

NATIONAL DEFENSE UNIVERSITY

NATIONAL WAR COLLEGE

“CLAUSEWITZ ON CLINTON: THE WAR COLLEGE LECTURE”

MR. RICHARD BEER, STATE DEPARTMENT
CLASS OF 2000
COURSE NUMBER 5602
SEMINAR GROUP “C”

Report Documentation Page				Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
Public reporting burden for the collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to a penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number.					
1. REPORT DATE 2000		2. REPORT TYPE N/A		3. DATES COVERED -	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Clausewitz Clinton: The War College Lecture				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S)				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) National Defense University National War College Washington, DC				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release, distribution unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT					
15. SUBJECT TERMS					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT UU	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 10	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT unclassified	b. ABSTRACT unclassified	c. THIS PAGE unclassified			

Editors's Note: It is not necessary to describe in detail here what has been reported so extensively elsewhere, regarding the recent stunning advancements in biotechnology and genetic engineering. These advancements have enabled scientists working with small fragments of DNA to reconstitute the exact personality and intellect of individuals long deceased. In one of the first such endeavors, these scientists in the spring of 2003 succeeded in recreating completely the early 19th century military theorist Carl Von Clausewitz. Because the scientists who did this were Americans, working in Rockville, Maryland, Mr. Von Clausewitz was brought to America, amidst great secrecy, and ensconced at the National War College in Washington for months of intensive readings and briefings, to bring him up to date on the many developments in the field of war since his death. That fall he made his dramatic first public appearance, speaking in English no less and delivering a lecture to the War College's faculty and students on how his theories applied to military activity during the administration of President Bill Clinton. Following is a complete transcript of this remarkable event, exactly as heard by the faculty and students on October 1, 2003.

COMMANDANT: Please be seated. Welcome to what is without a doubt the most remarkable day in the history of the National War College. For the first time ever, students and faculty alike will encounter the enduring observations and theories of Carl Von Clausewitz on war not from that 732 page paperback book we all know and love, but directly from Mr. Von Clausewitz himself. This surely will be the most memorable lecture in our school's history. Unfortunately I must apologize to our distinguished guest that this lecture is taking place here in the Transpoint Building, headquarters of the U.S. Coast Guard, and not in our own Arnold Auditorium in Roosevelt Hall. The renovation work in the auditorium unfortunately has taken a bit longer than expected, but we hope to be in there after the Christmas break. I am sure, however, that the less than optimum

setting will in no way detract from this monumental event. So, without further ado, let me turn it over to Mr. Von Clausewitz.

CLAUSEWITZ: Thank you Madame Commandant for that most kind introduction. The focus of my talk will be the policies of the administration of your President Bill Clinton, as seen in the light of the theories of war advanced in my book. First, I will look at how the deployment of military forces by the Clinton administration in Haiti, Iraq and Kosovo conformed with my dictum that war is a continuation of politics by other means. Second, I will further examine the Kosovo engagement of 1999 in light of my description of war as a trinity of passion, reason and chance. Third, I will attempt to peer over the horizon and surmise what appears to be the future of warfare, in the wake of what I feel are truly sweeping changes in military doctrine and society at large which crystallized during Mr. Clinton's presidency, and which continue today.

Haiti, Iraq, Kosovo and Politics

One may question why I would include the 1994 Haiti intervention in my discussion of war, since that situation never reached the level of combat. However, it was clear Mr. Clinton was prepared to send American troops into combat in case the negotiations to remove Mr. Raul Cedras and his junta failed. So in this case, I am equating this very real threat to use force with the use of force itself. I wrote in my book, "war is not merely an act of policy but a true political instrument, a continuation of political intercourse, carried on with other means."¹ This aptly describes Mr. Clinton's marshaling of military force against Haiti in 1994. His objective was clearly a political one -- the removal of Mr. Cedras and restoration of the elected president, Mr. Aristide. I would argue that he mobilized just the right level of military activity, combined with the negotiating efforts of his representatives, Mr. Jimmy Carter, Senator Sam Nunn and General Colin Powell. They offered enough in the way of incentives to induce Mr.

¹ Carl Von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1976), 87

Cedras et. al. to depart the country and thereby achieved the stated objective and did so without firing a shot. Mr. Clinton quite correctly used the threat of war as an effective political instrument to achieve the policy ends which he sought. To quote again from the same section of my book: “The political object is the goal, war is the means of reaching it, and means can never be considered in isolation from their purpose.”²

The Iraq situation was different from Haiti. The United States continues to hold an exceptional grudge against Mr. Saddam Hussein, far in excess of any animus towards the Haitian junta, because he has managed to remain in power and defy your will even though you administered a most substantial defeat upon him in the 1991 Persian Gulf war. Mr. Hussein’s mischief-making in the years following his limited defeat in 1991 was to be expected. As I wrote:

“...even the ultimate outcome of a war is not always to be regarded as final. The defeated state often considers the outcome merely a transitory evil, for which a remedy may still be found in political conditions at some later date.”³

This remedy sought by Mr. Hussein has included his defiance and eventual expulsion of the United Nations weapons inspectors and his campaign for lifting of the economic sanctions imposed on him in response to his invasion of Kuwait. Baffled and frustrated by Mr. Hussein’s defiant and rather wily behavior, Mr. Clinton and his associates could think of no policy other than to threaten a reprise of the Persian Gulf bombing campaign, though on a reduced scale. The reduced scale was an appropriate balancing of ends and means since Mr. Hussein’s intransigence vis a vis weapons inspections and sanctions was not a transgression in any way approaching that of his invasion of Kuwait. However, the Clinton administration never articulated just how the bombing attacks it threatened, and ultimately carried out in December 1998, would change Mr. Hussein’s mind and secure his agreement to permit weapons inspections to

² Ibid 87

³ Ibid. 80

resume and thereby meet the terms for the lifting of sanctions. The negotiations that were pursued on this matter were not of the intensity and sophistication of the Haiti effort, and no incentives were offered to Mr. Hussein for his compliance. It was all rather in the form of a bluntly stated ultimatum: Let the inspectors back in or we will bomb you. Quite simply, Mr. Clinton allowed the policy objective he sought to be disconnected from the military means he threatened and ultimately employed. I am sorry to say that he failed to follow my dictum that nobody should start a war “without first being clear in his mind what he intends to achieve by that war and how he intends to conduct it.”⁴ So, instead of being a carefully considered extension of politics, the American-British air strikes more resembled a spanking administered to a defiant child by a frustrated and exasperated parent. Not surprisingly, the child in this instance remains as defiant as ever and the outcome for Mr. Clinton was total failure. The weapons inspections never resumed, sympathy for the plight of Iraqis under sanctions grew internationally and the sanctions regime broke down. This conforms to what I have written about defeated adversaries:

“Envy, jealousy, anxiety, and sometimes perhaps even generosity are the natural advocates of the unsuccessful. They will win new friends for him as well as weaken and divide his enemies.”⁵

The Kosovo situation, I am sorry to say to my American audience, began by repeating this unfortunate pattern of military action not fully connected to political objectives. The United States and its allies, you will recall, attempted to obtain the agreement of the leadership of Yugoslavia to a plan that called for a vote on autonomy in the province of Kosovo. Since the province is overwhelmingly ethnic Albanian it was a foregone conclusion that autonomy, and indeed eventual independence from Yugoslavia, would be supported in any such vote by a substantial margin. This

⁴ Ibid 579

⁵ Ibid 597

proposed agreement thus offered Yugoslavia the prospect of losing yet another province -- this one the birthplace of Serbia's nationalist identity -- while receiving nothing in return. Despite her quite blunt warnings of the bombing that would follow if Yugoslavia failed to sign this agreement, your Secretary of State Mrs. Albright should not have been surprised when Yugoslavia rejected this one-sided agreement.

Once this happened, the United States and its allies faced the problem of making good on their threats and carrying out a military action that would somehow prompt the Yugoslav leader, Mr. Slobodan Milosevic to sign this agreement that was so contrary to his interests. This was the type of instance I described in my book in which "the political object will not provide a suitable military objective. In that event, another military objective must be adopted that will serve the political purpose and symbolize it in the peace negotiations."⁶ Thus when the allies began the aerial bombing campaign they switched their rationale to an effort primarily to force Mr. Milosevic to withdraw his troops from Kosovo and cease his attacks on the ethnic Albanian civilians, rather than to sign the agreement on a referendum.

The Kosovo War and the Trinity

I am assured by your distinguished commandant that this school has drilled into you my concept of war as a "paradoxical trinity" of passion, chance and reason which are primarily the province of the people, the military and the government respectively. That is good, but keep in mind that in a war situation passion is not limited to the people, chance is not solely the province of the military and reason is not exercised only by the government. To the people of America and Western Europe, Kosovo was rather remote and the Yugoslav government had in no way directly attacked or injured any of the Western countries. Its only offense, in the eyes of the West, was its refusal to sign the Kosovo agreement. Concluding the agreement was a rather limited objective and the

⁶ Ibid, p. 81

failure to achieve it stirred little passion in the Western population. So it fell to the government to supply the passion because, as I wrote, “if policy is directed only toward minor objectives, the emotions of the masses will be little stirred and they will have to be stimulated rather than held back.”⁷

Mr. Clinton, as the acknowledged leader of the Western forces, thus faced the delicate task of inflaming the rather apathetic public sufficiently to support the Allied war effort but not so much so that, aroused, they would demand military actions he was not prepared to take, such as a ground invasion. Mr. Clinton also attempted to prevent any show of genius or exploitation of chance by the military, in ruling out a ground assault and sharply limiting the prosecution of the air campaign to avoid Allied casualties. In the end, as we all know, Mr. Clinton and the Western allies muddled through by fixing as their objective a Yugoslav army withdrawal from Kosovo and the means to achieve that objective the high altitude bombing of Belgrade and other parts of the Serbian region of Yugoslavia. After supplying the passion to launch the war and build public support, Mr. Clinton and his allies then took up the more common government role of subordinating passion to reason and ending the hostilities upon withdrawal of the Yugoslav forces. This final act was done against growing passion in some quarters of the military and general public for still harsher retribution in light of the Yugoslav forces’ clear human rights abuses. In the end, Mr. Clinton’s understanding of the trinity, explicit or subconscious, thus led him to halt the war after finally achieving his revised stated policy objective and before the war expanded to a level quite disproportionate to his objective.

Looking Ahead...and Backwards

As soon as one war ends, it is tempting to extrapolate from its judgments as to the future of warfare. This can degenerate into sheer guesswork, not to mention utter

⁷ Ibid, p. 88.

pedantry, but I feel compelled to comment, in light of some of my own writings. Mr. Clinton's strategy of conducting a very strictly limited war, for limited objectives in Kosovo, is only the latest example of how America is coming to view all wars as limited. This is an understandable recoil from the mass slaughter of this century's two world wars, and especially the unprecedented civilian casualties of the Second World War, combined with the large losses and poor results in the Vietnam conflict. War thus has been increasingly restricted to the achievement of a series of very limited objectives -- apprehending the leader of Panama, driving the invader out of Kuwait, restoring the elected government in Haiti, reprimanding the leader of Iraq for cutting off weapons inspections and driving forces out of a breakaway province in the Balkans. This appears to be the trend for the future. It is a development I foresaw in my book when I wrote:

So policy converts the overwhelmingly destructive element of war into a mere instrument. It changes the terrible battle-sword that man needs both hands and his entire strength to wield, and with which he strikes home once and no more, into a light, handy rapier -- sometimes just a foil for the exchange of thrusts, feints and parries.⁸

In a very real sense military affairs throughout the world, and especially in Europe and America, have come full circle from the era of Bonaparte and now strikingly resemble the pre-Bonaparte era I have described. Mass conscription has been abolished in most countries, most noticeably for a quarter century in America. Armies are coming to resemble the small, monarchical units of the 18th century. They are placed into combat under very tightly limited circumstances, and only after the most arduous of public debate. Budget pressures, especially to meet social expenditures for a burgeoning population of retired citizens, are placing sharp limits on military spending in Europe and increasingly in America too. Warfare now, as then, must be so carefully

⁸ Ibid, p. 606

controlled and calibrated that it is just “a somewhat stronger form of diplomacy, a more forceful method of negotiation.”⁹

Your Secretary of State, Mrs. Albright, has even gone so far as to maintain that these limited military actions are not war at all. In a recent article she was quoted thusly, when questioned about military action against Iraq: “We are talking about using military force, but we are not talking about a war...I think that this is an important distinction”¹⁰

I beg to differ. As I stated at the very opening of my book, war is “an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will.”¹¹ It is so patently obvious that Mrs. Albright has championed the use of force to compel her adversaries in Iraq and Yugoslavia to do our will that I see no need to dwell further on this matter.

Mrs. Albright succeeded with such statements, however, in driving the United States and Europe back to what I see as a return to the pre-Bonaparte era of limited, princely wars. Then as now, as I observed in my book, philosophies of enlightenment “turned war even more into the exclusive concern of governments and estranged it still further from the interests of the people.”¹² I believe it is principally for this reason that public support for the Kosovo endeavor was so limited and tentative at the outset. By attempting to limit the passions of the people and restrain the military, Mr. Clinton and his supporters should not have been surprised that they then could muster so little support for their cause.

The similarly limited support of America’s European allies also reminds me of the pre-Bonaparte era. Then, I observed: “Political relations, with their affinities and

⁹ Ibid, p. 590

¹⁰ Andrew J. Bacevich, “Policing Utopia, The Military Imperatives of Globalization,” *The National Interest* 56 (summer 1999) 7.

¹¹ Clausewitz, p. 75

¹² Ibid, p. 591

antipathies, had become so sensitive a nexus that no cannon could be fired in Europe without every government feeling its interest affected.”¹³

America and Europe clearly are now in an era of extremely limited warfare or military action, call it what you will. I can see no prospect at the present time for reversion to warfare on a grand scale. But might there be another Bonaparte lurking out there somewhere? Perhaps, but that is the subject for another lecture at another time. I have been advised that the students’ chairs in this lecture hall are exceptionally uncomfortable and therefore I should not subject you to an overly long lecture. Unfortunately no time is available for questions, as I am told you all must be in your seminar rooms within the next 15 minutes. Thank you for your attention and I look forward to speaking with you again on further aspects of the theory and practice of war. Perhaps we can apply my theories to the military actions to date of your current president, M.... (*remainder of recording inaudible due to microphone failure - Ed.*).

END OF LECTURE

¹³ Ibid, p. 590