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**CHALLENGING THE ETERNAL CLAUSEWITZ**

By /par Colonel CJR Davis

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Abstract

The author argues that an exclusive, Clausewitzian based, strategic level doctrine will not meet the evolving demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. To prosecute modern, highly complex, multi-dimensional operations, military leaders must possess a broader perspective on conflict and this cannot be found within the various chapters of *On War*. Other classical war theorists and indeed modern academics and practitioners in the field of conflict resolution offer valuable insights and theories concerning the nature and conduct of war and conflict that cannot be ignored. The paper discusses the relevance of doctrine and theory to the military institution, briefly examines conflict in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and then looks at three of Clausewitz's main ideas: the duality of war; the trinity; and the political object as the rational purpose behind war. The examination demonstrates that though Clausewitz's theories remain pertinent they are subject to misinterpretation and, in some cases, are limited in scope. The need to broaden the study of the classical and modern works on war and conflict is proposed.

## CHALLENGING THE ETERNAL CLAUSEWITZ

It was my ambition to write a book that would not be forgotten after two or three years, and that possibly might be picked up more than once by those who are interested in the subject.<sup>1</sup>  
Clausewitz, 1818

### INTRODUCTION

Many post-Cold War conflicts might be characterized as post-Clausewitzian, in so far as they do not exhibit the traditional view of two or more states fighting each other with organized military forces both attempting to break each other's will to fight. Rather, they are intra-state affairs "involving fragmented decision-making and disorganised forces directed at civilian populations."<sup>2</sup> Into these very complex emergencies western peace enforcement forces - trained, educated, and equipped according to a predominantly Clausewitzian theory of war - intervene in the hope of providing a meaningful contribution to the conflict resolution process. In an age characterized by intra-state conflict, does the predominant study and application of Clausewitzian theory provide an adequate theoretical foundation for third party interventionist operations? More specifically, as the CF prepares to publish its first strategic level doctrine manual should Clausewitz provide the sole influence for our military thought and doctrine?

This paper argues that an exclusive, Clausewitzian based, strategic level doctrine will not meet the evolving demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. To prosecute today's highly complex, multi-dimensional operations, military leaders must possess a broader perspective on conflict and this cannot be found within the various chapters of *On War*. Other classical war theorists and indeed modern academics and practitioners in the field of conflict resolution offer valuable insights and theories concerning the nature and conduct of war and conflict that cannot be ignored.

Consequently, this paper will discuss the relevance of doctrine and theory to the military institution, briefly examine conflict in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and then look at three of Clausewitz's main ideas: the duality of war; the trinity; and the political object as the rational purpose behind war. The examination will demonstrate that though Clausewitz's theories remain pertinent they are subject to misinterpretation and, in some cases, are limited in scope. The need to study the classical and modern works on war and conflict will be proposed.

## **THEORY AND DOCTRINE**

Military forces fight or impose their will through two key components or forces: the physical component which refers to the machinery of war such as the weapons platforms, equipment, materiel and resources, tactics, techniques, procedures, training, and personnel; and, the moral component, which embodies the cohesion and will to fight derived from appropriate leadership, ethos, command philosophy, and professionalism.<sup>3</sup> Overarching these two components is what the British forces call the conceptual component that is the thought process behind the ability to fight.<sup>4</sup> The conceptual component, from which the moral and physical components derive their guidance and direction, comprises the principles of war, doctrine, and force development. It is therefore imperative that the intellectual arch or thought process is as comprehensive and relevant as possible to ensure that the ways and means to fight is resident within a given force. This paper focuses on the doctrinal element of the conceptual component. Consequently, the discussion begins by examining the relationship between theory and doctrine.

As Clausewitz is widely recognized as the pre-eminent theorist on war, it is fitting to turn to him first for guidance. He believed that: “Theory exists so that one need not start afresh each time sorting out the material and plowing through it, but will find it ready to hand and in good order. It is meant to educate the mind of the future commander, or, more accurately, to guide him in his self education, not to accompany him to the battlefield.”<sup>5</sup> He recognized that a theory of war is not mathematical and its principles cannot be applied in a scientifically reproducible manner to provide solutions to problems. Rather a good theory, “can give the mind insight into the great mass of phenomena and of their relationships, then leave it free to rise into the higher realms of action.”<sup>6</sup> Sir Julian Corbett, the British maritime theorist, agreed with Clausewitz by arguing that, “Its [theory] main practical value is that it can assist a capable man to acquire a broad outlook whereby he may be surer his plan shall cover all the ground, and whereby he may with greater rapidity and certainty seize all the factors of a sudden situation.”<sup>7</sup>

More specifically, a theory according to The Concise Oxford Dictionary is a supposition that explains something, especially one based on principles independent of the phenomena to be explained. For it to be valid it should be at least three things: “compact in description, a clue to explanation, and a tool for better work.”<sup>8</sup> Consequently a good theory should not constrain but should enable an individual to think creatively and critically to conceptualize novel solutions especially under time constrained and often demanding conditions. This notion is reinforced and expanded by Mao Tse-Tung in his military writings. He rightly supports Clausewitz in stating that theory is a means to be used wisely.

“All military laws and military theories which are in the nature of principles are the experience of past wars summed up by people in former days or in our own times. We should seriously study these lessons, paid for in blood, which are a heritage of past wars. That is one point. But there is another. We should put these conclusions to the test of

our own experience, assimilating what is useful, rejecting what is useless, and adding what is specifically our own. The latter is very important, for otherwise we cannot direct a war.”<sup>9</sup>

Military doctrine, on the other hand, is a uniform appreciation of past experiences that becomes the body of thought that is taught. It provides advice on the best way of employing military forces but it must be recognized that though it is authoritative, it requires judgement in application and cannot be applied without thought or common sense.<sup>10</sup> “Its purpose is to guide, explain and educate, and to provide the basis for further study and informed debate.”<sup>11</sup> Good doctrine that is studied and understood by all will contribute to unity of effort and purpose as those using it will have a common understanding of past experience leading to greater clarity of thought.<sup>12</sup>

Strategic level doctrine can be best termed as fundamental doctrine. “Fundamental doctrine forms the foundation for all other types of doctrine. Its scope is broad and its concepts are abstract. Essentially, fundamental doctrine defines the nature of war, the purposes of military forces, the relationship of military force to other instruments of power, and similar subject matter on which less abstract beliefs are founded.”<sup>13</sup> Though doctrine in general must evolve in response to experience, technological innovation and thought, fundamental doctrine should remain relatively stable, as it comprises basic concepts and theories that to be valid must be relatively insensitive to political philosophy or technological change.<sup>14</sup> That is not to say that fundamental doctrine does not change at all, as it surely must to reflect new experiences and realities. For example, the doctrine associated with the Cold War is very different from that required in the world we live in today and indeed today’s doctrine will be different from the doctrine required 30 years hence. Fundamental doctrine is the source from which joint and

environmental doctrine is derived and, “it ultimately influences the way in which policy and plans are developed, forces are organized and trained, and equipment is procured.”<sup>15</sup>

The relationship between theory and doctrine is slightly more difficult to explain but it is essential to our understanding. As mentioned above, doctrine is the body of accepted experiences in a nationally based armed forces and it is used by those within the institution as a guide in the conduct of its operations, activities, and so on. Whereas theory is distinct from doctrine in that it is the means by which the individual military leader understands the past from the perspective of the present. Theory provides structure and common points of reference as opposed to doctrine that gathers together the details of what has worked successfully in particular/repeated contexts of the past. Theory, therefore, must be studied and reflected upon as it influences the development of doctrine and its employment. To build a doctrine solely on one theory when more are available limits the doctrine’s relevance and applicability.

## **THE SPECTRUM OF 21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY CONFLICT**

The end of the Cold War and the lessons of the past decade provide the impetus to review one’s strategic level doctrine. The absence of the threat of global nuclear war has unleashed new threats to world peace and security. Armed conflict will continue and indeed increase in violence and impact as people within developing and weak states fight wars of liberation, unification, and secession in attempts to resist domination, exclusion, persecution, or dispossession of lands and resources.<sup>16</sup> Exacerbated by resource scarcity brought on by environmental degradation and conflict, future wars will be about communal survival related to

cultural and racial clash. In “The Coming Anarchy” Robert D Kaplan, a foreign correspondent, foresees that these wars will be subnational, meaning that it will be hard for states and local government to protect their own citizens physically.<sup>17</sup> Samuel Huntington, a political scientist, in his article and later national bestseller “The Clash of Civilizations” set forth the notion that “conflicts between groups in different civilizations will be more frequent, more sustained and more violent than conflicts between groups in the same civilization.”<sup>18</sup> Others have characterised the 20<sup>th</sup> century as the period of great wars between ambitious winner states. “The future will see these reconciled winner-states pitted against weak loser populations in failed states and regions.”<sup>19</sup> In addition to wars of legitimacy brought on by communal needs, new threats to global security in the form of transnational anti-state organizations such as warlords, criminals, drug cartels, mercenaries and tribes will exploit the anarchy created by state incompetence.<sup>20</sup> These organizations will also contribute to many ongoing intra-state conflicts through the provision of arms, money and personnel thereby transforming the conflict from a local action to a large and extremely complicated transnational one.<sup>21</sup>

Academics in the field of conflict resolution have also been studying intra-state conflict, and, though from a different viewpoint, they have come to the same conclusions. Edward Azar’s theory of protracted social conflict (PSC) evolved from his interest in the fact that the majority of post-1945 conflicts have been intra-state vice inter-state. He argued that most theorists were basing their arguments on the Clausewitzian inter-state notion of war and therefore were not focusing on the causes, effects and international implications of ethnic and other forms of communal conflict.<sup>22</sup> Specifically, the absence of violence within a conflict was associated with a state of peace. Azar wrote that this concept ignored covert, latent or non-violent conflict and

therefore was too simplistic to be applied to contemporary intra-state situations. He concluded that: “many conflicts currently active in the underdeveloped parts of the world are characterized by a blurred demarcation between internal and external sources and actors. Moreover, there are multiple causal factors and dynamics, reflected in changing goals, actors and targets. Finally these targets do not show clear starting and terminating points.”<sup>23</sup> He determined that the source of PSC was based on four variables or preconditions: communal content, that is the various identity groups based on religion, race, ethnicity etc within a state; grievances resulting from needs deprivation be they political, economic, developmental or social; governance, usually characterized by incompetent and authoritative regimes; and the role of international linkages used to exploit mainly political-economic relations.<sup>24</sup>

What is clear from the above discussion is that nations that see global peace and security as an essential component of their national security strategy will be increasingly challenged in determining a response to the more prevalent intra-state conflict. The “expeditionary west” will be condemned to protect its interests via a “triage approach to diplomacy, aid and intervention based on financial and lifestyle-protection” in an ever-increasing competition between national and human interests.<sup>25</sup> But more importantly, the prevalence of intra-state conflict with potential intervention by others now challenges the commonly accepted state versus state Clausewitzian theory of war. This will be discussed in greater detail later in the paper.

## **CONTEMPORARY CONFLICT RESOLUTION THEORY**

Accepting the prevalence of intra-state conflict and the potential need for third parties to intervene in some manner it is instructive to review quickly the major aspects of contemporary conflict resolution theory prior to turning our attention to Clausewitz. First, conflict *per se* is an integral part of human relations and it cannot be entirely eliminated or controlled. The ultimate aim is to transform the violent expression of conflict in to one expressed through non-violent means.<sup>26</sup> Second, it is now widely recognized that the resolution effort must be prosecuted on several tracks using five approaches to include coercion, mediation, arbitration, negotiation, and adjudication.<sup>27</sup> Third, the relationship between conflict resolution theory and the conduct of peace support operations has evolved significantly since the classical Hammarskjold/Pearson peacekeeping principles were articulated in the 1950s. At that time peacekeeping was based on the impartial, non-forcible deployment to a conflict area with the consent of the conflict parties. The aim was to ensure international peace and stability in the conflict area while the parties themselves or through intermediaries resolved the underlying cause of the conflict.

Today, it is agreed that there may be a role for military forces throughout the complete spectrum of conflict resolution. The complexity of modern protracted social conflict may result in military forces being employed as pre-emptive forces prior to the outbreak of violence. During crisis situations prior to open hostilities, they can also be used to help reduce tensions and ultimately, should war breakout, military forces can be used to enforce a peace. They then transfer to the traditional “Pearsonian” roles during the period of conflict termination and the subsequent peace-building period.<sup>28</sup> The underlying theme is that the application of state sanctioned violence to enforce the “will” will remain because the collective feeling is that peace is preferable to violent conflict in a given situation.

Consequently, from a national strategic perspective, any attempt to resolve a conflict will be multi-disciplinary, using all the levers of power such as persuasion, inducement, coercion, sanctions and force. It is recognized by nations that conflict resolution implies more than the application of hard power in a coercive zero-sum game where the absence of co-operative elements becomes the essential defining characteristic.<sup>29</sup> To many, zero-sum equals Clausewitz, which leads us appropriately into an examination of Clausewitzian thought.

## **CLAUSEWITZ AND THE 21ST CENTURY**

Recognizing the imperatives of fundamental doctrine presented earlier, the following discussion of Clausewitz is confined to the theoretical nature of war, avoiding reference to the operation level. The key elements of Clausewitzian thought are the duality of war encompassing the opposing tendencies of escalation and limitation, the “paradoxical trinity” of the people, the military, and the government, and the political object as the rational purpose for war. These themes deserve serious attention in turn.

### **The Duality of War**

As said by Clausewitz: “When two ideas form a true logical antithesis each complimentary to the other, then fundamentally each is implied in the other. If the limitations of our mind do not allow us to comprehend both simultaneously, and discover by antithesis the whole of one in the whole of the other, each will nevertheless shed enough light on the other to

clarify many of the details.”<sup>30</sup> Accordingly he developed an abstract concept of war which is referred to as absolute war. In its ideal form, it would be irrational, apolitical, uncontrollable, possess a tendency to escalate to the extreme, be fought as a zero sum game until a victor is declared, and consume all resources without calculation.<sup>31</sup> However he recognized that though war may have a tendency to move in this direction it is in reality “limited” by a variety of variables such as strong or weak leadership, imperfect intelligence, differences in resources, friction, the fog of war, and political will to name a few. The ideal limited war would be the exact opposite of absolute war in that it would be rational, politically controlled, not fought to the end, not waged continually and only the requisite force used.<sup>32</sup> This ideal limited war is not necessarily achieved in practice due to a variety of factors just as the ideal absolute war is not achieved.

Unfortunately Clausewitz limits the impact of his theory by stating: “War can be of two kinds, in the sense that either the objective is *to overthrow the enemy* – to render him politically helpless or militarily impotent...or *merely to occupy some of his frontier-districts* so that we can annex them or use them for bargaining at the peace negotiation.”<sup>33</sup> This comment is found in the notes preceding the very readable Book One of *On War* and therefore is read and cited often. When combined with Clausewitz’s belief in the maximum use of force to achieve decisive results in the shortest possible time and his belief in the destruction of the enemy’s forces as the shortest way to achieving political objectives, one can easily conclude that this is the method espoused by Clausewitz.<sup>34</sup> However his actual theory tends not to support it. Paret argues that the dual nature of war forms the basis for all acts of organized mass violence from wars of

annihilation to armed demonstration.<sup>35</sup> This is not the commonly accepted view but should be, as will be explained shortly.

Regardless, modern doctrine has interpreted Clausewitz's dual nature to mean two types of war: Unlimited or Total War with the complete defeat of the opponent as the overriding aim; and, Limited War which possesses more modest objectives such as trading rights, territory, acceptable political regimes and access to resources.<sup>36</sup>

It is Clausewitz's duality of war that presents the first problem for modern day doctrine writers. The current interpretations of his thought clearly address interstate conflict as was experienced in the Gulf War in 1991 and is presently ongoing between India and Pakistan. Should these types of conflict occur in the future the concept of the overthrow and decisive action will remain. But can his theory provide strategic insight for nations planning to intervene as third parties into areas for either national or human interests? As was evident from the recent operations in Kosovo, modern interventions from a strategic perspective demand restraint, limited resources, precision, and minimum collateral damage but also decisive action and speedy victory. This is contrary to the common interpretation of Clausewitz. How does one reconcile these opposing demands? What do the classical theorists have to say?

In fact the application of limited force and intervention is not just a 21<sup>st</sup> century phenomenon. Corbett devoted a chapter to this issue in *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy*. He noted that Clausewitz was embarrassed by his inability to fit a concept he defined as "Limited by Contingent" into his theory of war. "Nor is that attitude peculiar to the case where one state

gives another support in a matter of no great moment to itself. Even when both share a major interest, action is clogged with diplomatic reservations, and as a rule the negotiators only pledge a small and limited contingent, so the rest can be kept in hand for any special ends the shift in policy may require.”<sup>37</sup> In this case a country with no vital interest made war by furnishing the main belligerent with a very small force of specific size. Corbett goes on to say that Clausewitz saw this as a new form of war that was different from his war limited by object.<sup>38</sup> After further analysis, Corbett concluded that, “in reality it is not a *form* of war, but a *method* that may be employed either for limited or unlimited war.”<sup>39</sup>

Jomini may have helped form Corbett’s thoughts as he considered intervention to be a *kind* of war. “Intervention in the external relations of states is more legitimate, and perhaps advantageous. It may be doubtful whether a nation has the right to interfere in the internal affairs of another people; but it certainly has a right to oppose it when it propagates disorder which may reach the adjoining states.”<sup>40</sup> Sun Tzu does not discuss limited war and intervention as such but Handel argues that limited war is implied by SunTzu’s desire to win at the lowest possible cost.<sup>41</sup> Handel’s argument is logical in that limited war is usually associated with minimum investment with respect to a nation’s resources.

Given that intervention is a *kind* of war strategic leaders can default to Clausewitz’s idea that, “wars must vary with the nature of their motives and the situations which give rise to them.”<sup>42</sup> “The first, the supreme, the most far reaching act of judgement that the statesmen and commander have to make is to establish by that test [i.e. the political motives and special circumstances]<sup>43</sup> the kind of war on which they are embarking; neither mistaking for, nor trying

to turn it into, something that is alien in nature. This is the first of all strategic questions and the most comprehensive.”<sup>44</sup> By deciding on the kind of war to be waged strategic planners, political and military, should be able to choose whether to be involved at all and to determine the appropriate resources to apply to the situation. Will it be conventional, guerrilla, protracted, short, supported by the people, or asymmetric in that one side will fight an unlimited war while the other is limited? Will it be an intervention with limited objectives? The answers to these questions and many more will enable the planners to allocate the appropriate means to achieve the desired endstate. If a military is not equipped or trained to fight an interventionary war it must reassess its ability to participate. Of course once the operation begins, as cautioned by Mao, one must continue to reassess the situation in order to adapt to the changing nature of war.<sup>45</sup> Machiavelli in his *The Discourses* goes on at the length concerning the advantages of adapting to the changing nature of war.<sup>46</sup> Failure to adapt can lead to disastrous results, as was the case for the US in Vietnam.

Modern day interventions, therefore, are not in conflict with Clausewitz’s duality theory but are really non-traditional limited operations not suited to the “conventional” notion of war. Of course, they are not the *kind of war* espoused by Clausewitz but they are the *limited war* as defined by his theory. Jomini recognized this reality and therefore included it Chapter 1 - The Relation of Diplomacy to War of his *The Art of War*. The duality theory appears to remain valid; but what of the ‘paradoxical trinity’? Has the emergence of state and non-state actors and the perceived upcoming collapse of the state provided a critical blow to Clausewitz’s trinity? I think not.

## The Trinity

The second of Clausewitz's key concepts is the: "paradoxical trinity – composed of primordial violence, hatred and enmity, which are to be regarded as a blind natural force; of the play of chance and probability within which the creative spirit is free to roam; and of its element of subordination, as an instrument of policy, which makes it subject to reason alone. The first of these three aspects mainly concerns the people; the second the commander and his army; the third the government."<sup>47</sup> He further states that, "the political aims are the business of government alone."<sup>48</sup>

Martin van Creveld is the most outspoken critic of Clausewitz's trinitarian theory. In *The Transformation of War* he argues that the trinity will become obsolete as the concept of the territorial state declines since the state will not be able to protect its citizens from the emerging threats.<sup>49</sup> His vision of the future sees conflict taking on a low intensity orientation with forces degenerating into police forces or mere gangs no longer able to fight wars using armies in pursuit of national aims.<sup>50</sup> "The Clausewitzian Universe rests on the assumption that war is made predominantly by states, or, to be exact, by governments...It follows that, where there are no states, the threefold division into government, army, and people does not exist in the same form."<sup>51</sup> He later asserts that when states confront non-states the trinity breaks down and when non-states fight non-states the trinity does not apply at all.<sup>52</sup>

To counter Van Creveld's view it is necessary to examine the notion of the state or government and then correctly interpret the trinity and its interactions. Kim Nossal in *The Patterns of World Politics* traces the evolution of the sovereign nation state from the earliest times to the present. He concluded that over the centuries humankind divided itself based on an identification with a political community from small villages through to large civilizations. The identity was based not on territory per se but on how people defined themselves, be it from a kinship and tribe, religious (true believer versus non-believer), and/or civilization (civilized versus barbarian) perspective.<sup>53</sup> These elements were present in feudal times well before the establishment of the modern state system by the Peace of Westphalia in 1648. The same is the case today in many of the ongoing conflicts.

As the reader should recall, two of the key preconditions for protracted social conflict are communal content and weak governance. Azar demonstrated that for a conflict to become violent three key determinants must be present: communal actions and strategies; state actions and strategies; and the built-in mechanisms of conflict.<sup>54</sup> For example, once an identity group is established and mobilized by a leader it will develop strategies and tactics to advance its political agenda for change. The governing individuals and elites will choose theoretically from an array of options to meet the challenge posed by the identity group. In many cases of intra-state conflict, the solution chosen is repression vice accommodation based on a winner takes all mentality. Once the conflict turns violent, violence breeds violence leading to a downward spiral which can in many case only be stopped by the intervention of a third party, by exhaustion on the part of at least one of the parties to the conflict, or by determination of a winner. Somalia is a good example of a failed central state political system as defined by Van Creveld, and of a

protracted social conflict as defined by Azar. In the absence of the central government, identity groups based on clans and sub-clans appeared to advance their particular political agendas through military and political means.<sup>55</sup>

The government, as defined by Clausewitz, actually represents the political body that is responsible for the “rational calculations” or the “reason” behind the war.<sup>56</sup> Should that organization be a state as in Clausewitz’s time or a warlord clan in the future is fundamentally irrelevant as long as it provides policy and direction. Van Creveld misses this point; Mao does not. “In Mao’s treatise on guerrilla warfare: the Communist party (the government or political authority) is in control of the gun (the military element), while the military (the fish) hide in the sea of the general population.”<sup>57</sup> Further, Clausewitz never intended for his three trinity elements to be treated equally. “These three tendencies are like three different codes of law, deep rooted in their subject and yet variable in their relationship to one another.”<sup>58</sup> Though it is not clearly articulated in *On War*, it is generally accepted that Clausewitz never wished for the tendencies to be considered in isolation as he judged war to be reciprocal and interactive in nature.<sup>59</sup>

The state is not essential for the expression of political thought through violent means. Even in situations of chaos associated with internal conflicts where there is no central government or a weak central governing body that no longer controls the use of force through law, customary rules and dominant norms, groups or political entities will eventually establish themselves for mutual protection and the advancement of their concerns through peaceful or

violent means. Consequently, the Clausewitzian trinity continues to have relevance in today's world.

### **The Political Object at the Strategic Level**

Clausewitz's most famous dictum and his third key concept is that government is responsible for guiding the political object of war which is, therefore, merely the continuation of policy by other means. "The political object is the goal, war is the means of reaching it, and means can never be considered in isolation from their purpose."<sup>60</sup> Simply, strategy in Clausewitzian terms is the art of matching military ways and means to political ends against an active opponent.<sup>61</sup>

Sun Tzu wrote: "War is a matter of vital importance to the state; the province of life and death; the road to survival or ruin. It is mandatory that it be fully studied."<sup>62</sup> Western nations and governments understand this concept and do not deploy their forces without significant thought and consideration. At the grand strategic level, it is their responsibility to establish the strategy and policies for activities, impose limitations in the form of restraints and constraints, and then allocate or make available the necessary resources for their implementation. Subordinate to grand strategy is military strategy, which is the province of national policy advisors, their military advisors, and the nation's senior military leadership. Their challenge is to, "define the national strategic conditions which determine success, translate policy goals into military terms by establishing military objectives...Military strategy, being a subset of national strategy, must be co-ordinated with the use of the other elements of national power."<sup>63</sup> There is no question

that the political objective is the rationale behind any operation; but it is the determination of the most appropriate response or action that vexes most strategic level planners. It is here that Clausewitz falls short as he looks at war and peace as distinct and separate activities.<sup>64</sup> In today's complex political emergencies a multi-disciplinary approach involving a variety of state and non-state actors is required.

The new reality was clearly enunciated by a very senior NATO general who stated recently that he foresaw the need for NATO to move from the existing conflict paradigm expressed by peace/crisis/conflict to one embracing conflict resolution theory which is more holistic and all encompassing as was discussed earlier in this paper. From his perspective effective engagement will mean an integrated approach including political, diplomatic, economic, military, civil, and humanitarian lines of operation. "The time is over where politicians will leave us alone to fight the war. We must adopt a more indirect approach." The latter comments endorse the Alliance's new Strategic Concept, in particular paragraphs, 31 and 32, which outline the Alliance's approach to conflict prevention and crisis management.<sup>65</sup>

Sun Tzu proffers more insight as *The Art of War* is written at the highest strategic level whereas *On War* is focussed at the lower strategic/operational interface.<sup>66</sup> Sun Tzu presents a much broader framework that interprets diplomacy and war to be an ongoing process. For Sun Tzu, peace and war are indistinguishable, both belonging to the same ongoing conflict or competition between states, communities and groups.<sup>67</sup> He believed strongly in the indirect approach and did not recommend destruction as the primary method. "1. Generally in war the best policy is to take a state intact; to ruin it is inferior to this. 2. To capture the enemy's army is

better than to destroy it... 3. Thus, what is the supreme importance in war is to attack the enemy's strategy."<sup>68</sup> Conversely Clausewitz's study of war really begins when all other avenues have been explored and war is unavoidable.<sup>69</sup> This being the case its relevance and applicability to the strategic level becomes more limited when matching ends, ways, and means.

Andre Beaufre in his *Introduction to Strategy* stated that in determining the strategy to fulfil the objectives laid down by policy, strategic planners or commanders should not readily adopt the "formulae such as that attributed to Clausewitz, "decision as a result of victory in battle", as [it is] not applicable to all types of objective."<sup>70</sup> Rather the focus should be placed on the desired outcome to be achieved rather than the method. Once the outcome is determined the appropriate means to achieve it can be selected. The art of strategy is to take the most appropriate means and orchestrate their results to produce the desired effect on the enemy. From his view "a decision is achieved when a certain psychological effect has been produced on the enemy: when he becomes convinced that it is useless to start or alternatively to continue the struggle."<sup>71</sup>

Modern conflict resolution is a combination of hard and soft power assets that should be applied in a judicious and coherent manner. Clausewitz's concentration on the hard power dimension with an almost complete fixation on the destruction of the enemy as the main decisive action limits his utility at the strategic level when trying to match the most appropriate ways and means. Sun Tzu, on the other hand, though not providing specifics, forces planners and commanders to think of alternate strategies - wise council indeed for a very complex world.

## CONCLUSION

Though this paper has challenged Clausewitzian thought, the continuing importance and relevance of *On War* to the study of war should be readily apparent. Even Van Creveld, Clausewitz's most outspoken contemporary critic, wrote in 1986, that he believed Clausewitz to be eternal due to his objective and systematic study of war that did not search out constants in a mainly human endeavour.<sup>72</sup> By not reducing war to a science and by recognizing that war was an interactive and reciprocal activity "involving clashing purposes and free creative choices"<sup>73</sup>, Clausewitz developed a theory that did not guarantee results if certain principles were followed but rather he developed a theory to educate and to serve as a tool for better work. However, as any soldier knows, the correct tool must be used correctly.

The changing nature of war in the 21<sup>st</sup> century foresees an increasing prevalence of intra-state conflict involving intervention from modern western states that have acknowledged the need to address conflict from a broader perspective to include all the elements of power. Accordingly, Clausewitz's theory on the duality of war and the trinity remains as pertinent as ever as they both help explain the intricate aspects of war. The fact that war is indeed limited by a variety of factors and is never ideal in its absolute or limited form is essential to any military or political leader's understanding of war. Further, the role of government or rather the community's "political authority" continues to be a justifiable and essential element of the trinity. However, *On War's* narrow focus on operational warfighting restricts its contribution to the changing perspectives of war at the strategic level. Clausewitz limits himself to the

battlefield, though he acknowledges the importance and primacy of politics before and after the conflict.

Modern strategic theory and doctrine must be broad based to include theories on conflict resolution and the use of alternate power levers both soft and hard. The relevant teachings from Sun Tzu and other classical and modern theorists who view the prosecution and resolution of war and conflict from a wider perspective would reinforce the base established by Clausewitz as he, when interpreted correctly, provides considerable insight into the nature of war and its many interrelationships. Canadian doctrine should, therefore, build upon Clausewitz's strengths while at the same time drawing upon the teachings of others to ensure that the new fundamental strategic doctrine provides the Canadian Forces with a solid foundation upon which to build its Vision 2020 force.

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- <sup>1</sup> Michael I Handel, ed, Clausewitz and Modern Strategy (London: Frank Cass and Company Ltd, 1986) 34.
- <sup>2</sup> Hugh Miall, Oliver Ramsbotham, Tom Woodhouse, Contemporary Conflict Resolution (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999) 16.
- <sup>3</sup> Canada's Army (Ottawa: NDHQ, 1998) 101.
- <sup>4</sup> British Defence Doctrine JWP 0-01 (London: Not dated) 2-3.
- <sup>5</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, Edited and translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret Indexed Edition, On War (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984) 141.
- <sup>6</sup> Clausewitz 578.
- <sup>7</sup> Julian S Corbett, Some Principles of Maritime Strategy (London: Naval Institute Press, 1972) 2.
- <sup>8</sup> Stephen B. Jones, "A Unified Field Theory of Political Geography," Annals of the Association of American Geographers, 1954, p 111 quoted in Commander Joseph A. Gattuso, Jr., USN, "Warfare Theory," The Naval War College Review, Vol XLIX, No 4 (Autumn, 1996), p 112.
- <sup>9</sup> Mao Tse-Tung, Selected Military Writings of Mao Tse-Tung (Peking: Foreign Language Press, 1966) 87.
- <sup>10</sup> AAP-6 NATO Glossary "Military doctrine is defined as the fundamental principles by which military forces guide their actions in support of objectives. It is authoritative, but requires judgement in application."
- <sup>11</sup> Draft The Strategic Framework of the Canadian Forces (Ottawa: NDHQ 1999) 25.
- <sup>12</sup> JWP 0-01 1-1.
- <sup>13</sup> Dennis M Drew, Donald M Snow, Making Strategy An Introduction to National Security Processes and Problems (Alabama: Air University Press, 1988) 168.
- <sup>14</sup> Drew 168.
- <sup>15</sup> JWP 0-01 1-1.
- <sup>16</sup> Kalevi J Holsti, The State, War, and the State of War (Cambridge: University Press, 1996) 26-27.
- <sup>17</sup> Kaplan 74.
- <sup>18</sup> Samuel P Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations," Foreign Affairs Summer (1993) 52.
- <sup>19</sup> Ralph Peters, "The Culture of Future Conflict," Parameters Vol 25 no 4 (1995-96) 20-21.
- <sup>20</sup> Peters 21.
- <sup>21</sup> Holsti 38.
- <sup>22</sup> Miall, Ramsbotham, Woodhouse 68.
- <sup>23</sup> Miall 72.
- <sup>24</sup> Miall 74.
- <sup>25</sup> Peters 27.
- <sup>26</sup> Kumar Rupesinghe, Civil Wars, Civil Peace: An Introduction to Conflict Resolution (London: Pluto Press, 1998) 3.
- <sup>27</sup> James A. Schellenberg, Conflict Resolution Theory, Research, and Practice (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996) 13.
- <sup>28</sup> Kumar Rupesinghe 87-92.
- <sup>29</sup> David A. Baldwin, "Power Analysis and World Politics: New Trends Versus Old Tendencies," World Politics Vol 31, January (1979) 85-86.
- <sup>30</sup> Clausewitz 523.
- <sup>31</sup> Michael I Handel, Masters of War Classical Strategic Thought 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 2001) 329.
- <sup>32</sup> Handel Masters 332.
- <sup>33</sup> Clausewitz 69.
- <sup>34</sup> Handel Masters 22.
- <sup>35</sup> Peter Paret, Makers of Modern Strategy From Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986) 200.
- <sup>36</sup> Doug McLean, "Adaptive Warfare Theory: A Flexible Theory of War and Warfare for the Canadian Forces," Canadian Forces College Paper CSC 25 (April 99) 6-7.
- <sup>37</sup> Clausewitz 603.
- <sup>38</sup> Corbett 59.
- <sup>39</sup> Corbett 59.
- <sup>40</sup> Baron Antoine Henri de Jomini, The Art of War (London: Greenhill Books, 1996) 19.

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- <sup>41</sup> Handel Masters 296.
- <sup>42</sup> Clausewitz 88.
- <sup>43</sup> Handel Masters 92.
- <sup>44</sup> Clausewitz 88.
- <sup>45</sup> Handel Masters 95.
- <sup>46</sup> The reader is referred to Handel Masters 96-97 for an in-depth review of Machiavelli's importance of adapting to the changing nature of war.
- <sup>47</sup> Clausewitz 89.
- <sup>48</sup> Clausewitz 89.
- <sup>49</sup> Martin Van Creveld, The Transformation of War (New York: The Free Press, 1991) 49-50.
- <sup>50</sup> Van Creveld 49-50.
- <sup>51</sup> Van Creveld 49-50.
- <sup>52</sup> Van Creveld 56.
- <sup>53</sup> Kim R Nossal, The Patterns of World Politics (Scarborough: Prentice-Hall, 1998) 190-193.
- <sup>54</sup> Miall 75.
- <sup>55</sup> Mark J Redlinger, "Clausewitzian Concepts and Their Relevance to Modern Warfare Experiences in Operations Other Than War," Strategy Research Project USAWC, Carlisle Barracks, Pa (1996) 14.
- <sup>56</sup> Handel Masters 404.
- <sup>57</sup> Handel Masters 403.
- <sup>58</sup> Clausewitz 89.
- <sup>59</sup> Handel Masters 106.
- <sup>60</sup> Clausewitz 87.
- <sup>61</sup> Mark T. Clark, The Continuing Relevance of Clausewitz" Strategic Review Vol 26 Winter (1998) 55.
- <sup>62</sup> Sun Tzu, The Art of War, Samuel B Griffith Edition (London: Oxford University Press, 1971) 63.
- <sup>63</sup> CF Operations Manual, B-GG-005-004/000, Chapter 3, Section 1.
- <sup>64</sup> Handel 34.
- <sup>65</sup> "NATO Alliance Strategic Concept", NATO Review Vol 47, No 2 (Summer 1999).
- <sup>66</sup> Handel Masters 33.
- <sup>67</sup> Handel Masters 34.
- <sup>68</sup> Sun Tzu 76.
- <sup>69</sup> Handel Masters 33.
- <sup>70</sup> Andre Beufre, An Introduction to Strategy (London: Faber and Faber, 1965) 23.
- <sup>71</sup> Beufre 23.
- <sup>72</sup> Martin Van Creveld, "The Eternal Clausewitz", Clausewitz and Modern Strategy (London: Frank Cass and Company, 1986) 41-44.
- <sup>73</sup> Michael J Handel ed, Clausewitz and Modern Strategy 11.

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