

Carl von Clausewitz

Quotes

*War, Military, Men, Mean, Enemy, Art, Simple, Powerful, Mind, Giving, Peace,
Fog, Campaigns, Firsts, Principles, Character, Courage, May, Inspirational,
Exercise*

The enemy of a good plan is the dream of a perfect plan.

~Carl von Clausewitz

War is not an independent phenomenon, but the continuation of politics by different means.

~Carl von Clausewitz

No one starts a war--or rather, no one in his sense ought to do so--without first being clear in his mind what he intends to achieve by the war and how he intends to conduct it.

~Carl von Clausewitz

To secure peace is to prepare for war.

~Carl von Clausewitz

Tactics is the art of using troops in battle; strategy is the art of using battles to win the war

~Carl von Clausewitz

To achieve victory we must mass our forces at the hub of all power & movement. The enemy's 'Center of Gravity'

~Carl von Clausewitz

Pursue one great decisive aim with force and determination.

~Carl von Clausewitz

It is even better to act quickly and err than to hesitate until the time of action is past.

~Carl von Clausewitz

Be audacious and cunning in your plans, firm and persevering in their execution, determined to find a glorious end.

~Carl von Clausewitz

Criticism exists only to recognize the truth, not to act as judge.

~Carl von Clausewitz

The first, the supreme, the most far-reaching act of judgment that the statesman and commander have to make is to establish ... the kind of war on which they are embarking.

~Carl von Clausewitz

Knowledge must become capability.

~Carl von Clausewitz

Self-reliance is the best defence against the pressures of the moment.

~Carl von Clausewitz

War is an act of force, and to the application of that force there is no limit. Each of the adversaries forces the hand of the other, and a reciprocal action results which in theory can have no limit.

~Carl von Clausewitz

Knowing is different from doing and therefore theory must never be used as norms for a standard, but merely as aids to judgment.

~Carl von Clausewitz

War is the realm of uncertainty; three quarters of the factors on which action is based are wrapped in a fog of greater or lesser uncertainty.

~Carl von Clausewitz

Courage, above all things, is the first quality of a warrior.

~Carl von Clausewitz

If the leader is filled with high ambition and if he pursues his aims with audacity and strength of will, he will reach them in spite of all obstacles.

~Carl von Clausewitz

If you entrench yourself behind strong fortifications, you compel the enemy seek a solution elsewhere.

~Carl von Clausewitz

Principles and rules are intended to provide a thinking man with a frame of reference.

~Carl von Clausewitz

Four elements make up the climate of war: danger, exertion, uncertainty and chance.

~Carl von Clausewitz

The best form of defense is attack.

~Carl von Clausewitz

Given the same amount of intelligence, timidity will do a thousand times more damage than audacity

~Carl von Clausewitz

Although our intellect always longs for clarity and certainty, our nature often finds uncertainty fascinating.

~Carl von Clausewitz

The backbone of surprise is fusing speed with secrecy.

~Carl von Clausewitz

With uncertainty in one scale, courage and self-confidence should be thrown into the other to correct the balance. The greater they are, the greater the margin that can be left for accidents.

~Carl von Clausewitz

The best strategy is always to be very strong.

~Carl von Clausewitz

Never forget that no military leader has ever become great without audacity.

~Carl von Clausewitz

There are very few men-and they are the exceptions-who are able to think and feel beyond the present moment

~Carl von Clausewitz

War is...a trinity of violence, chance, and reason.

~Carl von Clausewitz

Every age has its own kind of war, its own limiting conditions and its own peculiar preconceptions.

~Carl von Clausewitz

Savage peoples are ruled by passion, civilized peoples by the mind.

~Carl von Clausewitz

The Conqueror is always a lover of peace: he would prefer to take over our country unopposed.

~Carl von Clausewitz

Politics is the womb in which war develops.

~Carl von Clausewitz

There is nothing more common than to find considerations of supply affecting the strategic lines of a campaign and a war.

~Carl von Clausewitz

Where absolute superiority is not attainable, you must produce a relative one at the decisive point by making skillful use of what you have.

~Carl von Clausewitz

Der Krieg ist nichts als eine Fortsetzung des politischen Verkehrs mit Einmischung anderer Mittel. War is merely the continuation of policy with the admixture of other means.

~Carl von Clausewitz

By 'intelligence' we mean every sort of information about the enemy and his country - the basis, in short, of our own plans and operations.

~Carl von Clausewitz

Blood is the price of victory

~Carl von Clausewitz

Everything in war is very simple, but the simplest thing is difficult.

~Carl von Clausewitz

The more a leader is in the habit of demanding from his men, the surer he will be that his demands will be answered.

~Carl von Clausewitz

To be practical, any plan must take account of the enemy's power to frustrate it.

~Carl von Clausewitz

Close combat, man to man, is plainly to be regarded as the real basis of combat.

~Carl von Clausewitz

War is nothing but a duel on a larger scale.

~Carl von Clausewitz

All action takes place, so to speak, in a kind of twilight, which like a fog or moonlight, often tends to make things seem grotesque and larger than they really are.

~Carl von Clausewitz

The bloody solution of the crisis, the effort for the destruction of the enemy's forces, is the first-born son of war.

~Carl von Clausewitz

Great things alone can make a great mind, and petty things will make a petty mind unless a man rejects them as completely alien.

~Carl von Clausewitz

Strength of character does not consist solely in having powerful feelings, but in maintaining one's balance in spite of them.

~Carl von Clausewitz

Only great and general battles can produce great results

~Carl von Clausewitz

A conqueror is always a lover of peace.

~Carl von Clausewitz

War is the province of chance. In no sphere of human activity is such a margin to be left for this intruder. It increases the uncertainty of every circumstance, and deranges the course of events.

~Carl von Clausewitz

...as man under pressure tends to give in to physical and intellectual weakness, only great strength of will can lead to the objective.

~Carl von Clausewitz

[...] to introduce into the philosophy of war itself a principle of moderation would be an absurdity

~Carl von Clausewitz

War is not merely a political act but a real political instrument, a continuation of political intercourse, a carrying out of the same by other means.

~Carl von Clausewitz

War therefore is an act of violence to compel our opponent to fulfill our will.

~Carl von Clausewitz

Many intelligence reports in war are contradictory; even more are false, and most are uncertain.

~Carl von Clausewitz

Whoever does great things with small means has successfully reached the goal.

~Carl von Clausewitz

Every combat is the bloody and destructive measuring of the strength of forces, physical and moral; whoever at the close has the greatest amount of both left is the conqueror.

~Carl von Clausewitz

War is regarded as nothing but the continuation of state policy with other means.

~Carl von Clausewitz

In war everything is simple, but it's the simple things that are difficult.

~Carl von Clausewitz

War is not an exercise of the will directed at an inanimate matter.

~Carl von Clausewitz

War is the domain of physical exertion and suffering.

~Carl von Clausewitz

Only the element of chance is needed to make war a gamble, and that element is never absent.

~Carl von Clausewitz

There are times when the utmost daring is the height of wisdom.

~Carl von Clausewitz

War is nothing but a continuation of politics with the admixture of other means.

~Carl von Clausewitz

No other human activity is so continuously or universally bound up with chance. And through the element of chance, guesswork and luck come to play a great part in war.

~Carl von Clausewitz

War is an act of violence pushed to its utmost bounds.

~Carl von Clausewitz

In war more than anywhere else, things do not turn out as we expect.

~Carl von Clausewitz

The very nature of interactions is bound to make it unpredictable.

~Carl von Clausewitz

There is only one decisive victory: the last.

~Carl von Clausewitz

Talent and genius operate outside the rules, and theory conflicts with practice.

~Carl von Clausewitz

Blind aggressiveness would destroy the attack itself, not the defense.

~Carl von Clausewitz

Men are always more inclined to pitch their estimate of the enemy's

strength too high than too low, such is human nature.

~Carl von Clausewitz

War is merely a continuation of politics.

~Carl von Clausewitz

The more a general is accustomed to place heavy demands on his soldiers, the more he can depend on their response.

~Carl von Clausewitz

No campaign plan survives first contact with the enemy

~Carl von Clausewitz

There are cases in which the greatest daring is the greatest wisdom.

~Carl von Clausewitz

Boldness governed by superior intellect is the mark of a hero.

~Carl von Clausewitz

We shall not enter into any of the abstruse definitions of war used by publicists. We shall keep to the element of the thing itself, to a duel. War is nothing but a duel on an extensive scale.

~Carl von Clausewitz

Knowledge in war is very simple, being concerned with so few subjects, and only with their final results at that. But this does not make its application easy.

~Carl von Clausewitz

Just as some plants bear fruit only if they don't shoot up too high, so in practical arts the leaves and flowers of theory must be pruned and the plant kept close to its proper soil- experience.

~Carl von Clausewitz

Everything in strategy is very simple, but that does not mean everything is very easy.

~Carl von Clausewitz

The art of war in its highest point of view is policy.

~Carl von Clausewitz

Boldness becomes rarer, the higher the rank.

~Carl von Clausewitz

War is politics by other means.

~Carl von Clausewitz

Modern wars are seldom fought without hatred between nations; this serves more or less as a substitute for hatred between individuals.

~Carl von Clausewitz

The heart of France lies between Brussels and Paris.

~Carl von Clausewitz

Battles decide everything.

~Carl von Clausewitz

If we read history with an open mind, we cannot fail to conclude that, among all the military virtues, the energetic conduct of war has always contributed most to glory and success.

~Carl von Clausewitz

Politics is the womb in which war develops - where its outlines already exist in their hidden rudimentary form, like the characteristics of living creatures in their embryos.

~Carl von Clausewitz

The difficulty of accurate recognition constitutes one of the most serious

sources of friction in war, by making things appear entirely different from what one had expected.

~Carl von Clausewitz

War is only caused through the political intercourse of governments and nations - war is nothing but a continuation of political intercourse with an admixture of other means.

~Carl von Clausewitz

What we should admire is the acute fulfillment of the unspoken assumptions, the smooth harmony of the whole activity, which only become evident in the final success.

~Carl von Clausewitz

In the whole range of human activities, war most closely resembles a game of cards.

~Carl von Clausewitz

Beauty cannot be defined by abscissas and ordinates; neither are circles and ellipses created by their geometrical formulas.

~Carl von Clausewitz

All war presupposes human weakness and seeks to exploit it.

~Carl von Clausewitz

Friction is the only concept that more or less corresponds to the factors that distinguish real war from war on paper.

~Carl von Clausewitz

War is a conflict of great interests which is settled by bloodshed, and only in that is it different from others.

~Carl von Clausewitz

A certain grasp of military affairs is vital for those in charge of general

policy.

~Carl von Clausewitz

A prince or general can best demonstrate his genius by managing a campaign exactly to suit his objectives and his resources, doing neither too much nor too little.

~Carl von Clausewitz

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