicts among nations in the world we live today, but also to understand the progress throughout the years of this field of social sciences by analyzing different actors and concepts like power, institutions, individuals, states, international organizations, and others. There have been realist, liberal, and radical theories and other approaches, which have constantly competed against each other in order to explain the distinct phenomena that our world has and so, they have become a strong basis for the study of international relations (Walt 1998, 30). Nevertheless, in this work, the theory of neorealism applied to international conflicts that Kenneth Waltz provides will be examined, along with some postulates of classical realism developed by Hans Morgenthau, as they bear an undeniable relationship with the studies and theories about the perception of wars.

Kenneth Waltz was an American political scientist who studied and made great contributions to the neorealist approach in order to explain many assumptions related to the conception of power throughout war processes and the behavior of men influenced by their impulse to pursue their interests. Without a doubt, one of his most famous

statements that synthesizes his central idea about war is that “According to the first image of international relations, the locus of the important causes of war is found in the nature and behavior of man. Wars result from selfishness, from misdirected aggressive impulses, from stupidity” (Waltz 2001, 16). In this statement, it is clear that Waltz settles the importance of analyzing the human behavior and its nature, in order to understand the main causes of war and their implications. Historically, power has always been sought and desired by men and their governments, so in order to attain it they have fallen into long periods of constant wars and conflicts between nations. Because of this, Sun Tzu and Carl von Clausewitz conducted deeper studies of wars centuries ago, as both became great sources of information for analyzing and proposing some important strategies that have even been applied into the actual world as strategic advices for winning and gaining power during hard periods of conflict.

In order to understand the comparison between both authors in the light of Waltzist neorealist approach, it is essential to begin with the definition of war that Sun Tzu and Clausewitz propose in their books. Both betray differences in their definitions about war, but they coincide in their statement saying that the main objective is to win and claim victory. First, Tzu says “War is a game of deception. Therefore, feign incapability when in fact capable; feign inactivity when ready to strike; appear to be far away when actually nearby, and vice versa” (1999, 7). Starting from this definition of war, it can be seen that the point of view that this Chinese general offered is clearly strategic. Carl von Clausewitz states that “War is thus an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will...Force is thus the means of war; to impose our will on the enemy is the object” (1832, 75). As can be seen, for Clausewitz the use of force is something necessary to defeat the enemy, and he says that force is conceived as “physical force, for moral force has no existence save as expressed in the state and the law-is thus the *means* of war; to

impose our will on the enemy is *its object*” (1832, 75). Here, the superiority of force highlights as a strategy to defeat the enemy’s forces and make them render powerless. Also, Clausewitz provides another definition which is necessary to understand the essence of his argument, he states that “War is merely the continuation of policy by other means...The political object is the goal, war is the means of reaching it, and means can never be considered in isolation from their purpose” (1832, 87). In this sense, it is clear that their difference in defining war also relies on the precept that Sun Tzu never states in an explicit manner, the linkage between politics and war, as Clausewitz do. Nevertheless, according to both definitions, victories in wars as a result of defeating the enemy are also necessary to bring wealth, prosperity, and strengths to the state that the commanders and their troops are representing. Certainly, war has been a difficult item to analyze in the field of realism, as it is directly linked to a process of humans taking hard decisions to achieve their victory against their enemies. Because of this, Kenneth Waltz explains that “the evilness of men, or their improper behavior, leads to war: individual goodness, if it could be universalized would mean peace...” (2001, 39). Pursuing their interests have been so important that no matter the consequences it would lead, war has always been a way to solve international conflicts, in which its origins resides in the human nature.

The realist approach shares the idea that states will always look after their interests and their sovereignty, and Waltz also comes up with interesting concepts related to the human behavior, international conflict, and their relationship with the perpetual peace, which are important terms used in war affairs and they are helpful as well, to understand one of the main strategies that both, Sun Tzu and Clausewitz propose in their work. Sun Tzu explains the national interest as the kind of motivation that the commanders need to inspire in their troops, as this would be used as a wise strategy in order to gain their

confidence. Tzu claims that a true commander would know how to use emotions and feelings like anger, cowardice, fear, patriotism, or honor in order to serve to their empire and fight against the enemy with truthful convincement and this will lead them to work and battle as a team (1999, 47-51). Because of this, he states in his seventh strategy named “Contest to Gain the Initiative” that

Drums, gongs, flags, and banners are used to coordinate the sights and hearing of the troops so that they will act as one, so that the brave will not have to advance alone, nor the timid retreat by themselves. This is the art of directing a large number of troops (Tzu 1999, 51).

Creating a feeling of nationalism when going to any war, is something fundamental to the troops for they need to work as a team that will represent their empire, or state. On the other hand, Clausewitz explains that the national interest is something that influences and affects the entire nation, and so “if the motives and policies are directed only toward minor objectives, the emotions of the masses will be little stirred and they will have to be stimulated rather than held back” (Clausewitz 1832, 88). For this reason, the commander and his army have to follow the natural tendency of war where the motives are so strong and fierce that the main objective of defeating the enemy would be undeniable. Under those statements, Waltz claims that

In moments of crisis and especially in the crisis of war, attempts to achieve a nearly unanimous backing for foreign policy are most likely to be successful. The united front is enforced by the feelings of individuals, by their conviction that their own security depends on the security of their state (2001, 179).

This is a clear example to explain the assumption that the feelings of individuals have been a result of the crisis of war. For instance, they start supporting and raising their nationalism to pursue a common interest, winning the war.

Moreover, Kenneth Waltz has also set forth ideas that are helpful to connect strategist visions with the explanations and perceptions of war, for example, he states that “Knowledge leads to control” (2001, 75). Agreeing with this statement, Carl von

Clausewitz mentioned that a clever leader must have a certain intelligence to have more knowledge to plan his strategies during a battle, for this reason he states “By “intelligence” we mean every sort of information about the enemy and his country- the basis, in short, of our own plans and operations” (1832, 117). At the same time, Clausewitz also says that “Although our intellect always longs for clarity and certainty, our nature often finds uncertainty fascinating...with uncertainty in one scale, courage and self-confidence must be thrown into the other to correct the balance... war is the realm of uncertainty” (Clausewitz 1832, 86-101). Uncertainty is undeniable in wars and both, Clausewitz and Sun Tzu agree with this statement. Sun Tzu reaffirms that it is fundamental to know the movements and plans of the enemy, for this reason he proposes the thirteenth strategy, based on the usage of spies. He states that

The foreknowledge cannot be obtained from ghosts or spirits, nor from gods, nor by analogy with past events, nor from astrological calculations. It can only come from men who know the enemy situation...Secret operations are essential in war; upon them the army relies in deciding its every move (Tzu 1999, 108-113).

Uncertainty is seen as a weakness that is needed to be avoided in order to gain advantage in the face of the adversary, so this means that spies have always been essential to facilitate the work of collecting information and with this, the commander could be prepare to make the next move.

Waltz also states that “Since each state acts on its own interpretation of its requirements for security and well-being, one state has to forecast the intentions of other states” (2001, 211). It is true that every state has its own interpretation of the situations that have been settled during war periods. Because of this, knowing the intentions of other states will become a vital advantage to take and move around good decisions. Tzu says that a good commander will always be prepared to take those decisions and claims that “it is a rule in war that you must not count on the enemy not coming, but always be

ready for him; that you must not count on the enemy not attacking, but make yourself so strong that you are invincible” (1999, 57). Being prepared for everything that could come is not easy, but is an indispensable characteristic of a good leader and commander. Clausewitz alludes to “wisdom” as a feature that a commander should have, for “During an operation decisions have usually to be made at once: there may be no time to review the situation or even to think it through” (1832, 102). If a leader shows wisdom, he could take the best decisions and will avoid huge risks and terrible consequences, he would also use other possible strategies to reach his goal and defeat his enemy. Also, Clausewitz says that any good and clever commander “should possess a standard of judgment, which he can gain only from knowledge of men and affairs and from common sense” (1832, 117). This statement is linked with Clausewitz’ ideas against feeling compassion for the enemy, as for him is not an option in warfare, and being a wise leader also means to make decisions by being aware that “war is such a dangerous business that the mistakes which come from kindness are the very worst” (Clausewitz 1832, 75).

Another strategy of Sun Tzu, is called “The Terrain” in which he wrote

On such a terrain, he who first occupies the sunny high ground and establishes convenient supply routes has the advantage in battle...Advantageous terrain can be a natural ally in battle. Superior military leadership lies in the ability to assess the enemy’s situation and create conditions for victory, to analyze natural hazards and calculate distances. He who fights with full knowledge of these factors is certain to win (1999,73-77).

Without a doubt, a true strategist must know how to move around a certain terrain, as it will be used as a primary tool in order to plan future attacks and to find evacuation routes in case something goes wrong. In other words, Clausewitz states “In these ways the relationship between warfare and terrain determines the peculiar character of military action...It is faculty of quickly and accurately grasping the topography of any

area which enables a man to find his way about at any time” (2001, 109). In this case, the geographical features play an important role in strategic planning to use nature’s benefits in one’s favor.

Kenneth Waltz wrote that “states are motivated to attack each other and to defend themselves by the reason and/or passion of the comparatively few who make policies for states and of the many more who influence the few” (2001, 232). This statement leads to perhaps one of the main strategies of Sun Tzu named “Momentum”, in which he addresses the importance of knowing how to use both, the *qi* and *zheng*. “‘Qi’ denotes the use of unusual and unexpected methods, of sudden, surprise attacks, of flanking movements in military operations; while ‘zheng’ denotes the use of normal and regular methods, of frontal attacks and defensive moves in military operations” (Tzu 1999, 35). In warfare, a wise commander must know when to use the force to attack and when to use certain tactics to defend his troops from the adversary. Also, Clausewitz defends the idea that “The end for which a soldier is recruited, clothed, armed, and trained, the whole object of his sleeping, eating, drinking, and marching is simply that he should fight at the right place and the right time” (1832, 95). He sets the idea that during any war, a good leader has to learn both offensive and defensive war and these strategies would lead the commander to a more marked victory. On the one hand, the objective of offensive war is to reduce the forces of the other, or to occupy the other’s territory (Clausewitz 1832, 611). On the other hand, defensive tactics are considered to be the most effective forms of war, as they help to keep one’s territory safe and impenetrable, and it encourages the leader to lay traps for the enemy (Clausewitz 1832, 614). Both of them are necessary to plan strategies of attack and defense, for the leader not only has to be prepared to apply the force and violence to win, but he also has to wait and defend his own territory.

After having compared different scopes among war issues, it becomes clear the close relationship borne between both realist strategists. Even if Sun Tzu and Carl von Clausewitz lived in different eras, and have distinct concepts of the meaning of war, both propose strategies of war that actually are really close to each other. First, both talk about war as power and as the exertion of force, which directly influences in the conception of how they propose to pursue the collective national interests, which at the same time would be achieved after winning the war. Besides, the evident influence of the human nature in warfare, uncertainty and security are linked to the importance of the role of wisdom while taking decisions, as every decision the commander takes can determine whether a war could be won or not. Thus, depending on the capacity to know and use the territory, the leader can plan and build effective and efficient battle strategies, without forgetting perhaps two of the most important strategies, knowing when to attack and to defend. Without a doubt, all these strategies are built under the theory of contemporary realism that Kenneth Waltz wrote about, for his strong conviction that there is and will always be an undeniable relationship between men, states, and wars, allows to understand those strategies in a better manner under the eyes of neorealism. Also, it is necessary to acknowledge that even if Sun Tzu and Carl von Clausewitz have several similarities when they are being analyzed through the Waltzist perspective, they differ with Kenneth Waltz in one of his most well-known postulate that states “violence among states is the product of international anarchy” (Waltz 2001, 14). For both ancient strategists of war, conflicts arise due to the impossibility of reaching a mutual agreement with the adversary through politics, or dialogues. Therefore, they do not take into account the influence of anarchy in the system to establish their strategies, and as Waltz states is vital to be aware that “In anarchy, there is no automatic harmony” (2001, 160). This is fundamental to understand, for Kenneth

Waltz provides a new perspective to take into account in warfare, and so if his theory about the influence of anarchy would have been considered at the time of Sun Tzu or Clausewitz, their strategies to win battles among states would probably had also been focused on preventing war by looking at the functionality of the international system, based on the assumption that the system is anarchical.

Closer to realism: Sun Tzu vs Carl von Clausewitz

In the previous chapter, Sun Tzu and Carl von Clausewitz were analytically compared with the most relevant postulates of the neorealist theory that Kenneth Waltz provided. Making this comparison has been important for it has clearly proven that indeed, Tzu and Clausewitz belong to the realist approach. Because of this, in the present chapter I will analyze which author is considered to be closer to the realist perspective as a theoretical approach, even if it has already seen that both are congruent with it. In order to understand certain key aspects of the realist vision in this chapter, some of the six principles that Morgenthau established in his book “Politics Among Nations” will also be compared with Tzu and Clausewitz. My hypothesis in this section, is that Carl von Clausewitz is closer to the classical realist paradigm, for his ideas and his way of thinking can be directly linked to some of the principles of Hans Morgenthau.

Sun Tzu and Carl von Clausewitz contain many statements that can be clearly identified with the realist approach throughout their books, but they propose strategies focusing on distinct aspects. One of them is their conception of how to win wars. For Sun Tzu, his primary goal “is to find a way to defeat the enemy without actually fighting him...he does not advocate sacrificing in order to accomplish victory” (Zapotoczny 2006, 1). So this shows that he gave priority to the use of intelligence over

military force to win. Clausewitz focuses on “the destruction of the enemy’s army and occupation of its territory as overriding goals of warfare” (Zapotoczny 2006, 1), which means that he says that victory could only be acquired by force in a violent way. In this sense, he also says that “we must render the enemy powerless; and that, in theory, is the true aim of warfare” (1832, 75). This is an example of how they plan to win wars using different paths. It is true that as the classical realist approach establishes that the pursuit of power is something unavoidable for “power appears an end-in-itself...necessary for success in competitive struggles...struggles for power arise because men are born seekers of power” (Waltz 2001, 35). Because of this, Tzu agrees to reach power, but he wants to “force the enemy to do one’s will and sue for peace as a result” (Zapotoczny 2006, 1), and this does not mean that for achieving that goal the enemy has to be completely destroyed as Clausewitz assumes. Following this statement, Morgenthau establishes in his first principle that “Political realism believes that politics, like society in general, is governed by objective laws that have their roots in human nature” (1948, 4). Morgenthau complements this idea when he states “the selfishness of man has limits: his will to power has none” (1948, 193). Clausewitz could clearly be identified with the previous statement, for his ideas about winning wars at all costs lies on this premise about the human nature and the necessity to feel and gain power to satisfy one’s interests. In this sense, Morgenthau’s second assumption states that

The main signpost that helps political realism to find its way through the landscape of international politics is the concept of interest defined in terms of power...We assume that statesmen think and act in terms of interest defined as power, and the evidence of history bears that assumption out. The assumption allows us to retrace and anticipate, as it were, the steps a statesman- past, present, or future- has taken or will take on the political scene (Morgenthau 1948, 5).

Clausewitz has written his book basing his arguments on the importance of preparing strategies for the commander, or statesman to win wars and they are constantly fitting

with the idea of thinking about power defined in terms of interests, as in the realist approach. For this reason, *On War* is the best example to analyze “the strategic-operational realm, at the point where diplomacy has failed and fighting is unavoidable” (Cher 2015, 68). On the other hand, when reading *The Art of War*, one can see that it “approaches the subject of war at the grand strategy level” (Cher 2015, 68). This shows that Sun Tzu took into consideration diplomatic and economic factors, whereas Clausewitz saw those factors as clear failures, and so this sets war as eminent where there is no turning back.

Moreover, Clausewitz recognized a paradoxical trinity composed by “people (representing primordial violence, passion, hate and enmity); the military (representing the realm of probability and chance, courage and talent); and the government (representing the rational calculus, nexus between ends and means)” (Cher 2015, 70). For him, the equilibrium of this trinity is the key to achieve victory through warfare, as each of them represents something essential to take into account at his strategic operational level. Sun Tzu used another paradoxical trinity that influences in the process of wars, but he focuses of “three factors of nature, terrain and law” (Cher 2015, 70). In a different sense, Tzu makes clear that both elements, the natural environment and the military doctrine, are factors that are necessarily be considered when making strategies. For Sun Tzu, the more dragged on the conflict is, the more destruction will be caused. In contrast, Clausewitz does not consider those factors in his strategic planning, as for him any kind of loses are justified in order to achieve victory and this is also related to the third principle of Morgenthau, where he affirms that

Power may comprise anything that establishes and maintains the control of man over man. Thus power covers all social relationships that serve that end, from physical violence to the most subtle psychological ties by which one mind controls another... as in Western democracies, and when it is that untamed and

barbaric force that finds its laws in nothing but its own strength and its sole justification in its aggrandizement (Morgenthau 1948, 13).

The realist approach views the study of conflict resolution processes through wars and this is the reason why Clausewitz and Tzu belong to this branch of international relations. As can be seen, in both books they analyze what they consider to be the best strategies to reach victory and power, which is linked to the theory of realism. Sun Tzu and Carl von Clausewitz have a different manner to plan their strategies and they give priorities to some issues like preserving resources or the influence of diplomacy in warfare, but still their goal is to win battles. These authors have also been analyzed in the light of the main principles that Hans Morgenthau proposed, but there are differences in this regard between the two ancient authors. For instance, it is clear that Carl von Clausewitz can be considered to be closer to the realist approach, for he can justify every action the commander takes under the condition to reach his final goal with reference to the realm of human nature, which remains in the first principle of Morgenthau. Instead of being worried about winning without starting a fight, Clausewitz “was largely preoccupied with the massive application of the force and attempts to mitigate friction in combat operations. He defined friction as suffering, confusion, exhaustion, and fear” (Zapotoczny 2006, 1). Throughout the several battles he fought, Clausewitz applied his concept of friction to disarm and defeat his enemy without mercy in order to pursue power and the statesman interest, which can also be seen in the second and third principle of Morgenthau. Clausewitz for instance, considered it to be one of the most relevant and effective strategies of his book and that is the reason why he put so much emphasis on the importance of applying force and violence to win.

Conclusion

Wars have been a fundamental part of the history of our world. Wars have been considered to be one way to solve disputes among nations, so they have been studied for centuries especially in the conflict resolution area. Many scholars have written about the causes, consequences, and strategies of war, but without a doubt, the most recognized and most studied books of all times are “On War” of Carl von Clausewitz, and “The Art of War” of Sun Tzu. Those books have been considered to be the greatest masterpieces in the study about war. At the same time, they provide a Western and an Eastern perspective about war in different epochs, for the first one was written in 1832 in what at that time was Prussia, and the second one was written around the end of the 4th century B.C in China. While studying the postulates of each book, one can determine that they have much more similarities than differences, even if both were written under distinct circumstances, as they belong to different eras and fought miscellaneous wars. Moreover, it is necessary to understand that their books, their strategies, and their ideas about warfare can be subsumed under the realist paradigm, so both of them belong to the same theoretical approach.

Many scholars have thought that both books are almost completely different due to the historical and cultural background of each author, but their similarities are constantly showing up, even when both are being studied from both, the classical realist perspective of Hans Morgenthau and the neorealist assumptions of Kenneth Waltz. Starting from their definition of war, one can see that Sun Tzu and Carl von Clausewitz talk about exerting force and dominance to achieve the goal of defeating the enemy, yet they refer to the use of violence in different manners. Both strategists agree that due to the necessity that humans feel to gain more and more power, a commander needs to be

objective and take the best decisions for the benefits of his troops, so objectivity has to prevail among feelings and emotions that are characteristics of the human nature. Nevertheless, they say that a good leader must know how to manage his troops and the emotions of his soldiers, for those are also important items to convince them that they are fighting a war to represent the interests of the entire nation. Moreover, decision-making processes are fundamental to determine a victory or a defeat during a combat, so the commander according to both authors, needs to have some key characteristics such as wisdom, objectivity, and rationality to handle every unexpected event without a problem. Also, an important factor in war to be taken into consideration is uncertainty. Uncertainty is one of the hugest problems that commanders face in a conflict of any kind, for they will never know the exact strategies or intentions of their opponent. For this reasons, both authors talk about this topic in a meticulous way. Specifically, Sun Tzu proposes the usage of spies to reduce uncertainty and gain advantage. Another common topic of both books is when their authors explain the importance of knowing the terrain where the battle has been set up. Sun Tzu and Clausewitz talk about the need of the commander to apply their expertise to move wisely around the terrain, for all of that kind of factors can determine the result of the battle. In armed conflicts, there is an imminent need to not only know how to attack, but also to know how to defend yourself from the enemy. Defensive and offensive attacks are important for the leader, but according to Clausewitz, defensive war has more advantages and it is more effective, for at the same time the commander defends himself and his troops, he has the possibility to plan how and when to lay traps and create strategies to defeat the adversary.

After having established several differences and similarities that both authors have, their belonging to the theory of realism is indisputable. For this reason, I have

considered to be interesting to analyze which one of both authors can be closer to the classical realist approach. To accomplish the goal of this section, I looked at some of the six principles that Hans Morgenthau, a classical realist theorist of international relations, proposed, for comparing them to some of the statements of Carl von Clausewitz and Sun Tzu respectively. One of the main points in the presented argument was that Sun Tzu planned to win wars without even fighting them, but if that was not possible, he agreed to impose force and dominance to the enemy. On the contrary, Clausewitz never considered the possibility to reach a mutual gain resolution, for him the optimal resolution was to defeat the enemy at all costs, justifying the legitimacy of using violence to attack, disarm, kill, and totally destroy the enemy in order to avoid future conflicts. After the analysis, it was clear that indeed the hypothesis that I initially proposed was proved, Carl von Clausewitz can be considered to be closer to the classical realist approach than Sun Tzu. Nevertheless, it is necessary to clarify that neither of the two classical thinkers of war agree with Waltz when he establishes the idea of basing the systemic nature of war under the principle of anarchy. Therefore, even if I consider Clausewitz to be closest to the realist approach, both fit in a better way under the postulates of Morgenthau, based on the classical realist premise.

Understanding the importance of learning and developing studies about warfare relies on the premise that even until nowadays, war has still become a fundamental topic in foreign affairs and in international politics of most of the countries around the world. Even if today new theories and strategies about conflict resolution processes have arisen, war is always going to be a frequent used medium to pursue the interests of every nation and this has been proven throughout the years. There is a need to recognize that “As war becomes even more complex, the need to explore its fundamental nature is no less important than in the past” (Cerjal 1991 in Handel 1991, iv) and so, studying

both masterpieces have always been important in different areas to understand the development of our world itself. Also, taking into account that even if technology has drastically evolved and diplomacy has been taken as a useful tool into the foreign policy of distinct nations, it is interesting to see that “On War” and “The Art of War” are still being used as key books of strategy planning for resolving disputes among countries. It is well-known that every warfare brings out big loses and massive destruction to every country who takes part in it, so in order to reduce the costs and risks that entering into a conflict between states takes, studying the strategies about war proposed by Tzu and Clausewitz is something vital even nowadays. Just as Sun Tzu says, “war is a question of vital importance to the state, a matter of life and death, the road to survival or ruin. Hence, it is a subject which calls for careful study” (1999, 3). Certainly, the importance of both authors resides on the premise that “Of all the classic studies on war, ‘The Art of War’ by Sun Tzu and ‘On War’ by Clausewitz are still the most outstanding, ‘modern,’ and relevant despite the passage of time” (Cerjal 1991 in Handel 1991, iii). All in all, it has been clear that learning, studying, and developing theories and strategies about war affairs through a Western and an Eastern perspective, help us to understand not only the complexities about war as a phenomenon that is still happening in the 21st century, but also to understand the development that our world has had throughout the years.

References

- Brainbridge, Jason. 2016. *Media and Journalism: Textual Analysis and Media Research*. Oxford: Oxford University Press: 224-237.
- Cher, Ong. 2015. "A Study of Sun Tzu's *Art of War* and Clausewitz's *On War*." *Journal of the Singapore Armed Forces*, vol 41, no. 2 (June): 68-80.
- Handel, Michael. 1991. *Sun Tzu and Clausewitz: The Art of War and On War Compared*. Pennsylvania: U.S Army College: 1-81.
- McKee, Alan. 2003. *Textual Analysis: A Beginner's Guide*. London: Sage: 1-33.
- Morgenthau, Hans. 1948. *Politics Among Nations*. New York: McGraw-Hill: 1- 409.
- Tzu, Sun. 1999. *The Art of War*. Beijing: Foreign Languages Press: 1-304.
- Von Clausewitz, Carl. 1832. *On War*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press: 1-637.
- Walt, Stephen. 1998. One World, Many Theories. *Foreign Policy*. Special Edition: *Frontiers of Knowledge*, no. 110 (Summer): 29-32; 34-46.
- Waltz, Kenneth. 2001. *Man the State and War: a theoretical analysis*. New York: Columbia University Press: 1-238.
- Zapotoczny, Walter. 2006. *Sun Tzu Compared to Clausewitz*. Pennsylvania: 1-2.