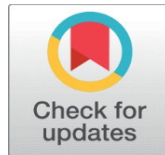
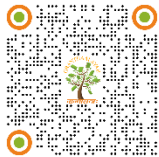


UKRAINE, RESETTING OUR MILITARY MIND-SET

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Received 11 May 2025
Accepted 15 June 2025
Published 31 July 2025

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DOI
[10.29121/granthaalayah.v13.i7.2025.6267](https://doi.org/10.29121/granthaalayah.v13.i7.2025.6267)

Funding: This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

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ABSTRACT

The present deadlock in the Ukraine-Russian War demands some hard thinking, reflection on our military mind-set. When more, more-more-more; more weapons, more money, more sanctions are failing to deliver, a mental turning around can open new perspectives. Here we can build forth on what thinkers through the ages have understood about the War God 'Mars'. However, let us not forget Minerva, the Goddess who combined wisdom with war That is what the philosopher has to offer: Wisdom in War. In this article I concentrate on Sun Tzu, a Chinese philosopher from 500 BC whose sayings are still very relevant.

"If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles. If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle."

A second philosopher is the German Carl von Clausewitz with his focus on continuation of communication during a war.

Do not expect from this article the repetition of well-known facts, nor the revealing of 'secrets' known only by the powers that be. The philosopher looks through the day-to-day news, to find principles that have characterized war through the ages. Philosophical ideas, that run counter to contemporary opinion but can offer a practical way out of the deadlock.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Thinker Looking down through the gates of hell

Figure 1

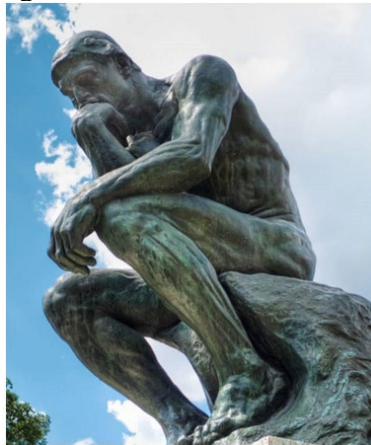


Figure 1 Rodin 1880, Several Locations

Far from any ongoing war sits the philosopher. He is not involved. He studies the battles, as the Latin saying goes: “Sine ira et studio,”- without anger or passion. He browses through the day-to-day news, to find structures which have characterized wars for ages. He sees through political statements of actors taking the frontstage. He peeps round to have look behind the scenes. Backstage is where the actors take off their make-belief masks.

The philosopher is not interested in what the Greeks called ‘doxa’ = opinion, but searches for ‘aletheia’ = truth, wisdom.

The reader cannot expect from me a repetition of well-known facts or the revealing of unknown secrets. The philosopher browses through the day-to-day news, often lowering his head in despair. He sees through political statements of actors taking the frontstage. He peeps round to have look behind the scenes. Backstage is where the actors take off their make-belief masks.

I study the works of thinkers from ages past. The Chinese sage Sun Tzu , 500 BC and the German Carl von Clausewitz

These sages studied Mars, the Roman God of War but were especially interested in Minerva, the Goddess who combined Wisdom with War.

Figure 2



Figure 2 Mars God of War

Figure 3



Figure 3 Minerva Goddess of Wisdom and War

That is what I as a philosopher am searching: wisdom in war.

In this article I reflect on OUR military mind-set. I must specify that word 'OUR'. I am a citizen of Netherland, a country that has been free from war for 80 years. Mark Rutte, the present NATO secretary general, is my countryman. He lives in a nearby town, the Hague. However, our positions are very different. I am what the Germans call 'Freischwebende Intelligenz'. A luxury position from which I can freely reflect upon what is, in the final analysis, OUR military mind-set.

2. FIGHTING HITLER'S GHOST

It is a well-known saying that military generals are preparing for the last war. So are political leaders. Seen from a philosophical distance, Ukraine war seems to be a Ghost war. On the Western side there is the fear, that if Ukraine is lost, it is the same as the loss of Sudetenland at the beginning of World War II. Then again Hitler/Putin will again Blitzkrieg all over Europe. On the Russian side, the anxiety is that again, after Napoleon and indeed Hitler, Russia will again be occupied. That explains the importance of Kursk. In 1943 the Wehrmacht attacked Kursk, with the aid of Ukrainian collaborators. The then Soviets were able to withstand them. The battle of Kursk, a year before D-Day. is considered to be the turning point in de Second World War, so one could say that both sides are not so much fighting each other as defending themselves against the ghost of Hitler.

The West is ambivalent, hung between, stop Putin whatever it takes, and Peace for our Time, whatever it takes. NATO does not want to get directly involved in this war, in order to avoid triggering a Third World War, which could easily become nuclear. Neither does Putin, for the same reasons want to get involved in a war with NATO. In this respect both sides hope for Peace for our Time. On the other hand the West seriously wants to help Ukraine with money and weapons, so as to prevent Russia from Blitz-Krieging all over the West. Whilst avoiding the red line dictated by the Nuclear Age. Russia wants seriously to secure its defensive position, to protect itself from another Blitz assault, without becoming involved with NATO and thus triggering a nuclear war. My advice would be. Sit around the same table, with posters of Hitler on the wall and treat each other to a vodka, whiskey or indeed Jenever. Mark!

3. DEFINING TODAY'S ENEMY

For Sun Tzu a philosopher knowledge is essential. But it is not the knowledge of weapons systems, or of tactics. It is the saying coined by Socrates. "Know thyself"

Sun Tzu says:

- "If you know the enemy and know yourself you need not fear the result of a hundred battles.
- If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained you will also suffer a defeat.
- If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle."

As the saying goes: "Generals - and Statesmen -, are preparing for the last war. In Ukraine, both sides seem to be fighting the same enemy from the past: the Ghost of Hitler.

The West is reminded of Sudetenland, occupied by Hitler in 1938, and accepted by the UK in the Munich agreement. "Peace for our time." was the declaration made by the British Prime Minister Chamberlain. In less than a year Hitler occupied Poland and subsequently large parts of the continent.

The recent Ukrainian offensive against Kursk reminds Russians of the offensive in 1943 by the Wehrmacht with the cooperation of Ukraine. soldiers. After furious fighting, the Kursk Battle was won by the Soviets. It is considered to be the turning point in World War II.

D-Day came only a year later.

However, that History, that fickle character never repeats itself, today there is a new and totally different challenge The major enemy might not be Putin or, from his perspective, Zelenski + NATO. The most destructive enemy today and especially tomorrow is climate. Extremes of torrential rain, extreme heat, drought and fires are common enemies of the present antagonists.

Offering the Patriot to Ukraine is a costly symbolic and morale boosting rather than a However morale boosting the speeches made up front might be, the piecemeal delivery of weapons and ammunitions and above all money, backstage the Western position is again Peace for our Time. Rightly so, for in this nuclear age a direct confrontation with Russia, the greatest nuclear, must be avoided, whatever it takes.

4. PEACE FOR OUR TIME AND THE PATRIOT

That explains the importance of Patriots as a symbolic gesture. These high tech, complicated and expensive weapon systems are a way to help Ukraine, without sacrificing Western Lives. A symbolic rather than a practical measure. The Patriot was developed some 50 years ago to protect the West against costly ballistic missiles, cruise missiles and advance aircraft. For the defence against these expensive systems, it is reasonable to use the Patriot system which fires costly munition. Absorb finances needed elsewhere. The Patriot is not cost effective against the many, much cheap Russian drones. The expectations of the Patriot are high, but it offers object rather than area protection. This complicated weapon system requires a substantial number of personnel (90?) trained for a period of up to one year. What is more, Russian drones can be designed to fly under the Patriot

radar. Offering Patriots to Ukraine serves a symbolic, morale boosting, rather than a practical purpose.

Popular myth sometimes blames everything on the military, who supposedly want to keep the war going. However, the military often have a rich and long experience of war and have of the human sacrifices. It is essential that political leaders listen to them. It is not certain if Zelensky does. He is seen dismissing and relocating senior military and ministers, ie a rather big reshuffle of government. If and what the underlying difference of opinion were s not clear. Was it the warning not to invade Kursk, costing many live without any strategic or economic advantage, historically highly sensitive for Russia. Or a warning against deep strike into Russian territory. Especially the bombing part of Russia's Nuclear Triad, an essential part of the Nuclear Deterrence, which has been worked well for some 70 years. This operation was planned and prepared for one and a half years, in which time there was no consultation with NATO allies, or even with the Ukrainian military leaders as for negotiations, there might be a sense among the military or Ukrainian People that trading the Crimea and other occupied territories for Peace would be acceptable, if not desirable.

There is no way of finding out if the above debates are actually taking place and how strong their support is.

Since 22nd February 2022, Martial Law in Ukraine is prohibits free press, all TV stations were merged into one. There are no elections. 11 political parties are prohibited. Only after 3 years of war are people again demonstrating, in the past a typical Ukrainian characteristic of Ukrainian political culture. Therefore, the simple philosopher cannot gain insight into the military and political discourse inside the Ukrainian elite. Nor does he have a clear picture of what the People want as long as Martial Law is in place. What the philosopher does pick up is rather hap snap.

Similarly, what happens backstage at NATO the philosopher can only guess. Was it a shock that Ukraine had destroyed Russia's nuclear bombers. Because there is an implicit agreement between the nuclear superpowers, to leave each other's Nuclear Triad intact, as the essence of mutual nuclear deterrence? Unbelievable that a country that wants to join NATO – an organisation based on consensus, should be working on the preparation of such an operation for one and a half years and not consult even the leading actors in NATO.

So, there is a lot to guess for the outsider, the philosopher. It seems obvious however that there is no clear strategy for peace, either in Ukraine, or NATO. It is business as usual, more weapons, more Patriots, more drones, more money for defence. Wading deeper and deeper into the muddy marsh.

Perhaps military philosophy can offer a perspective on of reaching peace, through consensus between the enemies. Rather than by forcing the enemy on his knees, by attrition, more weapons, patriots, drones, sanctions, and continuing the blaming game. And of course, more young deaths. Now after three and a half years the current military mind-set has clearly failed, it might be time for

5. RESETTING OUR MILITARY MIND-SET

victory or defeat, what's in a name?

A philosopher will delve into the meaning of words tossed around rather easily by actors on the stage and parroting journalists. Obvious examples are 'victory' and 'defeat'. On chess board it is obvious, the options are black and white, it is either the one or the other. Chess is a zero-sum game; the winner takes all. His victory is my defeat, and vice versa.

In real life it is not so clear. There are shades of grey, - there is more or less. Real life is not a Zero-Sum game as is chess. Both sides can win, but more seriously, both sides can lose.

Similarly, the term 'capitulation' is blown up into an all or none concept. My country the Netherlands capitulated twice in the 20th century. Once to Germany, and a short time later to Japan. Capitulation meant the transfer of all authority over the whole country the victorious enemy. No party in the Ukraine war is suggesting anything like this. In the worst-case Ukraine will accept that Russia has the authority over some 20% of the country, The Crim and other already occupied parts. Only if and when Russia occupies the other 80% would 'capitulation' become relevant word.

6. DEFINING AND KNOWING THE ENEMY

The ancient Chinese military philosopher Sun Tzu gives this advice:

"Know your enemy."

This refers not only to technical knowledge of his position, armaments, number of troops etc. It implies the right definition of your enemy. And then the obligation to listen to the enemy, to seriously try to understand his motives. This is emphatic, rather than technical knowledge.

Defining today's enemy is the first priority. The major enemy might not be Putin or, from his perspective, Zelenski + NATO. The most destructive enemy today and especially tomorrow, is climate with its unpredictable world-wide destructive extremes. Again, the approach now taken by the powers is appeasement, climate 'Peace in our Time'. This reminds one of the pré-war Denial of Hitler's rearmament.

7. KNOWING ONESELF ΓΝΩΘΙ ΣΕΑΥΤΟΝ - GNOTHI SEAUTON

This famous saying of the Greek philosopher Socrates, is important in life in general. It is essential in war, which is after all a question of life and death.

Knowing oneself is even more difficult than knowing the enemy. It can be painful to confront one's own deficiencies and mistakes. Even more painful is reflecting on one's own history.

In Western Europe that painful process has been going on for years, to resurge around the celebration of 80 years Liberation. Germany has admirably taken the lead in their "Vergangenheits Bewältigung". Netherlands, itself victim of the Nazi Regime, and Japan, has recently investigated the war crimes of the Royal Dutch Indië Army, the KNIL, during the Indonesian war of Independence. For the excesses performed by the Dutch, the King offered his heartfelt apologies.

Relevant issues for Ukraine are:

The participation of some Ukrainian Nationalists in the German Wehrmacht attack of Kursk in 1943.

The contribution of Ukrainians to one of the largest the Holocaust massacres at Baba Yar, a ravine near Kiev, 1941 – 1943, - the mass murder of Jews, Soviet prisoners of war, and psychiatric patients.

The massacre by Ukrainian nationalists of in Polish villages. On July 11, 1943, members of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UIA), a nationalist paramilitary group armed with axes, knives and guns, stormed villages on the Polish Ukrainian border, killing ethnic Polish men and raping women.

It is understandable that actors on the stage today, would rather leave these issues unspoken. As a philosopher I cannot afford that luxury. It is my professional duty to speak forth what I see as aletheia: the truth. These historic issues have gained in relevance through the Ukrainian offensive against Kursk in 2024, heavily laden with historic, symbolic meaning. Also on the table are the alleged war crimes by Putin in abducting Ukrainian children, which can be compared to other relevant war crimes by various parties.

On the other hand, the claim by the enemy that Russia is fighting Ukrainian Nazi's, rings a bell. It should be countered not by dismissal, but by honest acknowledgement of historic facts. Thus, they can be put into perspective. And frank and concise recognition that a small minority extreme nationalists inspired by this history still play a modest in today's Ukraine.

On the other hand, due attention has been given to Holodomor, the famine in 1932-33 caused by the agricultural policy of Stalin.

In the table below various war crimes by various parties with number of victims are set next to each other.

As so often the people of one and the same country can be both victim and oppressor. Speaking for my countrymen, Dutch people were victimized by Japan in World War II, then by Indonesian Revolutionaries in the so-called 'Bersiap', and in their turn performed war crimes against Indonesians during the Dutch- Indonesian war. 1945-1949.

These issues are very complex. Here cooperation with European partners who have experience in dealing with such sensitive issues, is called for.

European cooperation arose out of the ashes World War II and is directed not only to economic and defence but first of all based on common values such as the humane search for truth, aletheia.

8. VICTIMS OF HISTORY

Table 1

Theatres	Deaths
World War II global	70 to 85 million
European theatre	15 to 20 million
Losses of the Soviet Union	12 million
Victims of the Holocaust	6 million
German Wehrmacht Siege of Leningrad	1,5 million
Baba Jar holocaust	1 million
German with participation of Ukrainian	
Stalin's agricultural policy	4 million
Holodomor famine...no of Ukrainian deaths	
Volyn Ukrainian massacre of Polish villages ¹⁰	
Child abductions in the Russian- Ukraine war ¹¹	20,000
no deaths some victims have returned home.	
Dutch Indonesian war of Liberation 1945-1949	Dutch and Indo's 3.500 -30.000 Indonesian 100.000

For All of This There is Another Relevant Quote from the Bible

Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven Luke 6:37

9. DEBATE?

Open debate is a value of Western Democracy. One might have expected a more open debate about the Ukraine war in the peaceful West with independent expertise brought in from a variety of disciplines on a 'we agree to disagree' basis. Perhaps even the involvement of Russian experts, as the author has organised in the past. See note 12.

The lack of debate about the Ukraine war in the West can be explained - not by Press censoring, - but by the natural human tendency of wanting to belong to the flock. Journalists, politicians and experts seem to follow a me-too principle. Freedom of expression is curbed voluntarily on the grounds that everything we say or write might benefit Russia. That it might benefit Ukraine even more is not considered. It is only black sheep like Churchill in the thirties who accept becoming unpopular by speaking the truth. Indeed, a philosopher should follow suit, and search for and express aletheia, damn the consequences. The courage of reflecting upon one's own military mind-set, - in my case the one of Ukraine and NATO, that, being Dutch is where I belong - is therefore given only to the lonely few.

10. REFLECTING ON OUR OWN MIND-SET

The situation in Ukraine as of the summer of 2025 gives us a chance and urgent reason to reflect on our military mind set. 'Reflection' is directed not to others but to ourselves.

Re-flect means to bend the ray from our eyes and thoughts back to where it came from: US.

This is far more difficult than allowing our eyes to discern and judge the other. It is especially difficult during a war when much seems to depend on 'blaming the other'.

Because THEY are to blame. That being said, one wonders why this opinion should be repeated time and time again. Blaming the enemy might be a way of letting off steam when things are not going as planned. But blaming the enemy is not going to win or indeed end the war. Neither is the blaming of third parties.

"We urge the U.S. to stop shifting blame on the Ukraine issue or creating confrontation, and instead play a more constructive role in promoting a ceasefire and peace talks,"

China's deputy UN Ambassador Geng Shuang told a meeting of the UN Security Council."

There comes a moment, especially if things are not going as hoped and perspective is dwindling, that it is necessary to investigate ourselves, our OWN mind-set.

All human activities are performed in the context of a mind-set, a system of notions which covers goals and means, do's and don'ts. It guides thought and action, often without us being aware of it. It is the task of the philosopher to take a step back and investigate that which is hardly visible or recognisable, simply because it is so close.

As Heidegger put it "That which is ontically closest and well known, is ontologically the farthest and not known at all."

In ordinary language: people do not really know their own nose.

Philosophers must investigate the mind-set 'sine ire et studio', without anger or passion. He or she must take a non-partial stance, which in an ongoing war is especially difficult. The trick is to put into brackets the opinions of the moment, 'doxa,' formed as they are by which side one is on, and the need to present a closed front to the enemy. Difficult but needed is an open and honest discussion, in which 'alètheia', gets a chance, truths with a longer time span, which have been formulated over the ages.

The ancient writings of Sun Tzu are very relevant for the resetting of our military mind-set.

"There is no instance of a nation benefitting from prolonged warfare."

Indeed, the First World War resulted in the demise of three Empires, the German, Austrian and Russian emperors were forced to leave the scene. After the Second World War the British Empire disintegrated, and the Dutch East Indies were lost.

The Ukrainian war has nearly lasted as long as World War I or II. Of course, the West is hoping that Putin's Russia will disintegrate. Putin is probably hoping that Zelenski's Ukraine will disintegrate.

According to Sun Tzu it is essential to know yourself and the enemy.

"If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles. If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained you will also suffer a defeat. If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle."

Knowing yourself is difficult during the conflict, for holding onto a positive self-image seems essential to boost morale of one's own people and allies. However, a deliberate effort must be made to acknowledge the facts concerning costs and losses, strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and limits. Listening to one's own experienced military and the very experienced military of the allies is part of this process. Experts must speak up even if they fear the disapproval of the actors on the stage.

Knowing the enemy is next to impossible. In a war both parties are locked into a conflict mind-set. Feelings of anger, of moral condemnation prevail. But a moral condemnation has never won a war. Neither can anger ever be the last word.

"Anger may in time change to gladness; vexation may be succeeded by content. But a kingdom that has once been destroyed can never come again into being nor can the dead ever be brought back to life."

Passing moral judgment on the enemy's every deed prevents us from clearly seeing, really knowing him. In military terms that can be disastrous. It also promotes an unfriendly atmosphere which will not make fruitful negotiations possible.

"It is easy to love your friend, but sometimes the hardest lesson to learn is to love your enemy."

This is not a moral postulate coming from the Bible, but a strategic consideration, a condition for avoiding military defeat and successful negotiations 'Love', 'Empathy', does not exclude conflict neither does it include moral approval of the enemy's conduct. It is the attempt to see our enemy objectively, through the fog of war and hatred. Empathetic rather than moral judgement is required.

"To know your enemy, you must become your enemy. This means think like the enemy. Do it and you have some chance. Forget it and you are doomed."

Of course, we know much more about the enemy than we pretend. We know the history of Russia, plagued as it was, time and again, by foreign powers. At the close of World War I the American, British and French invaded Russia in order to persuade Lenin to send his men back to the trenches. And to support the Whites in the civil war against Lenin. Napoleon reached Moscow and left the city in ashes. and Hitler. In World War II the German Wehrmacht reached the outskirts of Moscow and laid siege to Leningrad, from 8 September 1941 to 27 January 1944, 1,5 million people succumbed, from hunger, cold and bombing.

The then Soviet Union made a great contribution to the defeat of Hitler. The battle of Kursk has been mentioned. Or Stalingrad, the siege of Leningrad and the near occupation of Moscow. That war cost them 12 million souls, twice the number victims of the holocaust. The celebration of 80 years defeat of Hitler both of the then allies chose to celebrate separately.

We know they gave so many East European countries their Freedom after the end of the Cold War. Hoping and expecting to cooperate with NATO in a common security system.

But NATO expanded by adding 12 of those freed countries to NATO. Ukraine was supposed to be number 13!

11. OFFENCE OR DEFENCE?

The relative merits of offensive and defensive operations during a war have been subject of thought over the ages. Generally defensive actions are considered the preferred option. Logistics are easier than in the case of offensive actions, where the lines must be considerably longer and are vulnerable to attack. Without food, drink and ammunitions any offensive action must fail. Defensive actions make use of a well-known environment. And offence requires some quadruple the number of soldiers. Who are in danger of being encircled.

What about the supposed advantage of taking the war to the enemy's country? That idea came from times in which wars were fought only in the summer. When the wheat was on the fields for the grab. The only real advantage of offensive actions into the enemy's country today is PR. It can demoralize the enemy but supposedly boost one's own morale. Given that war was always associated with the man Mars. Offensive action is more popular.

The defensive attitude of Minerva might be wise but is not very exciting.

12. HOW TO END A WAR

In the day-to-day news ample space is given to the question of how to continue a war.

Doe, one has enough men? How can new recruits be enlisted?

How many more weapons are needed? How will the war be financed?

Sages however have pondered on How to End a War? The philosopher Sun Tzu carefully considered the vitally important question of how to bring a war to an end at the earliest opportunity.

"When you surround an army, leave an outlet free. Do not press a desperate foe too hard."

If surrounded with no way out, no escape, the enemy will continue fighting to the bitter end.

Another Chinese scholar, Du Mu, commenting on Sun Tzu, advises,
"Show him there is a road to safety."

One wonders whether this was considered by the International Criminal Court (ICC) when it issued arrest warrants for Vladimir Putin for the abduction of Ukrainian children. See note 9.

This runs counter to the advice of military sages. These arrest warrants, apart from making communication more difficult, might conceivably lengthen the war, leading to a greater number of deaths on both sides. Anyone with any empathy can sense that these arrest warrants will not stimulate Putin to end the war. On the contrary.

[The Duke of Alba \(1560\)](#) reformulates Sun Tzu's principle about stimulating enemies to exit as follows:

"Better build them a golden bridge than offer a decisive battle"

This bridge must include a safe conduct or passage for retreating troops. It must be a golden bridge. The enemy can be motivated to stop hostilities by material and financial rewards, guarantees concerning present and post war security and economic prospects.

The West however wants to arrest Putin and confiscate his money and put in place further sanctions.

It's like the asshole that has broken into my flower garden, and is trampling on it, munching whatever pleases him. To drive him out, a stick is not enough. Add a carrot and he will move out that much faster. Deleting any kind of 'carrot', on the grounds that the ass does not deserve it, will prolong rather than shorten the war.

13. COMMUNICATING WITH THE ENEMY

Another 'punishment' which will backfire is cutting communication with the enemy,

not just in the military field, but in all spheres: science, culture, sports, travel etc.

The Hotline between USA and Russia, dating from the Cold War, established in 1963 - such a great achievement, fell flat, due to the policy of actors in the Russia Ukraine war.

The punishment for bad conduct is: "we won't speak to that Naughty Boy anymore. And anyone who does is excommunicated." This boys' playground approach was extended to every sphere imaginable So far to no avail.

The German military theorist Carl von Clausewitz made the memorable statement.

"War is the continuation of politics by other means."

Continuation, not the End of Policy. War does not demand that all communication with the enemy be brought to a halt. On the contrary. During a war communication with the enemy is essential. It must be continued in spite of the fog of war. Towards its end it must be intensified. Not only during negotiations but on a much wider scale.

Success in negotiations demand a resetting of our mind-set. Listening to the enemy. Treating him with respect rather than blaming and blackening him. We all recognise these principles from daily life. In this respect war is no different. The more distance there is between the parties the more urgent it is to reset our mind-set. Towards more gentlemanly behaviour. It is strange how in a war normal human

conduct is suspended. On the one hand there is a lot of hugging, broadcast on TV. On the other hand, there is even more blaming. Blaming the enemy and blaming third parties. All made public by a variety of media. Such behaviour obviously fulfils some emotional need. Blaming is a sign of weakness not of strength. It is a symbolic way of lifting oneself high above the enemy when more realistic options are not available.

This is what we read in a book, well known in Russia, Ukraine, Europe, UK and USA, and of course the Vatican:

“Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged.

And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye,
but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?”

Condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned.”.

The Sermon on the Mount.

War is not primarily a contest of arms, but a battle of wills, with important psychological, emotional and contextual aspects. It resonates with the relevant historical context as (differently) perceived by the contestants. So, it might be cost-effective (in terms of lives spared) to focus on the enemy's will and devise direct means of influencing it, using diplomacy, with armed conflict relegated to the second place.

Here the shutting down of communication with the enemy, on the military, the political and societal and indeed cultural level, however comforting from a moral and emotional point of view is unwise if one wants military success, or an end to a prolonged and destructive war through negotiations. Isolating the enemy is insulting and drives his aggression. It is like the pushing of a naughty boy into a lonely corner by a crowd of schoolchildren. So-called ‘punishment’, - ‘you cannot come to my party we won't come to yours’, is what happened to the celebration of 80 years victory, won by both sides working and fighting towards the same goal, the overthrow of Hitler. The idea is that forced loneliness might weaken his moral. It could result in the contrary. Pushing that boy out will motivate him to find new friends and promote the gang- versus-gang fighting.

14. FACTS ON THE GROUND

Moral evaluations, legitimate in an ethical or legal discourse, cannot delete the military facts on the ground. Ignoring the empirical side of war, overstressing what should be at the expense of what is, can be detrimental.

It's as if Plato and Aristotle are still in debate. Both Greek philosophers believed that ideas were determining for human actions. But they differed as to which ideas, which mind-set could be most beneficial. Plato loved the realm of ideas, idealism. That is why he was painted with his finger pointing up to ideas, the sphere of the moral, the Good. Aristotle points to the empirical, material world, in which good ideas must be realized. that is never easy for reality is recalcitrant. And yet in a war, looking away from reality, from the facts on the ground can spell disaster.

Figure 4

It is held that Europe was, in the 13th century, experiencing the come-back of Aristotelean thought, while Russia was being overrun by the Tartars. Thus, that part of the world remained in the Platonic mind-set. The 'idealistic' Russian Revolution is an illustration. The Western culture became empirical and very rational and practical, especially in the economic sphere.

However, for Ukraine the West departs from its usual cost-effective approach. If the West has no strategic plan about how to end the Ukraine-Russian war, they certainly do not have a business plan. Intuitively throwing money around to do All that it takes. The EU has pledged to stand with Ukraine "for every single day of the war, and for every single day thereafter". This resembles the discourse between lovers, or a prayer to a divine being, for only 'God' it seems can make promises for the thereafter. Promising for enhanced Defence spending a future 5 percent of our national wealth, whatever the consequences for other aspects of our national budgets such as social costs and expenses for climate extremes. Very un-Dutch the people who are known for turning round every penny. Interesting is the loose way that commitments are made for the unpredictable, endless future. Indeed, rational and democratic decision-making is a long regulated and specific step by step-by-step process. Financial decision-making without a detailed prediction and balancing of money going out and coming in runs counter to Western practice. The whatever it takes it is clearly frontstage whilst backstage the actors take off their masks and return to business as usual. In practice decision making in a rational democracy requires consensus building through parliamentary and independent State financed commissions, negotiations with economic and social partners and detailed financial control by state institutions. And last but not least the voice of the electorate via elections.

It is clear that in NO case will NATO or EU actually join in the fighting. Because we live in a nuclear age, and nobody wants to destroy the planet.

In that respect it is still Peace for Our Time.

15. CONCLUDING

I have shown how the advice of age-old philosophers of war can contribute to a resetting of our military mind-set. Knowing the enemy rather than condemning

him. Knowing oneself by examining strengths and weaknesses. Carefully considering the relative advantages of offensive and defensive operations, both in practical terms and as symbolic messages to the enemy. What could bring him to the negotiating table and what would provoke further aggression. Listening to experienced military advisers, accepting an open debate on the most effective strategy to end the war. Continuing communication with the enemy right through and especially towards the end of the war, instead of trying to isolate him. Granting him free conduct and a golden bridge rather than promising to arrest him and approve more sanctions.

It is not up to the philosopher to take the measure of the men in the field or of the politicians on the stage. As an outsider by profession, he cannot expect to have much influence on what happens on the ground or at the negotiating table. Patience must be his main virtue.

As a looker-on on, he must accept that, as the philosopher Hegel said:

“The owl of Minerva flies only at dusk.

Figure 5



CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

None.

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