On War: Is Clausewitz Still Relevant?

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Carl von Clausewitz occupies a position of well-deserved prominence in the small pantheon of Western military theorists. He bequeathed to us, in his unfinished masterpiece *Vom Kriege*,[1] a trove of provocative ideas, many of which retain remarkable contemporary value. Studying those ideas today is a challenge well rewarded: though we must cull through dusty examples and outdated technical elaborations, we still discover abundant pearls of wisdom that have retained their sheen for more than a century and a half.

But modern soldiers and statesmen cannot redeem the full value of Clausewitz's legacy if they fail to subject his propositions to serious debate. Unfortunately, Clausewitz is more often quoted than read, more venerated than understood. Many of his ideas on the purposes, nature, and conduct of war have been reduced to mere aphorisms to decorate the pages of field manuals. Clausewitz would hardly be pleased by this sort of idolatry. As an empiricist who tried to develop his theory scientifically, he was acutely aware of the need to test his hypotheses against reality. When the realities of warfare change over time, then old, previously accepted hypotheses need retesting and, if necessary, modification.

One facet of Clausewitzian theory that warrants revisiting is his very concept of war. Is it sufficiently comprehensive for modern American warriors and statesmen? I think not. For example, his singular concern for ground warfare was restrictive in its own time, let alone today when huge navies and air forces allow nations to project power far beyond the limits he could have imagined.

This article will focus specifically on three important developments that defy neat inclusion in Clausewitz's construct. The first of these, modern nuclear weaponry, is only the most dramatic of a series of technological achievements that make possible methods of warfare radically different from

what Clausewitz could conceive. The second development I will call *transnational constabulary warfare*.[2] Combating modern terrorism or large drug-dealing enterprises may require nations to mount warlike efforts against amorphous and shadowy transnational networks—an idea rather far removed from the Clausewitzian concept of war between states obliging the clash of opposing field armies. The third development is in the area of modern statecraft, which differs from the kind with which Clausewitz was familiar.

First, however, let us begin by briefly recounting how Clausewitz conceptualized war.

Clausewitz's Concept of War

First-time readers of Clausewitz typically find his style obtuse and are confused by what seems to be a profusion of definitions of war. In his first chapter alone, he alternatively describes war as "nothing but a duel on a larger scale,"[3] "an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will,"[4] and "a continuation of political activity by other means."[5] Consequently, critics are often tempted either to choose one of these assertions and demonstrate its obvious flaws or, in Napoleonic fashion, to destroy each in turn. Such straw-man approaches, however, do injustice to the subtlety of Clausewitz's attempt to define war in a more meaningful way.

Clausewitz tried to reach a fuller understanding of the nature of war by exploring his subject dialectically, an approach popular among 19th-century German philosophers.[6] First, he assumes that the object of war is political—to impose one's will on the enemy. He then logically constructs a thesis regarding "absolute" war—that is, war as a pure act of physical force abstracted from other variables (such as international law or scarce resources) that might limit it but are theoretically external to the concept of war itself. In this abstract sense, the aim of warfare is purely military—to disarm the enemy, rendering him powerless to resist the victor's will. The "pure," unencumbered interaction of military forces, Clausewitz deduces, leads inevitably through escalation to extremes of will and effort.

Into this "logical fantasy," however, steps reality.[7] War neither breaks out nor proceeds in isolation from external variables. For example, necessary

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resources (forces, materiel, etc.) may be unavailable or take excessive time to mobilize or develop. Allies may not cooperate. Physical barriers (vast distances, mountains, seas, etc.) may impede efforts to concentrate military power in space and time. "Culminating points" may be reached and action suspended.[8] Information and intelligence may be deficient or misused. Resolve and morale may be weak. Leaders may be daring, indecisive, or foolhardy. Chance interferes. "Friction" complicates planning and retards action.[9] Treaties, international law, or custom may circumscribe options. All of these and other variables act to limit the conduct of warfare, which creates an antithesis to the theoretical gravitation of war toward absolute violence.

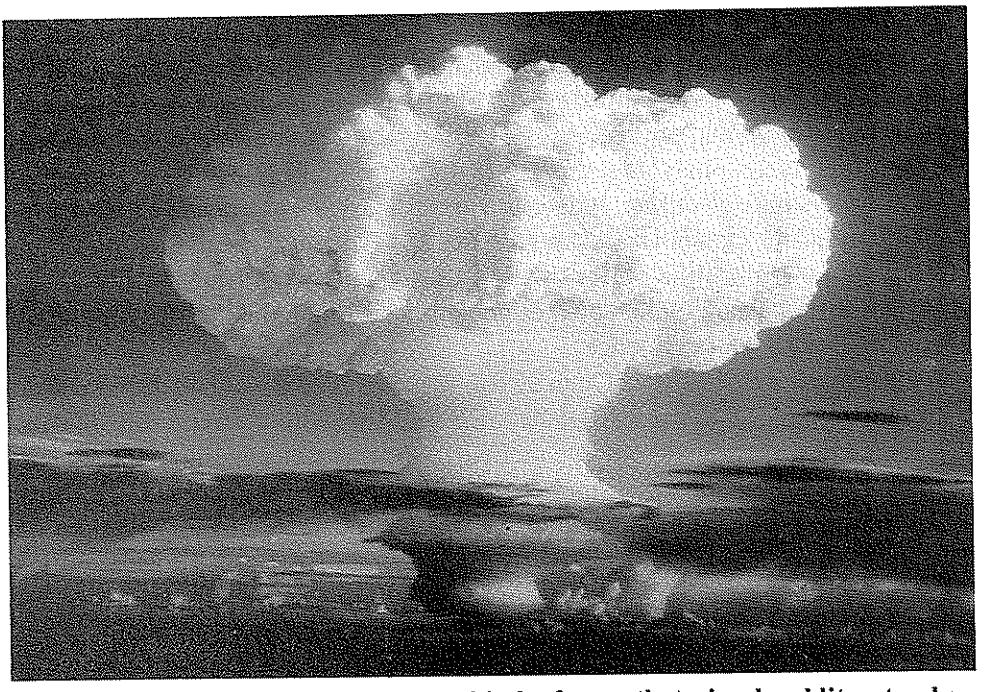
Thus, according to Clausewitz, war has a dual nature and is pulled by opposing tendencies toward escalation and limitation. Given this duality, the degree of effort that should be made in war becomes a matter of judgment that requires a constant assessment of the probabilities of success in the light of known circumstances. Since success or failure can be measured only with respect to the *political object*—the original motive for war—political policy must be the state's supreme consideration in judging what military objective to pursue and what level of effort to mount for its achievement. This leads logically to Clausewitz's famous dictum that war is "a true *political instrument*, a continuation of political activity by other means."[10]

With the addition of this third dimension—the subordination of war to policy—to his earlier construct of a duality of war, Clausewitz refines his concept by concluding that "as a total phenomenon its dominant tendencies always make war a remarkable trinity."[11] The first tendency of war—its intrinsic tendency—is toward unlimited violence and enmity. The second is the play of chance that real individuals and circumstances interject (the uncertainty so generated must be managed by the commander and his army in the planning and conduct of battle). The third is the subjection of war to rational direction by the political leadership of the governments engaged. Each war finds some point of balance among these variable tendencies, "like an object suspended between three magnets."[12]

Clausewitz in the Nuclear Age

How does Clausewitz's elaborate concept accommodate the vast evolution in the ways and means of waging war that has occurred over the past century or so? The answer, I believe, is surprisingly well, considering the immensity of developments in such areas as science, ideology, and organization that affect (or can affect) modern strategy and warfare.

However, one struggles vainly trying to fit some of these changes into the Clausewitzian model. Take, for example, the current and future possession by several nations of nuclear weapons that can be delivered over great distances.



"Nuclear weapons make possible a kind of war that simply obliterates key postulates underlying Clausewitz's concept of war."

In deriving his concept of war, Clausewitz assumed that war "never breaks out wholly unexpectedly, nor can it be spread instantaneously,"[13] and that "the very nature of war impedes the simultaneous concentration of all forces."[14] But these propositions would clearly lose validity in the context of a nuclear war.

Nuclear weapons vastly reduce the limitations that moderate conventional warfare. They make "absolute war," which Clausewitz considered as only a theoretical paradigm, far more realizable.[15] This argument is admittedly facile, but only because nuclear weapons make possible a kind of war that simply obliterates key postulates underlying Clausewitz's concept of war. To explore this point more deeply, consider three possible cases: (1) war between two belligerents,[16] only one of which possesses nuclear weapons; (2) war between two nuclear powers, neither of which possesses a first-strike capability[17]; and (3) war between two nuclear powers, one or both of which possess a first-strike capability.

Case 1: Assume that A is a nuclear power capable of achieving the assured destruction of B, which possesses only conventional military capabilities.[18] One can hardly imagine war under these conditions ever to be in B's interest,[19] except: if B can achieve strategic surprise and quickly capture or neutralize A's nuclear weapons; or if B's war objective does not threaten A's vital interests and A chooses to exercise self-restraint; or if A is restrained

from using its nuclear weapons for other reasons (e.g. pressure from allies, fear of inciting third parties, or the need to maintain an adequate nuclear reserve). Under such exceptional circumstances, a conventional war may ensue between A and B (as in Vietnam), for which a liberal interpretation of Clausewitz could account.

But if A, at any point before its imminent defeat, resolves to use its nuclear arsenal, B's surrender or defeat is assured.[20] The war then would lose virtually all elements of chance, which Clausewitz considered to be a continuous and universal element of war.[21] The courage, skill, and character of the military commanders and their armies would become largely irrelevant. Decisions taken would depend solely upon cold calculations by the political leaders: A's leaders would determine what increment of destruction to impose, and B's would determine how much destruction could be absorbed before capitulating. Such a situation essentially prevailed between the United States and Japan in August 1945.

Case 2: If A and C each can launch nuclear attacks that achieve the assured destruction of the other, yet neither can disarm the other with a preemptive first strike,[22] one can conceive of a war that results in the defeat of both sides. If A expects that C will respond in kind, then a massive nuclear attack by A on C would defy logic, since it would likely result not only in C's defeat, but in A's as well. Nations pursue war, according to Clausewitz, to achieve a political objective, and a *rational* political objective cannot include destruction of one's own nation.

Moreover, the enemy's possession of nuclear weapons would surely exacerbate the quandaries and insecurities that face decisionmakers during war, since such weapons can be delivered very quickly and their destructive potential is so massive. Political and military decisions which in Clausewitz's day could take hours, days, or even months may have to be made in minutes or seconds if a nuclear attack is believed to be imminent or underway. The fog of war in such pressured circumstances could be virtually impenetrable. Uncertainty would prevail, especially if an early attack isolated one or more key leaders by cutting communications. Enemy intentions would be unclear. Even a very limited nuclear attack by one side could be misinterpreted (is it a prelude to a massive attack?) and would at least cause the other to have to guess whether to respond tit-for-tat or to up the ante. Is extreme caution required, or must resoluteness be demonstrated? Miscalculation on either side could have devastating consequences. If, as Clausewitz claims, "war most closely resembles a game of cards,"[23] any nuclear exchange could quickly resemble fifty-two pick-up.

The key point here is that, in such an interaction, events could take place so rapidly amid so much confusion that political leaders could easily lose even minimal control over escalation (many find compelling the analogy to Europe in August 1914). Policy, then, could no longer have the continuous

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influence over military operations that the Clausewitzian model assumes.[24] Clausewitz's postulate that war "always lasts long enough for influence to be exerted on the goal and for its own course to be changed in one way or another—long enough, in other words, to remain subject to the action of a superior intelligence"[25]—would not necessarily hold.

Fear of such uncontrollable escalation gripped political leaders on both sides during the Cuban missile crisis, when the United States and Soviet Union stepped to the brink of nuclear war. Near the climax of the crisis, Nikita Khrushchev sent a message to President Kennedy warning that "contact of our ships . . . can spark off the fire of military conflict after which any talks would be superfluous because other forces and other laws would begin to operate—the laws of war."[26] Kennedy apparently agreed. He later replied to Khrushchev that developments were "approaching a point where events could have become unmanageable."[27] Robert Kennedy's memoir captures the President's agony over his belief that he "had initiated the course of events, . . . [but] he no longer had control over them."[28]

Clearly, at the height of the Cold War, Kennedy and Khrushchev did not share Clausewitz's high degree of confidence in the ability of political leaders to apply rational control to war—at least between nuclear powers.[29] Indeed, they apparently believed that nuclear weapons had created conditions in which war could "of its own independent will usurp the place of policy the moment policy had brought it into being; it would then drive policy out of office and rule by the laws of its own nature, very much like a mine that can explode only in the manner or direction predetermined by the setting."[30]

Quite naturally, Clausewitz dismissed such conditions as fantastic.

Case 3: Assume antagonists A and D each possess enough nuclear weapons to effectively destroy the other, but D has the added advantage of a first-strike capability.[31] This puts A in an unenviable position not unlike that of B in Case 1. Should a war that threatens either side's vital interests ensue, D would gain a decisive advantage by striking first against A's nuclear forces (thereby also extinguishing large portions of nearby population and industry).

The war could conceivably end in this single spasm or continue under conditions and logic resembling Case 1. But if A, fearing it might be disarmed by D, attempted to launch first (i.e. "use 'em or lose 'em,"), it could expect retaliation in kind from D. This would resemble Case 2 and would be similarly unamenable to Clausewitzian logic.

And what if each side possesses not only sufficient nuclear capability to destroy the other, but also to disarm the other with a preemptive first strike? This would create the greatest instability, as it would give a decisive advantage to haste (again, the image of August 1914 looms). As Thomas Schelling noted:

> The statesman who, knowing his instrument to be ready *on condition he strike quickly*, knowing that if he hesitates he may lose his instrument and his country, knowing his enemy to face the same dilemma, and seeing war not inevitable but a serious possibility, who hesitates to strike first is . . . in an awful position . . . that both he and his enemy can equally deplore. If neither prefers war, either or both may yet consider it imprudent to wait. He is a victim of a special technology that gives neither side assurance against attack, neither such a clear superiority that war is unnecessary, and both sides a motive to attack, a motive aggravated by the sheer recognition that each other is similarly motivated, each suspicious that the other may jump the gun in 'self defense.'[32]

Thus, the vulnerability of one side's nuclear forces to the enemy's quick, decisive preemption makes the task of controlling escalation immeasurably more complex than it had already been under Case 2. Once again, the Clausewitzian model, which presumes a substantial degree of rational political control in war, is found wanting. We should note, however, that as today's East-West detente broadens and the nuclear genie is lured part way back into the bottle, then the Clausewitzian model begins somewhat to reassert its relevance.

Clausewitz and Transnational Constabulary Warfare

The so-called war on drugs, into which the military services of the United States have been somewhat reluctantly conscripted,[33] is only the latest instance of the use of American military troops as constabulary forces. Precedents include, for example, the war with the Barbary pirates of Tripoli from 1802 to 1805; much of the Army's 19th-century frontier experience fighting various Indian tribes; Army border patrol duty from 1910 to 1916; Pershing's 1916 Punitive Expedition into Mexico to pursue and disperse Pancho Villa's *banditti* ("with scrupulous regard for [the] sovereignty of Mexico"[34]); and the extraordinary exploits of Marine Corps paladin Smedley D. Butler, who, for nearly three decades, sailed about with boatloads of

Marines protecting American business and political interests in Central America, the Caribbean, and the Far East.[35]

Skeptics will argue, with much justification, that use of the term "war" to describe transnational police actions against drug-dealing criminals (even if they involve some limited use of military forces) is merely a hyperbole that has become fashionable for journalists and useful for politicians trying to assuage uneasy citizens. After all, officials or political candidates regularly pronounce the need to "wage war" on this or that civic problem. But it seems likely that political frustration over the futility of alternative "solutions" to the drug problem and mounting concern over the vast outlawry, violence, wealth, and power of *narco-traffícantes* will inevitably lead to an increased role for American military forces in transnational anti-narcotics operations.[36]

When this occurs, the war on drugs will become less metaphorical and more literal. At least one shooting incident involving US military forces has already occurred.[37] Moreover, US armed forces are providing advice and training to civilian agents of the Drug Enforcement Administration and the US Border Patrol as well as to foreign armed forces, raising the possibility of a drug war scenario in which anti-narcotic operations could be planned, coordinated, and supported by the military, but actually fought by paramilitary proxies.

Any such campaign, however, whether military forces were engaged in direct combat or used only in a supporting role, would fall outside of the Clausewitzian concept of war, which considered only conflicts between states or nations. Indeed, in concluding that "war is simply a continuation of political intercourse, with the addition of other means,"[38] Clausewitz made clear that he considered war to be a form of political relations "between peoples and between their governments."[39] Thus, applying Clausewitz's logic, a conflict between antagonists who could not reasonably be expected to engage in any sort of political intercourse, as between a settled nation and a fractious band of transnational outlaws, could not accurately be called a war, however violent the interaction. This appears to be one way in which war, as defined by Clausewitz, differs from mere police activities.

The notion of fighting a war largely with nonmilitary proxies also accords poorly with the Clausewitzian concept. For Clausewitz, the principal expression of warfare was combat by military forces.[40] Appropriately subordinated to political authority, generals developed military objectives and war plans to support the political object. Armies were their essential instruments. In the drug war, however, the military services are among a host of agencies establishing objectives, setting priorities, planning operations, and engaging in combat against transnational narcotics traffickers. These include, for example, the Drug Enforcement Administration, the CIA, the FBI, the Border Patrol, and various foreign police and armed forces. This diffusion of responsibility and effort can be expected to enormously complicate the planning,

operations, and political control of such a war in a way that today would surely surprise a time-traveling Clausewitz.

And what of the political object itself? Crucial to Clausewitz's concept of war is the relationship between the political and military objectives; that is, the political object of a war "must determine the sacrifices to be made for it in magnitude and also in duration."[41] Underlying this proposition are at least two key assumptions. First, the ends to be achieved by war must be clearly established, tangible, obtainable, and understood by political and military leaders. According to Clausewitz, military commanders and staffs plan campaigns designed to achieve an operational objective that supports the desirable political end-state:

> No one starts a war—or rather, no one in his senses ought to do so—without first being clear in his mind what he intends to achieve by that war and how he intends to conduct it. The former is its political purpose; the latter its operational objective. This is the governing principle which will set its course, prescribe the scale of means and effort which is required, and make its influence felt throughout down to the smallest operational detail.[42]

Clearly implicit in this is a second assumption that any war has both a definable beginning and end. The end—the decision to make peace—is expected when either the operational objective supporting the desirable political end-state has been achieved or when "the expenditure of effort exceeds the value of the political object."[43] This is another way in which war—at least as Clausewitz defined it—can be fundamentally distinguished from police activities. War is an extraordinary undertaking designed to achieve an extraordinary political object. It usually ends in what passes for victory or defeat. On the other hand, a police force usually operates continuously—reactively and proactively—to respond to this or that disturbance and to reduce crime in its precincts to some acceptable level. Its victories are typically small and ephemeral—an arrest today on this beat, a crime tomorrow on that.

Does the current drug war comply with these two Clausewitzian assumptions? At this point, it seems fair to say that the political object—and hence the level of resources that ought to be devoted and the operational objectives that ought to be pursued by military (and paramilitary) forces—is ambiguous. There appears to be no defined end-state the achievement of which will entitle the US forces engaged to declare victory. If such a goal is eventually articulated, the appropriate test for determining whether Clausewitz's conditions are met is to see if there exists a reasonable measure of correspondence among operational objectives, the resources devoted to achieve them, and the established political object. However, if no desirable, attainable end-state is defined, military and other forces fighting transnational drug traffickers will be expected, like police forces, to operate more or less continuously, always vigilant and ready to stamp

out criminal activity here and there as necessary. Yet Clausewitz's concept does not admit of such an endless war.

Anti-narcotics operations represent merely one example of how American military forces can expect to be involved in transnational constabulary warfare. Anti-terrorist operations are another, and pose equally difficult problems for Clausewitzian theory. If anything, terrorist organizations, networks, and splinter groups are even more amorphous, shadowy, motley, and dispersed than transnational drug enterprises (which, of course, may themselves engage in terrorism).

Clausewitz and Modern Statecraft

Nuclear weapons and new types of warfare are not the only developments that challenge the Clausewitzian model. So do some important political changes. Among the most far-reaching of these is the high degree to which both the political and military vocations have become professionalized in the developed Western democracies and even in some totalitarian regimes, including the Soviet Union. The technical complexities of both modern warfare and national-level statecraft require more specialization than was typical during the wars studied by Clausewitz, when it was still common for monarchs such as Frederick and Napoleon to lead their armies on horseback. Seldom today can one find leaders highly competent in both political and military affairs.

This increased specialization naturally creates difficulties now and then in integrating military objectives with, and properly subordinating them to, political objectives. Indeed, it is not uncommon for modern statesmen to ask generals for "purely military advice" or for modern military officers to express frustration about politicians (even those who are Commanders in Chief!) who "interfere" in "purely military" operations.[44] Such attitudes would undoubtedly be nonsensical to Clausewitz, for whom war was an extension of politics.[45] This is not by any means to suggest that Clausewitz was wrong in any prescriptive sense. Today, as then, war *ought* to be an extension of politics, not some separate realm of activity guided exclusively by generals. But Clausewitz assumed that political leaders, in matters of war, were less dependent on the technical advice of soldiers than they typically are today.

Finally, the basic outline of government in the United States clashes with Clausewitz. In establishing a decentralized political system of separate institutions sharing powers, the US Constitution (which predated Clausewitz's writing but was unconnected to his education in the art and science of war) set up knotty arrangements for exercising civil control over the military that do not readily comport with important Clausewitzian assumptions. In positing that government provides the essential rational element of control over warfare, Clausewitz creates an image of the state as a person, from whom policy emerges "as the product of its brain."[46] He uses this image again in

stating that "policy is the guiding intelligence and war only the instrument."[47] Thus the government, as the "brain," conceives policy. Consequently, it determines whether, when, why, and (to the extent possible) under what conditions to go to war. It then provides a measure of rational guidance for the overall conduct of the war (again, to the extent possible within the context of the interaction of two states at war), exerting its influence to ensure that the scale of effort and the military objectives pursued are in consonance with the political object.

But what happens when there is more than one brain controlling the instrument? Our Founding Fathers, because they feared the threat to liberty that might conceivably be posed by an executive with too much prerogative over the size and use of military forces, distributed various war powers among independent branches of government.[48] Hence, the President is Commander in Chief, but the Congress has the exclusive right to raise, fund, and maintain armies and a navy, declare war, decide when and if there will be a draft, establish regulations governing the armed forces, and confirm appointments to high military position. The judiciary also shares some power, as demonstrated when it prohibited President Truman from running the steel mills during the Korean War.

It is not my purpose here to pass judgment, from the perspective of over 200 years of American history, on the wisdom of the Founding Fathers' distribution of war powers. Plenty of informed arguments on this score are widely available.[49] My intent is only to suggest that the sharing of war powers among independent political branches of government is not consistent with a key assumption—unified government—underlying Clausewitz's concept of war. This is less pertinent when there is broad political consensus between the President and Congress concerning foreign policy or when one branch defers to the other. But when there is a high degree of political fragmentation and debate between the President and Congress over foreign policy objectives and the appropriate uses of military force, one can expect a corresponding diminution of the American government's capacity for applying rational control over war (especially a large or protracted one). This situation is exacerbated by

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differing interpretations of constitutionally designated prerogatives. Hence the War Powers Act of 1973 and the continuing controversy that surrounds it.

Conclusions

The foregoing analysis suggests that, for the United States, some important historical developments in methods of warfare and statecraft are at variance with key assumptions underlying Clausewitz's carefully constructed concept of war. Among these are modern nuclear weaponry, transnational constabulary warfare, the increased specialization of both warriors and statesmen, and the Constitution of the United States.

Clausewitz's concept of war assumes that considerable limitations in the ways, means, and purposes of war will moderate the natural tendency of war to escalate to extremes. Consequently, he postulates both a need and a substantial capacity for political leaders to subordinate war to their rational control to achieve the political objective that is the original motive for war. But nuclear weapons (and the means to deliver them quickly) remove many, perhaps most, of the limitations considered by Clausewitz and create the danger that uncontrollable escalation will lead to spasms of destruction wholly disproportional to rational political objectives.[50] Clearly, nuclear weapons make possible a type of warfare inconceivable to Clausewitz, who believed that Napoleonic warfare approached the absolute extremities that war could achieve.[51]

The immense destructiveness of nuclear weapons and the consequent reluctance to use them (especially against a nation that could retaliate in kind) also created the conditions for the Cold War, in which powerful nations competed without fighting directly at all. War by algebra, in which comparative figures of strength became the principal means of military competition between the world's superpowers, was the result, featuring both a tremendous mobilization of military and industrial might by each side and, from time to time, negotiations aimed at controlling the competition.

In the United States, this algebraic war, the political object of which has not been military victory but deterrence (that is, persuading the enemy not to launch a *real* war), also spawned a new type of strategist—neither military man nor politician. These civilian defense intellectuals, applying new analytical techniques such as game theory and dynamic modeling, wrested from the military much of the claim to expertise in the art of strategy. All of these developments would undoubtedly shock the ghost of Clausewitz, should he descend to peek at how his theory is holding up in the late 20th century. War by algebra, already contemplated by some theorists who preceded Clausewitz, was dismissed by him as an "obvious fallacy."[52]

Nuclear weaponry is an illustrative example, albeit an extreme one, of how technology has changed the nature of war to a degree not accommodated by Clausewitz's model. It has not rendered his theory wholly obsolete, however, any

more than Einstein's discovery of relativity rendered Newton's laws of motion obsolete. Just as Newton's theory approximates reality under certain conditions, Clausewitz's theory explains much about conventional war even today. The wars in Vietnam, the Falklands, and Afghanistan showed that, at least under the conditions of Case 1 above, nuclear powers may fight without resort to their nuclear arsenals.

Nevertheless, some emerging forms of non-nuclear warfare are also inconsistent with Clausewitz's paradigm. This is certainly the case with transnational constabulary warfare. Though Clausewitz supposed that wars were waged between states or nations, the dangers to national security interests posed by such activities as narcotics trafficking or terrorism may make necessary warlike actions against autonomous, non-state organizations and transnational criminal networks. Certain types of transnational constabulary warfare may also fail to conform to other Clausewitzian premises: for example, his assumptions that wars are fought almost exclusively with military forces by means of combat, and that essential conditions for victory (and consequently for ending the war) would follow necessarily from the political object which was the original motive for war.

One might argue, not unreasonably, that transnational constabulary warfare is aberrant—that it is not war per se, but only takes on some of the trappings of war in the context of what remains essentially a police action. But today, as the drug-trafficking problem demonstrates, some transnational criminal enterprises may be able to accumulate greater disposable wealth than some small countries (allowing them, among other things, to recruit their own armed forces and buy modern weaponry) and to achieve a level of sophistication in command, control, and organization that makes them formidable opponents. Combat against such organizations may reach a level of intensity which renders it difficult to distinguish, at least at the tactical level, from more traditional forms of warfare. This holds true especially if one considers the further possibility that a transnational criminal network—of terrorists, for example—may someday acquire weapons of mass destruction.

Furthermore, given the spectacular turn of events in Eastern Europe today, it is likely that the US military will place increasing focus on expeditionary forces and transnational constabulary warfare. A theory of war which excludes, by definition, a form of warfare that may increasingly occupy modern American warriors and statesmen is surely inadequate.

Neither does Clausewitz's model square with certain important political developments. Specifically, for modern industrialized nations the arts of both war and government have become far more technocratic and complex than Clausewitz could have imagined. Both fields have become so specialized that one is far less likely to find national political leaders who can claim competence in matters of war. Thus, they tend to rely more on military experts for advice,

and there is even a greater tendency than when Clausewitz wrote (and his writing suggests that the tendency was strong then!) to consider certain matters of war "purely military" and others "purely political." This false dichotomy increases the difficulty modern statesmen face in integrating military with political objectives and ensuring that war is a true instrument of policy.

Finally, the US Constitution's dispersal of war powers among independent political institutions—and continuing disputes over how properly to interpret this dispersion—creates unique problems for the United States in subjecting war to rational control as an instrument of policy.

Thus Clausewitz's concept of war needs substantial modification, though not complete overhaul, if it is to be sufficiently comprehensive for modern American warriors and statesmen. Some thoughtful ideas have already been put forward by today's theorists[53] and deserve the attention of those interested in understanding the nature of war.

NOTES

1. The best English edition is Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. and ed. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1976).

2. Two decades ago, Morris Janowitz saw the likelihood of increasing constabulary missions for the armed forces. See Morris Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier* (New York: The Free Press, 1971), p. 418 and Epilogue, passim. The term "transnational" is more accurate than "international" in this context, since it connotes warfare against autonomous, non-state actors rather than sovereign states.

3. Clausewitz, p. 75.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid., p. 87. This is the most often quoted definition of war attributed to Clausewitz.

6. Though Clausewitz's approach was certainly not as sterile or tidily arranged as those of Kant or Hegel. He seems to temper his intellectual enthusiasm for logical elegance with a strong respect for empirical reality.

7. Clausewitz, p. 78.

8. This is when the balance of strength shifts from attacker to defender because of the attacker's overextension, exhaustion, etc. This Clausewitzian concept has been revived in the US Army's Air-Land Battle doctrine. See US Army, FM 100-5, *Operations* (Washington: GPO, 1986), pp. 181-82.

9. See Clausewitz, pp. 119-21.

10. Ibid., p. 87. My italics.

11. Ibid., p. 89.

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid., p. 78.

14. Ibid., p. 80.

15. Clausewitz did, however, believe that under Napoleon, war "rather closely approached [its] true character, its absolute perfection. . . . [A]ll limits disappeared." See Clausewitz, pp. 592-93.

16. The belligerents may be single nations or coalitions.

17. The phrase "first-strike capability" indicates an ability to launch a preemptive, disarming nuclear strike against another nuclear power. Thus, it is possible for a nation to use nuclear weapons first ("first use") without achieving a "first strike."

18. "Assured destruction" is typically considered to mean the ability to destroy one third of a nation's population and two thirds of its industrial capacity. Clearly most nations would find far less destruction unacceptable.

19. This assumes B's government is rational. Assuming rationality is an unfortunate limitation on virtually every theory of human behavior (including Clausewitz's), since irrational behavior defies prediction.

20. That is, unless another nuclear power comes to the aid of B. Then, however, Case 1 would no longer be valid—either Case 2 or Case 3 would ensue.

21. Clausewitz, pp. 85 and 89.

22. This situation currently obtains between the United States and the Soviet Union.

23. Clausewitz, p. 86.

24. Ibid., p. 87.

25. Ibid.

26. Letter from Chairman Khrushchev to President Kennedy, 27 October 1962, US Department of State *Bulletin*, 12 November 1962, pp. 741-43, cited in Graham T. Allison, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1971), p. 132. See also Robert F. Kennedy, *Thirteen Days: A Memoir of the Cuban Missile Crisis* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1969), p. 87.

27. Letter from President Kennedy to Chairman Khrushchev, 28 October 1962, US Department of State *Bulletin*, 12 November 1962, pp. 745-46, cited in Allison, p. 132.

28. Robert F. Kennedy, pp. 69-71.

29. Perhaps both Khrushchev and Kennedy exaggerated their concerns over the unmanageability of the crisis to instill uncertainty and caution in the opponent. However, several reexaminations of the affair by participants and analysts have persuaded me that the concerns were genuine.

30. Clausewitz, p. 87.

31. Again, the belligerents may be single nations or coalitions.

32. Thomas C. Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1966), p. 224.

33. Legal constraints continue to restrict military forces largely to a supporting role. Clearly, however, many officials expect the military's current involvement in drug-fighting missions to expand. See, for example, William Matthews, "Drug Fight: What Kind of War?" *Army Times*, 18 December 1989, pp. 14-16.

34. The Mexican government nonetheless considered the expedition a profound violation of Mexican sovereignty. Frank Tompkins, *Chasing Villa* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Military Service Publishing Co., 1934), p. 70.

35. See Lowell Thomas, *Old Gimlet Eye: Adventures of Smedley D. Butler* (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1933).

36. A post-Civil War law ("Posse Comitatus") restricts federal military forces from engaging in domestic police activities, including searches, seizures, and arrests.

37. The incident involved a Marine Corps reconnaissance unit that exchanged fire with drug smugglers along Arizona's border with Mexico.

38. Clausewitz, p. 605.

39. Ibid.

40. Ibid., p. 95.

41. Ibid., p. 92.

42. Ibid., p. 579.

43. Ibid., p. 92. Clausewitz recognized, of course, that the original political objects can change during the war.

44. For example, see William Manchester's discussion of McClellan, Mitchell, and MacArthur in *American Caesar* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1978), pp. 629-77. See also Harry G. Summers, Jr., *On Strategy* (New York: Dell, 1982), p. 136.

45. Clausewitz, pp. 605-09.

46. Ibid., p. 88.

47. Ibid., p. 607.

48. Today, of course, it is the prospect of adventurism, not tyranny, which most disturbs those who favor strong checks on presidential war powers.

49. See George C. Edwards III and Wallace Earl Walker, eds., *National Security and the US Constitution* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1988), esp. pp. 136-58.

50. Ironically, the recognition that nuclear escalation could usurp policy has prompted political leaders (at least in this country) to try to effect tighter control over military forces. Elaborate procedures and lines of authority have been established in an effort to prevent accidental precipitation of a nuclear crisis. In the Cuban missile crisis, the potential for a nuclear holocaust justified, and modern communications made possible, tighter personal control of military operations by political leaders than perhaps had been seen since the age of Clausewitz, when many monarchs still led their nations' armies in person.

51. Clausewitz, pp. 592-93.

52. Ibid., p. 76.

53. See, for example, Michael I. Handel, "Clausewitz in the Age of Technology," in *Clausewitz and Modern Strategy*, ed. Michael I. Handel (London: Frank Cass, 1986), pp. 51-92. Handel suggests one way of incorporating technological and technocratic changes into the Clausewitzian model.