“The Nature of Military Theory”

By:

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Warfare over Time

Every past civilization has conducted military conquests of rival nations in both defense and attack. Every one of these armies likewise yielded commanders of varying quality, some of which recorded their techniques. An ancient Chinese general, Sun Tzu and a Prussian Army officer, Karl von Clausewitz, although separated by a vast amount of time, are regarded as two leading experts on military theory. They also inadvertently demonstrate that little has changed significantly between the times of their writings.

Sun Tzu and the Art of War

One of the earliest treatises of conducting land combat operations was written over a millennium ago in ancient China. Various cultures and professions have since studied Sun Tzu’s Art of War, written sometime around 400-320 BC. Within Sun Tzu’s text are both basic details and intricate guidance for military commanders. “Nature is unrelenting and unstoppable.” These words state that armies have very...
limited control over their surroundings. If plans are not adjusted accordingly to coincide with the troops’
destination, the results would be disastrous if commanders ignore the lay of the land and how it shapes
the battlefield. Sun Tzu clearly writes guidelines for identifying how the landscape should be treated
while both marching and fighting.

Karl von Clausewitz On War

Another theorist of armed conflict was Karl von Clausewitz. At age twelve, he joined the
Prussian Army. After serving against the French in 1793, he received an education from the Berlin
Military Academy. This led him to the Prussian Army Staff where he fought against Napoleon
Bonaparte’s forces. In 1818, he was placed in charge of the Berlin Staff College and began writing
extensively on the subject of war. Having witnessed the effective strategy and brilliance of Napoleon,
arguably the greatest commander of that period, Clausewitz was quite capable of recording the lessons
that he had learned from his capture in the early 19th century.

Published posthumously, On War is perhaps Clausewitz’s most well-known book. His work encompasses
the broad spectrum of warfare, similar to The Art of War. However, of the three levels of conflict, it
focuses less on political-strategic factors. Broken into eight books, On War discusses a variety of subjects
including offense, defense, fighting the enemy, and planning for War. He believed that engaging an
adversary in the battlefield could not be done scientifically. Understanding the principles and how they may affect each situation was the best approach. This links his theory to Sun Tzu’s. Each theorist believed that, without flexibility, a commander might overlook key details in the terrain and find himself and his troops trapped and at a disadvantage. Thus, it is imperative that soldiers realize that every circumstance must be adapted to and cannot have a rigid template. This groundbreaking idea and theoretical approach made both Tzu and Clausewitz authors on the art of war.

Comparative Theory

Since the practice of organized warfare, the need to understand its fundamentals has led to the recording of many theories. Although technology has advanced and details have become more elaborate, the fundamental theory behind armed engagement has remained steadfast and almost unchanging, despite the passage of time. Sun Tzu and Clausewitz demonstrated the same principles in their writing. The small difference between the two is the level of detail; Tzu gives only the basics while Clausewitz examines specific circumstances. In the same way, the two examples provided in this study show that, across the centuries, little has changed in regards to using the landscape and terrain to benefit one’s objectives in combat.
All manners of life have been captured throughout history. Many factors have shaped the evolution of social exchange. One of those influential factors has been warfare. This brutal interaction has become a subject of interest to both those who fought the battles and wars, offering theoretical thought, and outside observers compiling written summaries and analyses of those historical events. Culture and society have been shaped by the context in which they have been created. In much the same way, warfare has been affected by that very same context: the environment in which the interaction takes place.

The purpose of this paper is threefold. First, it intends to analyze the historian’s perspective on military use of terrain in wartime through the use of a historiography. Second, it looks at theories and their writers to create a case study, giving examples to show how each theorist looked at the use of terrain. To conclude, it briefly looks to the present and the manner in which those very same theories can be seen in today’s military strategy.

**Historian Perspective in Terrain Analysis**

Historians have usually tended to use the aspects of terrain as a means to layout a thoughtful approach for their specified battles. A researcher looking back on past battles can only use the features of the battlefield as a map for both chronological understanding of sequential events and how the environment influenced those very events. This historiography proposes to analyze several examples, such as two Roman defeats and the American Civil War’s battle of Gettysburg, to further demonstrate the historian’s need to incorporate the environmental context.
Simon Schama’s *Landscape and Memory* offers a short vignette on one of Rome’s disastrous defeats.\(^1\) Two great warriors, equally matched in military prowess, met in the German frontier above Rome. Schama consults the works of Tacitus written sometime after the fighting in 9 AD. Varus decided to march his Roman Legions, numbering twenty five thousand troops, to a more secure area for quartering for the winter. Beginning on page 88 of *Landscape and Memory*, Schama writes that, “At some point on the march – the precise site is still unforgivingly disputed by archaeologists – the route ran between treacherous swamps and impenetrable forest.”\(^2\) He goes on to describe that Cheruscan spearmen appeared from the wood line in a massive ambush all along the Roman line of march. The Legionaries then held two options before them according to Schama: retreat and “becoming helplessly bogged down in the swamp” or “penetrating the terrible woods in an effort to root them out.”\(^3\) Very few soldiers of Rome escaped the carnage after three days of intense fighting under “rains of javelins.” Six years later, Roman General Germanicus reentered the Teutoburger Wald Forests and ordered his troops to bury the remains of thousands of fallen; both Barbarian and Roman have bones intermingled amongst the debris.

This is an example of the historian’s approach to presenting how a battle unfolded. Terrain features are only mentioned if the writer believes they carried weight in determining the outcome of the fighting. “Swamps” and “impenetrable forests” simply described the environment, when there could have been many other factors that determined much of the combat. He fails to mention what intelligence of the battlefield the commander may have had.

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\(^2\) Schama 89.
\(^3\) Ibid, 89.
available in his decision making process that guided his actions toward the disastrous march he undertook.  

Around the same time period as the Teutoburger Wald Ambush, there was another ambush of Roman troops in 217 BC. *Hannibal: Invader from Carthage* goes into more depth when describing the environment in which these ancient soldiers were operating. Greater detail would be a requirement for presenting Hannibal’s story, as he led his army across the Alps and other land barriers deep inside enemy territory; as he then needed to use every aspect of the environment to his advantage to even the odds for his numerically weaker forces. Prior to this battle, Hannibal’s Carthaginians had already one an impressive victory.  

This short story begins with Hannibal confined to his camp because “the severity of the winter storms had forced him to remain idle.” However, when spring arrived he selected an unlikely route through “mud, water and slime.” Acting in his usual accord, Hannibal sent a scouting party ahead to conduct reconnaissance along the proposed route of march. “He learned that the water was not too deep, and that the bottom, although muddy, was firm.” After reaching dryer ground, the Carthaginians learned that the land was rich in sources of sustenance. Another factor brought to Hannibal’s attention was the arrogant attitude of his Roman counterpart. The invaders “pillaged and burned” the countryside to provoke pursuit by Rome’s legions. “The only passage for Flaminius (Roman commander) was the narrow one between the lake and the hills,” which is where Hannibal selected to lay his troops in ambush. The author quotes Roman writer Livy in saying, “The place was formed by nature for an ambuscade, where

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4 Ibid, 89.
6 Ibid, 47.
7 Ibid, 48.
8 Ibid, 50.
the Trasemnus comes nearest to the mountains…”⁹ On the morning of the fight, the Legions advanced into the corridor and were consumed: “the fog was so thick rising from the lake that the Roman troops could barely see the men in front of them.”¹⁰ This lack of visibility further inhibited communication amongst the commanders and their soldiers once the ambush was initiated. Hannibal’s army swarmed down the hills and slammed into their adversaries. After putting up a desperate fight, the Romans were quickly forced back in the water where “many drowned from the weight of their armor” or were hacked down by Carthaginian cavalry.¹¹

Here again, it can be seen as another source showing how the historian describes the campaign from an environmental perspective. Webb offers the reader much more detail than Schama’s brief research on the previous Roman ambush. Factors, such as inclement weather, forced operations to a halt and could shift advantages to one side or the other regardless of numbers participating in the battle. Utilizing the high ground and wood line concealed the attackers while the lake itself pinned the unsuspecting Romans in for slaughter, thus sealing their fate before the ambush was even initiated.

Jumping forward in time to the American Civil War, the battle of Gettysburg and its surrounding events give greater detail to how historians have recorded warfare. “Gettysburg and the Organic Nature of the American Civil War” gives amazing details on what environmental factors led the southern troops to Gettysburg. Food supplies were limited due to low production from the war ravaged countryside of Virginia. Bacterial outbreaks killed large quantities of livestock, which in turn reduced available food and leather sources. Droughts broke out in Virginia and massive flooding destroyed the Mississippi Delta. To further complicate the

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⁹ Ibid, 51.
¹⁰ Ibid, 51.
¹¹ Webb 52.
Confederate predicament, when encamped in winter quarters, the troops lived among open sewage due to no reliable sanitation. Many men suffered from inadequate sheltering from the freezing temperatures. All of these components forced the Southern Army to march north into Pennsylvania, hoping to find a landscape rich in plentiful resources. If properly supplied with nourishment and clothing, while maneuvering deep inside enemy territory, the Rebel troops could pose an even greater threat to the Northern Capitol. The desperate tables could turn drastically towards favorable negotiations if Washington, DC and its field army could be eliminated. Nature would be the necessary tool to arm this renewed effort seeking Confederate victory.\(^\text{12}\)

From a different perspective, *They Met at Gettysburg*, written by a general, picks up with the Rebel invasion of the north motivated by the previously mentioned components. This author offers an in depth analysis of the battlefield used by the armies at the turning point of the War Between the States. Chapter Ten is entirely devoted to explaining the tactical value of the terrain that would be used during the remainder of the book’s retelling of the battle. The hills are described in detail as they relate to each other and how each army would see the situation over the following three days of fighting. For instance, on the first day, Culp’s Hill would serve as the strong point defensive position. Its preparation by the Federal Army early on in the fight would allow the hill to be where the line would form after nearly being overrun by oncoming Rebels. On the second day, one Union commander left the high ground and was nearly routed. However, his counterpart immediately recognized the floundering situation, using initiative and innovative thought he placed all available troops in defense to halt the Confederate advance. The

method used by this historian is interesting to note because he has been schooled in the military analytical methods.\textsuperscript{13}

These authors explained the value and weight that environmental factors carried in the selected scenarios depicted in their works\textsuperscript{14}. The level of detail placed on analyzing terrain features differs between historians and military commanders because the latter are schooled in a mindset that uses the environment to shape a battlefield prior to any sort of hostilities beginning. Military training through manuals reflects this type of thought. Although they have evolved into greater detail over time, the principles have always been the same in finding the best place to fight and being the first to arrive at the objective with the most troops. Being able to read the land and understand how to use every facet for some advantageous gain over the enemy. However, no one has ever considered how military manuals have presented terrain or evolved through the centuries. Across the operational spectrum, which must include logistics, supply, tactics, and strategy, documentation concerning these matters has always been influential in the wars that proceeded.

**Military Theory through Time**

Every past civilization has conducted military conquests of rival nations in both defense and attack. Every one of these armies likewise yielded commanders of varying quality, some of which recorded their techniques. An ancient Chinese general and a Prussian Army officer, although separated by a vast amount of time, are regarded as two leading experts on military theory. They also inadvertently demonstrate that little has changed significantly between the times of their writings.

\textsuperscript{14} Schama, Webb, Fiege, Stackpole.
One of the earliest treatises of conducting land combat operations was written over a millennium ago in ancient China. Sun Tzu’s *Art of War* has been studied by various cultures and professions since the early ages of writing. For example, the *Art of War* “has reported influenced people as diverse as Japanese industrialists, American M.B.A. students, Napoleon, and certain members of the Nazi high command.”\(^\text{15}\) Sun Tzu lived around 400 to 320 BC. “Sun Tzu was the first to set out what we would now recognize as principles of war: moral influence, weather, terrain, command and control, and logistics.”\(^\text{16}\) Among the chapters is an assessment regarding how to recognize various types of terrain by their features and recommendations for various courses of action that will raise the probability for success.

Sun Tzu begins with a basic analysis of how armies maneuver across different lands. “Some terrain is easily passable, some you get hung up, some makes for a standoff, some is narrow, some is steep, some is wide open.”\(^\text{17}\) Each is then discussed in further detail on how they are recognized in the real world and particular measures that should be undertaken upon its encounter. For example, “When both sides can come and go, it is said to be easily passable. When the terrain is easily passable, take up your position first, choosing the high and sunny side, convenient to supply routes, for advantage in battle.”\(^\text{18}\) According to Sun Tzu, a general must understand how these each effect the battle.\(^\text{19}\)

*The Art of War* then goes on to examine nine different grounds found within the realms of combat. “Ground of Dissolution” describes where the local people fight amongst themselves.

\(^\text{18}\) Ibid, 79.
\(^\text{19}\) Ibid, 80.
“Light Ground” is found just inside another country’s borders. “Ground of Contention” holds certain advantages to both sides in the conflict and would become an area that either side may seek ruthlessly. On land that both forces travel frequently, it is called “Trafficked Ground.” “Intersecting Ground” would give accessibility to the occupier into any of the nations surrounding the ground. Advancing far from any base of operations into a country is called “Deep Ground.” Crossing difficult, unfavorable land, like dense forests and swampy areas, becomes “Bad Ground.” A smaller enemy force may gain an advantage on “Surrounded Ground” because the route of march is too narrow for the body of troops that must pass through. “Dying Ground” is to no one’s favor because both are fighting for survival.

Again, Sun Tzu goes into further detail to elaborate on how each type of “Ground” may affect operations. For instances, “When a leader establishes a goal with the troops, he like one who climbs to a high place and tosses away the ladder. When a leader enters deeply into enemy territory with his troops he brings out their potential.”20 Speaking about “Heavy Ground”, he also states that resupply must be a never-ending process to keep soldiers continually working toward the objective.

On the reverse side, however, luring a great army far away from its own lands can also be a tool used against an advancing foe. To do such a thing and defeat it logistically can be a counter measure for the defender. Sun Tzu speaks on the psychology of soldiers, saying that when resistance is necessary for survival they will fight ferociously to return home.21

“For him, the landscape is virtually an active participant in the battle, just as the army and commander are.”22 The Barnes and Noble Reader’s Companion to The Art of War dedicates a

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20 Ibid, 95.
21 Ibid, 99.
22 Kestler, 24.
section to understanding why Sun Tzu would devote such attention toward terrain. Within Sun Tzu’s text are both basic details and intricate guidance for military commanders. When an adversary is crossing a river, he advises to patiently wait until they are half across and then advance; striking only a portion of their forces while still remaining on dry land. The Companion speaks of another instance where rising Sun Tzu analyzed the billowing dust clouds when approaching combat: narrow billows of dust indicate fast moving chariots, while low hanging clouds are usually caused by approaching infantry.23

“Nature is unrelenting and unstoppable.”24 These words state that armies have very limited control over their surroundings. If plans are not adjusted accordingly to coincide with where the troops are going, the results would be disastrous if commanders ignore the lay of the land and how it shapes the battlefield. Sun Tzu clearly writes guidelines for identifying how the landscape should be treated while both marching and fighting. In certain situations, defensive operations would be more favorable, while in different circumstances it would be advisable to engage the enemy. For example, if a hostile force was approaching against your smaller force on the high ground, it would make more sense to hold that position. However, if that hostile force was a lead element to a much larger group it would make more sense to advance and annihilate them before reinforcements could arrive and mesh with the advance group to overwhelm your own position.

It is also necessary to maintain this knowledge of the terrain throughout the campaign to ensure that no detail is either missed completely or unexpectedly changes, leaving no time to adjust appropriately. Failure here would give the enemy an advantage to pursue and force the army to become reactive. “…the first step of familiarity with the terrain isn’t simply advisable

23 Ibid, 25.
24 Ibid, 27.
but necessary—just as one needs to step on the first rung when climbing up a ladder, there’s no way for an astute commander to bypass intimate knowledge of the landscape.”

*The Art of War* shows respect for the natural world in how terrain and landscape are analyzed and marshaled for advantage in military operations.

All of this detail gives a window into how Sun Tzu thought regarding the subject of warfare. He believed that terrain and ground were essential to any militarist seeking to engage an enemy. He does a good job by explaining how to determine what type of terrain is confronting the commander by offering key descriptors for which to observe. Once the terrain can be classified, Tzu proceeds to offer advice for the commander on appropriate methods of utilizing the landscape. Occupying high ground or attacking from a seemingly impossible place can give even the smallest group of soldiers a keen advantage and thereby overwhelm their adversary. These same thoughts would also be reflected in the later works of a Napoleonic Era Theorist.

Another theorist of armed conflict was Karl von Clausewitz. At age twelve, he joined the Prussian Army. After serving against the French in 1793, he received education from the Berlin Military Academy. This led him to the Prussian Army Staff where he fought against Napoleon Bonaparte’s forces, and was captured at one point, during the early 1800s. In 1818, he was placed in charge of the Berlin Staff College and began writing extensively on the subject of war. Having witnessed the effective strategy and brilliance of Napoleon, arguably the greatest commander of that period, Clausewitz was quite capable of recording the lessons that he had learned the hard way.

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25 Kestler 27.
On War is perhaps Clausewitz’s most well-known book, although it was not published until after his death. His work encompasses the broad spectrum of warfare, just like The Art of War. However, of the three levels of conflict, it does not focus as much on political-strategic factors. “Indeed, no less than 50 percent of On War is dedicated to purely operational, even tactical, matters.”27 It is broken into eight books, each regarding various subjects to include the offense, defense, fighting the enemy, and planning for War. He believed that engaging an adversary in the battlefield could not be done scientifically. Understanding the principles and how they may affect each situation was the best approach. This links his theory to Sun Tzu. Each theorist believed that, without flexibility, a commander might overlook key details in the terrain and find himself and his troops trapped and at a disadvantage. Thus, it is imperative that soldiers realize that every circumstance must be adapted to and cannot have a rigid template. This groundbreaking idea and theoretical approach made both Tzu and Clausewitz authors on the art of war.28

Within the selection on defense, he addresses a number of different issues. Many chapters speak about how to hold onto certain pieces of terrain. Chapter XXI explains how a defender must utilize a forest for resistance. On level expanses, a body of trees should either be totally avoided or placed at the army’s rear. “If he chose to leave a wooded district before him, he would be like a blind man fighting against one who can see. If he should place himself in the middle of the wood, both, of course, would be blind.”29 Left at the rear, it would permit the army to have a concealed route of retreat with better fields of fire and observation, while likewise hindering the enemy’s abilities. To attempt a defense of a forest would be “a hazardous piece of

27 Ibid, 91.
28 Ibid, 91.
work” for any army. Although a wooded area may seem impassable with outposts, an attacker will find a way to penetrate the line. As previously mentioned, Sun Tzu regarded this as “Bad Ground.” This further illustrates the way in which dense forests can be unfavorable both to attack and defend. Hidden amongst the branches, snipers or ambushes could lay in wait for an army passing through the forest. Additionally, a corps of troops entering a body of trees would find themselves blinded to their own advance as well as the threat of any oncoming threats.

Chapter XVIII discusses defending rivers. To Clausewitz, they can offer assistance in three types of operations. The first option would be to hold against the enemy indefinitely. Second, rivers may be used to demonstrate force by blocking the enemy’s intended line of advance. Finally, they afford smaller groups the capability of holding off a larger force by controlling the only feasible place to ford. Clausewitz speaks extensively on preparing the line. Dividing the troops up to occupy various command posts is contrasted with carefully positioning the main element to react to enemy movement. He also discusses the various situations that would best suit each circumstance. Other variables include building roads, or improving those which already exist, to parallel the river, which could be necessary for fast movement in striking while the enemy is crossing.

Mountain ranges are just as complicated in the matters of war. He describes the difficulties associated with trying to march through narrow passes. Sun Tzu would classify this as “Surrounded Ground.” These two theorists both share the same assessment on how a smaller force could paralyze a much larger body of troops as they attempt to cross over. Long lines of men would naturally be hindered by the physical demands on their bodies which would then be

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30 Ibid, 426.
31 Ibid, 426.
32 Ibid, 412.
coupled with the near impossibilities being suffered by artillery pieces and trains struggling along the narrow mountain roads.\textsuperscript{33}

On the other side of the battlefield, Clausewitz also talks of commencing offensive operations. After a discussion of the different methods of defending a river, Clausewitz offers a number of possible countermeasures. A feign against one spot on the line could draw the enemy reserves there while the main body strikes another point. His only other option is to completely bypass the defender and try to deploy in the enemy’s rear. Regardless, the assailant must achieve a decisive blow to pierce the enemy line.\textsuperscript{34}

Since the practice of organized warfare, the need to understand its fundamentals has led to the recording of many theories. Although technology has advanced and details became more elaborate, the fundamental theory behind armed engagement has remained steadfast and almost unchanging despite the passage of time. Sun Tzu and Clausewitz demonstrated the same principles in their writing. The only difference between the two was in the level of detail; Tzu giving only the basics while Clausewitz examining specific circumstances. In the same way, the two examples provided in this study have proven that, across the centuries, little has changed in regards to using the landscape and terrain to benefit one’s objectives in combat. Each excerpt has described how armies, either Ancient or Napoleonic Era, have functioned in relationship to terrain. The act of reading the landscape has not only been helpful in victory, but a priceless quality required of every soldier.

These exploits of battle have been one of many key subjects consistently sought after by historians. Their approach to analyzing terrain usage has used different vantage points to explain how specific events developed. Some look at the combat first, perhaps turning to the

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid, 386.
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid, 519.
environment for secondary explanation, while others look at all variables and give each ample consideration to fully understand the events that took place. Several examples which show the descriptive style of historians have likewise been provided to illustrate this point. Ultimately, each historical onlooker takes a different perspective, but one, who looks at all variables, including the environment, could gain a more well-rounded view of the battles and decisions made to garner victory.
Annotated Bibliography


Using the environment to gain advantage is peppered throughout the book and may provide other examples from history to build the paper.


As a companion to military history, this book may provide further insight into military theory and the use of landscape in warfare.


This chapter looks at the way the land was used in the battle of Gettysburg and provides another example regarding the way that the land can be employed to gain advantage.


This book will provide further breakdown of Sun Tzu’s explanation of terrain.


This text provides an example of a Roman defeat and a demonstration of the way terrain is viewed through the eyes of a historian.


This book review may provide further insight into the works of Sun Tzu.


Stackpole’s writing will provide a different perspective, that of a general, on the battle of Gettysburg and the use of the land in said battle.


Sun Tzu details his assessment of using five different types of ground on which to fight. This will help to establish the importance of understanding how environment affects warfare.

This book provides an overview of Hannibal’s campaigns with environmental details that will help build my illustration.
Jack Reed  
Seminar Paper Reflection  
Seminar in Comparative History  

My Progress as a Historian

Prior to attending Shippensburg University I have always had strong fascination with the history of warfare. From ancient conquests to modern military operations, most every facet has interested me to research. This led me to pursue a Major in History upon graduation from high school. My career as a historian with Shippensburg has grown tremendously over the past four years.

Typical of most majors, I began with the basic level courses. World History I and II provided a great introduction to the topics for further study in other classes. Among the tasks to complete were debates. This was a great way to allow the students to work together in researching a particular issue and defend their stance against immediate criticism from their classmates. There was a process for structuring the arguments which helped us in better understanding how we would begin to frame our future papers. This forum permitted us to match our arguments against the opposite viewpoint and see if our research was weak in key areas.

As the years progressed, I took more history classes which covered a vast range of subjects. The developing research methods from the introductory courses began to equip us with the necessary tools for a maturing historian. We were given requirements of writing papers averaging five pages in length. Within their content, we had to establish the topic and present various points to either debate or retell the details of its existence.

Part of my preparation for the senior seminar paper was my previous coursework. During the fall semester of my fourth year, I took Theory and Practice of History with Dr. Steven
Burg. There was an eight page paper requirement for this class. The topic was ours to choose but it had to pertain to the Great Depression Era of the United States. For my research, I chose the effects suffered by the US Army during the Inter War Period between the First and Second World Wars.

This class taught me various skills necessary for a project of this degree. First was the process of finding a topic of interest and determining if enough material was available to build a solid argument. Next came the framing of all the research gathered.

This was also my first opportunity to utilize an archival data base. The Army Heritage and Education Center of Carlisle, Pennsylvania greatly aided my research. Within its walls are thousands of records regarding every facet of the US Army and its history, from the American Revolution to the current wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. High ranking officers of the War College utilize the collections in their scholarly work, studying to become general officers responsible for commanding thousands of soldiers in future military operations. Working here, I became acclimated to their process of registering and then requesting materials through their system.

Among the classes taken during the following semester was the Senior Capstone Seminar in Comparative History. Under the instruction of Dr. Allen Dieterich-Ward, this class reinforced the principles established during Theory and Practice. Both of these courses implemented new tools for research that never surfaced in any previous classes. The final objective was to compile research into a twelve page paper. This was broken into various steps throughout the semester which made the project more manageable. This was the first course which introduced the different elements of historical analysis.
The first step toward writing was this paper was the creation of my annotated bibliography. The annotated bibliography permitted me to choose sources that would provide background information on my topic. These sources would also go on to support my research by identifying their key features that I would intend to use.

Next was the Historiography, which became the first half of the Seminar Paper. This was my first real introduction to that type of research method. I learned how to begin with a broad topic, and, with a series of following topics, I would become increasingly more specific to arrive at my intended thought. Although I have previously completed research proposals, it was quite helpful in this context to give me a base from which to build the paper, instead of writing the complete paper and then finding out that it was going in the wrong direction. The purpose of my paper was to first establish how historians have typically looked at environmental aspects in war and then move into showing how nature has influenced the development of various military theories across time.

After the Historiography came the Case Study. Here I would select two specific examples demonstrating the affects of nature on military theory. For this, The Art of War by Sun Tzu\(^1\) and On War by Karl von Clausewitz\(^2\) would fuel the Case Study. Both authors, although separated by over a millennium, also helped build the underlying theme for the study. The comparative element argues that even with the advances in modern technology the theoretical principles of waging war have never changed.

The first is among the earliest treatises on military theory which was written in six century BC China. Sun Tzu was a general officer within the Chinese Army of that time. Two examples

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chapters from his book assisted the study by offering views on terrain analysis. The first view identified what classification the terrain was by its key features. The second was various recommendations regarding how to deploy troops which would increase the possibilities for success.

Clausewitz was used for the same purpose. Chapters from his writing were analyzed in how they respected terrain through both identification and utilization. His work went into much greater detail compared to Sun Tzu in presenting scenarios to further illustrate his findings. Clausewitz knowledge was based in great part from experience as a commander of troops in combat, just like Sun Tzu.

Other elements of the Senior Capstone helped to develop my skills as a historian. Vast quantities of reading were required to cover the material needed for the book discussions. Prior to becoming fully engaged in the semester, our class was given a presentation on how to grasp a books argument without reading every word. Both in class and in online journal responses, we analyzed the information with our own thoughts and were permitted to express our opinions with the class.