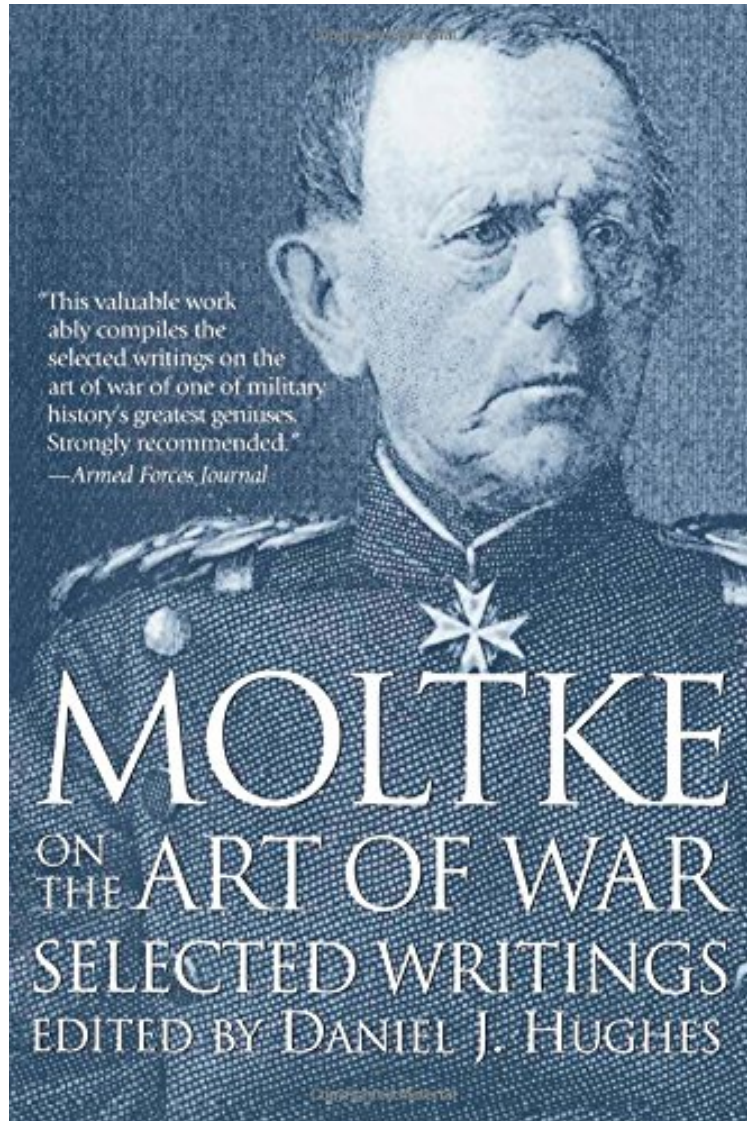


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Moltke on the Art of War: Selected Writings

Helmuth von Moltke

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Helmuth von Moltke : Moltke on the Art of War: Selected Writings before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Moltke on the Art of War: Selected Writings:

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Excellent selection of works by one of the best generals of the 19th Century By Patrick S "Moltke on the Art of War" is a selection of the writings of Helmuth Von Moltke the Elder and the way in which the Prussian army should conduct operations. Although he left no explicit body of work laying out a coherent theory of war, as Dr. Hughes makes clear in his introduction, scattered throughout Moltke's writing are the

bits and pieces of his view of war. This information is particularly relevant for students of German military history, Moltke, who successfully led the Prussian army to victory over both Austria and France, placed his stamp on the German army. These writings go far in explaining the thinking behind one of the greatest military minds Germany has ever produced. The first section is a selection of Moltke's thoughts on the nature of war. In these essays, he makes clear that he believes war is a part of the natural order and therefore it behooves a nation to be as prepared as possible. It is the duty of the army of a nation to be strong and prepared for war in order that they may deter war by their readiness and quickly defeat the enemy if deterrence fails. He is also a fierce believer in a strong executive embodied for him by the King; he says that only one man can direct the state because government by majority is no more than mob rule. The essence of Moltke's thoughts on war is that the nation who is most prepared for war will succeed and victory proves the correctness of one's goal. In the second chapter Dr. Hughes presents a selection of works that deal with the organization of headquarters, how to conduct operations, and dealing with emerging technologies. It is clear that Moltke, who was a product of the German staff system, felt that it provided a model with many advantages over the systems of other nations. He provides examples of why the German system is superior as well as detailing the best way to harness the efficiencies of the system when conducting active operations. Perhaps most telling is the section on technology, it is clear that Moltke grasped the fundamental changes occurring in warfare because of the advent of new technologies such as the railroad, telegraph, repeating rifle, and modern artillery. He specifically warns about the dangers of trying to command from a distance through the use of the telegraph. The third chapter concerns a topic that German military theory concentrated on from Clausewitz until the end of World War II, the battle. Moltke agrees with Clausewitz that the central act of warfare is the battle itself, all else is details because it is the battle that decides campaigns. Moltke explains that the desire for decisive confrontation is also the desire for a quick end to a war. He believes as Clausewitz does that the best way to make war short is to not just beat your enemy but also destroy his capacity to resist. He shows nothing but contempt for guerilla fighters and blames the French francs tireurs for prolonging the Franco-Prussian War and thereby making their countrymen suffer more, this is the best example he cites of the uselessness of this tactic as the French were forced to surrender anyway. The final point that Moltke continually hammers away at is the duty of commanders at all levels to react to the changing situation in combat and use their own initiative instead of passively waiting for orders. Chapter four is a reprint of the Prussian Armies' instructions to large unit commanders of 1869 which were prepared while Moltke was chief of the Great General Staff. They proved their worth when the Prussian army overran France in just seven months the following year. These instructions would remain in force with the German army with slight modification until the end of the Second World War. The instructions pull together all the various threads of Moltke's thought and present them as a series of practical guides on how to conduct military operations. Moltke continually stresses the need for higher commanders to issue guidelines instead of orders and to rely on the initiative of subordinates. The fifth and final chapter is a selection of various writings from Moltke's tenure as chief of the Great General Staff and his thoughts on various aspects of military operations. The work is as varied as the organization of the army to the proper personnel to conduct reconnaissance. "Moltke on the Art of War" is an excellent selection of the writings of one of the greatest generals Germany has ever produced. Dr. Hughes has selected excellent texts that clearly demonstrate that while Moltke never published a coherent theory of war he certainly had one. This book is a must read for any serious student of German military history as Moltke's thoughts go far to explain German operational methods of the two World Wars.

3 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Strategy doesn't matter

By Raimonds Moltke is widely considered to be one of the most important military thinkers between the fall of Napoleon and the First World War. However bizarre it may seem, but this book, which is a compilation of his essays, maintains his view that in the conduct of military operations, a strategy plays much less significant weight than any armchair general may have wished. It proves that military operations on the ground have only very remote linkage with plans, maps and red or blue arrows. In either way, there is nothing romantic about mapping and charting. Moltke was above all a practical nineteenth-century German military man. It is intriguing, that in spite of his elaborated views and deep knowledge about military matters, he never commanded a field unit. One could imagine that, therefore, he might be a passionate about the impact of strategic considerations during the course of operations and combat. But he is not. He insists that strategic doctrines do not go much beyond the basic rules of common sense and decisions of military commanders taken on the ground are based not on rigid theories, but on available information - usually imperfect calculations of what can be done, rather than what theoretically ought to be done. "No plan of operations survives the first collision with the main body of the enemy." Moltke says that "war cannot be conducted from the green table" and underlines tactics over strategy throughout all his essays. He rejects the idea that systems could ever replace individual talent and considers local commanders and their qualities to be the most decisive factor in the conduct of operations. Local commanders should be allowed the freedom to act as their situations demanded; the officer has to earn the trust of the soldier through his personal conduct and he carries responsibility before God and his conscience for the lives of thousands of his men. A great deal of the book is about the nitty-gritty of military operations, like for example, concentric operations conducted by separated armies, which converge only during the course of battle, which presented a radical departure from the existing concepts of that time. It is considered to be Moltke's major contribution to the old dictum "march divided, fight

united". Overall, I would recommend this book. First, to get to know how to devise any plan, even that in your work or daily lives; and second - to realize that its execution is seldom done in a way you have had imagined. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Understanding Moltke By Customer Book arrived on time and as described. Easy return after first book was damaged in transit. Would recommend this book to anyone studying the development of Germany as a military power in the 19th century.

Prussian hero Field Marshal Helmuth Graf von Moltke was the architect of the German way of war.

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