Is Clausewitzian Thought Really Timeless as Some Have Claimed?
Written by Mareike Oldemeinen

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Is Clausewitzian Thought Really Timeless As Some Have Claimed? Discuss with Reference to the War on Terror.

When almost two-hundred years ago Carl von Clausewitz wrote his famous work 'On War', it was his "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" (Clausewitz 1976: 63). The fact that, "Carl von Clausewitz's On War is the prism through which we have come to look at war" (Strachan and Herberg-Rothe 2008: 1) suggests that Clausewitzian thought was not only a product of and relevant to its time, but that it is still applicable in a modern day context and, hence, timeless. However, when we look at the War on Terror where a state – the US – declared 'war' on a tactic – terrorism – and hence did not follow the traditional model of interstate war, the question of whether Clausewitzian thought is still relevant is an appropriate one. To assess this, the essay will first set the stage by briefly outlining what is meant by Clausewitzian thought. Here, Clausewitz's fundamental insights into the concept of war and particularly his notions of the 'Trinity' and of 'Friction', as well as his famous assertion "war is merely the continuation of policy by other means" (Clausewitz 1976: 87) will be explored. Underlying the question of whether Clausewitzian thought is relevant to explaining and understanding the War on Terror is the more fundamental debate regarding the timelessness of Clausewitz's theory. The claim articulated by Martin van Creveld that "the Clausewitzian Universe is rapidly becoming out of date and can no longer provide us with a proper framework for understanding war" (van Creveld 1991: 58) represents one side of this debate. Propagators of this theory often bolster their arguments with reference to the doctrine of 'Old Wars' and 'New Wars', claiming that only "traditional state-centric […] warfare" (Dexter 2007: 1058) can be described as "clausewitzian" (Dexter 2007: 1058) and that, in order to explain the 'New Wars' that are "fought by networks of state and non-state actors" (Kaldor 2005: 8), we are in need of a new paradigm. Having thus laid the groundwork, the discussion then turns to the main analysis of whether Clausewitzian thought really is timeless and whether it can provide the means and techniques for explaining and understanding the War on Terror. The argument that will be discussed is that "his [Clausewitz's] conception of war, his remarkable trinity, and his grasp of the relationship between Politik and war will endure as long as states, drug cartels, warrior clans, and terrorist groups have a mind to wage war" (Echevarria, 1995-1996: 80). It will be evident that one should not attempt to apply Clausewitz's individual theses word for word to a modern-day context, but rather that if we succeed in finding "fresh angles from which to approach the text" (Strachan and Herberg-Rothe 2008: 2), we can appreciate the applicability of Clausewitz's general methods and ideas to modern-day warfare.

According to Christopher Bassford "Clausewitz was interested in fundamental truths on war" (Bassford 2003: 19). Having fought as an officer for the Prussian Army himself, he was writing as a practitioner for his fellow soldiers and "for those who are interested in the subject" (Clausewitz 1976: 63). His insights on war are manifold, ranging from the incentives and the right to go to war, to conduct during battle and questions of soldiers' morale. His most famous notions include the proclamation that "war is merely the continuation of policy by other means" (Clausewitz 1976: 87), as well as the concept of the "remarkable trinity" (Clausewitz 1976: 89), and general uncertainty in war, what Clausewitz called 'Friction'. He considered war to be a means of reaching a goal that is the political object (Clausewitz 1976: 87). The 'Trinity', which Clausewitz regarded as inherent to war, he said was "composed of

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primordial violence, hatred, and enmity, which are to be regarded as blind natural force; of the play of chance and probability […]; and of its element of subordination […] which makes it subject to reason alone"(Clausewitz 1976: 89). His notion of 'Friction', he describes as "the force that makes the apparently easy so difficult" (Clausewitz 1976: 121), the discrepancy between theory and reality and it can help explain why any given outcome might differ from what was expected (Bassford 2007: 15). Having set out what is meant by Clausewitzian thought, the essay will now briefly outline the reasons for and form of the following discussion regarding the relevancy of Clausewitz's theory to modern-day conflicts and the War on Terror.

The recent "surge in academic interest in intra-state conflicts" (Dexter 2007: 1066) and the proclaimed emergence of so-called 'New Wars' has led scholars in recent years to reconsider the relevancy of Carl von Clausewitz's theory on the concept of war. Those scholars such as Antulio J. Echevarria who argue that "his [Clausewitz's] conception of war remains valid" (Echevarria 1995-1996: 77) are the ones that thoroughly examine not only Clausewitz's individual theses, but also his general concepts and methods. They regard Carl von Clausewitz not as a 'prisoner' of the military thought of the Napoleonic era, but as a military analyst who understood that "every age had its own kind of war" (Clausewitz 1976: 593) and who endeavoured to provide a study so comprehensive that it would "be universal and timeless" (Owens 2003: para. 2). Rather than focusing too much on particular theses, Mackubin Thomas Owens approached Clausewitz's 'On War' from a methodological perspective. He applied his criteria of what constitutes a valid and useful theory to Clausewitzian thought and arrived at the following conclusion: "A good theory is descriptive, predictive, and prescriptive: It should adequately describe the various phenomena associated with its subject matter; permit individuals to predict what will happen in the future by extrapolating from the present; and offer a guide for action. This is what Clausewitz does." (Owens 2003: para. 2). This approach highlights the marked difference between those scholars mentioned above who argue for the continuing relevance of Clausewitz's thought and approach, and the critics who – by focussing on his individual, case specific theses – claim that Clausewitzian thought is unable to provide a useful basis for the analysis of modern-day conflict. Academics like Martin van Creveld or Robert M. Cassidy, who claims that "Clausewitz theorized about war in a context that is two paradigms out of date" (Cassidy 2008: 150) and has, hence, lost its relevancy to the study of modern warfare, often have an "overly narrow" (Stone 2007: 282) or limited view of Clausewitzian thought. This is evident in the way that the critics interpret Clausewitz's well-known claim that "war is merely the continuation of policy by other means" (Clausewitz 1976: 87).

This assertion "is often interpreted to mean that war is merely an act of state policy aimed at achieving political aims" (Echevarria 1995-1996: 77). This is a very limited view, since Clausewitz's description of war, in fact, has a much wider underlying meaning that encapsulates the "dominant ideas, emotions and political interrelationships" of that particular time (Echevarria 1995-1996: 77). Again, this demonstrates the need for interpretation of Clausewitzian thought, rather than taking it at face value. Later in this essay, when the argument for the continuing relevance of Clausewitz will be made in more detail, we shall return to this discussion and show more ways to apply this famous statement to modern-day conflicts. Another of Clausewitz's concepts that his critics have misinterpreted and hence used to argue against the relevance of Clausewitzian thought nowadays is the famous 'Trinity'. The problem here is that the critics rely on a "simplified model [of the trinity] of people, army, and government" (Bassford 2003: 19) and thus argue that this tripartite system is irrelevant in contemporary warfare that "does not distinguish between governments, armies, and peoples" (van Creveld 1991: 58). This perceived shift is related to the doctrine of 'Old Wars' and 'New Wars' and the claim that the War on Terror and other conflicts involving non-state actors represent a move away from "Classical war [that] assumes a fixed set of identifiable physical (normally state) enemies, not amorphous terror networks." (Heng 2002: 227).

As Helen Dexter has pointed out, "we now live in an era characterized by new threats and challenges" (Dexter 2007: 1059), but does that mean that Clausewitzian thought has lost its relevance? The War on Terror with its focus on non-state actors is certainly a very different kind of 'war' compared to World Wars I and II, and the Cold War, but has modern-day warfare changed to the extent where Clausewitz's theory no longer offers any explanatory value? In order to assess whether the War on Terror really represents a so-called 'New War' and if so, what implications this might have on the relevance of Clausewitzian thought, a working definition of what is understood by 'Old Wars' and 'New Wars' is needed. According to Mary Kaldor "'Old War' refers to an idealized version of war that characterised Europe between the late 18th and the middle of the 20th century. 'Old War' is war between states fought by armed forces in uniform, where the decisive encounter was battle." (Kaldor, 2005: 2). On the other hand, "'New Wars' are

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just the opposite. These are wars that take place in the context of the disintegration of states. […] wars fought by networks of state and non-state actors, often without uniforms" (Kaldor 2005: 3). Considering these definitions, it appears that the War on Terror does not suit either label. It is obviously not an 'Old War', since it is a conflict of a state versus a non-state actor, but at the same time it is not a 'New War' either, since it is not connected to the disintegration of a state. Well aware of this conceptual problem and looking for an alternative, Mary Kaldor has come to label the War on Terror an "'Old War' using new technology" (Kaldor 2005: 1). When we examine the way the United States has handled the response to the 9/11 attacks, it becomes apparent why Mary Kaldor would create such a definition. By calling the response to the terrorist attacks a 'War' and by labelling the terrorists as 'enemies', the United States has given the perpetrators the legitimacy of traditional state-adversaries and has added 'Old War' rhetoric to the conflict. Looking at it this way will also help the reader to appreciate why – even though the War on Terror does not fall under the heading of "traditional state-centric or 'clausewitzian' warfare." (Dexter 2007: 1058) – Clausewitzian thought nevertheless can provide helpful insights. The fact that "American administrations continue to behave as though they are fighting World War II" (Kaldor 2005: 2) causes them to pursue the War on Terror in a way that resembles traditional clausewitzian warfare and hence it would only seem appropriate to use Clausewitzian thought for the purpose of analysis.

So far, we have briefly considered 'Clausewitzian thought', outlined the debate that is the focus of this essay, and looked at the arguments of Clausewitz's modern-day critics. Now let us turn to proving the main assertion of this essay, namely that Clausewitzian thought – if considered in context and interpreted correctly – is indeed timeless and still able to provide insights into conflicts and warfare of the present-day. Probably one of the most important ideas that Clausewitz put forward is that "war is more than a true chameleon that slightly adapts its characteristics to the given case" (Clausewitz 1976: 89). This proves that Clausewitz did not regard war as a phenomenon that would occur in one form only and that would never be subject to change; quite the opposite. As mentioned earlier, he was well aware that "each war reflected its own era and that war in general remained in a process of continuous change" (Smith 2005: 67-68). It is precisely this adaptability that led Michael Howard to acknowledge that "what is remarkable, however, is how much of what Clausewitz had to say did outlast his time and remain relevant, not only under military circumstances transformed out of all recognition, but for a readership far broader than the officers of the Prussian Army whose education he primarily had in mind." (Howard 2002a: 4). Of course, much of what Clausewitz wrote concerns the conflicts of his time, however, often when interpreted within present-day contexts and understood in a wider sense – as demonstrated above – we do find that many of Clausewitz's insights even apply today. Furthermore, much of what he wrote concerns war's "essential nature" (Echevarria 1995-1996: 78), aside from its particular characteristics. Owens' assertion that, "the character of war is infinitely variable, [but] the nature of war is basically immutable. It is a violent clash between opposing wills, each seeking to prevail over the other", suggests that Clausewitzian thought on the general nature of war has to be timeless.

Clausewitz identified several tenets of the fundamental nature of war that can be regarded as bearing continuing relevance, one of them is that "war is […] an act of force to compel the enemy to do our will" (Clausewitz 1976: 75). This was true of the Napoleonic Wars of his time, it holds true for both World Wars and it is still relevant in the War on Terror. In this war, Al Qaeda's stated goal is to "move, incite, and mobilize the [Islamic] nation to rise up to end US interference in Islamic affairs" (as cited in Echevarria 2007: 11). Hence, Al Qaeda is trying to use the force of the supposed 'Islamic nation' to compel the United States to end its interference in the Middle East. The stated aims of the United States in this war, as spelled out in the US Government's 'National Strategy for Combating Terrorism', are "to reduce terrorism to an unorganized, localized, nonsponsored phenomenon, and to persuade all responsible nations and international bodies to adopt a policy of 'zero tolerance' for terrorism, and to agree to delegitimize it" (Echevarria 2007: 12). Again this falls under the Clausewitzian principle named above, since the United States are trying to use "all instruments of national power and influence" (National Strategy for Combating Terrorism 2006: Section 4) in Iraq and Afghanistan to destroy terrorist movements and their support system.

In order to assess with reference to the War on Terror whether Clausewitzian thought really is still as important as it used to be, we will now take a closer look not only at Clausewitz's general theory on war, but also at his specific principles and analyse their relevance to modern-day warfare. One of the most relevant of Clausewitz's observations to any modern-day conflict, but to the War on Terror in particular is the assertion that one must "establish (…) the kind of war on which they are embarking; neither mistaking it for, nor trying to turn it into, something that is alien to its

Is Clausewitzian Thought Really Timeless as Some Have Claimed?

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nature" (Clausewitz 1976: 88). The 'kinds of war' between which Clausewitz distinguishes are 'absolute war', "the kind of war that is completely governed and saturated by the urge for a decision", and what he calls "a war of observation", or limited war (Clausewitz 1976: 488-489). The relevance of this concept to the War on Terror becomes apparent when we try to define what kind of 'war' we are dealing with. Judging from the United States' goals in the War on Terror outlined above, one would think that the Bush Administration embarked upon an 'absolute war', since it is seeking to destroy terrorist organisations and their networks of support by using military force. However, two problems arise when we try and define the War on Terror in these terms. The first one has to do with the language used, when labelling the response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks a *'War'* on *'Terror'*. The usage of the term *'Terror'* suggests that the United States is fighting a war against a tactic, terrorism, but at the same time the usage of the word *'War'* creates an image of traditional war with identifiable adversaries and a state, a specific area or even military headquarters that can be targeted. This is impossible, though, if one is fighting a war against a tactic. Hence, as a result, the lack of a clear definition of what kind of war will be undertaken causes tremendous difficulties for strategic planning, for the implementation of these tactics on the ground, as well as for the soldiers fighting this ill-defined war. Thus, this demonstrates the timelessness of the Clausewitzian call for defining the war that is about to be undertaken, since – had the Bush Administration clearly defined what kind of war they were embarking on and had they been more careful in labelling the response to 9/11 – it could be argued that the War on Terror might have proceeded differently.

In addition to what Clausewitz wrote about the importance of defining the kind of war one is about to undertake, his thoughts on the general motives, emotions and intentions, which drive states or leaders into war also bear continuing relevance to present-day conflict. Clausewitz claimed that it is "hostile feelings and hostile intentions" that drive parties into conflict with each other, where the ultimate aim is to "render the enemy powerless" (Clausewitz 1976: 75). When looking at the War on Terror, it can be seen just how much this still applies today. Hostile feelings towards the US because of its interference in Islamic affairs drove Al Qaeda to attack the United States and in return, hostile feelings towards Al Qaeda and its support network in the Middle East drove the Bush Administration to launch the War on Terror in response (Echevarria 2007: 11). As stated above, the ultimate aim of both parties to the conflict is to "render the enemy powerless" (Clausewitz 1976: 75); the United States are trying "to reduce terrorism to an unorganized, localized, nonsponsored phenomenon" (as cited in Echevarria 2007: 12) and Al Qaeda wants to render the United States powerless in the Middle East" (Echevarria 2007: 11). These general Clausewitzian notions regarding the intentions and motivations of conflicting parties entering a war once again highlight the applicability of Carl von Clausewitz's thought. His assumptions were true for the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars of his time, just as much as they apply to the War on Terror. While the particular motives may of course vary with time and context, the underlying feelings and intentions identified by Clausewitz remain unaltered and hence are still relevant.

Having discussed Clausewitz's timeless, yet more general thoughts on war, the essay will now turn to the more specific ideas developed by him, the most prominent of which is probably the notion that "war is merely the continuation of policy by other means" (Clausewitz 1976: 87). When analysing the relevance of this claim to the War on Terror, one has to be careful not to fall in the trap of taking this statement too literally and hence ignoring its deeper meaning and significance. As Echevarria rightly points out "Clausewitz's description of war as a "continuation of politics (*Politik*) by other means" is well known but unfortunately is often interpreted to mean that war is merely an act of state policy aimed at achieving political aims" (Echevarria 1995-1996: 77), when in fact it is more than that. As Clausewitz clarifies: "war is not a mere act of policy but a true political instrument", which means that war contains the means that can be used to achieve a political object (Clausewitz 1976: 87). This statement is still very much applicable to present-day warfare and especially to the War on Terror. Michael Howard argued that Clausewitz identified two kinds of political objects: either total destruction of the enemy, or the ability to dictate the peace-terms to him (Howard 2002a: 17). This demonstrates the importance of this part of Clausewitzian thought very well, since in the War on Terror the United States is using the means of war to achieve the destruction of terrorist networks, namely Al Qaeda. Furthermore, as outlined in a White House Fact-Sheet on the War on Terror, another political goal the US is trying to achieve through this war is the "spreading democracy and peace" (Fact-Sheet: President Bush Remarks on the War on Terror, 2005: para. 5) to nations in the Middle East through the War on Terror. However, Clausewitz's use of the word 'policy' (in German: *Politik*) does not confine this notion to the realm of states. The German word 'Politik', as Echevarria rightly observes, can mean both policy and politics (Echevarria 2007: 8). Policy in this case is not limited to state policy, but rather encompasses the policy of every actor, be it state or non-state.

Is Clausewitzian Thought Really Timeless as Some Have Claimed?

Written by Mareike Oldemeinen

This implies that according to Clausewitz, also a non-state terrorist group like Al Qaeda can use war as 'a continuation of policy' to achieve its aim. Hence, it has been demonstrated once again that if one takes the time to interpret and examine in depth one of Clausewitz's ideas, namely the notion that "war is merely the continuation of policy by other means" (Clausewitz 1976: 87), it proves to be just as applicable today as it was back in the 19th century and is thus timeless.

Let us now briefly take a closer look at the specific actions taken by the United States as response to the 9/11 attacks. Bruce Fleming has argued that "In the Second Gulf War as in the first, the (second) Bush Administration was clearly acting with an eye to this reading of Clausewitz" (Fleming 2004: 63). The first 'action' here that can be examined and explained by using Clausewitzian thought is that of calling the response a *'War'* rather than something along the lines of a 'large scale criminal investigation'. According to Clausewitz, "the aim [in war] is to disarm the enemy" and in order to do so, "maximum exertion of strength" is necessary and legitimate (Clausewitz 1976: 77). War is an exceptional state of affairs in which more military and financial means are at the government's disposal than would be during a 'large scale criminal investigation'. Hence, this might explain why the Bush Administration preferred the term '*War* on Terror' over any other. Labelling it as such put more resources at their disposal and, in line with Clausewitzian thought, allowed for "the maximum use of force" (Clausewitz 1976: 75). Another element that might have played into this specific choice of words is what Clausewitz called the "Moral Factors" (Clausewitz 1976: 184). According to him, in order for any operation to be successful, the "temper of the population" (Clausewitz 1976: 184) has to be positive and supportive. Labelling one's mission a 'War' rather than a 'large scale criminal investigation' will incite a more "patriotic spirit" or "national feeling" among the populace, which Clausewitz regarded as the vital backbone of the army (Clausewitz 1976: 186). Therefore it can be seen that the decision of the United States Government to call the 'War on Terror' a 'War' can, in part, be explained by the Clausewitzian theory of what this word implies not only for the mission at the front, but also for popular support at home.

From using Clausewitzian thought to explain the immediate response to the 9/11 attacks, let us now return the analysis of Clausewitz individual concepts and their application to the War on Terror. After having examined his famous notion of 'war as the continuation of policy' this essay will now take a closer look at his concept of the 'Trinity'. In Book One, Chapter One of 'On War', Clausewitz describes the Trinity as an omnipresent tripartite concept in war, composed of violence, hatred and enmity which manifest themselves in war as "natural force"; chance and probability; and the "element of subordination […] which makes it subject to reason" (Clausewitz 1976: 89). With regard to the War on Terror, "Clausewitz's wondrous trinity, which captures in a single synthetic statement war's principal tendencies, represents objective knowledge of the nature of war, […] should also prove useful in analysing the nature of a specific conflict such as the war on terror." (Echevarria 2007: 10). In order to demonstrate that this statement holds true and that, hence, the Clausewitzian notion of the 'Trinity' is timeless, each of the Trinity's individual components and their relevance to the War on Terror will now be assessed. The first element, that of violence, hatred and enmity, or simply 'natural force', is probably the most apparent one, bearing the essence of every conflict past and present. Manifestations of this in the War on Terror can be found at numerous points. The violent attacks by Al Qaeda on the United States were driven by feelings of enmity and hostility, as already pointed out in the above discussion of Al Qaeda's motives. The subsequent military response of the US in the form of the wars on Afghanistan and Iraq as part of the War on Terror were driven by similar factors. But this first element of the Trinity is not only useful in explaining the onset of the War on Terror. As Echevarria points out: "the outcome of this conflict ultimately becomes a question of the will or commitment of the belligerents, and will is most effectively addressed through that tendency Clausewitz described as basic hostility" (Echevarria 2007: 16). Thus according to Echevarria, this first element of the Clausewitzian Trinity that addresses the underlying motives and emotions of the conflicting parties has great bearing on their commitment and willingness to fight and hence on the actions taken in the War on Terror.

If Thomas Waldman was right in claiming that in war, one faces an "omnipresence of chance" (Waldman, 2010: 342), then this would not only imply that one should be able to identify elements of chance and probability in the War on Terror, but it would also reaffirm the argument made in this essay, that Clausewitzian thought is indeed timeless. Arguably, one could say that in the War on Terror the United States is facing even more chance and uncertainty than in previous traditional interstate wars, since it suddenly found itself fighting a different kind of war, a war against a tactic, against dispersed terrorist groups, rather than a clearly defined state. Clausewitz ascribed the realm of chance

Is Clausewitzian Thought Really Timeless as Some Have Claimed?

Written by Mareike Oldemeinen

and uncertainty to the commander and argued that within that sphere, "the creative spirit [of the commander] is free to roam" (Clausewitz 1976: 89). If we look at the early plans and statements of US decision makers at the beginning of the War on Terror and then compare their initial beliefs to the actual subsequent developments, it is apparent just how much these individuals were operating in the realm of chance and probability. Just before the invasion of Iraq, then US Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld predicted that "It could last six days, six weeks. I doubt six months"(BBC News, 'Rumsfeld foresees swift Iraq War', 2003) and Vice President Cheney was even more optimistic and announced that this operation would last "weeks rather than months" (Washington Post, 'Upbeat Tone Ended With War', 2003). Looking back now on a War on Terror that has been going on for more than 10 years and a war in Iraq where, even though Saddam Hussein has been toppled, the US military is still present, these assertions seem highly optimistic, one could maybe even argue utopian. However, if we assume that these statements represent the decision makers' opinions at the time, this is a perfect demonstration of probability and chance in the War on Terror, since, obviously, the conflict did not turn out the way the Bush Administration had anticipated. Thomas Waldman summed this up nicely when he said that "The Iraq War underlines the extent to which Clausewitz's analysis remains relevant still today. […] they [the members of the Bush Administration] were a victim of their own operational, technical potency, where over-confidence bred arrogance and strategic myopia" (Waldman 2010: 361).

The third element of the Trinity, "war's subordination to reason" (Bassford 2007: 8), Clausewitz deemed to be part of the realm of the government, since determining the political aims in a war is "the business of the government alone" (Clausewitz 1976: 89). Once the political objectives in war have been identified, the actions that have to be taken in order to achieve these aims will, ideally, also be determined through the application of reason. This does not necessarily mean that the reasoning applied will lead to the right actions being chosen, since misperceptions of a threat or one's own capabilities may lead to an action that seems rational and reasonable, but that is based on a distorted view of reality. John Stone argued that in response to the 9/11 attacks, "reason dictated some robust form of action designed to forestall further attacks" (Stone 2007: 290). Given the mindset of the Administration and the general feeling at the time, this might seem reasonable. However, by accepting the War on Terror as the course of action dictated by reason, other options like a large-scale criminal investigation are not even being considered. Hence it seems that if one manages to understand the reason and rationality of the decision makers in war, it is possible to trace their actions and identify their motivations. This was true in Clausewitz's time, it holds true for the War on Terror and it will hold true for as long as humans governed by reason and rationality are involved in the decision making process. Overall, it has been demonstrated that Clausewitz's Trinity is a timeless concept with respect to the analysis of war. The War on Terror is as much affected by the elements of natural force, chance and probability, and reason as were the traditional interstate wars of Clausewitz's time.

As the very last point of analysis, we will now briefly be looking at the notion of 'Friction' and its relevance to the War on Terror. Clausewitz said: "Friction […] is what makes the apparently easy so difficult" (Clausewitz 1976: 121). Friction is the term that describes the effect that "Countless minor incidents – the kind you can never really foresee" have when they "combine to lower the general level of performance, so that one always falls far short of the intended goal" (Clausewitz 1976: 119). In its origins, as well as its effects, Friction is closely linked to the notion of chance, the unpredictable. Stone argued that "an important effect of this friction is to expose the conduct of war to the influence of chance" (Stone 2007: 286). Hence, if we return to the example of former Vice President Cheney and former Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld discussed in the section regarding probability and chance, it can be argued that Friction led to a change in conditions and hence necessitated a change in action: the prolonging of the military intervention. Therefore, since the concept of Friction is so closely intertwined with that of chance discussed above, one cannot observe the one without the other; both concepts form a vital part of any analysis of the War on Terror and are still relevant to present-day conflict.

After careful analysis, it seems reasonable to conclude that Clausewitzian thought really is timeless and that "the War on Terror is more susceptible to Clausewitzian analysis than the man's (Clausewitz's) detractors allow" (Woudhuysen 2007: para. 18). This essay started out by briefly outlining Clausewitz's theory on war, before moving on to assess the arguments made by his critics who claim that his theory is outdated and "deserves to be thrown overboard" (van Creveld 1991: 57-58). It has been shown that Martin van Creveld's claim that "the Clausewitzian trinity [consists] of the people, the army, and the government" (van Creveld 1991: 40) and is hence not relevant to modern-day conflict involving non-state actors – like the War on Terror – was based on a misperception, if albeit a

Is Clausewitzian Thought Really Timeless as Some Have Claimed?

Written by Mareike Oldemeinen

common one. This highlights the need not to apply Clausewitzian thought too literally, but to "find fresh angles from which to approach the text" (Strachan and Herberg-Rothe 2007: 2) and to look for deeper meaning and significance in his concepts. The analysis of each of Clausewitz's famous notions later in the essay sought to do exactly this. The discussion of his claim that 'war is the continuation of policy' showed that, when interpreted correctly, this is indeed a timeless concept and hence very much applicable to the War on Terror. The passage concerning the immediate response to the 9/11 attacks demonstrated how general notions of Clausewitzian thought can help to explain how we suddenly found ourselves in a *War* on Terror, rather than a criminal investigation. Finally, the analysis of Clausewitz's notion of the 'Trinity' and 'Friction' proved that it is of no importance whether we are analysing the Napoleonic Wars of the late 18th/early 19th century or the War on Terror of the 21st century – these two famous concepts, as well as Clausewitzian thought in general, retain their relevance and still offer vital insights into modern-day warfare and the War on Terror.

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Is Clausewitzian Thought Really Timeless as Some Have Claimed?
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Written by: Mareike Oldemeinen
Written at: University of St Andrews
Written for: Dr Ryan Beasley
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