Clausewitz Quotes*

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*Citations refer to Michael Howard and Peter Paret, eds., On War (Princeton University Press, 1984) by Book:Chapter:section, page number
The Meaning of War

“War is thus an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will” (I:1:2, 75)

The Enemy Reacts

“War, however, is not the action of a living force upon a lifeless mass (total nonresistance would no war at all) but always the collision of two living forces.” (I:1:4, 77)
The Political Object of War

“The political object—the original motive for the war—will thus determine both the military objective to be reached and the amount of effort it requires... wars can have all degrees of importance and intensity, ranging from a war of extermination down to simple armed observation.” (I:1:11, 81)
“[W]ar cannot be divorced from political life; and whenever this occurs in our thinking about war, the many links that connect the two elements are destroyed and we are left with something pointless and devoid of sense... No major proposal required for war can be worked out in ignorance of political factors; and when people talk, as they often do, about harmful political influences on the management of war, they are not really saying what they mean. Their quarrel should be with the policy itself, not with the influence. If the policy is right—that is, successful—any intentional effect it has on the conduct of the war can only be to the good. If it has the opposite effect the policy itself is wrong. ” (VIII:6:B, p.605,608)