

### CHAPTER III.

## STRATEGY.

### DEFINITION AND FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLE.

THE art of war, independently of the parts which we have just succinctly explained, is composed yet, as has been seen above, of five principal branches: strategy, grand tactics, logistics, (*la logistique*) elementary tactics, (*la tactique de détail*), and the art of the engineer. We shall treat only of the first three, for reasons already indicated; it is necessary then to commence by defining them.

In order to do so more surely, we shall follow the order in which the combinations which an army may have to make, present themselves to its chiefs at the moment when war is declared; commencing naturally with the most important, which constitute in some sort the plan of operations, and proceeding thus the reverse of tactics, which should begin with small details in order to arrive at the formation and the employment of a great army.\*

We will suppose then the army about to take the field; the first care of its chief will be to settle with the government upon the nature of the

\* To learn tactics it is necessary to study first the school of the platoon, then that of the battalion, finally the evolutions of the line; then you pass to the small operations of the campaign, then to castrametation, afterwards marches, finally the formation of armies. But in strategy we begin at the top, that is to say, with the plan of campaign.

war which it shall make; afterwards it will be his duty to study well the theatre of its enterprises; then he will choose, in concert with the chief of the State, the most suitable base of operations, according as its frontiers and those of its allies shall favor thereto.

The choice of this base, and still more the end which it shall be proposed to attain, will contribute to determine the zone of operations that will be adopted. The generalissimo will take a first objective point for his enterprises; he will choose the line of operations which would lead to this point, whether as a temporary line, or as a definitive line.

The army marching upon this line of operations, will have a front of operations or a strategic front; behind this front it will do well to have a line of defense, to serve as a support in case of need. The transient positions which its army corps will take on the front of operations, or upon the line of defense, will be strategic positions.

When the army shall arrive near its first objective point, and the enemy shall commence to oppose its enterprises, it will attack him, or manœuvre to constrain him to a retreat; it will adopt to this effect one or two strategic lines of manœuvres, which being temporary, may deviate to a certain point from the general line of operations, with which they must not be confounded.

To connect the front of operations with the base, one will form as he advances, his staple line and lines of supply, dépôts, &c.

If the line of operations be somewhat lengthened in depth, and there be hostile corps in reach of disturbing it, choice will have to be made between the attack and expulsion of those corps, and the pursuit of the enterprise against the hostile army, paying no attention to them, or merely observing them; if this latter course be resolved upon, there will result from it a double front of operations and great detachments.

The army being near obtaining its objective point, and the enemy wishing to oppose this, there will be a battle; when this shock shall be decisive, it will be resolved to recommence the struggle; if a victory be gained, our enterprises will be carried on for attaining or passing beyond the first objective point and adopting a second.

When the aim of this first objective shall be the taking of an important place of arms, the siege will commence. If the army is not sufficiently numerous for continuing its march, leaving a siege corps behind it, it will take a strategic position for covering it; thus, in 1796, the army of Italy, not numbering fifty thousand combatants, was not able to pass Mantua, in order to penetrate to the heart of Austria, leaving twenty-five thousand



men before the place, and having besides forty thousand men in front, upon the double line of the Tyrol and the Frioul.

In the case, on the contrary, where the army should have sufficient forces to obtain greater advantages from its victory, or rather where it should have no siege to make, it would march to a second objective point more important still. If this point be found at a certain distance, it will be necessary to procure an intermediate point of support; an eventual base will then be formed by means of one or two cities secure from insult, which will doubtless have been occupied; in the contrary case, a small strategic reserve will be formed, which will cover the rear and protect the grand dépôt by field works. When the army shall pass considerable rivers, *têtes de ponts* will be hastily constructed there, and if the bridges are in cities enclosed by walls, a few intrenchments will be raised to augment the defense of those posts, and to double thus the solidity of the eventual base, or of the strategic reserve which should there be placed.

If, on the contrary, the battle has been lost, there will be a retreat to the end of approaching the base, and of drawing therefrom new forces, as well from the detachments which would be drawn in, as from the places and intrenched camps, which would arrest the enemy or oblige him to divide his means.

When winter approaches, there will be winter cantonments, or else operations will be continued by that one of the two armies which, having obtained a decided superiority, and finding no serious obstacles in the hostile line of defense, should wish to profit from its ascendancy; there would then be a winter campaign; this resolution, which, in all cases, becomes equally painful for both armies, presents no special combinations; unless it be the necessity for a redoubled activity in the enterprises, in order to obtain the most prompt *dénoûment*.

Such is the ordinary movement of a war; such will also be that which we shall follow, in order to proceed to the examination of the different combinations which those operations lead to.

All those which embrace the ensemble of the theatre of war, are in the domain of strategy, which will thus comprehend:

1. The definition of this theatre and of the different combinations which it might offer;
2. The choice and the establishment of the fixed base, and of the zone of operations;
3. The determination of the objective point to be attained, whether it be offensive or defensive;

4. The determination of the decisive points of the theatre of war;
5. The fronts of operations and lines of defense;
6. The choice of the lines of operations which lead from the aforesaid base to the objective points, or to the front of operations;
7. That of the best strategic lines to take for a given operation; the different manœuvres for embracing those lines in their divers combinations;
8. The bases of eventual operations, and strategic reserves;
9. The marches of armies considered as manœuvres;
10. The magazines considered in their relations with the marches of armies.
11. Fortresses regarded as strategical means; as refuges for an army, or as obstacles to its march; the sieges to make and to cover;
12. Intrenched camps, *têtes de ponts*, &c.;
13. Diversions and great detachments.

Independently of those combinations which enter principally in the projection of the general plan for the first enterprises of the campaign, there are other mixed operations, which participate of strategy for the direction to be given them, and of tactics for their execution; as the passage of rivers and streams, retreats, winter-quarters, surprises, descents, great convoys, &c.

The 2d branch is tactics, that is to say, the manœuvres of an army on the field of battle, or of combat, and the different formations for leading troops to the attack.

The 3d branch is logistics, (*la logistique*) or the practical art of moving armies, the material details of marches and of formations, the situation of non-intrenched camps and cantonments, in a word, the execution of the combinations of strategy and of tactics.

Several futile controversies have had place for determining, in an absolute manner, the line of demarkation which separates those divers branches of the science. I have said that strategy is the art of making war upon the map, the art of embracing the whole of a theatre of war; tactics is the art of combatting on the ground, of placing thereon one's forces according to the localities, and of putting them in action on the different points of the field of battle, that is to say, within a space of four or five leagues, in such a manner that all the acting corps may receive orders and execute them in the course even of the action; finally, *la logistique* is in substance only the science of preparing the application of the other



two. My definition has been criticised without a better one being given; it is certain that many battles have been decided by strategical movements, and have been even but a series of such movements; but that has never been the case except against dispersed armies, which is an exception; now the general definition, being applicable only to pitched battles, is none the less exact.\*

Thus, independently of the measures of local execution which are within its province, grand tactics, in my view, will comprehend the following objects:

1. The choice of positions and of defensive lines of battle;
2. The offensive defense in combat;
3. The different orders of battle, or grand manoeuvres for attacking a hostile line;
4. The meeting of two armies in march and unexpected battles;
5. The surprise of armies;†
6. The dispositions for conducting troops to the combat;
7. The attack of positions and intrenched camps;
8. *Coups de main*.

All the other operations of war enter into the details of *petite guerre*, such as convoys, foraging, the partial combats of advanced and rear guards, the attack even of small posts, in a word, all that which must be executed by an isolated division or detachment.

### FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLE OF WAR.

The essential object of this work is to demonstrate that there exists a fundamental principle of all the operations of war, a principle which

\* It may be said that tactics is the combat, and that strategy is all the war before and after the combat, sieges alone excepted, even they belong to strategy so far as the deciding upon those necessary to be made, and how they must be covered. Strategy decides where we should act, *la logistique* conducts and places the troops there; tactics decides their employment and the mode of execution.

† The surprise of armies in open field is here meant, and not the surprise of winter quarters.

ought to preside over all the combinations in order that they be good. It consists:

1. In carrying by strategic combinations the mass of the forces of an army successively upon the decisive points of a theatre of war, and as much as possible upon the communications of the enemy, without endangering its own;
2. In manoeuvring in such a manner as to engage this mass of the forces with fractions only of the hostile army;
3. In directing equally, on the day of battle, by tactical manoeuvres, the mass of one's forces upon the decisive point of the field of battle, or upon that of the hostile line which it would be important to overwhelm;
4. In managing so that those masses be not merely present upon the decisive point, but that they be put in action there with energy and concert, in a manner to produce a simultaneous effort.

This general principle has been found so simple that it has not lacked criticisms.\*

It has been objected that it were very easy to recommend the carrying one's principal force upon the decisive points, and to know how to engage them thereon; but that the art consists precisely in recognizing these points.

Far from contesting so naïve a truth, I own that it would be at least ridiculous to utter a like general principle, without accompanying it with all the developments necessary for causing its different chances of application to be comprehended; I have, therefore, neglected nothing for putting every studious officer in condition to determine easily the decisive points of a strategical or tactical field (*un échiquier stratégique ou tactique*.) There will be found in article 19, the definition of those different points, and there will be recognized in all articles from the 18th to the 22d, those which apply to the divers combinations of a war. Military men who, after having meditated upon them attentively, should still believe that the determination of those decisive points is an insoluble problem, ought to despair of ever comprehending any thing of strategy.

In fact, a theatre of operations never presents but three zones, one to the right, one to the left, and one at the centre. In the same manner each zone, each front of operations, each strategical position and line of

\* To meet these criticisms, I ought, perhaps, to place here the entire chapter of the general principles of the art of war, which terminates my Treatise on Grand Operations, (chap. XXXV. of the 3d edition); but powerful motives have prevented me from despoiling my first work of the chapter which makes its principal merit, and which my censors ought at least to read.



defense, as well as each tactical line of battle, has never but those same subdivisions, that is to say, two extremities and a centre. Now, there will always be one of those three directions which it will be proper to follow, in order to reach the important object desired, one of the other two will be more or less removed from it, and the third will be altogether opposed to it. Hence, in combining hostile positions with geographical points, and with the projects which should be formed, it seems that every question of strategic movement, as well as of tactical manœuvre, would always be reduced to knowing whether we ought to manœuvre to the right, to the left, or directly to the front; the choice between three alternatives so simple, could not be an enigma worthy of a new sphinx.

I am far from pretending, nevertheless, that the whole art of war consists merely in the choice of a good direction to be given to masses, but it could not be denied that it is at least the fundamental point of strategy. It will be for talent of execution, skill, energy, and *coup d'œil*, to complete what good combinations will have been able to propose.

We are about to apply then the principle indicated; to the different combinations of strategy and tactics, then to prove, by the history of twenty celebrated campaigns, that all their successes or reverses were the result of the application, or of the neglect of this principle.\*

## STRATEGICAL COMBINATIONS.

### ARTICLE XVI.

#### SYSTEM OF OFFENSIVE OR DEFENSIVE OPERATIONS.

War once resolved upon, the first thing to be decided, is to know whether it is to be offensive or defensive. First of all, it is proper to define well what is understood by these words:

\* The account of those twenty campaigns, together with fifty plans of battles, will be found in my history of the Seven Years War, in that of the wars of the Revolution, and in the political and military life of Napoleon.

The offensive presents itself under several aspects; if it be directed against a great State, which it embraces entirely, it is then an *invasion*; if it be applied only to the attack of a province, or of a line of defense more or less limited, it is no longer an invasion, but an ordinary offensive; finally, if it be but an attack upon any position whatever of the hostile army, and limited to a single operation, it is called *the initiative of movements*. As we have said in the preceding chapter, the offensive considered morally and politically, is almost always advantageous, because it carries the war upon foreign soil, spares your own country, diminishes the resources of the enemy, and augments yours; it elevates the *moral* of the army, and often imposes dread upon the adversary; meanwhile it happens also that it excites his ardor, when it makes him feel that the question is to save his menaced country.

Under the military relation, the offensive has its good and its bad side; in strategy, if it be pushed to an invasion, it gives lines of operations *lengthened in depth*, which are always dangerous in an enemy's country. All the theatre of operations, the mountains, the rivers, the defiles, the fortifications, being obstacles favorable to the defense, are thus against the offensive; the inhabitants and the authorities of the country will be hostile to it, instead of being instruments in its favor. But if it obtain a success, it strikes the hostile power to the heart, deprives it of the means of war, and may bring about a prompt *dénouement* to the struggle.

Applied to a mere transient operation, that is to say, considered as the initiative of movements, the offensive is always advantageous, especially in strategy. In fact, if the art of war consist in directing one's forces upon the decisive point, it is comprehended that the first means of applying this principle will be to take the initiative of movements. He who has taken this initiative knows beforehand what he is doing and what he wishes; he arrives with his masses at the point where it is convenient for him to strike. He who waits is anticipated every where; the enemy falls upon fractions of his army; he neither knows where his adversary means to direct his efforts, nor the means which he ought to oppose to him.

In tactics, the offensive has also its advantages; but they are less positive, because the operations not being upon so large a sphere, he who has the initiative cannot conceal them from the enemy, who, discovering this instantly, can, by the aid of good reserves, remedy it upon the spot. Besides that, he who marches upon the enemy has against him all the disadvantages resulting from the obstacles of the ground which he will be obliged to overcome in order to approach the line of his adversary, which leads to the belief, that in tactics especially, the chances of the two sys-



tems are pretty nearly balanced. For the rest, whatever advantages could be expected from the offensive strategically and politically, it is obvious that this system could not be adopted exclusively for a whole war, for it is not even certain that a campaign commenced offensively may not finish with the defensive.

Defensive war, as we have already said, has also its advantages when it is wisely combined. It is of two kinds: the inert or passive defense, and the active defense with offensive returns. The first is always pernicious; the second may procure great success. The aim of a defensive war being to cover, as long as possible, the portion of the territory menaced by the enemy, it is evident that all the operations should have for object the retarding of his progress, the thwarting of his enterprises, by multiplying the difficulties of his march, without, meanwhile, allowing the army to be seriously broken. He who decides upon invasion, does it always in consequence of any ascendancy whatever, he should aim then at as prompt a *dénouement* as possible; the defender, on the contrary, ought to put it off until his adversary is weakened by detachments, marches, fatigues, &c.

An army is scarcely reduced to a positive defense but in consequence of reverses or a notable inferiority. In this case it seeks, by the support of its places, and by favor of natural or artificial barriers, the means of re-establishing the equilibrium of chances, by multiplying the obstacles which it can oppose to the enemy.

This system, when it is not pushed too far, presents also happy chances; but it is in the case only when the general who believes himself compelled to resort to it, has the good sense not to be reduced to an inert defense; that is to say, when he shall take care not to await passively, in fixed posts, all the blows which the enemy should be pleased to deliver him. He must apply himself on the contrary, to redouble the activity of his operations, and to seize every occasion which presents, of falling upon the feeble points of the enemy, by taking the initiative of movements.

This kind of warfare, which I have heretofore named the offensive-defensive,\* may be advantageous in strategy as well as in tactics. In acting thus, you have the advantages of the two systems, for you have that of the initiative, and you are better able to seize the moment when it is suitable to strike, when you find yourself in the midst of a theatre which has been prepared beforehand, at the centre of the resources and supports of your country.

\* Others have named it the active defensive, which is not correct, since the defense could be very active without being offensive. We may, nevertheless, adopt the term, which is more grammatical.

In the first three campaigns of the Seven Years War, Frederick the Great was the aggressor; but in the last four he gave the true model of an offensive defense. It must be confessed also, that he was marvelously seconded by his adversaries, who emulously gave him all the leisure and the occasions for taking the initiative with success.

Wellington also played this part in the greater portion of his career in Portugal, in Spain and in Belgium, and, in fact, it was the only one which suited his position. It is always easy to play the Fabius, when one does it on an ally's territory, when he has not to trouble himself about the fate of the capital, or of the provinces menaced; in a word, when he is at liberty to consult military convenience only.

Definitively, it appears incontestable, that one of the greatest of a general's talents, is to know how to employ by turns these two systems, and especially, to know how to retake the initiative in the midst even of a defensive struggle.

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## ARTICLE XVII.

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### OF THE THEATRE OF OPERATIONS.

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The theatre of a war embraces all the countries in which two powers may attack, whether by their own territory, or by that of their allies, or of the secondary powers which they will draw into the vortex through fear or through interest. When a war is complicated with maritime operations, then its theatre is not restrained to the frontiers of a State, but may embrace the two hemispheres, as has happened in the struggles between France and England, from Louis XIV down to our day.

Thus, the general theatre of a war is a thing so vague, and so dependent upon incidents, that it must not be confounded with the theatre of operations which each army may embrace, independently of all complications.

The theatre of a continental war between France and Austria, may embrace Italy alone, or Germany and Italy, if the German princes take part in it.



It may happen that the operations are combined, or that each army is destined to act separately. In the first case, the general theatre of operations ought to be considered only as the same *échiquier*, upon which strategy should cause the armies to move with the common object which shall have been resolved upon. In the second case, each army will have its special theatre of operations, independent of the other.

The theatre of operations of an army comprehends all the ground which it should seek to invade, as well as that which it may have to defend. If it is to operate by itself, this theatre forms its whole *échiquier*, out of which it might indeed seek an issue in the case where it should find itself invested therein on three sides, but out of which it ought never to combine any manœuvre, since nothing would be provided for a common action with the secondary army.

If, on the contrary, the operations are concerted, then the theatre of operations of each army, taken separately, becomes, in some sort, but one of the zones of operations of the general *échiquier* where the belligerents are to operate with the same object.

Independently of the topographical accidents with which it is strewn, each theatre or *échiquier*, which is to be operated upon by one or several armies, is composed for both parties :

1. Of a fixed base (or basis) of operations ;
2. Of an objective aim ;
3. Of fronts of operations and lines of defense ;
4. Of zones and lines of operations ;
5. Of strategic lines and lines of communications ;
6. Of natural or artificial obstacles to conquer or to oppose to the enemy ;
7. Of important geographical strategic points to occupy in the offensive, or to cover defensively ;
8. Of accidental bases of operations intermediate between the objective aim and the positive base.
9. Of points of refuge in case of reverses.

To render the demonstration more intelligible, I will suppose France, wishing to invade Austria with two or three armies, destined to be united under one chief, and departing from Mayence, from the Upper Rhine, from Savoy, or from the maritime Alps. Each country, which one or the other of these armies would have to pass over, will be, in some sort, a zone of operations of the general *échiquier*. But if the army of Italy is to act

only as far as the Adige, without concerting any thing with the army of the Rhine, then what was considered only as a zone of operations in the general plan, becomes the sole *échiquier* of that army and its theatre of operations.

Hence each *échiquier* should have its special base, its objective point, its zones and lines of operations which lead from the base to the objective aim in the offensive, or from the objective aim to the base in the defensive.

With regard to the material or topographical points, with which a theatre of operations is found more or less furrowed in every direction, the art is not wanting in works which have discussed their different strategical or tactical properties ; the routes, the rivers, the mountains, the forests, the cities offering resources, or secure from a *coup de main*, the strong holds, have been the object of many debates, in which the most erudite have not always been the most luminous.

Some have given to names strange significations ; it has been published and taught, that rivers were lines of operations *par excellence* ! Now, as such a line could not exist without having two or three roads for moving the army within the sphere of its enterprises, and at least one line of retreat, those modern Moseses pretended thus to transform rivers into lines of retreat, and even into lines of manœuvre ! It would appear much more natural and correct to say that rivers are excellent lines of supply, powerful auxiliaries for the establishment of a good line of operations, but are never this line itself.

It is not with less astonishment that we have seen it affirmed by a grave writer, that, *if a country were to be created to make of it a good theatre of war, it would be necessary to avoid constructing converging routes therein, because they facilitate invasion !* As if a country could exist without a capital, without rich and industrious cities, and as if the routes did not per force converge towards those points where the interests of a whole country are naturally and irresistibly concentrated. Even though a steppe were made of all Germany, in order to reconstruct in it a theatre of war to the liking of the author, commercial cities would rise again, chief towns would be re-established, and all the roads would converge anew towards those vivifying arteries. Besides, did not the Arch-Duke Charles owe to these converging routes the facility with which he beat Jourdan in 1796 ? And, in fact, do not those routes favor the defense as much as the attack, since two masses, falling back on two converging rays, can unite quicker than the two masses which should follow, and thus beat them separately.



Other authors have insisted that mountainous countries are full of strategic points, and the antagonists of this opinion have affirmed that strategical points were, on the contrary, more rare in the Alps than in the plains, but that, on the other hand, if they were less numerous, they were for that reason all the more important and decisive.

Some writers have presented also high mountains as so many Chinese Walls, inaccessible for every thing; whereas, Napoleon, in speaking of the Rhetian Alps, said, "*that an army ought to pass wherever a man could plant his foot.*"

Generals, experienced also in mountain warfare, have acknowledged, in the same manner, the great difficulty of conducting therein a defensive war, except by uniting the advantages of a rising in mass of the populations to those of a regular army, the first for guarding the summits and harassing the enemy, the latter for delivering him battle upon the decisive points at the junction of the great valleys.

In animadverting upon these contradictions, we do not yield to a futile spirit of criticism, but merely to the desire of demonstrating to our readers that, far from having carried the art to its utmost limits, there still exist a multitude of points to discuss:

We shall not undertake to demonstrate here the strategical value of the divers topographical or artificial accidents which compose a theatre of war, for the most important will be examined in the different articles of this chapter, to which they belong; but, it may be said in general, that this value depends much upon the skill of the chiefs, and upon the spirit with which they are animated; the great captain who had crossed the St. Bernard, and ordered the passage of the Splügen, was far from believing in the *impregnability* of those chains, and he little suspected that a miserable, muddy stream, and a walled enclosure were to change his destinies at Waterloo.

## ARTICLE XVIII.

### BASES OF OPERATIONS.

The first point in a plan of operations is to be assured of a good base; this name is applied to the extent of the frontiers of a State from whence

an army will draw its resources and reinforcements; that from whence it will have to depart for an offensive expedition, and where it will find a refuge in time of need; that, in fine, upon which it will have to support itself, if it covers its country defensively. In this last case, the line of the frontiers will become the first line of defense, and the army will then have to provide itself with a base in second line, either in the direction of the centre of the State, or in a direction nearly parallel to the frontier, according to what will be explained in article 38, upon so styled excentric retreats.

Although the base of operations is also ordinarily that of resources, meanwhile, every line by which a part of those resources should come, would not for that be a line of operations, but a line of supply.

Each army may have several successive bases. A French army operating in Germany, has for a first base the Rhine; but if it be withdrawn behind that river, it has a new base upon the Moselle; it may have a third upon Seine, and a fourth upon the Loire.

When an army is repulsed upon its first base, this becomes then a line of defense, especially if it be fortified; in this case, the army must have a new base in second line.

A base, supported upon a large and impetuous river, the banks of which should be held by good fortresses, situated in command of this river, would be, without contradiction, the most favorable that could be desired.

The larger the base, the less easy it is to cover, but the less easy will it be also to cut off the army from it.

A State, the capital or centre of power of which, is too near the first frontier, offers less advantages for basing its defenders, than a State whose capital is more removed.

Every base, to be perfect, should offer two or three places, of a capacity sufficient for establishing thereon magazines, dépôts, &c. It should have at least one intrenched *tête de pont*, upon each of the unfordable rivers found upon it.

Until now, there has generally been sufficient accord upon all the requisites we have just enumerated; but there are other points upon which opinions have been more divided. Several writers have insisted that, to be perfect, a base should be parallel with that of the adversary; whereas, on the contrary, I have uttered the opinion that bases, perpendicular to those of the enemy, are the most advantageous, particularly those which, presenting two faces nearly perpendicular, the one to the other, and forming a reentrant angle, would assure a double base at need,



would control two sides of the strategic field (*échiquier stratégique*), would procure two lines of retreat very distant from each other, and finally, would facilitate every change of the line of operations which the unexpected turn of the chances of war could render necessary.

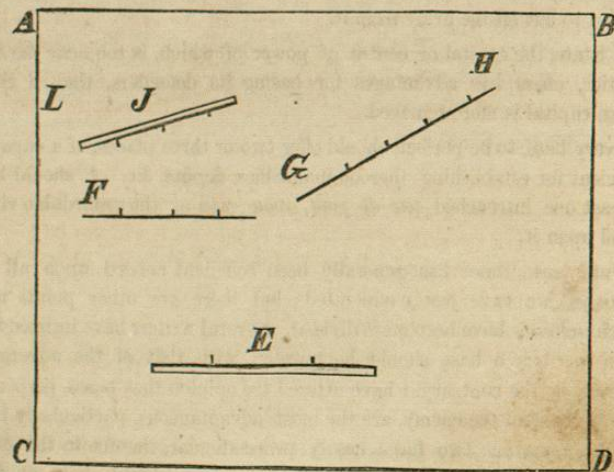
I demonstrated nearly thirty years ago, in my treatise on grand military operations, the influence which the direction of frontiers ought to exercise upon that of the base and of the lines of operations. It is recollected that, in applying those truths to the different theatres of war, I compared the latter to an *échiquier*, bounded on one side or the other by a sea, or by a great neutral power, which would form equally an insurmountable obstacle. See how I expressed myself:

"The general configuration of the theatre of war may have also a great influence upon the direction to be given to lines of operations, (and consequently to the bases.)

"In fact, if the whole theatre of war form a field, or figure, presenting four faces, more or less regular, it may happen that one of the armies, at the commencement of the campaign, occupies a single one of those faces, as it is possible that it may hold two of them, whilst the enemy should occupy but one only, and that the fourth should form an insurmountable obstacle. The manner in which this theatre of war would be embraced, would present then very different combinations in each of those hypotheses.

"In order better to make this comprehended, I will cite the theatre of war of the French armies in Westphalia, from 1757 to 1762, and that of Napoleon in 1806." (See Fig. I.)

FIGURE I.



"In the first of these theatres of war, the side AB was formed by the North Sea, the side BD by the line of the Weser, base of the army of the Duke Ferdinand; the line of the Main formed the side CD, base of the French army, and the face AC was formed by the line of the Rhine, equally guarded by the armies of Louis XV.

"It is seen, then, that the French armies, operating offensively, and holding two faces, had in their favor the North Sea, forming the third side, and that consequently they had only to gain the side BD by manœuvres, in order to be masters of the four faces, that is to say, the base and all the communications of the enemy, as the above figure shows.

"The French army E, departing from the base CD, to gain the front of operations FGH, cut off the allied army J, from the side BD, which formed its base; this latter would then have been thrown back upon the angle L, A, M, formed near Emden, by the lines of the Rhine, the Ems and the North Sea; whilst the French army, E, could always communicate with its bases of the Main and Rhine.

The manœuvre of Napoleon upon the Saale in 1806, was combined absolutely in the same manner; he occupied at Jena and at Naumburg the line FGH, and marched afterwards by Halle and Dessau, in order to throw back the Prussian army J, upon the side AB, formed by the sea. The result is sufficiently well known.

"The great art of directing properly one's lines of operations consists then in combining his marches in such a manner as to seize the hostile communication, without losing his own; it is easily seen that the line FGH, in consequence of its prolonged position, and the crotchet left upon the extremity of the enemy, preserves always one's communications with the base CD; it is the exact application of the manœuvres at Marengo, Ulm, and Jena.

"When the theatre of war shall not be adjacent to the sea, it will always be limited by a great neutral power, which will guard its frontiers and close one of the sides of the square; doubtless it will not be a barrier as insurmountable as the sea; but, in general thesis it can always be considered an obstacle upon which it would be dangerous to fall back after a defeat, and advantageous for the same reason to crowd an enemy upon. The territory of a power which should have a hundred and fifty or two hundred thousand men, is not violated with impunity, and if a beaten army took this course, it would be none the less cut off from its base.

"If it were a small power which limited the theatre of war, it is proba-

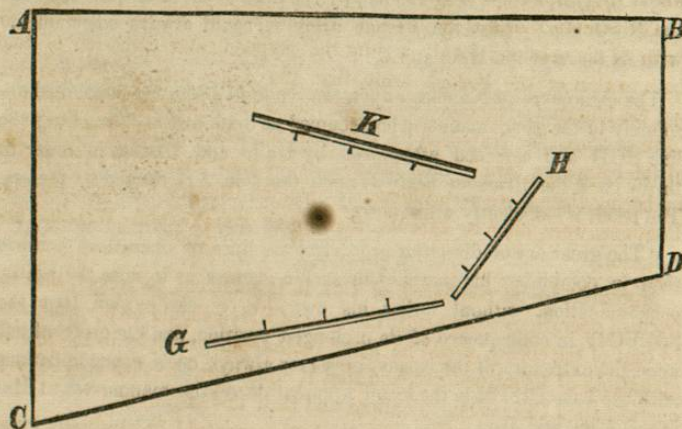


ble that it would soon be united with it, and the face of the square would be found merely a little more retired, to the frontiers of a great power or to a sea.

"To be assured of the correctness of these ideas, it is sufficient to cast an eye over the theatre of the campaign of 1806 and 1807. The Baltic Sea, and the frontiers of Austrian Galicia, formed the two faces AB and CD of the square. I think that it was very important to both the parties, not to allow themselves, to be thrown upon either of those obstacles.

"The configuration of the frontiers will sometimes modify the form of the faces of the square, or, more correctly speaking, the faces of the *échiquier*. It may have the form of a trapezoid, as in the following figure.

FIGURE II.



"In this latter case, the army GH, which should be master of the faces AC and CD, would have still greater advantages, since the base of its adversary narrowing towards BD, the latter would have many more difficulties in regaining his communications; the front of this base offering less development, would present also less resources for manœuvring, and it would give, on the contrary, to the army GH, the means of operating with more success, since the direction of its line CD, would naturally lead it upon the communications of its adversary, and the space which it would have to occupy, in order to cut them off, would be less extended, consequently more easy to take up.

"The theatre of war in Prussia and Poland, of which we have just

spoken, was actually similar to this, for the frontiers of Galicia, prolonged to the Narew, formed, with the line of the Vistula, the contracted side BD. The manner in which Napoleon manœuvred before the battle of Eylau, was absolutely the same as that which is found traced; a fortuitous incident prevented him from obtaining from it all the success which he expected, but his manœuvre was none the less wise for that. Meanwhile, this operation offered also its unfavorable chances, because of political antecedents; the first was founded upon the small confidence which could be accorded to the Austrian neutrality; the second upon the great remoteness of the base of the French army which put its communications with the Elbe at the mercy of the cabinet of Vienna; it depended only upon the latter, from this epoch, to put an end to those immoderate invasions; the manœuvre of the French general might be strategically good, whilst the operations of the statesman was nothing else than audacious."

The base in Bohemia in 1813, proves, as well as all that precedes, in favor of my opinion; for it was by the perpendicular direction of that base to that of the French army, that the Allies succeeded in paralyzing the immense advantages which the line of the Elbe would, but for that, have procured for Napoleon; a circumstance which made all the chances of the campaign turn in their favor. In the same manner, in 1812, it was, by basing themselves perpendicularly upon the Oka and Kalouga, that the Russians were able to execute their flank march upon Wiazma and Krasnoi.

Moreover, to be convinced of this, it is sufficient to reflect, that the front of operations of an army, the base of which should be perpendicular to that of the enemy, would be found established parallelly to the line of operations of its adversaries, and that it would thus become very easy to operate upon their communications and their line of retreat.

I have already said that perpendicular bases would be especially favorable when they should present a double frontier, as will be seen in the above-mentioned figures; now, the critics will not fail to object that this does not accord with what I have said in favor of frontiers salient to the side of the enemy, and against double lines of operations with an equality of forces.

The objection would be more specious than just, for the greatest advantage of a perpendicular base results precisely in that it forms a salient which takes in reverse a part of the theatre of operations. Again, the possession of a base with two faces by no means implies the necessity of occupying both in force; it suffices on the contrary, to have upon one of them, a few fortified points, with a small corps of observation, whilst the



weight of one's forces would be carried on the other face, as had place in the campaigns of 1800 and 1806. The nearly right angle, formed by the Rhine, from Constance to Basle, and from thence to Kehl, offered to Gen. Moreau one base parallel, and another perpendicular to that of his antagonist. He pushed two divisions by his left upon the first of those bases, towards Kehl, in order to draw the attention of the enemy in that direction, whilst he filed with nine divisions upon the extremity of the perpendicular face to the side of Schaffhausen, which brought him, in a few marches, to the gates of Augsburg, after the two detached divisions had already rejoined him.

Napoleon, in 1806, had also the double base of the Main and the Rhine; forming almost a right reentrant angle; he contented himself with leaving Mortier upon the parallel face, that is to say, upon that of the Rhine, whilst that with all the mass of his forces, he gained the extremity of the perpendicular face, and thus anticipated the Prussians at Gera and at Naumburg, on their line of retreat.

Here are, I trust, sufficient proofs to demonstrate the necessity of suspecting somewhat, that strategy, which is treated too geometrically, and to convince one that if this science has made great progress, it can still be improved by modifying the *geometrical systems*, by those founded upon the principles and the experience of war, which counsel a slight deviation from the first.

Another not less important question, as to the best direction to be given to bases of operations, is that which has respect to bases established upon the sea shore, and which has also given rise to grave errors; for, as favorable as they are for some, equally formidable would they be for others, as may be seen from all that precedes. After having pointed out the danger there would be for a continental army to be thrown back upon the sea, it should appear astonishing that any one could have vaunted the advantages of bases established upon its shores, and that they could suit any but an insular army. In fact, Wellington, coming with his fleet to the succor of Portugal and of Spain, could adopt no better base than that of Lisbon, or, more properly speaking, the *presqu'île* of Torres-Vedras, which covers the only avenues to that capital on the land side. Here the banks of the Tagus, and those of the sea, covered not only his two flanks, but they yet assured his line of retreat, which could have place only upon his vessels.

Seduced by the advantages which this famous intrenched camp of Torres-Vedras had procured the English general, and only judging from effects, without going back to causes, many generals, very learned in other

respects, would no longer acknowledge as good bases, any but those which, situated on the sea shore, would procure the army easy supplies, and places of refuge, with flanks secure from insult. This blindness was pushed to such a degree, that General Pfuhl sustained, in 1812, that the natural base of the Russians was at Riga, a strategical blasphemy, which was also uttered in my presence, by one of the most renowned of the French generals.

Fascinated by similar ideas, Colonel Carion-Nizas, dared even to publish, that in 1813, Napoleon ought to have placed half of his army in Bohemia, and to have thrown a hundred and fifty thousand men *at the mouths of the Elbe*, near Hamburg! Forgetting that the first rule of all bases of a continental army, is that they rest upon the front the most opposite to the sea; that is to say, upon that which would place the army at the centre of all the elements of its military power, and if its population, from which it would be found separated and cut off, if it committed the grave fault of resting upon the sea.

An insular power, acting upon the continent, ought naturally to make the diametrically opposite calculation, to the end, nevertheless, of applying the same axiom, which prescribes to each, *to seek his base upon the points where he can be sustained by all his means of war, and find, at the same time, a certain refuge.*

A power, strong both upon sea and land, and whose numerous squadrons command a sea adjacent to the theatre of operations, might, indeed, be able still to base a small army of forty or fifty thousand men upon its shore, by assuring it a well protected refuge, and supplies of every kind; but to give such a base to continental masses of a hundred and fifty thousand men, engaged with forces disciplined and nearly equal in numbers, would ever be an act of folly.

Meanwhile, as every maxim has its exceptions, there is a case in which it might be proper to deviate from what we have just said, and to carry ones operations to the sea side; it is when we should have to do with an adversary little to be dreaded in the field, and when being decided masters of that sea, we could supply ourselves easily from that quarter, whilst it would be difficult to do so in the interior of the country. Although it is very rare to see those three conditions united, it was, nevertheless, what happened in the war with Turkey, in 1828 and 1829. All attention was fixed upon Warna and Bourgas, merely observing Shoomla, a system which would not have been maintained in front of an European army, even though the sea had been held, without exposure to a probable ruin.

Notwithstanding all that has been said by the idlers who decide upon





the fate of empires, this war was well conducted, saving a few faults; the army took care to cover itself by making sure of the fortresses of Brailof, Warna and Silistria, then by preparing itself a *depôt* at Szipoli. As soon as it was sufficiently based, it pushed directly upon Adrianople, which previously would have been a folly. If it had not come from so far in 1828, or had had two months more of good weather, all would have been terminated in this first campaign.

Besides the permanent bases, which are ordinarily found established on one's own frontiers, or at least in the country of an ally that can be counted upon, there are also eventual or temporary ones, which depend upon operations undertaken in a hostile country; but as these are rather transient points of support we shall say a few words of them in a special article, to the end of avoiding the confusion which might result from a similitude of denomination. (See article 23.)

## ARTICLE XIX.

### STRATEGICAL POINTS AND LINES, DECISIVE POINTS OF A THEATRE OF WAR, AND OBJECTIVES OF OPERATIONS.

There are strategic points and lines of divers natures. Some receive this name from the fact alone of their situation, from which results all their importance on the field of operations; they are then permanent geographical strategic points. Others acquire their value from the relations which they have with the position of the hostile forces, and with the enterprises which it should be designed to form against them; these, then, are *strategic points of manœuvre*, and altogether eventual. Finally, there are strategic points and lines which have but a secondary importance, and others the importance of which is at once immense and incessant; these last I have named *decisive strategic points*.

I am about to endeavor to explain those relations as clearly as I myself conceive them, which is not always so easy as is believed in such matters.

Every point of the theatre of war which should have a military importance, either from its situation at the centre of communications, or from military establishments and fortified works of whatever description, which would have an influence over the strategic field, will be, in reality, a territorial or geographical strategic point.

An illustrious general affirms, on the contrary, that every point which might unite the above-mentioned conditions, would not be for that a strategic point, if it were not found in a suitable direction relatively to the operation which should be had in view. I shall be pardoned for declaring a different opinion, for a strategical point is always such from its nature, and that one even which should be the farthest removed from the theatre of first enterprises, could be drawn into it by the unexpected turn of events, and thus acquire all the importance of which it would be susceptible. It had been more exact then, in my opinion, to say that all strategic points were not decisive points.

Strategic lines are equally either geographical or relative only to temporary manœuvres; the first may be subdivided into two classes, namely, the geographical lines which from their permanent importance, belong to the decisive points of the theatre of war,\* and those which have value only because they connect two strategical points together.

For fear of confounding these different subjects, we shall treat separately of the strategic lines which relate to a combined manœuvre, in order to limit ourselves here to what concerns *the decisive and objective points* of the zone of operations upon which the enterprises will be directed.

Although there exist intimate relations between these two kinds of points, seeing that every objective must necessarily be one of the decisive points of the theatre of war, there is, meanwhile, a distinction to be made, for all decisive points could not be at the same time the objective aim of operations. Let us occupy ourselves, then, in the first place, in defining the former, which will conduct more easily to the good choice of the second.

I think the name *decisive strategic point*, may be given to all those

\* I shall be reproached yet, perhaps, for a barbarism, because I give the name *decisive* or *objective point* to lines, and that a point could not be a line. It is useless to observe to my readers, that objective points are not geometrical points, but a grammatical formula, expressing the object which an army proposes to itself. And if the word *decisive* be objected to, seeing that a point by itself is rarely decisive, the word *important*, may be substituted for it, although it does not express so strongly the idea which I attach to it.