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CLAUSEWITZ MISPERCEIVED: ON WAR, NOT STRATEGY

by

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A RESEARCH REPORT SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY

IN

FULFILLMENT OF THE CURRICULUM

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Advisor: Dr Grant Hammond

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ABSTRACT

TITLE: Clausewitz Misperceived: On War, Not Strategy.

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Clausewitz' contribution to the study of war is certainly invaluable. However, the military, politicians and scholars alike need to move away from Clausewitz except as a source of discussion to generate alternatives to strategy. Clausewitz essentially deals with the operational and tactical levels of war as he observed it in the Napoleonic era. While Clausewitz is better known and frequently quoted for espousing the primacy of politics in war, he does not adequately discuss the relationship between politics and war, the problems of higher direction of war or the nature of civil-military relations. Starting with his definition of strategy as the use of engagements for the purposes of the war, he repeatedly emphasizes the direct strategy of destruction of enemy's armies as the main objective and even calls the political purpose a modification of this objective. Unfortunately, due to his contradictory style of writing, his adherents have been able to link his theories to all subsequent wars to suit their particular needs. The controversy is fueled by the fact that Clausewitz could not complete his book "On War" before his death. This paper examines Clausewitz' validity in the modern era with a new approach of evaluating his emphasis on theories at the strategic level to derive his intent.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Group Captain Harish Masand is presently a member of the Air War College, Class of 1993. Harish Masand is a fighter pilot of the Indian Air Force and has about 3000 hours on fighters of British and Soviet origin including the MiG 29. He has served in a variety of field and staff appointments commensurate with his service. Harish Masand is a distinguished graduate of the Defence Services Staff College in India, Class of 1982 when he also won the Owl Silver Salver for his essay on the "Image of the Armed Forces In India". Harish Masand holds a Master's degree in defense studies from Madras University and served over two years in the faculty of the Staff College.

CLAUSEWITZ MISPERCEIVED: ON WAR, NOT STRATEGY

Introduction

Writing on the genesis of his early manuscript on the theory of war, Carl Von Clausewitz commented in a note found among his papers; "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."¹ That ambition of Clausewitz has certainly been fulfilled despite the initial lack of acclaim. The first edition of 1500 copies was still not exhausted twenty years after it was published.² Over a hundred and sixty years since his death, "On War" is being read and reread, and not just because of its tediousness. Exalted by some for being an unsurpassed thesis on war it is also being critiqued, if not outrightly denigrated, for its deficiencies. Michael Handel compares Clausewitz' contribution on war with Adam Smith in economics and finds that "In comparison, Clausewitz' theories on war have not yet been matched; in fact, most modern efforts are less creative, perhaps even regressive, in comparison to his original achievement."³ On the other hand, Liddell Hart cogently argues against blindly swallowing Clausewitz' indigestible aphorisms such as "only great and general battles can produce great results"⁴ and blood is the price of victory.⁵

While there can be no denying that Clausewitz' contribution to the study of war is invaluable, his concepts are not truly relevant in the formulation and application of security strategy in the present era. The main reason for this is that Clausewitz' treatise deals essentially with the operational and tactical levels of land warfare in the Napoleonic era. Despite his emphasis on primacy of politics, he barely addresses problems in strategy and higher direction of war. It is felt that without major modifications, Clausewitzian theory may continue to mislead the practitioners of military art as well as their political masters.

Overview

This paper would cover the study of deficiencies in Clausewitzian theories under the following headings:-

- Scope of the study.
- Need for and nature of required modifications.
- An analysis of Clausewitz' thoughts on strategy.
- Effects on Military's approach to the formulation and application process.
- Effects on politico-military Interaction.

-- Suggested approach to modifications at strategic levels.

Scope of the Study

There exists a vast area for exploration and research to assess the true relevance of Clausewitz in the present era. However, within the limitations of time and space, this paper will focus only on the study of the politico-military aspects and the deficiencies of Clausewitzian theories in the formulation and application of military strategy. One possible but largely neglected approach to this study is to analyze the relative emphasis paid by Clausewitz to each aspect of his theory.

Need and Nature of Modifications

Almost in the same breath in which Clausewitz' timelessness is exalted,⁴ some scholars have found it necessary to sound a caveat on this eternal goal of all authors due to the changing nature and conditions of warfare. Michael Handel feels that "Although Clausewitz' basic and most important theories are as valid today as they were when first set down on paper, the growing political, economic, and technological complexities of the modern world require the updating of his theories." Handel then goes on to list numerous factors that have transformed war since Clausewitz' time ending with "No text or theory should be elevated to the point where it is considered immune from

criticism."⁷ Apart from the changing nature of political, economic or technological environment, Clausewitz even overlooks the influence of some factors of his era on war.

In his usual self-contradictory style, Clausewitz lays himself open to such vast corrections and modifications. For instance, while discussing historical examples, he observes that only campaigns beginning with the War of the Austrian succession are relevant.⁸ While discussing what is perhaps his most important though not original contribution to the study of war, Clausewitz underscores that war is an instrument of policy by highlighting the changes in the nature of war with the French Revolution and the failure of policies of France's enemies in their efforts to stop Napoleon's triumphs.⁹ He concludes with the observation that "the transformation of the art of war resulted from the transformation of politics".¹⁰ Since then, there have been tremendous changes in politics as well as social and moral values which influence politically acceptable aims of war. Using Clausewitz' own logic, such changes justify a review of his thoughts on war.

As per Handel, Clausewitz' theories and observations on war that require modification can be classified in four major categories:

- Differences in modern warfare due to technological innovations that Clausewitz could not have foreseen and therefore could not take into account.
- Problems that existed in relatively simple form in the nineteenth century but which are more complex today as a result of technological changes: for example, problems in strategic policy making, in civil-military relations and in improving the reliability of military intelligence (in which he had little confidence).
- Topics such as causes of war, moral/ethical questions related to war, and war's economic dimensions. Clausewitz did not focus on these areas because he was concerned exclusively with the conduct of war itself. These topics are, however, of great interest to today's student of warfare, and are essential to any modern theory of war.
- The fourth category consists of theories or observations that were wrong or inaccurate even for his own time.¹¹

Though there may not be agreement on the categorization or even the extent of modifications propounded above, the very fact that the theories of Clausewitz are felt to be in need of major revision tends to refute the timelessness of his theories.

In his treatise, Clausewitz ignores naval power even though it had a significant impact on Napoleon's strategy and possibly signalled his decline with the battle of Trafalgar in 1805.¹² His only comment on seapower while discussing a plan of war against France is:

The other consideration is the coast of France. England dominates the sea; France must, therefore, be extremely sensitive about her whole Atlantic coast and she must keep some forces to defend it. However weak their coastal defenses might be, they make her frontiers three times as long and hence she must withdraw substantial forces from the theater of war.¹³

This further tends to confirm the suspicion that Clausewitz' theories were essentially based on his personal experiences and relevant essentially to land warfare in the Napoleonic era.

The advent of aerospace power and associated doctrines also highlight the need for revision of Clausewitzian thoughts particularly in the areas of Defense, Surprise and Intelligence. A convincing case could be made that neither aerospace doctrines nor successful employment of aerospace power in any campaign, including Desert Storm, has been truly Clausewitzian.

The tortuous and self-contradictory quality of Clausewitz' writing enables his adherents to relate his writings to almost all subsequent wars in one manner or another to suit their particular needs. In addition, due to his untimely death, *On War* had to be compiled by others. These factors have generated

endless controversies in interpreting Clausewitz. Clausewitz, as it turned out, had less cause to fear his critics than to be wary of many of his professed admirers.¹⁴ Even an adherent of "The Eternal Clausewitz" says the following of Clausewitz' writings: "It examines the same argument from many different angles, sends the reader back and forth by means of innumerable cross references and returns time and again to ram home the same fundamental points."¹⁵ The evidence to follow would show that the points Clausewitz returns to time and again are not fundamental ones but the major cause of misdirection of war.

Clausewitzian Thoughts on Strategy

"Clausewitz' greatest contribution to the study of war - his Copernican revolution - was his emphasis on the centrality of politics in war."¹⁶ Handel argues that before the advent of this deceptively simple concept, war was studied as an independent activity with a purely military view. In view of the same author's contention that "Sun Tzu fully comprehended the political nature of war (the primacy of political over military/operational considerations) two millennia before Clausewitz",¹⁷ the hyperbole may be unnecessary. Certainly, few today would differ with the famous and oft-quoted dictum of Clausewitz that "war is an act of policy" which he later builds to "war is not merely an act of policy but a true political instrument, a continuation of political intercourse, carried on with other means."¹⁸ Unfortunately, Clausewitz, who is best

known and most often quoted for his ideas on the primacy of politics, has very little to say on this issue of dominance of politics over military means. This is true even in Book Three on strategy,¹⁹ where, perhaps, it should exhibit the most influence. "As straightforward as the idea of the primacy of politics in war is, it is also the most difficult to accept and implement in time of war."²⁰ This lack of discussion on a major issue cannot be considered merely misleading but has to be taken as an indication of either the author's emphasis or his difficulty in clarifying the issue.

With his brief explanation on the relation of politics and war, Clausewitz embarks on a voluminous exposition on the details of land warfare which can only be of historical interest to modern generations of students of warfare. Unfortunately, even in this discussion he lays the seeds of controversy not only on this relation but also on the true and most preferred military objective in war. The latter of these was to lead to such names as "Mahdi of Mass" for Clausewitz.²¹ Possibly, one of the reasons for such controversy is the difficulty that Clausewitz himself seems to have had in reconciling the political and military strategy or ends and means. Instead of discussing the major issues, he repeatedly returns and emphasizes the battle and destruction of the enemy's armies.

Thus, while discussing the political basis for war, both in its origin and subsequent conduct, he presupposes a rationality in the political purpose and the decision making process. "That, however, does not imply that the political aim is a tyrant. It must adapt itself to its chosen means, a process which can radically change it; yet the political aim remains the first consideration."²² During the following discussion on purposes and means in war, Clausewitz mentions the wide range of political interests or objectives. However, Clausewitz portrays the forms of resultant wars from a struggle for political existence to a war reluctantly declared to fulfill an alliance obligation "that no longer seems to reflect the state's true interests".²³ With this example of a war which does not seem to be in the state's true interests, the theoretician appears to be questioning the rationality of politics "which, ideally, pursue a rational goal by enhancing the welfare and interests of the state forming the axiomatic foundation of his theory of war".²⁴ It seems obvious that the above example was based on Clausewitz' personal experience and controversial actions of 1811-12 which, as will be seen, further aggravate the controversy.

From these variety of ends to be pursued in war, Clausewitz immediately turns to the means stating emphatically that there is only one: combat, regardless of the forms it takes. Combat leads to engagements and to the destruction of the enemy's forces which "is always the means by which the purpose of the engagement is achieved".²⁵ Even catering for the metaphysical influence of

Kant and Hegel,²⁶ this repeated and emphasized return to the destruction of the enemy's forces, as "...always the superior, more effective means, with which others cannot compete",²⁷ would contradict the earlier claim about fundamental points. Clausewitz even goes to the extent of summing up his discourse on the subject with: "of all the possible aims in war, the destruction of the enemy's armed forces always appears as the highest."²⁸ Admitting the general possibility of existence of other kinds of strategies "with the possibility of deviating from the basic concept of war under the pressure of special circumstances", he does not "fail to emphasize that the violent resolution of the crisis, the wish to annihilate the enemy's forces, is the first born son of war" and for the one that deviates, the exhortation that he "must never forget that he is moving on devious paths where the god of war may catch him unawares."²⁹ Thus, Clausewitz has little time or regard for other uses of force including the threat of use of force. This limits the alternatives offered for serious study.

Small wonder then, that numerous adherents much less god fearing warriors have found it difficult to move away from this strategy. A comparison of Clausewitz' work with that of other strategists leads to the conclusion:

While Clausewitz stressed the necessity of searching for a military decision as well as the idea that, in war, the battle itself is the ultimate, and to a large extent, the unavoidable goal, Sun Tzu believed that the battle should be avoided if possible, for it essentially represents a failure to win by other means.³⁰

In another comparison, Handel also argues that Clausewitz employs the ideal type method more explicitly than Sun Tzu.³¹ Since, in his own words, the ideal is to which political and military leaders should aspire, the emphasis that Clausewitz places on his ideals, even in his dialectical methodology, can only serve to inspire his adherents in that one direction, to his superior means to attain the highest aim in war.

Michael Howard, while disagreeing with Liddell Hart, admits that "In many respects Liddell Hart's critique of Clausewitz was quite justified: the reiterated emphasis on battle, the small concern for maneuver, a definition of strategy which ignored all save purely military means, ...".³² At the same time, he also points to the qualifications that are set out in the very first chapter.³³ Despite such qualifications, the thrust of Clausewitz' arguments can only be assessed through the relative emphasis laid on each viewpoint.

In the field of strategy, where one would expect the harmonizing of the political and military ends and means, Clausewitz extracts a bland definition of strategy: "the use of the engagement for the purpose of the war".³⁴ In the whole chapter, he does not highlight the subordination of means to the overall policy much less discuss the structure/process necessary for such compatibility of means and ends. Even a charitable view of the definition of strategy, formulated in context of the time

and experiences of Clausewitz, would place it at what we know as the operational level of war, if not the tactical in many aspects. Even here, he re-emphasizes the importance of engagements as against the value of capture of territory by itself.³⁵

While Clausewitz does explain the three levels of war through time and space in defense and types of resistance,³⁶ he barely discusses the conduct of war or problems at the higher levels. Thus, observations like "his (Clausewitz') study of war is concerned primarily with that which occurs once hostilities have commenced" and on his exclusion of logistics and economics:

Yet, once again one must remember that Clausewitz confines his discussion to the conduct of war in the battlefield itself, with the assumption that the necessary economic and logistical support will be made available to the military leadership.³⁷

Such deficiencies only confirm the main level of discussion in "On War". With the level identified, scholars, politicians and military strategists alike should be cautious of expecting substantial guidance on strategy from Clausewitz.

The explanation for these shortfalls is, perhaps, to be found in the introductory note Clausewitz wrote in 1827. Here, he expressed his intention to revise and bring out "the two types of war with greater clarity at every point" and apply the other principle that "war is nothing but the continuation of policy

with other means". The intent was to "iron out a good many kinks in the minds of strategists and statesmen" provided that "the working out of Book Eight results in clearing my own mind and in really establishing the main features of war".³⁸ His undated note, presumably written in 1830, also hints at the reason for such deficiency with his reference to the extraordinary difficulties of strategy and his assessment that very few people have clear ideas about its details.³⁹ As it stands, the reader already overwhelmed with the contradictory style, is exhorted to keep the author's intent on revision in mind to find himself in accord with the author.⁴⁰ It is the resultant variations in interpretations that lead Raymond Aron to comment that while "Clausewitz did not give a clear theoretical or general reply to these two questions: his readers have given many and contradictory interpretations to prolong the posthumous fate of this posthumous work."⁴¹ Perhaps, the reason is that we expect too much from Clausewitz even though the author was dissatisfied with his effort.

Effects on Military's Approach to Strategy

Influenced by Clausewitzian thoughts on strategy and his relative emphasis on the destruction of the enemy's forces as the superior approach to military strategy, not to mention his invocation of the "god of war" to drive home his point, it would be difficult to search for an alternate strategy. Even in limited conflicts, where the political ends did not demand the complete

destruction of the enemy's forces, partial destruction in one or more limited battles to reduce the enemy's powers of further resistance becomes the obvious and straightforward choice. As a matter of fact, Clausewitz' influence seems to have taken hold of political and military minds with the notable successes of one of his most intelligent and devoted disciples, the elder Moltke in the German wars of unification in 1866 and 1870.⁴²

In Moltke's writings, one finds passages over and over again which echo Clausewitz: "Victory through the application of armed force is the decisive factor in war...it is not the occupation of a slice of territory or the capture of a fortress but the destruction of the enemy forces which will decide the outcome of the war."⁴³ To a large extent, Clausewitz himself contributes to this simplistic view of strategy with his dictums such as: "the best strategy is to be very strong; first in general, and then at the decisive point."⁴⁴ It could also be argued that Clausewitz strengthens this misinterpretation through his examples of failure of strategy in achieving the political objective. Perhaps, the most apt is the analysis of Napoleon's Russian campaign of 1812 in which Clausewitz is assessed to be generous on Napoleon's miscalculations when he says: "...his estimate of how the government and people would react to his taking Moscow was not so predictably wrong as to make the campaign an absurdity."⁴⁵ However, when read in conjunction with Clausewitz' assessment of the missing element of that strategy as "the destruction of the Russian army. If that

achievement had been added to the rest, peace would have been as sure as things of that sort ever can be",⁴⁶ such examples hardly encourage a departure from the strategy of annihilation.

Clausewitz also argues that the battle is the center of gravity of the war with the logic that "since the essence of war is fighting, and since the battle is the fight of the main force, the battle must always be considered as the true center of gravity of the war"⁴⁷ and "The major battle is therefore to be regarded as concentrated war, as the center of gravity of the entire conflict or campaign."⁴⁸ This needs to be related to his discussion on the object of the engagement, when he states:

If we are right, then the notion according to which the destruction of the enemy forces is only the means, while the ends are bound to be quite different, is only generally true. We would reach the wrong conclusion unless we bear in mind that this very destruction of enemy's forces is also part of the final purpose. That purpose itself is only a slight modification of the destructive aim.⁴⁹

Here, Clausewitz treads on dangerous grounds diluting the fundamental assumption that the military objective is to be derived from the political one and is subordinate to it. At the same time, some scholars seem to err in interpreting Clausewitz' intent on the relation of the two objectives in the partially revised Book Eight. Quoting this Chapter, Peter Paret writes that "The military objective is dependent on the political purpose, but also' on the enemy's political and military policies, and on ...".⁵⁰ On the other hand, Clausewitz at this point does not

refer to the military objective but only to the resources that must be mobilized for war. Clausewitz also appears to do this to lead to the "Qualities of mind and character of the men making the decisions- of the rulers, statesmen, and commanders, whether these roles are united in a single individual or not".⁵¹ Notwithstanding this error, today it is not the relation between the military objective and the political purpose that is in question. The question is, how does one ensure that compatibility between the two in practice?

Effects on Politico - Military Interaction

The ambiguities of Clausewitz that thus seem to mar the formulation of strategy continue to afflict the relation between policy and strategy and as its natural sequel, between the political and military leadership. While talking about revision, Clausewitz also expresses the intent of including a special chapter dealing with the structure of the supreme command which was never written.⁵² Had it been, the controversy may have taken an entirely different form.

Bernard Brodie indicates that the idea that "war is simply the continuation of policy by other means" was still not crystallized in Clausewitz' mind, because it is developed only among the last portions that he worked on, that is, Chapter six of Book Eight and first chapter of Book One.⁵³ Unfortunately, despite these self-admitted shortcomings, Clausewitz' adherents

on both sides, civilian as well as military, have interpreted his thoughts largely to suit their particular theories confirming Raymond Aron's earlier observation on prolonging the fate of this posthumous work.

Undeniably, in the first chapter of Book One, Clausewitz does emphasize the dominance of the political end over the military means. However, he does also emphasize the operational freedom of the military necessary to conduct war with his injunctions like "Policy, of course, will not extend its influence to operational details".⁵⁴ This may indicate the degree of freedom that Clausewitz had in mind for the operational commander.

There is also the controversy regarding Clausewitz' intention in suggesting that the commander-in-chief be made a member of the cabinet so that the cabinet can share in his activities. Hahlweg is credited in having discovered the "deliberate alteration" of the second edition of *Vom Kriege* published in 1853 to read "so that the commander-in-chief may take part in the cabinet's councils".⁵⁵ What seems to slip attention is the caution that Clausewitz sounds almost immediately after making this suggestion: "what is highly dangerous is to let any soldier but the commander-in-chief exert an influence in cabinet".⁵⁶ Coupled with his earlier observation that at the highest levels the commander is simultaneously a statesman, it could be argued that Clausewitz' intent was of letting the military participate in the security policy making so that the

military objective was not in discord with the political aims. Certainly, participation does not mean domination and a violation of dogma the way it seems to be portrayed by some.²⁷

Viewed in this light, it may be unfair to comment:

what one does not find in Moltke, or indeed in any of his disciples or successors, is any reflection of Clausewitz' insistence on the need for military means to be subordinate to political ends...Certainly he accepted the supremacy of the political authority so long as it was the King himself,...but it did not extend to the King's political advisers.²⁸

With such observations, the attempt may well seem to be to extend the primacy of politics to subordination of the military, also to political advisers of the head of the state. This, perhaps, may be the clue to the controversy.

Considering the previous analysis, one wonders if in the political environment in Germany at that time, Moltke was far wrong when he wrote in 1871:

Policy makes use of war to gain its objectives, it acts with decisive influence at the beginning and the end of the war, in such a way either to increase its claims during the progress of war or to be satisfied with lesser gains. With this uncertainty strategy cannot but always direct its efforts towards the highest goal attainable with the means at its disposal. It thereby serves policy best, and only works for the object of policy, but is completely independent of policy in its actions.²⁹

The political wisdom of the time is expressed in German

Emperor Wilhelm II comments that "Policy keeps its mouth shut during war until strategy allows it to speak again". Consider also the conclusion:

Although Von Moltke accepted the leading role of Bismarck in shaping the objectives of war, even submitting to the Chancellor's political demands in the course of the war, his idea of military autonomy became nevertheless the standard opinion of the German soldier and, fatefully enough for Germany, also of the statesman.⁴⁰

In view of the foregoing, the charges appear distorted in the name of Clausewitz. It is interesting to consider the state of the British in the same period:

Although the British are supposed to be politically more sophisticated than the Germans and more firmly set against vesting authority in the military, the difference is hardly supported by their experience in the First World War. Indeed, it can be fairly said that the country's first wartime prime minister never tried as hard as Bethmann Hollweg did to see that war was used as an instrument of policy and that the great strategical issues remained under the control of the political leadership.⁴¹

Gordon Craig in his article "The Political Leader as Strategist" also brings out that the major cause of the tragedy of the great war was not only the failure of the political leadership to find alternate policies or strategy but also the strong public passions and support for this senseless war.⁴² This inability of the political leadership would be indicative of the bankruptcy of policy guidance along with contemporary military wisdom, unfortunately in all the belligerents at the same time. Liddell Hart writes that "The wave of Prussian

imitation that had followed 1763 was repeated after 1870. The Prussian army had been nourished on the gospel of Clausewitz, therefore his gospel was right."⁴³ When one considers the evidence, it does not appear incidental that all the belligerents were under the influence of Clausewitz, to varying degrees.

It is ironic to note, in view of the charges against him, that it was the elder Moltke who issued a warning on the dangers of the impending war as early as 1890.⁴⁴ While Bernard Brodie suggests not laying the blame primarily on the military for this debacle due to the fact that the responsibility for their selection and retention or dismissal was ultimately the politician's, he seems to overlook the overarching responsibility of the policy makers in avoiding a war which is beyond their means.⁴⁵

Nor was the American experience, even after this holocaust, any different in the Second World War in terms of its focus. One analysis shows:

Nor was Hull alone in opposing the intrusion of the concepts of the old diplomacy into the pursuit of war. American soldiers, who were convinced that their preference for the direct rather than the peripheral approach to battle problems showed their adherence to Clausewitz' doctrines, were all too obviously ill-informed about the German theorist's insistence that political considerations can be forgotten in wartime only with peril...As for the President himself---he was no more open to the idea that strategy had a political side than his secretary of state or his soldiers.⁴⁶

Samuel Huntington asserts that this focus was essentially civilian and the US military slowly veered towards it from its much broader pre-war outlook.⁶⁷ It could also be argued that due to its focus on military victory, the American leadership, both military and civilian, lost an opportunity to promote a world order which may have reduced the ill-effects of the cold war.⁶⁸

Suggested Direction of Modification

Despite the lessons of history, the attempt to assert the dominance of civil authority, with the intention perhaps of complete separation of the military from the strategy formulation process, continues to be made in the name of Clausewitz. The thought used, not infrequently, is that of Clemenceau who is reported to have said that war was too serious a matter to be left in the hands of the generals.⁶⁹ As would be evident from the previous discussion, Clausewitz never recommended such complete separation of war and politics. He hinted at the opposite in the little that he did say on the issue. As a matter of fact, a case has been made out that in certain circumstances, which they do not clarify, both Sun Tzu and Clausewitz recognize that the military commander in the field "can and must overrule political orders".⁷⁰ While this represents the other extreme view of the relation, those making the case in Clausewitz' name forget the influence of his own actions in the Prussian alliance with Napoleon against Russia.

Clausewitz was among the most outspoken opponents of what he called a surrender that was both unheroic and politically unwise, and with some thirty other officers resigned his commission, a step that confirmed his reputation as a man who put his own values above the policies of the King.⁷¹

This was when, under the circumstances, the King's policy was possibly the best for the future of Prussia.

Viewed in this perspective, it is counter-productive to label the military mind or military profession with derogatory terms, as some scholars have tended to, in an effort to establish the military's supposed violations of Clausewitzian teaching. The focus of the debate should be the most suitable process for formulation of national strategy. Historical examples tend to show that more often than not it is the incompatibility between the desired end state and the means employed that has been responsible for failure. The American experience in Vietnam could be one clear example of such incompatibility. The comments made in an analysis of revolutionary war read:

Neither the US Department of State nor various other agencies showed sufficient capacity to deal with fundamental political problems" and "American (military) accepted their mission in good conscience, but assumed that political matters -the heart of revolutionary war- were not their responsibility.⁷²

Bernard Brodie also assesses that the Vietnam War was not suited to American style since Americans do well when in situations where military operations are easily isolated from

political constraints.⁷³ In this case, a return to Clausewitz, who highlights politico-military interaction but does not offer a choice of strategic alternatives, after this failure may be a step in the wrong direction for the US.

Such examples tend to indicate that with growing complexities of modern warfare and its variations, the only full-time practitioners of this art- the military- need to be even more politically aware as distinct from politicized. Gordon Craig perhaps sums up the practical problems most appropriately with the following:

Clausewitz' statement that "policy is the guiding intelligence and war only the instrument....No other possibility exists, then, than to subordinate the military point of view to the political," though of great theoretical significance, is of little use to anyone trying to formulate rules for decision making in twentieth century warfare or to delineate responsibility for the determination of strategy. If, as David Fraser has argued, "the art of strategy is to determine the aim, which is or should be political: to derive from that aim a series of military objectives to be achieved: to assess these objectives as to the military requirements they create, and the preconditions which the achievement of each is likely to necessitate: to measure available and potential resources against the requirements and to chart from this process a coherent pattern of priorities and a rational course of action," the difficult question is how much of the deriving and assessing and measuring and charting falls within the political leader's purview and how much of it becomes a military function. It is clear that this cannot be answered by any categorical formulation, even one that is invested with the authority of Clausewitz' name.⁷⁴

Thus, the answer may not lie only in debating who is subordinate to whom but in adopting and encouraging a structure that permits efficient and healthy interaction of all

instruments of political power so that their use and effect is synergistic. Even within such a framework, the interplay of personalities in all their facets including intellect and strength of character would continue to play an important role. Effective extraction of the best from the group would, to a very large extent, depend on the ability of the political leader. This has been demanded of the leader from time immemorial and would continue to be so.

Conclusions

A review of the theories of Clausewitz becomes even more important in the current environment, particularly in the United States due to the return of Clausewitz, with renewed zeal, in its military and the academia after the failures in Vietnam. The success of the US in Desert Storm must not blind us to the deficiencies in Clausewitzian philosophy since the available information does not clearly prove that the war was won through a Clausewitzian approach. The true lesson of this war may yet have to be relearned. The Controversy about involving the US military in the former Yugoslavia without a clear political end due to pressures of public opinion is an indication of the complexity of employment of the military instrument. Also, it is not certain that the structure that worked in the Gulf War would work as effectively with new incumbents without some readjustments or clarification of the ground rules. It has been the thrust of this paper that strategy needs to move away from Clausewitz' both

politically and militarily if future use of force in varying forms is to achieve the desired results.

The major reasons for this view are four. Firstly, "On War" essentially deals with war at the operational and tactical levels. Secondly, Clausewitz presupposes a rationality in policy making but does not discuss how this rationalization is to be achieved. This perhaps is the most important as well as complex step which gets largely simplified in current practice due to Clausewitz' influence. Thirdly, Clausewitz actually misguides in the formulation of an appropriate military strategy with his emphasis on the destruction of enemy's armed forces and little discussion on strategic alternatives. Clausewitz does not also address the concurrent use of other instruments of power to aid in attainment of the military objective much less discuss the complexities of synergizing their use. As long as the military has overwhelming power, this deficiency gets masked. Unfortunately, even the US military may not have the luxury of abundant resources in future. Lastly, Clausewitz does not ask the question whether the military instrument is always suitable or if the desired objectives are unattainable militarily. As a matter of fact, the political atmosphere for possible attainment of some objectives may be vitiated by use of the military.

Despite these limitations, Clausewitz needs to be read and discussed. The chief value of his work remains in the discussion generated as a means of leading to more appropriate approaches to

strategy and the process associated with its formulation and application.

The controversy on the structure for higher direction of war in the name of Clausewitz also needs to be laid to rest instead of its furtherance due to misperceptions and parochial reasons. The debate in the present political culture needs to shift from the accepted primacy of politics to the role of the military in the strategy formulation process, the aim being compatibility of political and military objectives and the synergy of all instruments of power. Perhaps, the only logical and effective way of exercising political dominance, in democracies including the US with its liberal democratic traditions, is objective civilian control suggested by Samuel Huntington almost a generation ago where he says: "Only an environment which is sympathetically conservative will permit American military leaders to combine the political power which society thrusts upon them with the military professionalism without which society cannot endure."⁷⁵ History is replete with the lesson that military effectiveness and efficiency can only be sacrificed at the altar of domestic politics at the risk of national decline, if not survival.

NOTES

1. Carl Von Clausewitz, On War. Edited and Translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret, 8th ed., New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1984, p 58.
2. Ibid. p 27.
3. Clausewitz and Modern Strategy, Edited by Michael I. Handel, New Jersey: Frank Cass and Co. Ltd, 1986, p 2.
4. Basil Henry Liddell Hart, The Ghost of Napoleon. Connecticut: Greenwood Press Inc., 1980, p 126.
5. Ibid. p 137.
6. Michael I. Handel, Clausewitz and Modern Strategy, Op Cit.
6.
7. Ibid. p 10.
8. On War, Op Cit. p 173.
9. Ibid. pp 605-610.
10. Ibid. p 610.
11. Michael Handel, Clausewitz and Modern strategy, Op cit. p 53.
12. Larry H. Addington, The Patterns of War since the Eighteenth Century. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984, p 27. Also see Michael Howard in his Introduction to On War, "The Influence of Clausewitz", On War, Op Cit. p 36 & p 48.
13. On war, Ibid. p 634.
14. Ibid. p 28.
15. Martin Van Creveld, "The Eternal Clausewitz", Clausewitz and Modern Strategy. Op Cit. p 36.
16. Michael Handel, Ibid. p 7.
17. Michael I. Handel, "Sun Tzu and Clausewitz: The Art of War and On War Compared", Strategic Studies Institute, US army War college, Carlisle barracks, Pennsylvania, 1991, p 14.
18. On War, Op Cit. pp 75-89. As a matter fact, the latter quote is the only one on p 544 of John Barlett's 14th Edition of "Familiar Quotations" which may signify how Clausewitz is generally perceived.
19. On War, Op Cit. p 28. Also see Michael Handel in "Sun Tzu and Clausewitz", op Cit. p 10.

20. Michael Handel, Clausewitz and Modern Strategy. Op Cit.
p 7.
21. Liddell Hart, Op Cit. p 120.
22. On War, Op Cit. p 87.
23. Ibid. p 94.
24. Michael Handel, Clausewitz and Modern strategy. Op Cit.
p 7.
25. On War, op Cit. p 95.
26. Bernard Brodie, "A Guide to the Reading of On War", On
War, Op Cit. p 643.
27. On War, Ibid. p 99.
28. Ibid.
29. Ibid.
30. Michael Handel, Clausewitz and Modern Strategy. Op Cit.
p 13.
31. Michael Handel, "Sun Tzu and Clausewitz", op Cit. p 5.
32. Michael Howard, On War, Op Cit. pp 40-41.
33. Ibid. p 40.
34. On war, Ibid. p 177.
35. Ibid. p 182.
36. Wallace P. Franz, "Two Letters on Strategy: Clausewitz'
Contribution to the Operational Level of War", Clausewitz and
Modern strategy. Op Cit. p 172.
37. Michael Handel, "Sun Tzu and Clausewitz", Op Cit.
pp 10-11.
38. On War, Op Cit. pp 69-70.
39. Ibid. p 70.
40. Peter Paret, "The Genesis of On War", On War, Ibid.
pp 22-23.
41. Raymond Aron, Clausewitz: Philosopher of War. Translated
by Christine Booker and Norman Stone, New Jersey: Prentice Hall
Inc., 1985, p 116.

42. Michael Howard, On War, Op Cit. p 30. Also see Bernard Brodie in Strategy in the Missile Age. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1959, pp 34-35.
43. Michael Howard, On War, Ibid. p 30.
44. On War, Ibid. p 204.
45. Bernard Brodie, On War, Op Cit. pp 709-710.
46. On War, Ibid. p 582.
47. Ibid. p 248.
48. Ibid. p 258.
49. Ibid. p 228.
50. Peter Paret, "Clausewitz", Makers of Modern Strategy: from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age. Edited by Peter Paret, with Gordon A. Craig and Felix Gilbert, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1986, p 207.
51. On War, Op Cit. pp 585-586. Also see Bernard Brodie in "A Guide to the Reading of On War", Ibid. p 702, where he links the problem of scale of the military objective and the effort to be made to the failure of the US in Vietnam.
52. On War, Ibid. p 633. Also see Note 5 by the editors on the same page.
53. Bernard Brodie, On War, Ibid. p 642.
54. On War, Ibid. p 606.
55. Jehuda L. Wallach, "Misperceptions of Clausewitz' On War by the German Military", Clausewitz and Modern Strategy. Op Cit. pp 227-228. Also see On War, Note 1 by the editors on p 608.
56. On War, Op Cit. p 609.
57. Jehuda L. Wallach, Op Cit. p 228, where he suggests that this deliberate alteration clearly indicates the German military's rejection of the principle of primacy of politics.
58. Michael Howard, On War, Op Cit. pp 30-31.
59. Jehuda L. Wallach, Op Cit. p 228. Also see Gunther E. Rothenberg, "Moltke, Schlieffen, and the Doctrine of Strategic Envelopment", Makers of Modern Strategy, Op Cit. pp 296-325, particularly pp 297-299.
60. Jehuda L. Wallach, Ibid. p 228.

61. Gordon A. Craig, "The Political Leader as Strategist", Makers of Modern Strategy, Op Cit. p 485.
62. Ibid. pp 481-509.
63. Liddell Hart, Op Cit. p 131.
64. Bernard Brodie, War and Politics. New York: Macmillan Publishing Co. Inc., 1973, pp 27-28.
65. Ibid. p 27.
66. Gordon A. Craig, Op Cit. pp 503-504.
67. Samuel Huntington, The Soldier and the State. Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 6th Printing, 1979, pp 326-335.
68. Maurice Matloff, "Allied Strategy in Europe, 1939-45", Makers of Modern Strategy, Op Cit. pp 677-702.
69. Gordon A. Craig, Op Cit. p 490.
- 4 70. Michael Handel, "Sun Tzu and Clausewitz", Op Cit. pp 14-16.
71. Peter Paret, "Clausewitz", Makers of Modern Strategy, Op Cit. p 195.
72. John Shy and Thomas W. Collier, "Revolutionary War", Makers of Modern Strategy, Op Cit. pp 855-856.
73. Bernard Brodie, Strategy and National Interests: Reflections for the future. New York: National Strategy Information Center, Inc., 1971, p 33.
74. Gordon A. Craig, Op Cit. p 481.
75. Samuel Huntington, Op Cit. p 484.

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3. Barlett, Familiar Quotations. 14th ed., Boston: Little Brown & Co., 1968.
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5. _____, War and Politics. New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1973.
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