

**MORE ON WAR - Martin Van Creveld – Oxford University**

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“You may not be interested in war, but war may be interested in you,” says Leon Trotsky. The survival of anything alive depends ultimately on war, i.e. the ability to wage war in justifiable self-defence. Ergo, any state is obliged to be prepared for it throughout the world. War is one of the most striking phenomena in the world, nonetheless there has not been a contribution to the literature which makes sense of war the way the classics, namely Sun Tzu’s *The Art of War* and *On War* of Carl von Clausewitz, do for decades. *More on War* is an attempt to fill this gap and serve as a modern-day, thorough and eloquent book. It is, indeed, an attempt to provide a theory of war for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Martin van Creveld, Prof. Emeritus at the Hebrew University, Jerusalem, is one of the world’s best-known experts on military history and strategy.

Born in the Netherlands, educated in Israel and the United Kingdom, van Creveld is the author of twenty-five books. Most are about military history and strategy; but he has also written on political

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history, women's history, American history, Israeli history, the history of conscience, and the history of equality. Between them, these works have now been published in twenty different languages.

Prof. van Creveld has taught or lectured in virtually every important institute of higher strategic learning, both military and civilian, in the world. He is the author of several hundred newspaper- and magazine articles and has appeared on radio and television programs in many countries.

The table of content does not reveal enough information on the structuration of the book to make sense of the framework that the author built. The first two chapter, omitting Introduction, offers an account of topics with an implicit connection to 'war' while the remainder of the chapters, excluding Conclusion, accounts for the subjects explicitly related to 'war' itself. Indeed, these chapters in question take into account how to conduct war. However, reading introduction of the book sheds a light on the reasoning behind the way the table of content is built.

So many theorists of war are forgotten due to (1) "no two armed conflicts are ever the same" and (2) "war itself, forming an integral part of human history, is forever changing and will continue to

change.” The former statement caused many theorists to engage in a vain quest for “principles” or “maxims.” The latter chained them to their particular times and spaces.

There are two exceptions who are Sun Tzu and Clausewitz. Yet, they are not flawless too. The author’s criticisms of the seminal works of both military thinkers, who are also generals, are the backbone of the bulk of the book. The author emphasises the deficiencies of “The Art of War” and “On War” regarding their relevance to contemporary warfare and builds the book roughly on these criticisms. First, neither one of them had an answer to the causes of war or the purposes for which it is fought. Second, neither Sun Tzu nor Clausewitz offers an account of the relationship between economics and war. Third, both military thinkers reveal the perspective of senior commanders. Fourth, both Sun Tzu and Clausewitz may not ignore but certainly overlook the implements of war, i.e. military technology. Fifth, neither Sun Tzu nor Clausewitz takes thoroughly into account staff work, logistics, and intelligence. Sixth, both Sun Tzu and Clausewitz emphasize the most important characteristic of strategy: namely, its mutual, interactive nature and the way that nature determines its conduct. However, they do not elaborate comprehensively upon it. Seventh, neither is

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interested in war at sea, neither China nor Prussia were maritime powers back then. Eighth, neither Sun Tzu nor Clausewitz addresses air war (including its maritime branch). Ninth, neither author addresses what, since 1945, has become by far the most important form of “war”—nuclear war. Tenth, neither has much to say about the law of war. Eleventh, neither is much interested in war between asymmetric belligerents. The final reason is that many young people find both authors hard to understand. *More on War* strives for filling the gaps. It expands on themes which, for one reason or another, they neglected or left untouched.

The primary query Van Creveld’s book asks is that how relevant is the classics to wars in contemporary world. Van Creveld posits that the well-known protagonists of war studies, especially Clausewitz, are not understood well. He offers a new theory of war with special emphasis on topics which are not comprehensively mentioned before in any classical books, e.g. the relation between economics and war. He also asserts that there is an intellectual crisis in the war and military studies which should be addressed. Indeed, the book is a timely contribution in this regard thanks to its wide-ranging content. Besides, the author takes advantage of not only political science and history but also

international law too, which provides him a cohesive coverage over war-related issues. Moreover, he regards the soaring military technology expenditures as a crippling burden over states. He does remember to mention the devastating effects of wars on developing countries and the perspective of the participants of war, low-level officers and soldiers, together with the viewpoint of the managers of war, senior officers and politicians. Furthermore, he focuses on war strategies. He makes use of technology, economics, culture, geography and so on. He sheds a light on why defence is not the choice over attack, how to break enemy's will and examines a number of strategies by looking into multiple past examples. He believes that the most important element in winning war is to know your enemy before anything else. Concerning maritime warfare, he again underlines the prominence of technology together with preserving maritime communications. By examining cyber war, air war and war at outer space, he touches to a relatively neglected field. He presumes that air power will get less pertinent in time whereas cyber war, which is already being resorted to aggressively, and war at space, by drawing attention to satellites, become crucial. More importantly, he draws attention to "the absolute weapon", i.e. nuclear warfare. He explains,

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in this chapter, why nuclear weapons matter and why “without nuclear weapons, there is no nuclear strategy.” Van Creveld takes into account *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello* too. He makes a strong case by accusing International Court of Justice in Hague with having a vague influence over the states whereas acknowledging the fact that the institution has to stay active one way or another. The chapter delving into asymmetric warfare, first, makes a definition of it. Then, the author takes into account the wars of weak against strong. He posits that the asymmetric warfare has become so ubiquitous, at the end, it surrounded political sphere.

More on War is a state-of-the-art and comprehensive contribution to the literature, because it is almost unique and serves as a pioneer in the context of war. It is a modern-day attempt to replace Sun Tzu’s *Art of War* and *On War* of Clausewitz. The book’s chapters range from guerrilla warfare to nuclear war, cyber wars to war in outer space, combined with topics relevant to war such as economics, strategy and law of war. It is a must-read for anyone who is interested in the past and present of warfare and military strategy. However, the book involves too many historical events, facts and lessons to elaborate on, which may immerse readers too deep in the past and, therefore, render

the book hard-to-read. Besides, the book strives for covering an immense area which has a number of sub-branches. The author may be missing, at least, a few vital minor issues in order to make sense of wider picture. Moreover, the wide-ranging content of the book may confuse the readers' minds and may make them to miss the argument of Van Creveld. The protagonists of this field should scrutinise the book in this context.