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**THE REMARKABLE TRINITY:
ANOTHER DIMENSION**

BY

**LIEUTENANT COLONEL THEODORE G. CHOPIN
United States Army**

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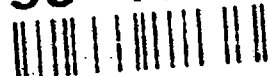
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19. ABSTRACT

Carl von Clausewitz's concept of The Remarkable Trinity asserts that support from the three elements of the people, the government, and the military (army) must be in balance for any nation to successfully prosecute war. The classic depiction of this concept is in the form of a two dimensional model - a triangle, with one of these three elements at each of its points. This depiction, however, does not provide a way to visualize either the balance Clausewitz calls for, or the power of the support being exerted within the model by each of the three elements.

A more detailed model can provide a way to measure balance and total power. By constructing a three dimensional model and adding two new constructs of a "mission ball" and a "sphere of success" to Clausewitz's original idea, his concept can be more easily and completely visualized and, therefore, become more relevant.

The theoretical application of the new trinity model to wars, from a historical perspective, helps provide a decision support mechanism relative to the conduct of future conflicts.

USAWC MILITARY STUDIES PROGRAM PAPER

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THE REMARKABLE TRINITY: ANOTHER DIMENSION

AN INDIVIDUAL STUDY PROJECT

by

Lieutenant Colonel Theodore G. Chopin
United States Army

Dr. David Jablonsky
Project Advisor

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U.S. Army War College
Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania 17013

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ABSTRACT

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INTRODUCTION

The first of these three aspects mainly concerns the people; the second the commander and his army; the third the government. The passions that are to be kindled in war must already be inherent in the people; the scope which the play of courage and talent will enjoy in the realm of probability and chance depends on the particular character of the commander and the army; but the political aims are the business of government alone.

These three tendencies are like three different codes of law, deep-rooted in their subject and yet variable in their relationship to one another. A theory that ignores any one of them or seeks to fix an arbitrary relationship between them would conflict with reality to such an extent that for this reason alone it would be totally useless.

Our task therefore is to develop a theory that maintains a balance between these three tendencies, like an object suspended between three magnets.¹

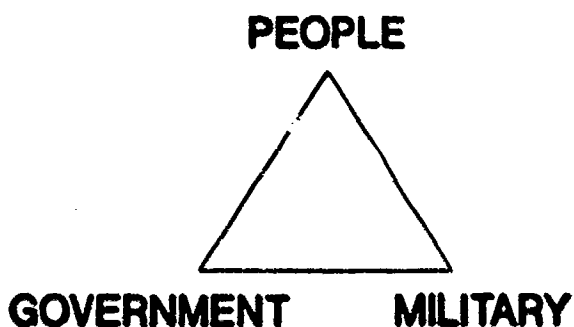
It was with these somewhat obscure but profoundly relevant paragraphs that Carl Von Clausewitz penned what has come to be widely known and respected as The Remarkable Trinity. The study of the causes for the initiation, prosecution and termination of war cannot be considered thorough without the intellectual examination of the relative balance of will and purpose among a nation's people, government, and military. In furtherance of this effort much has been written. It is not the intent of this paper to replot old ground. Instead its purpose is to expand the currently held notion of The Remarkable Trinity into a more meaningful and timely construct.

Today's use of the trinity derives from Clausewitz's creation of it as he was redrafting his On War. In trying to tie all the books of his work together, the Prussian philosopher came upon an idea of war "in which the directing policy of government, the professional qualities of the army, and the attitude of the

population all played an equally significant part."² This concept is woven throughout his entire work. With its specific introduction in chapter one, he explains the trinity as a paradoxical one involving: "primordial violence, hatred, and enmity" which primarily concern the people; "the play of chance and probability within which the creative spirit is free to roam" which primarily concerns the army; and of "its element of subordination, as an instrument of policy" which primarily concerns the government.³

It is rare when attending any lecture or reviewing any literature on the subject not to see these three elements of the trinity depicted as a triangle with each part at one of its points.

Figure 1 - Clausewitz's Trinity



The notion of balance can best be described by drawing the triangle as an equilateral one with all three sides being equal in length, or balanced. The people, in this drawing, are placed at the top of the triangle to connote the primacy of that element in the U.S. democracy. Subordinate to the people, but still superior to the military (left before right), is the government. The depiction of the trinity in this conventional two dimensional way is used consistently to invoke similar visualizations by many authors and teachers. Within current

convention, discussion of the trinity then begins to focus on the need to keep "forces" in balance as Clausewitz so aptly enjoined his students. The basic premise is that all three must exist, with generally equal force invested by each in the effort being undertaken (the war), in order that folly will be avoided.

In terms of the American people within that premise, the argument is often made that they will not long support their duly appointed officials when their sons and daughters are dying or their national wealth is being spent, without a sincere belief that the war being fought is worth the extreme cost. Of course, worthiness is in the mind of the beholder, or in this case, the collective minds of the population as a whole. What has been traditionally considered as being worthy will be explored in a later section. The measure of the degree of that support (the power at that point of the triangle) is more difficult to ascertain. It can be partially explained by the number and intensity of such actions and occurrences as public demonstrations, letters to the editor, public opinion polls, and votes for or against political supporters of the war.

The government's support in terms of Clausewitz's basic premise is manifested in the U.S. by the Legislative Branch's demonstrated willingness to support a war effort with the nation's pocketbook. That branch provides its balance of force with its rhetoric and its budget approval. The strength of its support can be seen in the number of "yeas" and "nays", and the speed with which resolutions come to the congressional floor for

a vote. Although the Congress has traditionally been somewhat reluctant to "interfere" in the Commander-In-Chief powers of the executive, it is becoming increasingly prone to voice misgivings concerning war sustaining needs and the overall advisability of continuing the effort to the other part of the government element of the trinity, the executive branch. Not part of the military, but totally in command of it, the Executive Branch decides ends, ways, and means and uses the military as an extension of political means in accordance with Clausewitz's prescription. Today's combination of inputs from the Executive and the Legislative Branches comprises government support for war.⁴

The military provides support at the will (order) of its commanders. It controls its own destiny only indirectly in that it can be heard before the fact, but once committed is collectively committed. Its degree of support, on the other hand, is not so cut and dried. The power of this corner of the triangle is measured by anticipation exhibited in the earliest stages of the planning for a possible operation; the amount and composition of forces sent to do battle; and by the personal commitment demonstrated in some visible and some not so visible (but mostly individual) ways by its soldiers, sailors, airmen, and civilians. This measure of the degree of power will also be dealt with in more detail later.

The notion of power being exerted by each specific part of the trinity provides a context for relating to the balance that Clausewitz writes must be present so as to "suspend an object."

Simply put, the more the power in that part of the trinity, the greater the pull (like magnetic attraction) it exerts on the object of war.

Clausewitz noted, as an example, that Austria and Prussia tried to treat the French Revolution as a conventional diplomatic type of war, expecting only to have to deal with a weakened French army. Instead, they were opposed by the entire French nation.

The people became a participant in war; instead of governments and armies as heretofore, the full weight of the nation was thrown into the balance. The resources and efforts now available for use surpassed all conventional limits.⁵

How can a model be depicted to provide a more descriptive picture of this full weight of the nation? Michael Howard, after quoting Clausewitz's trinity explanation says, "such was Clausewitz's conclusion. It would be a good place for any contemporary strategic thinker to begin."⁶ Howard was right when he helped translate On War. He is right today. Using much of the current thinking and dialogue about when to go to war, a more descriptive trinity can be constructed using Clausewitz's conclusions as the starting point.

ANOTHER DIMENSION

Describing the full weight of the nation as compared to some lesser degree of support from that same nation begs a way to be able to differentiate the power of one construct of the trinity from another. The current model (Figure 1) cannot do that. In fact, it does not even provide a good way for the user

to visualize whether the three elements are in "balance" as Clausewitz tells us they must be.

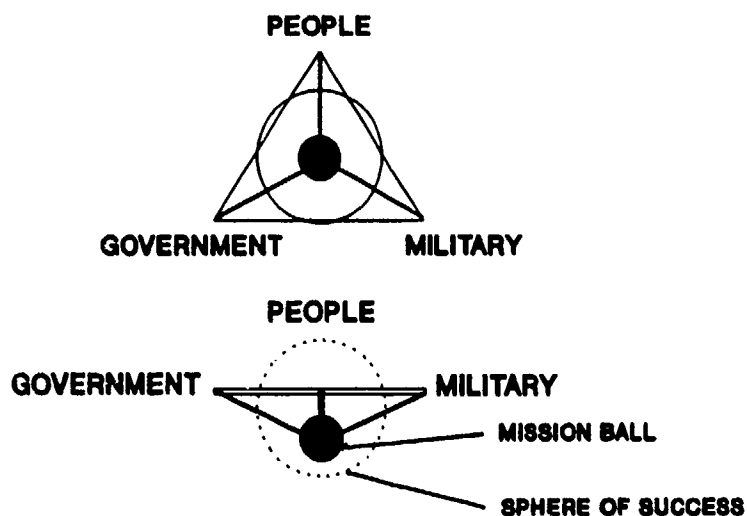
When contemplating in what state the trinity exists for any possible or ongoing military operation (war), it is necessary to evaluate the total degree of power the trinity has or does not have. This evaluation is important since it can help provide answers to questions that should be asked. Is overall national support sufficient to go to war now, or must we wait to see if it builds? Is the commitment strong enough (does excess power exist) to sustain the effort should major setbacks occur? This second point supports the contention that war must not be undertaken until adequate safety margins of power are in place. On this point, World War I provides an example of the margin of the type support that was needed to ensure the victory of the allies.

This type of [very strongly committed] domestic spirit meant that even the most crushing military defeats in the field would not be necessarily decisive. On the other hand, if the national will was weakened or lacking, the most trifling military defeat at the tactical or operational level could be decisive.⁷

It is in pursuit of a more descriptive model in which to include these measures of relative overall power of the trinity and the balance maintained by its parts that we proceed. "If force is used imprecisely or out of frustration rather than clear analysis," General Powell (Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff) has pointed out, "the situation can be made worse."⁸ In the quest for a better tool for clear analysis, a new trinity model is offered. It is drawn as it would be viewed from two directions.

The top view shows how the three dimensional model would be seen from directly overhead (plan view), the lower drawing depicts how it would appear when viewed from the front (landscape view).

Figure 2 - The New Trinity Model



To the original, two dimensional model a third dimension has been added as have several new constructs visible in both planes. The purpose of the new model is to provide the user with a way to

visualize important facets that can describe the measure of the full power of the trinity, and to provide a way to visualize whether or not the entire model is sufficiently balanced to proceed to war.

Mission Ball

The mission ball has been added. Its purpose is to describe the action being undertaken from a military perspective. It has a particular size and weight (mass) for a specific operation. The size of the mission ball should remain relatively fixed once its value is established. It is used to denote the relative size of the operation. Either it is a big mission (force the Iraqi forces out of Kuwait) or a small mission (remove American citizens from Grenada). The weight of the mission ball changes

in direct relationship to the military difficulty of the assigned task. It is determined by the user based on everything known about the enemy each time the model is contemplated. As with all other parts of the model, this measure can (and probably will) change over time as the user becomes more informed. Mission ball weight will change as more definitive information becomes known about the specific composition, location, and capabilities of the opposing forces. To reiterate, the mission ball has a size and weight which together are its mass.

The mission ball is suspended within the model, between the three points of the triangle, by its connection to each point. This part of the model is necessary to provide a way to depict not only the balance required by Clausewitz, but the overall power needed by all parts of the trinity taken as a whole. Relative total power is displayed by how high or low the mission ball is suspended when viewed from the front. The balance existing between the elements of the trinity is displayed by how close to the center of the triangle the ball is held when the model is viewed from the top (plan view). The construction of the model using the mission ball in this way is the key to being able to depict the total force of the national will to undertake and complete the effort (mission) in question.

Sphere of Success

The sphere of success exists as a construct which is always centered in both views. Its size (diameter) is defined by the extremely subjective measure of how the model's user believes

military mission success can and will be viewed as being truly successful on the domestic and international scene. It therefore describes success from a political perspective. Its diameter varies inversely with the user's assessment of the difficulty of achieving political success. For example, if true political success is determined to be highly difficult to achieve, the sphere will be very small. If political success is judged to be relatively easy, the sphere should be depicted as being quite large. Because so many inputs bear on the true measure of political success in war, its size will be more dynamic than any other part of the model. Its size, therefore, requires constant reevaluation by the user.

To best describe the sphere of success for a particular war, many things must be considered.

If we must involve forces in war . . . , we should clearly understand what we want to achieve. The end state describes what the NCA (National Command Authority) and the theater commander want the situation to look like at the conclusion of operations.' The political aim of war itself is not per se the conquest of territory and the annihilation of enemy armies, but a change in the mind of the enemy which will make him yield to the will of the victor.¹⁰

Add to these observations the need to have a general "OK" from all parts of the American society, and as many international political organizations as possible, and the model's user can begin to address things that must be considered in defining the diameter of a sphere of success. In trying to construct a starting point for determining the size of the sphere, some

common considerations might prove useful. Success will be achieved when:

1. Well defined military objectives are achieved.
2. A majority of American people will evaluate the war's fighting as having had positive outcomes within the context of its generally held societal values.
3. It will be evaluated over time as having had positive international impact by a community of non-aggressive nations.
4. The United States will be able to disengage, at least to the degree it wishes to, as desired and defined before the initiation of war.

The construct of the model is now complete. For purposes of answering the question of whether the model is or is not "in balance", the user need only ask if the mission ball is being held in suspension within the sphere of success. If it is, Clausewitzian balance is present, and therefore the effort being undertaken (the war) is headed toward a successful conclusion. If the ball is outside the sphere, needed balance is not present and continued pursuit of the effort being undertaken has become, in Clausewitz's word, "folly."

The Power in the Points of the Trinity

At this point it is important to contemplate what gives power to each of the points of the trinity. While it has always been important to assign a relative, subjective value to each in order to visualize balance in the trinity, the new model requires more attention be paid to this facet of its construction since

each point's power is now working across two planes. Each of the three points is exerting its power through its attachment to the mission ball.

The People

The power exerted by the people to support a war is measured in a relative sense. That is to say in comparison to how supportive they were in previous instances. As Sun Tzu knew when he spoke of politics, it is vitally important to gain the full support of the people.

By politics, (Sun Tzu) meant the ways to cause the people to be in harmony with their ruler. That is to say, the ruler has to impose his will upon the people and only in so doing can he succeed in making the people accompany him in war and peace without fear of mortal peril.¹¹

In Sun Tzu's day having the people's support meant he would have the army he needed in the field as they were one in the same. In the U.S. in the 1990s having the support of the people means being able to continue or not continue the prosecution of a war effort. In a democracy such as America's, the people's will is truly the key ingredient from which major portions of the power in the other two points of the trinity flow.

In today's world, the "people" must also include the peoples of the world. As will be discussed, modern media capabilities have given the American people and their government leaders, a way to quickly ascertain international impressions of United States actions. The perceptions gained from this historically, relatively new capability, then, partly drive the domestic agenda concerning any war effort. Democratically governed people

provide their nation the key measure of power within the remarkable trinity. From this source the other two elements draw sustainment.

Within the new model, strong public support (the people's power), acting through its attachment to the mission ball, can easily do its part to firmly suspend even the heaviest ball within a sphere of success. The U.S. democratic system provides its people with great quantities of information, allowing them to decide for themselves. An institutionalized promotion of its people's will, encourages the undiminished transfer of the power resident in them to the other points of the trinity, as well as down the connection to the mission ball. Said another way, it is more difficult for the government or the military to transfer some of its power to the people than for the reverse to happen.

The Government

American military forces need the commitment and political support of the American people to wage successful war. Congress, miserable as it may be, is the forum of that debate.¹²

This observation highlights the way many Americans come to recognize generally held public beliefs and desires. As a result, the user of this model can evaluate the Congressional feedback provided to the American people as a means to determine the relative degree of power being exerted by the government in any situation. Members of Congress tell the people of the country, for instance, why war is necessary or not necessary. As has been mentioned, they control the purse strings, without which war cannot be sustained. But the relative power of the Congress

is contained within the collective measure of what each member says and how each member says it. This measure sounds more difficult to determine than it practically is. Over time, its relationship to the support previously provided to other conflicts becomes a clear way to determine if political commitment is there.

In democracy as practiced in the U.S., the will of the people is filtered by Executive and Legislative knowledge, specialized understanding, and an ability to act quickly to determine the measure of power acting through the government point of the trinity to suspend the mission ball. The Executive Branch's special concern, expertise, and responsibility in foreign affairs often requires it provide a large measure of the total government power within the model.

The Military

The military shows its degree of support, its measure of relative power, in ways which are largely invisible to much of society. While the military institution has a mind of its own, that mind is disciplined to the point of not resisting the basic premise of, "once committed by civilian authority, its a go!" Within that absolute, strength can be varied. For example, how early is earnest planning begun? Has this contingency been thoroughly reviewed (wargamed) and a basic plan shelved, ready to be used as the basis upon which to build this specific application? Does the current structure of the force provide a good fit for those needed in this contingency.? On the

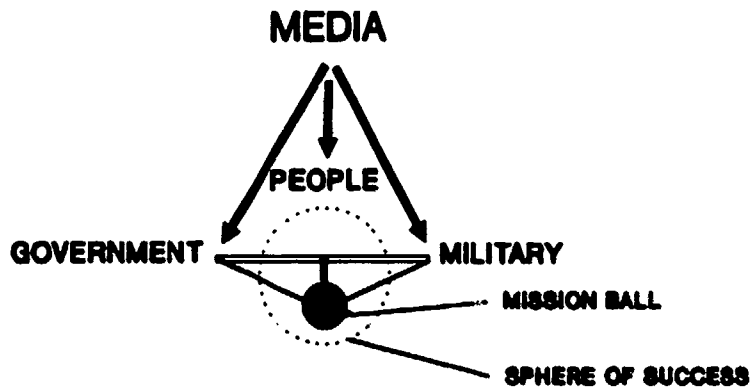
individual level, do members of the military believe in the cause? This last point is not a required ingredient for the fight, but it is necessary to get the soldier, sailor, airman, or civilian to sustain a true 100% effort throughout the conflict. In other words, everything about the employment of smart military people is easier and more productive when they really believe in the cause.

The current use of overwhelming force also bears on the measure of relative strength contained within the military part of the trinity. The presence of overwhelming force in any theater of operation, ready to do battle, serves to firmly define the power of the military commitment to the war effort. Therefore, the quantity of the forces to be used in war is a good measure of the ability of the military to keep the mission ball in suspended balance within the new model. As with the other two points of the trinity, strong power holds the mission ball high within the sphere of success.

The Media

Before providing examples to help the reader determine how he will decide a specific model shape for a war to come, the power of the media should be briefly addressed. The media energizes the U.S. political system and informs the public which, together, shapes opinion and determines public support. It can be a force (power) multiplier, or it can weaken commitment resident within of each point of the trinity.

Figure 3 - Media Impact Added to the New Model



The media, then, provide another linkage, a conduit, between each of the three points of the trinity. They can add to or subtract from the

power of each point. "The criteria for deciding to project forces," the current Army operations manual points out, "exemplify the dynamic link between the people, the Congress, the National Command Authorities (NCA) and the military."¹³ The media play a key role in this dynamic link by bombarding each point of the trinity with positive and negative information. The positive increases the power of that point of the model, the negative decreases it.

It is this author's premise that given generally well intentioned reasons for contemplating conflict, it is much better to have an informed public than an uninformed one. The attentive public is different from the generally uninformed public. The attentive are better educated and tend to follow foreign affairs. They support an active world role for the U.S. The uninformed audience generally has a noninternationalist attitude and tends to be rather unsupportive of much of U.S. foreign policy.¹⁴ The point is that should a good case for war need to be made to the

people, the uninformed public will be much harder to reach and therefore will not add to the collective power of that element of the trinity.

Two other factors are also important in considering the media's impact on the power of the trinity. One is that the media have impact throughout the world thereby providing a context within which other country's leaders view the war or contemplated mission.¹⁵ This context, in turn, helps shape diplomatic reaction to U.S. action which partially determines U.S. political support (or lack of support) for war. The other factor is that media deliver an understanding of the event. In the Persian Gulf, the media created perceptions and misperceptions which became the foundations for a "mythology of war".¹⁶ Nevertheless, it is critical to consider the perception held (true or not) when trying to determine the strength of the will of the people. For example, with regard to television, it is wise to always consider the adage, "Once over the air, forever on the mind."

A HISTORICAL VIEW OF THE NEW MODEL

The key to the Home Front, Churchill came to realize, was national will molded by strong leadership and propaganda into a unswerving belief in the worthiness of the war effort.¹⁷

This is an example of a total measure of the power of the trinity expressed as national will. Its emphasis points toward the power of the people and their government. Total commitment of the British in World War I was manifested in their complete mobilization and in their society's "ever increasing control and

regimentation ranging from freedom of action and speech to employment and even diet."¹⁸ With this kind of involvement in preserving an entire way of life, maximum support is maintained until victory or defeat. In a world war survival is at stake. Thus, it becomes very difficult to imagine less than total involvement by the people. The government must stay involved in the effort, whether it is world war or limited conflict. As Churchill wrote after the first of the British experiences in South Africa in 1901,

It is not enough for the government to say we have handed the war over to the military: they must settle it: all we can do is to supply them as they require! . . . Nothing can relieve the Government of their responsibility."¹⁹

The point is that the government must stay engaged. It must consistently bring its power to bear on the contest, on both the domestic scene with grand strategy decisions implemented down through the chain of command, and on the international scene by generating diplomatic support throughout all avenues available to it to help achieve success. The government must actively use its power to keep the mission ball within the sphere of success.

When the power to hold the ball in the sphere becomes insufficient, less desirable outcomes result. If enough power cannot be regained, the war will be lost.

Once the national will to war had been exhausted, that great reserve of enthusiasm and patriotism and endurance built up over a century of careful training and squeezed to the last drop by relentless war propaganda, the military instruments of that will were as useless as empty suits of armour."²⁰

While Michael Howard gives national will a more narrow definition than that needed for this paper, his point is well made. Within the physical reality of the new model, the mission ball cannot be held within the sphere of success by the power of any one or two parts of the trinity. Physical laws of nature require enough power from all three. Together, their collective power must be able to overcome the weight of the mission ball, holding it high enough to remain within the sphere of success.

In Grenada

President Reagan sought public support after the initiation of hostilities in Grenada. An after-the-fact effort is sufficient in small wars in that massive build-ups are not required, and therefore can be accomplished speedily and in relative secrecy. In his speech to the country early on the first day of the invasion, he sought to gain the peoples' support (add power to that portion of the trinity) by providing justification for the invasion. He stressed the need for the U.S. to save the lives of its 800-1000 citizens, to "forestall further chaos", and to "assist in a joint effort to restore order and democracy."²¹ As succinctly reported by the media, public opinion was not immediately supportive. United States' citizens were not fully convinced of the need for so powerful a military operation, in short, of the need for war. The second day of the operation, Reagan directly referred to the presence of 30 Soviet advisors and hundreds of Cuban military and paramilitary forces on the island. Because of the general hostility of the U.S.

public toward perceived Soviet expansion, this tactic obtained the needed support.²

"Indeed, as opinion polls cited, people supported the invasion on the narrow, pragmatic grounds of swiftness and success."²³ By the time opinion polls were taken the war was over. But the people indicated they had been convinced of the correctness of the war based on their traditional displeasure with anything communist.

On the world stage, Reagan's speeches and particularly the speeches of Jeane Kirkpatrick in the United Nations were pointed toward gaining world support, or at least, deflecting any serious non-support. They were successful in that they kept world negative opinion down.

On the home front Reagan had a more serious problem with the initial rather severe criticism he received from Congress because he had not consulted with that body beforehand. But, by 26 October, most Republicans and even some Democrats began to actively voice support for the effort. Congress and the rest of the country had been presented with media pictures and testimony of students praising the actions of the U.S. military in saving their lives. Adding to this very positive picture was the discovery and presentation of the large amounts of uncovered Soviet and Cuban weapons. The final ingredient needed to ensure strong government support, not only at home, but around the world, was provided by making sure all realized that the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) had issued an

urgent request for help. Under the auspices of Article 8 of the OECS treaty, intervention in crisis was authorized.²⁴ The U.S. government was now solidly behind the effort.

In several respects, the Administration made good efforts toward garnering support which resulted in the sphere of success being defined to be quite large. Adding to the ease of keeping the mission ball elevated enough was the relative impotence of the enemy force. In other words, the mission ball had very little mass. Both factors considered, keeping the ball in the sphere was simple.

Initially, the military part of the trinity was less than fully committed to the effort. It had not yet generated enough power to lift its part of the weight of the mission ball into the sphere. It had resisted beginning planning for the possible evacuation of U.S. personnel from Grenada until Prime Minister Bishop was killed on 19 October.²⁵ This resistance was the manifestation of the military part of the trinity not yet being fully committed. Once ordered, though, the military institution brought a great deal of power into its effort, fast. Planning began on the 19th, the invasion took place on the 25th. Additionally, the military used another ingredient discussed earlier as a measure of its power - overwhelming force. Even as the force package was being finalized, additional units were added to try to insure a rapid, low casualty victory.

Even though this war was short, and sustainment of the conflict was never really in question, it demonstrates some of

the ingredients which can describe the structure of the model. By the end of the second day, the mission ball was squarely within the sphere of success and being firmly held there by all three parts of the trinity. The media were continuing to add to that strength, building more reserve power.

The short duration of the Grenada war highlights another aspect of the discussion of the source of power within the new trinity model: time. A short conflict can "take advantage of" the propensity of the American people to support its military, against any adversary, for a short period of time, based on nothing more than national pride. A short war does not provide enough time to allow erosion of this kind of support. "If my sons and daughters are there," goes the first consideration by the average American, "it must be worthwhile." Only the addition of much more information, gained over an extended period of time can seriously erode this "pride power."

In Vietnam

In contrast to the shortness of the war in Grenada was the extreme length of the war in Vietnam. The successful prosecution of that conflict required the same maintenance of the mission ball within the sphere. Over time, though, the ball became so heavy and the power of each point of the trinity became so weak, that the ball dropped out of the sphere.

"From the time of the Declaration of Independence, Americans have believed that this Country has a moral significance for the world."²⁶ Without an evident moral justification for the Vietnam

war, it became impossible either to arouse popular support or to maintain the spirit of the defense department's men and women, as General Bruce Palmer concluded a decade after the conflict had ended.

(The leaders of the country) should have known that the American people would not stand still for a protracted war of an undeterminate nature with no foreseeable end to the U.S. commitment. . . . Our Vietnam experience convincingly demonstrated the criticality of the time element, that is the duration of hostilities. Time is somewhat less important if the American people are aroused, involved, and supportive of the war effort. But our government failed to mobilize public support, and time ran out.²⁷

Many parts of the new trinity can become less stable with the passage of time. The dynamic nature of the model was allowed to run its course. As time increased so did the probability that one or more of the subjective values, acting in relation to one another, would change. And since each is always connected to the other, a change in one point changed another which caused the balance to change, which in turn caused other changes. The model's utility is maximized only when it is repetitively reconstructed and reevaluated. In the Vietnam example the model was very dynamic. What General Palmer described, in terms of the new model, is that over time the power of the people erodes. It often will as any society tires of sending its sons and daughters far from home, especially for an incomprehensible reason. As power weakens, the mission ball, which has not lost mass, will drop out of the sphere of success. If then, as in Vietnam, the conflict is terminated, the war effort cannot result in success.

The mission, too, changed in Vietnam. As the military requirement was constantly adjusted from one of stopping the aggression from the North and defeating the communists, to Vietnamization,²⁸ the mass of the mission ball changed.

The size of the sphere of success changed also. In essence, the political policy of Vietnamization could be construed to be an attempt on the part of the U.S. government to make success easier, to make the sphere larger. In this construct, only a little power would be needed from each part of the trinity to keep (or replace) the mission ball inside the sphere. In actuality, the attempt at redefining the political mission was too little and too late to be considered credible in the eyes of the world, the people, the government, or the military. It was a ruse and therefore invalid within the context of the model presented. Had the attempt been made from a position of strength (before the North Vietnamese offensives), it might have been regarded as valid and, consequently, it might have also sufficiently altered the model enough to define a successful termination of the war.

In discussing actions that were being taken in Vietnam to keep most members of the legislative and executive branches of government in the dark about what was really happening, General Palmer pointed out that those actions made it impossible to get U.S. political leaders to understand why it was necessary to be at war. "In the absence of that understanding," he wrote, "it was difficult if not impossible for our government to explain the

war to the American people and get them directly or personally involved."²⁹ Two parts of the trinity were thus "in the dark" and therefore incapable of providing substantial support. "In the end," one analyst has concluded, "it was the public passions that had a moderating effect on the two principal limited conflicts of the cold war: Korea and Vietnam."³⁰

In The Persian Gulf

Beginning with the first words from President Bush the desire for strong popular support for the cause was very evident. U.S. leadership sought to shape public opinion (install great power in the people point of the trinity) by telling everyone that Saddam was an evil man whose aggressive quests for power must be stopped. The administration determined that this would be more effective than stressing our country's critical need for continued oil access. This tactic, and many more, demonstrated that the lesson of the need for popular support had been learned well. The government was very consciously trying to infuse power into the people part of the trinity model as an early priority.

Critical to getting the intended message to the American people were the media, which were now more technologically capable than ever before. As a group, they were able to get any message across in a very timely fashion. Unfortunately, the accuracy of the media was often questionable. "How the war was reported, or misreported, is almost as interesting as the war itself. Iraq made the media a part of its arsenal, as did the Allies."³¹ This fact worked to the great advantage of the

Allies. Iraq's tactic backfired, since it simply did not understand its target and how to use this potential weapon against the West.

The media created and sustained misperceptions which had the effect of increasing U.S. public support. The Iraqi army was portrayed as a desert tough, battle-hardened force. In fact, the army was battle-weary after many years of slugging it out with Iran. Also, it had not fought in the desert. The Iran-Iraq War had been predominately fought in the mountains and swamps of Shatt-al-Arab.³² This portrayal played to the American people's feeling of needing a "fair" fight, and the U.S. military's need to send large numbers of forces. To fully support a really big military commitment (one requiring major national support), U.S. citizens needed to believe it was necessary to send so large a force. They were confident, possibly overconfident of their military's prowess, but they did not wish to take a chance on sustaining more casualties than were absolutely necessary. This feeling of needing such a large force to face a very capable adversary carried through the deployment, defensive, and offensive phases of the campaign. The full support for a very large force helped infuse excess power into the military part of the trinity.

The news media likewise made the Iraqi border fortifications sound much more formidable than they really were. "A little calculation, and reflection on what these fortifications would have to resist, revealed that the Iraqis were not in a very advantageous position."³³ Again, the American people love to win

against strength. It was left to the military commander (as it must be) to decide if, or when, the risk was acceptable to breach the barriers. The media were helping the military by building up the Iraqi opponent in the minds of the average U.S. citizen to be more than he was. In terms of the model, this installed excess power in the people point of the trinity.

The theater press briefing was a significant part of the information war. Live briefings are a risk but also an opportunity if the right briefer can convey the right message (a message generally creating a positive perception of the military).

What the briefing process did, over time, was expose the foibles of the working press. U.S. and Allied military briefers became sympathetic and credible figures. The sharp-tongued and cynical press became the bad guys.³⁴

These perceptions, however true or false, created a very positive atmosphere. When thousands of the nation's sons and daughters, husbands and wives, factory workers and executives were called from every small and large town in America, popular support was guaranteed. Total national will became profoundly positive and, thus, very strong.

Also of major importance was the view of the war on the international scene. As the UN Security Council passed resolution after resolution admonishing the actions of Iraq, U.S. political support became easier. These same resolutions provided the political glue needed to establish and maintain the Allied coalition and to defeat Iraq.³⁵ All parts of the U.S. government

became fully committed to the war in the Persian Gulf. Its continued support was almost indefinitely assured once Congress voted to set a deadline for Iraqi withdrawal. Only major shifts in international public opinion and loss of coalition support could have seriously detracted from its power.

"The political and psychological benefits of such allied presence can be even greater than its military worth."³⁶ Even so, as Desert Storm illustrated, the presence of capable allied military forces on the battlefield adds great power to the military part of the trinity at both the collective and individual levels. Allied force presence also helps ensure good international support for the war effort, thereby causing the sphere of success to be of greater diameter.

The deployment of the VII US Army Corps from Germany to the Kuwaiti Theater of Operations was the manifestation of what is fast becoming a doctrine of employing overwhelming force. As mentioned before, it instills in the military point of the trinity, great excess power. Collectively, additional forces, especially the best equipped and trained available, give the military force an improved chance for success. On an individual level, more forces than might otherwise be considered absolutely required, instill the kind of personal confidence that is invaluable to the attitude of a winner.

The three dimensional model for the Persian Gulf War had great reserves of power throughout its conduct. To the extent that success in this war was achieved when all major parts of the

forces in theater withdrew, the mission ball was constantly held well within the sphere of success. Great stores of excess support were evident in the many parades and other awards and recognition given to participants upon their return to the U.S. Even today some of that excess power is being used to suspend a much smaller mission ball (no-fly zone enforcement) within a newly defined sphere.

CONCLUSION

It has not been this paper's purpose to trivialize the extremely complicated decisions associated with the initiation and conduct of war. Rather, its design was calculated to bring Clausewitz into the present by adding to his construct, making his theory of The Remarkable Trinity more useful.

The new model is not meant to be quantifiable, only visible. It should guide thinking not define it. Consequently, it is not meant to be a road plan that demonstrates the generic way to a decision of whether to war or not to war. Instead, it is to be used to "shed more light on the road" so intersections can be more easily perceived.

In using this model, the assessment of its shapes must be a continuing process that provides answers to a whole series of questions: "How can I alter the relative values of the various parts of the model to try to get the mission ball into the very center of the sphere of success?" "Should I try to alter the power resident in each point?" "Is the sphere too narrowly defined?" "Is the mission ball too heavy - its mass too great?"

"How can I use the opportunity the media give me to get the true story to the American people, thereby allowing their support to be correctly assessed?" "Should the National Command Authority be advised to wait to see if more energy is forthcoming in the people or government elements of the trinity?" These, and many more questions require the use of everything available to help determine best answers.

Of special note to the user should be the consideration of the length of the war. Perhaps there is a direct relationship between the probability of a short war and the degree to which the trinity is correctly and completely defined just prior to the initiation of the conflict. The old business management adage that "everything is variable in the long term," is very true when regarding the dynamic nature of the trinity model. The best policy may be to require the power necessary to get in and get out quickly, before the balance of the trinity can get out of hand. Over time, some things will go wrong and the media will report those occurrences. Resultant displeasure will sap power from all three points of the trinity, eventually allowing the mission ball to slip outside the sphere of success. Recognizing this possibility before commitment of forces should provide guidance to structure and time its obligation. In other words, future wars should be short if the U.S. does its remarkable trinity homework well. Conversely, if the engagement drags out, something may have gone or is going to go very wrong.

One other facet concerning the consideration of the model is important. In order to win a "war", actual fighting need not occur. The required power must be present in all parts of the trinity at the right time, with a force poised at the right place. If the enemy yields, and the other criteria defining success happen, the "war" has been won. Perhaps the presence of overwhelming force, poised to engage, serves to establish in the world's eye the presence of enough power in all points of the trinity.

Few wish to continue to tolerate aggression across currently defined nation-state borders. Desires for redefinition of state borders can be placed on the international agenda to be resolved by compromise, decided politically, in peace. Failing that, a useful model of the trinity may help structure U.S. consideration of whether war is viable and, of course, winnable.

ENDNOTES

¹Carl von Clausewitz, On War, trans. and ed. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 89.

²Michael Howard, Clausewitz, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 20.

³Clausewitz, 89.

⁴The Judicial Branch of the U.S. government has played and probably will continue to play a diminishing role regarding the making of war by the U.S. In several legal opinions concerning war powers, the judiciary has chosen to let the other branches determine what is proper or improper exercise of power under the constitution.

⁵Clausewitz, 591-2.

⁶Howard, 73.

⁷David Jablonsky, Why Is Strategy So Difficult?, (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 1992), 25.

⁸Colin L. Powell, "Why Generals Get Nervous," New York Times, 8 October 1992, A35.

⁹Department of the Army, Operations, Field Manual 100-5, Preliminary Draft, (Washington: U.S. Department of the Army, 21 August 1992), 7-2.

¹⁰Hans J. Morgenthau, Politics Among Nations, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978), 34.

¹¹Tao Hanzhang, Sun Tzu's Art of War, trans. Yuan Shibing (New York: Sterling, 1987), 82.

¹²James F. Dunnigan and Austin Bay, From Shield to Storm, (New York: William Morrow and Co., 1992), 442.

¹³Department of the Army, Draft FM 100-5, 1-3.

¹⁴Kai P. Schoenhals and Richard A. Melanson, Revolution and Intervention in Grenada, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1985), 167-8. See also Lloyd J. Matthews, ed., Newsmen and National Defense: Is Conflict Inevitable? (Washington: Brassey's, 1991).

¹⁵For example, Cable News Network (CNN) is viewed worldwide. It often provides the most complete view of any war to many world leaders. The same is true of many other sources of media reporting.

¹⁶Dunnigan and Bay, 343.

¹⁷David Jablonsky, Churchill: The Making of a Grand Strategist, (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 1992), 45.

¹⁸Ibid., 44.

¹⁹Ibid., 50.

²⁰Michael Howard, Studies In War and Peace, (New York: The Viking Press, 1971), 189.

²¹Shoenhals and Melanson, 147.

²²Ibid., 152.

²³Ibid., 169,

²⁴Ibid., 147-154 passim. See also Mark Adkin, Urgent Fury: The Battle for Grenada, (Lexington, Mass: Lexington Books, 1989).

²⁵Ibid., 140.

²⁶Henry Kissinger, "Morality and Power," in Earnest W. Lefever, ed. Morality and Foreign Policy, (Washington: Ethics and Public Policy Center of Georgetown University, 1977), 59.

²⁷General Bruce Palmer, Jr., The 25-Year War: America's Military Role in Vietnam, (Lexington, KY: DaCapo Press, 1984), 190.

²⁸Vietnamization, in its rather simplistic form, was to turn over the war to the South Vietnamese government and military, and then to totally withdraw U.S. forces. In theory this would not occur until the South's forces were sufficiently trained to carry on to victory. In practice the time table was driven by loss of U.S. national will to sustain the effort. See also R. W. Komer, Bureaucracy Does Its Thing: Institutional Constraints on U.S.-GVN Performance in Vietnam, (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 1972).

²⁹Palmer, 97.

³⁰Jablonsky, Why Is Strategy So Difficult?, 46.

³¹Dunnigan and Bay, 343.

³²Ibid., 345-6.

³³Ibid., 359-0.

³⁴Ibid., 441.

³⁵Ibid., 439.

³⁶Palmer, 191.

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