

Clausewitz and Modern Interstate Warfare (1990-2012):

The Continuing Relevance of Clausewitz?

by

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Abstract:

It has been almost 200 years since Carl von Clausewitz wrote *On War*. Clausewitz's discussion of war explores four distinct, but related aspects of war: reasons for war (politics), the theory of war (absolute war), war in reality, and the conduct of war. Using his experience as a soldier in the Napoleonic and other wars of the 1700s and 1800s, Clausewitz's major academic work seeks to provide a comprehensive theory of war. While war has changed dramatically since Clausewitz's time, war involving states is still a part of everyday life. In this context, this thesis examines the contemporary relevance of Clausewitz with regard to modern interstate warfare, specifically analyzing whether Clausewitz would recognize modern interstate warfare. This was achieved by analyzing whether there was symmetry between the reasons for war and conduct of war variables, as explained in *On War*, with modern interstate wars waged between 1990 and 2012. The data revealed that both the wars of Clausewitz's time and the wars of the modern era were varied in their reasons for war and conduct of war, but that wars from Clausewitz's time and the modern era still share similar characteristics. Despite the vast differences between Clausewitz's time and the modern era this study found that Clausewitz's wars and modern interstate wars do share common variables, making *On War* still relevant for the study of modern interstate warfare.

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Chapter 1: Identification of the Problem – Is Clausewitz still relevant for today's wars?

It has been almost 200 years since Carl von Clausewitz wrote *On War*.

Clausewitz's discussion of war explores four distinct, but related aspects of war: reasons for war (politics), the theory of war (absolute war), war in reality, and the conduct of war. Using his experience as a soldier in the Napoleonic and other wars of the 1700s and 1800s, Clausewitz's major academic work, written in eight books, seeks to provide a comprehensive theory of war. What made *On War* different from other military studies of his era was Clausewitz's attempt to provide a holistic and descriptive analysis of war encompassing more than simply tactical prescriptions. Specifically, Clausewitz wrote *On War* to provide a universal theory of warfare that would transcend the wars of his age.

Fast-forward to today and war involving states is still a part of everyday life. Many suggest, however, that war is now very different. Analysts cite the changed nature of warfare (more asymmetrical and involving more nonstate actors), counterinsurgency, not to mention the range of interventions (involving combat, peacekeeping and development work). This has led many critics to suggest that Clausewitz is no longer relevant in this 'new' age of warfare. Indeed, one could not possibly compare the Napoleonic wars with, for instance, the US intervention in Iraq in 1991. Not only were the soldiers dressed differently, but also the weapons were more powerful and accurate and the overall goals of generals were seemingly different. Is it true, however, that lessons about war from Clausewitz's time and his theories are no longer relevant to today's modern conflicts post 1990? Are critics today giving Clausewitz his due or have they been too selective in their cases and examples from Clausewitz's work to make

reliable and valid comparisons? In other words, are there lessons still to be learned from *On War* for today's modern warfare?

There are those within the academic community, including noted historian Colin Gray¹ and strategic theorist Antulio Echevarria,² who argue that Clausewitz is indeed still relevant in the 21st century. They believe that Clausewitz's teachings stand the test of time, and are integral to any understanding of the nature of warfare. *On War*, and the teachings of Clausewitz are, therefore, relevant to the contemporary study of war because of their lasting impact and relevance to major military thinkers and practitioners since the 19th century. These include, *inter alia*, noted military leaders and philosophers Helmuth von Moltke, Alfred Mahan, Julian Corbett, Fredreich Engels, Vladimir Lenin, J.F.C. Fuller, Michael Howard, and Peter Paret. Moreover, *On War* remains a staple of military education, especially for the US armed forces – still the biggest and best resourced in the world.³ One would be hard pressed to believe that the widespread use of Clausewitz's *On War* with modern militaries is simply of historical interest, with no impact on modern military thinking and practice.

However, the arguments of Clausewitz's critics must be answered in order to determine if, in fact, the teachings of Clausewitz are still relevant for today's wars. The critics, over the past many decades, generally fall into two camps: those who reject the fundamentals of Clausewitz, such as John Keegan, and Liddell Hart, largely based on arguments of a temporal nature/errors of logic (for example, Clausewitz's theories are too

¹ Gray, Colin. *Defining and Achieving Decisive Victory*. Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, 2002; Gray, Colin. "How Has War Changed Since the End of the Cold War?" in *Parameters*, Spring 2005.

² Echevarria, Antulio J. *After Clausewitz: German Military Thinking Before the Great War*. Lawrence: University Press Kansas, 2000; Echevarria, Antulio J. *Clausewitz and Contemporary War*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007; Echevarria, Antullio. *War, Politics, and RMA: The Legacy of Clausewitz*. Washington: National Defence University, 1996.

³ Metz, Steven, and Douglas V. Johnson. *Asymmetry and US Military Strategy: Definition, Background, and Strategic Concepts* (Strategic Studies Institute US Army War College, 2001).

old, as well as being flawed) and those who belong to the ‘new wars’ school of thought, such as Mary Kaldor and Martin van Creveld, who contend that the nature of war is so different from that of Clausewitz’s time that they cannot possibly be compared.

Critics from the first camp, such as Keegan and Hart, refute Clausewitz on the basis that his theory is flawed, incorrect and outdated. Keegan, for example, believes that Clausewitz fundamentally misunderstands war, arguing that his thinking on war is a product of the old European state system. Kaldor and van Creveld, members of the second camp, do not refute the tenants of Clausewitzian thought as much as they argue that war has fundamentally changed to become something ‘new’. If indeed there is such a thing as ‘new war’, then Clausewitz may indeed be irrelevant. However, both camps fault Clausewitz either for his ideas about the conduct during war or the nature of war. In either case, the critics are selectively critiquing Clausewitz’s arguments.

Thesis Questions and Methodology

This thesis seeks to unpack the arguments of critics and asks the question: given contemporary warfare (defined as inter-state conflicts waged since 1990 until 2012) are Clausewitz’s arguments for the reasons for war and its conduct still valid? In other words, if Clausewitz was alive today, would he recognize the wars of today and the decisions by politicians and soldiers to engage in armed conflict? For example, nuclear weapons had yet to be invented and many of the wars of Clausewitz’s days were of an interstate-sort as opposed to the intrastate-variant more common today. Nevertheless, there may be some enduring aspects of war that transcend time, and are still worthy of study and reflection. If Clausewitz’s description of war is still valid, then political and military leaders have a

valuable tool that they can utilize to further understand armed conflict. If, however, Clausewitz's critics are correct and *On War* is outdated and no longer relevant in contemporary strategic discourse, then its use can be limited to a historical study of the wars of Clausewitz's era. For the purpose of this thesis, "contemporary warfare" is defined as interstate conflicts waged since 1990 until 2012. Interstate wars after the Cold War are chosen for three reasons. First, they are those in the news today, for example tension between Asian nations over the South China Seas is of particular concern. Second, they are the wars often used as counter examples by Clausewitz's critics. For example, the critics of Clausewitz cite the changed nature of modern wars as proof that Clausewitz is no longer relevant. Third, the question of applicability and relevance is most important in discussing recent and emerging interstate wars, rather than those that took place during a different era. The world wars and Cold War are not discussed as they are of a very particular, global nature and have been analysed in many works with reference to Clausewitz. However, modern inter-state wars are given short shrift in terms of a comparison to Clausewitz. This thesis seeks to fill this gap in the literature.

This thesis hypothesizes that the comparison of Clausewitzian ideas about war to contemporary conflicts will show that Clausewitz is, indeed, still relevant in the modern age. This is an important question to ask because if I answer yes then both politicians and the military have another tool at their disposal to better understand interstate war. Furthermore, it paves the way for further research into the applicability of Clausewitz in other conflict types such as intrastate or civil wars. This research fills a gap in the literature that tends to focus either on the relevance of Clausewitz to the global interstate wars of WWI, WWII and the Cold War or, conversely, dismisses Clausewitz completely

as irrelevant. Since there have been many studies on the great wars, I will concentrate on the modern interstate wars that are still ongoing, are destabilizing in this post 9/11 period and are often ignored in favour of more “interesting” cases of conflict like terrorism. If I were to answer “no” to my thesis question, then the recommendation would be to stop using Clausewitz all together as a learning tool other than a quaint example of historical writing of the 1800s.

In order to correctly analyze Clausewitz’s ideas it is important to narrow the focus of the thesis so that the contemporary wars can be compared to similar wars from Clausewitz’s time, specifically interstate wars. While Clausewitz was inherently aware of wars against non-state actors, the dominant form of warfare in which Clausewitz participated and discussed was interstate war. This does not imply that Clausewitz is irrelevant to the study of intrastate war; merely that this thesis focuses upon the interstate variety exclusively. Therefore, to ensure comparison of like to like, this thesis is restricted to a case-study comparison of interstate wars and ideas from Clausewitz’s days and interstate wars (in both time periods meaning conflict between two or more states) between 1990 and 2012. An inductive and rational epistemology is required.

To examine Clausewitz in the modern era, the first step is to identify the interstate wars discussed in *On War* and find the equivalent, interstate variants of modern times. The list is recreated in Table 1:

Table 1: Clausewitzian and Contemporary Interstate Wars

War	Dates	Main Belligerents
War of Austrian Succession	1740-1748	France, Prussia, Spain vs. Habsburg Monarchy, Great Britain and Russia

War	Dates	Main Belligerents
Seven Years' War	1756-1763	Great Britain, Hanover, Prussia vs. France, Austria, Russia, Spanish Empire
War of the First Coalition	1792-1797	French Republic vs. Habsburg Monarchy, Holy Roman Empire, Prussia, Great Britain, Ottoman Empire
Napoleonic wars	1803-1815	France vs. Great Britain, Austria, Russia, Prussia, Spain, Portugal, Ottoman Empire
Modern Interstate Wars	Dates	Main Belligerents
Gulf War	1990-1991	(Iraq vs. Kuwait, later US coalition vs. Iraq)
Bosnian Independence	1992-1995	Serbia and Montenegro (FRY) vs. Bosnia Herzegovina, later US – NATO versus FRY
Azerbaijan-Armenia	1993 -1994	Azerbaijan versus Armenia
Ecuador-Peru Ecuador-Peru	1995	Ecuador versus Peru
Eritrea-Ethiopia	1998-1999	Eritrea versus Ethiopia
Kosovo	1998-1999	Serbia vs. Province of Kosovo later US Coalition/NATO versus Serbia
Pakistan-India	1999	Pakistan versus India
Invasion Afghanistan	2001-2014	Afghanistan versus US, later US/NATO versus Afghanistan/Taliban
Invasion of Iraq	2003-2011	US (coalition of the willing) vs. Iraq

The Clausewitz wars are all wars that Clausewitz discusses in *On War*, or of which he was a participant. For the modern wars, I turn to the most cited database for interstate wars, namely the Correlates of War (COW) database. COW is one of the most cited databases in the world for interstate wars. COW is a transparent dataset,

which relies upon the standard scientific principles of replication, data reliability, documentation, and review. In order to be listed as an interstate war, more than one state must be a main belligerent and there must be at least one thousand battle deaths.⁴ This dataset ensures that all of the wars since 1990 are based upon the same criteria, which ensures that similar types of conflicts are compared. In Clausewitz's time, 1000 battle deaths were very common. In modern times, however, it is more likely than not that civilians are killed and not soldiers. Therefore an interstate conflict like the recent conflict in Libya (2011-2012) cannot be included. Yes it included belligerents (Libya vs. NATO coalition), but there were very few battle deaths. Therefore, it is not included in COW's database and cannot be included in my dataset.

The next step is to compare the variables deemed important for war and the variables essential for the conduct of war as gleaned from *On War*. A definition of the variables is found in the attached Annex. The "for war" variable identified after a review of *On War* is the political objective of war (submission, overthrow or concessions). The conduct of war variables are: 1) offensive or defensive war and 2) limited or unlimited war (total war). A summary of the Clausewitzian wars and their variable categorization as perceived by the instigator of the war is listed in Table 2. It is necessary to categorize the wars based on the perspective of the instigator of the war so as to be uniform in the analysis. One could have chosen the "victor" as opposed to the "instigator"; however, for Clausewitz, the instigator had a special role

⁴ Sarkes, Meredith. The COW Typology of War: Defining and Categorizing Wars (<http://www.correlatesofwar.org/>). Accessed on May 31, 2013.

in terms of the political objectives of war and its conduct. I will also use the instigator as the defining variable for the modern interstate war cases.

Table 2: Clausewitzian Wars

			Reason for War	Conduct of War	
War	Date	Instigator	Political Objectives: Concessions or Submission or Overthrow	Offensive or Defensive war	Limited or Total War
War of Austrian Succession	1740-1748	Prussia	Concessions: Conquest and annexation of Silesia	Offensive	Limited
Seven Years' War	1756-1763	Prussia	Concessions: Acquisition of Austrian territory	Offensive	Total/ Limited
War of the First Coalition	1792-1797	Habsburg Empire	Submission: Overthrow of French Republic	Offensive	Total
War	Date	Instigator	Reasons for War	Conduct of War	
Napoleonic	1803-1815	France	Submission: Overthrow and creation of French Empire	Offensive	Total

Step three is to take the same variables for modern interstate wars listed in COW (namely the reasons for war variables and the conduct of wars variable) and apply them to the modern day also using the perspective of the instigator. The results are listed in Table 3.

Table 3: Modern Interstate Conflicts 1990 – 2012.

War	Date	Instigators perspective	Reasons for War		Conduct of War	
			Major objective today	Major objective in Clausewitzian terms (Submission, concession or overthrow)	Offensive or Defensive	Limited or Total War
Gulf War ⁵	1990-1991	US	Expel Iraq from Kuwait	Submission	Defensive	Limited
Bosnian Independence	1992-1995	US - NATO	End armed conflict	Concessions	Defensive	Limited
Azerbaijan-Armenia	1993-1994	Armenia	Territorial acquisition	Concession	Offensive	Limited
Ecuador-Peru	1995	Ecuador	Removing Peruvian patrols from disputed areas	Concession	Offensive	Limited
Eritrea-Ethiopia	1998-1999	Eritrea	Invasion of disputed territory	Concessions	Offensive	Limited
Kosovo	1999-	US-NATO	End violence	Concessions	Offensive	Limited
Pakistan-India	1999	Pakistan	Pakistani intrusion into Kashmir	Concessions	Offensive	Limited
Invasion Afghanistan	2001-2014	US – NATO Coalition	Expel Osama bin Laden and Taliban	Submission	Defensive	Total
Invasion Iraq	2003-2011	US (Coalition of the willing)	Expel Saddam Hussein and destroy WMD	Overthrow	Offensive	Total

These tables then allow within time period comparisons and between time period comparisons. A review of the results suggests that half of Clausewitz's wars have concession as a political objective while the other half are submissions. If we compare the dominant characteristics of modern wars, they too are mainly concessions. This

⁵ Note, for example, Iraq was the instigator. It invaded Kuwait, however, as there were so few battle deaths, this stage of the war is not captured in COW. Therefore, it is essential that the war is categorized according to the stage of the war for which there were 1000 battle deaths.

means that the initial review suggests that Clausewitz's wars and modern wars do share at least some similarities. Therefore, *On War* may still have merit today. In terms of the conduct of war, many of the Clausewitzian wars were offensive as are many of the modern variants. However, the conduct of the wars is mixed; while Clausewitzian wars aimed for total war, today's are (mercifully) limited. This suggests that Clausewitz's discussions of the nature of war, may, in fact, be of limited applicability to today's wars.

Organization of the Thesis

The overall aim of the thesis is to explore the relevance (or not) of Clausewitz's ideas about reasons for war and conduct of war in his time to modern, interstate wars. If the variables between the two categories of war are similar and I can show that Clausewitz's critics have been too selective in their attacks on his ideas, then I can conclude that *On War* still has resonance today. If, however, the wars are either very dissimilar in nature or that his critics have fairly and universally analyzed his arguments, then I can conclude that Clausewitz's lessons have very little if any relevance to today's wars. The expectation is that I will reject the latter view and find that Clausewitz's is, indeed, relevant if only about certain aspects of interstate war.

This thesis is divided into six chapters. Chapter One, this chapter, introduces the thesis. It explains why this study is important to contemporary strategic studies. Furthermore this introductory chapter explains what the major questions are, and how this thesis will explore for the answers. The methodology is outlined as is the hypothesis: that Clausewitz is still relevant for discussions of modern war.

Chapter Two is a literature review of Clausewitz and *On War*. This chapter provides an explanation of some of Clausewitz's experiences in war and thought. From there it examines the key arguments from *On War*. This does not entail a thorough contextual analysis of *On War*; instead, the focus is on the main ideas and theories of the book especially his ideas about the reasons for war and conduct of war – two of his major ideas in the book and the variables used for analysis of Clausewitz and modern wars.

Drawing upon this analytical foundation, Chapter Three examines Clausewitz's critics. The first critics that will be discussed are those who reject the fundamentals of *On War* largely on temporal and logical errors making hasty conclusions. In so doing, this analysis demonstrates that the criticisms leveled against Clausewitz are based on a misunderstanding of *On War*, especially in terms of the relationship between politics and war.

The second group of critics consists of the 'new' wars scholars. They question the relevance of Clausewitz in a modern context. The analysis examines their key theoretical tenets about 'new war' relative to Clausewitz's universalist and particularistic perspectives (the universal nature of war in relation to descriptive observations about specific features of war) in light of the empirical evidence drawn from the major, so-called 'new' wars of the last two decades. These scholars believe that there is something fundamentally different about war in the 21st century that Clausewitz's theory fails to explain adequately. While focusing on their criticisms, this chapter focuses on some of the strengths of their arguments against Clausewitz's work.

Chapter Four analyzes and provides brief descriptions of the wars from Clausewitz's time. The main focus is on explaining the variables gleaned from *On War*,

their definitions and how they apply to wars of Clausewitz's time. Chapter Five is a mirror of four, but using the modern wars.

The last Chapter makes comparisons between the wars of Clausewitz and the modern wars using the reasons for war and conduct of war variables. The questions answered include: Has the data shown that Clausewitz is still relevant in the modern era? Or, conversely has the data revealed that Clausewitz is indeed a relic of a bygone time? In fact, my research shows that there are similarities between the reasons for war and conduct of war variables for the Clausewitzian and modern interstate wars. This does not mean that there is a perfect match, but that there are enduring similarities. In other words, while the superficial aspects of war have changed, the nature of war has not. As well, this indicates that Clausewitz is useful both to historians and contemporary strategists. It is not a coincidence that *On War* has been a staple of military education since the 1970's.

As I answered "yes" to my main thesis question (i.e. are Clausewitz's ideas still relevant) then the chapter follows with an examination of what this means for contemporary strategic discourse and why this is important, i.e. that *On War* is an important and relevant text for modern-day soldiers and politicians to refer to when discussing/contemplating interstate war, especially the reasons for war and its conduct. The next logical step for research is to examine Clausewitz in regards to intrastate wars of the modern era—arguably the more deadly and destabilizing of the modern wars.

Chapter 2: Clausewitz and *On War*: Context and Perspectives

Carl von Clausewitz, a Prussian military officer and thinker, produced arguably the most comprehensive book about war ever written, simply titled *On War*. It was published posthumously in 1832 by his wife. Clausewitz' masterpiece is divided into eight books, which analyze different components of the institution of organized violence that is war. War, according to Clausewitz "is nothing but a duel on a larger scale."⁶

Clausewitz is most famously known for his dictum that war is the continuation of politics by other means ("war is not a mere act of policy but a true political instrument, a continuation of political activity by other means."⁷) Today this understanding of war as a political tool would seem, at first glance, to be completely alien to the modern western understanding of war. WWI and WWII caused so much destruction and carnage that a new international order, under the direction of the League of Nations and its successor the United Nations, sought to end or at least limit armed conflict between states. Unfortunately, this new international order has not been able to curtail the use of armed force as a tool of statecraft. Since the end of the Cold War, there have been numerous wars fought in the Persian Gulf, the former Yugoslavia, Georgia, Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, and now Syria, for example. The continued use of force by governments (as well as non-state actors) for a whole host of ends has not gone away, suggesting that the rationale behind the use of armed force remains a part of life for states and their citizens.

Contemporary understandings of warfare, specifically western understandings, offer different interpretations about the nature of warfare, some of which call into

⁶ Clausewitz, Carl Von, *On War*, Howard, Michael, and Paret, Peter eds.(Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 75.

⁷ Ibid, p. 87.

question Clausewitz's ideas. To understand Clausewitz, it is necessary to provide context via a better understanding about Clausewitz the man and his beliefs about the nature of warfare. A great deal of *On War* considers practical, tactical military analysis, and logistics, such as how to cross a river. This is because Clausewitz was a soldier and such details are important to his profession of arms. While interesting, the arguments germane to this thesis focus on the reasons for war and its conduct. The issue is not how well the war was fought, but what kind of war was fought and for what ends.

Clausewitz, Context and Perspectives

To provide context, it is necessary to understand Clausewitz the man and the reality of warfare during his time. Carl Von Clausewitz was born on June 1, 1780 in Burg, which was close to Madeburg (Prussia). Clausewitz's father was a lieutenant in the Prussian army of Frederick the Great.⁸ Like his father, Clausewitz became a military man. When Clausewitz was thirteen he received his "baptism by fire"⁹ during the campaign against the armies of the French. In addition to being a soldier Clausewitz was also very interested in educating himself in many different subject areas. Howard and Strachan, noted military historians, both refer to Clausewitz as being an "autodidact who devoured literature on any available topic"¹⁰, and an "eclectic reader."¹¹ In 1801, Clausewitz was accepted into the military school in Berlin - an accomplishment for the times. Clausewitz dedicated his life to thinking, practising and fighting war. From his start at the war academy, Clausewitz rose through the Prussian ranks eventually

⁸ Howard, Michael, *Clausewitz* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), p.5.

⁹ Howard, p.6.

¹⁰ Ibid, p.5.

¹¹ Strachan, Hew. *Carl von Clausewitz's On war: a biography* (Atlantic Books, 2007.), p.39.

becoming Chief of Staff. Clausewitz grew up, and participated in a period of great change in European warfare. The war against the French in 1793 was the war of the First Coalition which sought the destruction of the revolutionary regime in France. Michael Howard comments on this period of Clausewitz's life: "during the following decade, in a Brandenburg garrison and then as a student at the Berlin War Academy, he observed the new dynamism of the French nation and of her military tool as it developed, became institutionalized, and extended its power across Europe."¹² Clausewitz lived through a great change in warfare which was reflected in his thinking and writing.

The elites in Prussia, as well as the elites in other European countries, were concerned with the ideals of the French revolution. At its core, the French revolution emphasized the overthrow of the social order in Europe and the role of the people and their relationship with government.¹³ The French revolution represented a shift in the understanding of the role of the people in society. In this post-revolutionary world, the social contract of the ancien régime, emphasized by the sovereignty of the monarch as the emissary of God, was now replaced by the sovereignty of the people.¹⁴ In military terms, Napoleon represented a revolution in military affairs (RMA) produced by the levee en mass (conscription), and the decisive battle (massive climactic battles that ended conflicts).

Against this backdrop of changes in warfare, Clausewitz began to develop his own unique theory of warfare. Clausewitz can be separated from other military scholars by the 'wholeness' of his approach, and the reality he brings to the discussion of war.

¹² Howard, Michael. *The Theory and Practice of War* (London: Camelot Press, 1965), p.25.

¹³ Paret, Peter, and Gilbert, Felix, *Makers of modern strategy from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age* (Princeton University Press, 1986), p.124.

¹⁴ For a good explanation refer to the work of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Rousseau, Jean-Jacques, *The Social Contract* (New York: Cosimo Books, 2008).

“Clausewitz insisted that any meaningful theory should be able to accommodate all elements pertaining to its subject.”¹⁵ This is in stark contrast to other military scholars of the time, such as Bulow and Jomini, who focused exclusively on formulas and fixed rules for warfare.¹⁶ For example, Jomini believed that certain scientific principles governed the conduct of war. Chief among these were the lines of operations, and the focus on the decisive point. According to Jomini these principles were unchanging and reflected the true form of war.¹⁷

In 1818, Clausewitz was given the directorship of the War College in Berlin and promoted to the rank of Major-General. For the next twelve years, Clausewitz dedicated himself to what would eventually become *On War*. In 1830, Clausewitz was recalled into service as an artillery commander. Later that year, when the specter of a new European war appeared on the horizon, Clausewitz was appointed Chief of Staff of the Prussian army.¹⁸ During the suppression of the Polish rebellion, Clausewitz’s army attempted to create a quarantine to suppress the cholera epidemic. Unfortunately Clausewitz contracted and later died of cholera. Clausewitz never fully finished his work, and it was left to his wife to organize his papers and publish the book.

When Clausewitz began *On War*, he expressed his desire to write a book that would deal with the major elements of strategy. This indicates a very narrow focus, but for Clausewitz, strategy entails the entirety that is war, including political, organizational, and tactical concerns. In a note written in 1818, Clausewitz reveals a desire to “write a

¹⁵ Paret, p. 190.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Jomini, Antoine Henri, *The Art of War* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott and Co., 1862), p. 70-71.

¹⁸ Aron, Raymond, *Clausewitz: Philosopher of War* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983), p.31.

book that would not be forgotten after two or three years,”¹⁹ and so he set about to theorize war, provide strategy and tactical advice and argue the consequences of war.

On War is divided into eight books; the books and a short description provided by me are found in Table 4.

Table 4: On War

Book One: “On the Nature of War”	Describes war and its nature including: what war is, moral forces in war, uncertainty in war and friction from the point of view of the soldier. It is in this Book that Clausewitz first discusses the “reasons for war.”
Book Two: “On the Theory of War”	Discusses Clausewitz’s theory of war including an analysis of war as neither a science nor an art. He provides historical examples of war and outlines his analytical approach.
Book Three: “On Strategy in General”	An in depth analysis of strategy including discussion of: force, concentration of forces, time, space and the impact of moral factors on strategy. His years as a military leader helped to inform this chapter.
Book Four: “The Engagement”	Examines the main aspect of war, fighting, focusing on strategy and tactics.
Book Five: “Military Forces”	Discusses the troops and underlines the specialness of war and the character of man needed.
Book Six: “Defense”	Describes and analyzes the relationship between attack and defence with a focus upon defence in war.
Book Seven: “The Attack”	Similar to Book Six except with a focus upon the attack or offensive in battle.
Book Eight: “War Plans”	Examines absolute and real war as well the character of total war, limited war, offensive war and defensive war. It represents the conclusion of the book and is both a summary and a cautionary tale for future politicians and soldiers. This book, along with books five and six, discuss the “conduct of war”

¹⁹ Clausewitz, Carl von, “On the Genesis of his Early Manuscript on the Theory of War, written around 1818,” in *On War*, p.63.

On War is not the usual strategy and tactics' handbook of the time. Clausewitz wanted his readers to understand the nature of war and all its horrors, the specialness of the troops needed, the leadership required of Generals and, most importantly, the connection between the political decision to engage in war, the conduct of war and the consequences. There are many interesting ideas in *On War*, but specifically relevant to this thesis are the “for war” variables (that is, the political objectives of war - either submission, overthrow, or concessions) and the conduct of war variables (offensive/defensive war and limited/unlimited war). These variables are the key variables for comparison with modern wars because they represent the logic of decisions to go to war and the objectives to be achieved, which Clausewitz explained represented the true nature of warfare.

War: In Theory and In Reality

In Chapter One, Book One, Clausewitz clearly defines war:

War is nothing but a duel on a larger scale. If we would combine into one conception the countless separate duels of which it consists, we would do well to think of two wrestlers. Each tries by physical force to compel the other to do his will; his immediate object is to overthrow his adversary and thereby make him incapable of any further resistance. *War is thus an act to force to compel our adversary to do our will.*²⁰ (Emphasis in original)

In this quote, Clausewitz explains the theory of war noting that, since war is an act of force to compel an adversary to do one's will this leads to a situation where force is reciprocally escalated without limits, that is, coercion has no limits. Clausewitz says, “each of the adversaries forces the hand of the other, and a reciprocal action results,

²⁰ Clausewitz, Carl von, *On War*, p.75.

which in theory can have no limit.”²¹ Therefore, in theory, this escalation leads to a situation whereby one’s efforts must surpass the resistance of the enemy, which is a product of the number of soldiers, and will to fight. As efforts are increased by one side, the enemy does the same until both are forced to extremes.²² This results in the maximum amount of force being applied so as to ensure the defeat of an enemy. The point here is that war in theory for Clausewitz would always lead to maximum amounts of force being exerted by both sides, meaning that the state would use the maximum amount of troops and weapons at its disposal. Clausewitz realized, however, that this is not the case as there are many ‘limiting factors’ in the conduct of war. *On War* outlines these limits such as, available resources, supplies, political will, and troop discipline.

From its theoretical framework, Clausewitz describes war in practice. Clausewitz seeks to use dialectical reasoning²³ to argue a theory of warfare based on the reality of war which he had experienced first-hand. Clausewitz says that war, in theory, would be war in practice if three conditions were satisfied: 1) War were a wholly isolated act, occurring suddenly and not produced by previous events in the political world; 2) it consisted of a single decisive act or a set of simultaneous ones; and 3) if the decision achieved was complete and perfect in itself, uninfluenced by any previous estimate of the political situation it would bring about.²⁴ Clausewitz argues that none of these conditions are satisfied in reality. War is never an isolated act, and it does not break out unexpectedly. There are situations where an enemy may be surprised by the outbreak of

²¹ Ibid p.77.

²² Ibid.

²³ “Thesis is followed by anti-thesis; the characteristics of one phenomenon are ultimately fixed by analyzing its opposite. Discussion of the nature of war in the abstract alternate with the application to real war of such analytic devices as the theory of purpose and means, of the major concepts of friction and genius, of propositions of lesser magnitude such as those concerning the relationship of attack to defense, and with detailed operational and tactical observations.” Paret, p.198.

²⁴ Clausewitz, p.78.

hostilities, but there are always signs, however small, that indicate its approach, even if one only discovers these signs after the fact in historical accounts. Second, war does not consist of a single short blow:

If war consisted of one decisive act, or of a set of simultaneous decisions preparations would tend toward totality, for no omission could ever be rectified. The sole criterion for preparations, which the world of reality could provide, would be the measures taken by the adversary, so far as they are known; the rest would once more be reduced to abstract calculations. But if the decision in war consists of several successful acts, then each of them, seen in context, will provide a gauge for those that follow.²⁵

Essentially, war in reality has a limiting effect because it is a constantly changing manifestation, a fact many of his contemporaries ignored. Lastly, the result is never final. Many enemies do not accept defeat. Defeat may be accepted in the present, but there remains an acknowledgement that this is but a temporary set-back, suggesting endless conflict is a possibility, as was witnessed in Europe for much of the 1800s and 1900s.

Clausewitz recognizes and stresses that war in reality is different from war in theory, which is what sets him apart from his contemporaries. Real war does not require that extreme levels of force be used because it is not a single, isolated occurrence that produces a permanent decision. If war was in reality the same as the abstract, then extreme force would always have to be used because a defeat would be an irreversible and permanent reality. In other words, Clausewitz is saying that losing a war does not mean that the result of that war can never be reversed. If that was the case then it would follow that the belligerents would have to treat every war as their last, which would require the use of the maximum amount of force available. Essentially Clausewitz uses

²⁵ Ibid.

the theoretical example of war on paper to compare that ideal with war in reality, showing that there are naturally occurring limitations to war.

Reasons For War

Political motivations for war become the driving force for war and produces Clausewitz's famous dictum: war is a continuation of policy by other means. This political motivation comes from a recognized authority such as a King, Emperor, President or Parliament. The political authority decides that state interests would best be served by war. Combining the fundamental theoretical nature of war with war in reality leads to Clausewitz's famous first trinity that encompasses the core nature of war: "which is made up of primordial violence, hatred, and enmity, which are to be regarded as a blind natural force; of the play of chance and probability within which the creative spirit is free to roam; and of its element of subordination, as an instrument of policy, which makes it subject to reason alone."²⁶ Clausewitz explains that the trinity can loosely be related to the relationship between the people (blind natural force), military (probability) and the government (rationality).

Clausewitz explains that the relationship between war and politics is what gives form to violence. Without political will (the decision to use force) and conditions (availability of troops, weapons and the likelihood of success), there is no force to stop violence from escalating towards the extreme as emphasized by his war in theory. There is, however, a limiting factor to the expression of violence. As Clausewitz says, strategy is the use of the engagement for the purpose of the war.²⁷ Violence is used as a coercive

²⁶ Ibid, p.89.

²⁷ Clausewitz, p. 177.

tool; the means to achieve political objectives. This does not imply that force is the only coercive tool available to political actors (for example, there are sanctions). Instead, it is an explanation of the political influence upon the use of force.

It is important here to expand upon the ‘political nature’ of warfare, because it was key for Clausewitz to explain the total nature of war. Clausewitz expands upon the political aspect in the second chapter of Book One entitled, *Purpose and Means in War*. Clausewitz seeks to explain how the political objective, which is the purpose of war, influences the way in which military force is used; “If for a start we inquire into the objective of any particular war, which must guide military action if the political purpose is to be properly served, we find that the object of any war can vary just as much as its political purpose and its actual circumstances.”²⁸ In other words, wars vary due to the political purpose that they are fought for, which is also reflected in tactics and force generation.

If war is analyzed in its purest theoretical form, what Clausewitz refers to as ‘absolute war’, the political objectives of the war would have no relationship with the war itself; “for if war is an act of violence meant to force the enemy to do our will its aim would have always and solely to be to overcome the enemy and disarm him.”²⁹ This provides an overview of Clausewitz’ opinion about the nature of war in theory as opposed to war in reality. In its abstract form, all wars would simply require that the enemy’s will to resist be destroyed so that they would be forced to do the instigating state’s will. However, the complete destruction and submission of the enemy is not the objective of all wars; all wars are inherently constrained by the political objectives, and

²⁸ *On War*, p. 90.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

the constraints that are placed upon military action. While political objectives are inherently different for each situation, Clausewitz has identified three principle aims: 1) concessions, 2) submission and 3) overthrow. These three principle aims are related to the ideas of limited war and total war, in that the type of war that is to be fought is a reflection of the political objectives. When a state seeks concessions it is seeking to obtain limited objectives from another state through strengthening its bargaining situation in relation to its adversary. Submission and overthrow are closely related to total war, although it should be noted that submission is also a characteristic of limited war. When a state seeks submission it is imposing its will upon its enemy, thereby forcing 'the enemy' to accept the terms of the instigator. Overthrow is related to submission in that when one state is replacing the ruling regime it is forcing the regime into submission. The difference is that submission can be related to minor objectives as well as those of conquest and overthrow. Overthrow is unique in that one state is destroying the sovereignty of the other state and whole sale taking it over/annexing the state.

Conduct of War

Since war reflects political objectives, it holds for Clausewitz that the duration and the magnitude of war are also determined by political considerations. It is important to note, as was discussed by Clausewitz in Chapter One, that any war has the ability to escalate towards extremes. Even though the duration and the magnitude of the war have been decided upon in advance by the political authority, there is always a possibility for war to escalate. This is due to a variety of factors such as human error, troop readiness, and miscalculations amongst many other possible factors. This is why war can never be

considered a science; it is always driven by factors that cannot be determined or controlled.

Thus, the *political nature of the war* will be reflected in the conduct of the war including whether the war is total or limited, and whether it is defensive or offensive war. First, Clausewitz says that there are wars that seek the overthrow of the enemy. These are the types of wars that focus on the destruction of the enemy's will to resist. In this type of war your enemy is forced to do your will, because the destruction of its will to resist leaves it no other alternative. This is often referred to as total war (or unlimited war/total defeat), in that the aims are not the capture of a specific piece of territory or other goal; the aim of the war is the destruction of the enemy's ability to resist. This type of war is differentiated from 'limited wars' by its strategic objective; the destruction of the will to resist.³⁰ This type of war has also been referred to as 'total war' to describe the total mobilization of the state for the war effort. As noted above the objective of unlimited war is total submission.

The second type of war, is a war of limited aims. In this type of war the political goals are limited in that they might only be the occupation of some small amounts of territory. The purpose of a war of limited aim is to seek favorable terms at the negotiations.³¹ Clausewitz explains that "the conditions for defeating an enemy (unlimited war) presuppose great physical or moral risks. When neither of these is present, the object of military activity can only be one of two kinds: seizing a small or larger piece of enemy territory, or holding one's own until things take a better turn."³² There is an ability of weaker states to engage in war against more powerful states

³⁰ Beatrice Heuser, *Reading Clausewitz* (London: Pimlico Publishing, 2002), p. 117.

³¹ Clausewitz, p. 7.

³² Clausewitz, p. 601.

whereby they can be considered the ‘victor’. As Clausewitz explains, this is by holding one’s own in a defensive war. Whether a war will be total or limited is a decision of the political authority, which has decided upon the character of the war that it wishes to engage in before the war has begun and which is a reflection of political calculations.

Within the two types of war there are two different ways to conduct a war, offensively or defensively. These are the second two variables that will be used to draw a correlation between *On War* and contemporary warfare. It is important to realize, when discussing offensive and defensive war that Clausewitz uses these terms to refer to the conduct of war. They are not different ‘types of war,’ instead they are different tactics or strategies.

Offense and defence are also critical for a true understanding of Clausewitz because many critics of Clausewitz have mistakenly labeled Clausewitz as an advocate of offensive or annihilation warfare that was made popular by the German General Staff prior to WWI. Clausewitz is not a proponent of either, he merely describes them. That being said he also believes that defense is superior to offense.

According to Clausewitz, the main feature of an offensive battle is the out-flanking or bypassing of the enemy - that is, taking the initiative. In modern terms, it means to strike first. Defensive wars are a reaction to an attack. The object of offensive attack is the subjugation of the enemy, and the destruction of their will to resist.³³ Defensive war is about preservation. It is a negative form (negative suggests you do nothing or hold the status quo) of action aimed at destroying enough of the enemy’s power to force them to renounce their intentions. Every single act of resistance is directed

³³ Ibid, p. 521-526.

to that act alone, and that is what makes a policy negative.³⁴ Clausewitz explains that the principal aim, or minimum object, if the intention is to out last the enemy, is pure self-defence.³⁵ Essentially resistance is a ‘negative’ action because it does not seek victory. Rather, the purpose of resistance is to force the enemy to give up their attack. Clausewitz provides a basic definition of defence: “A partial engagement is defensive if we await the advance, the charge of the enemy. A battle is defensive if we await attack. A campaign is defensive if we wait for our theater of operations to be invaded.”³⁶ There is an inherent relationship between offensive and defensive war in that one side may be conducting an offensive campaign, which also entails the enemy to conduct a defensive war. Clausewitz explains that defence is superior to offence because of the simple explanation that it is easier to hold ground than to take it:

If defense is the stronger form of war, yet has a negative object it follows that it should be used only so long as weakness compels, and be abandoned as soon as we are strong enough to pursue a positive object. When one has used defensive measures successfully, a more favorable balance of strength is usually created; thus, the natural course in war is to begin defensively and end by attacking.³⁷

The relationship between the attack and defence becomes even clearer when it is explained within the context of an offensive. If the purpose of war is to force an enemy to do a state’s will through the destruction of its will to resist, this is achieved by attacking the state’s will to resist. “The object of strategic attack, therefore, may be thought of in numerous gradations, from the conquest of a whole country to that of an insignificant hamlet. As soon as an objective has been attained the attack ends and the defence takes

³⁴ P. 357-362.

³⁵ Clausewitz, p. 93.

³⁶ Ibid, p. 357.

³⁷ Ibid, p. 358.

over.”³⁸ It becomes apparent from Clausewitz’s analysis that the attack is the key component to unlimited war, while defensive operations may be more suited to limited war. Clausewitz believes that the distinction between defence and offence “dominates the whole of war.”³⁹

With these variables from *On War* defined it is now possible to examine contemporary wars to see whether there is a correlation between modern warfare and the reality that Clausewitz would have understood. Contemporary war will be examined first by identifying the political goals of the instigator, classifying the war as total or limited and finally by deciding whether the conduct of the belligerents was offensive or defensive. First, however, it is necessary to examine some of the arguments put forth by contemporary critics of Clausewitz. This will help place *On War* within the debate about the utility of Clausewitz in the modern era. If Clausewitz’s critics have thoroughly dismantled Clausewitz’s arguments, then it suggests that Clausewitz may no longer be relevant to modern interstate war. However, as speculated, it is more likely that the critics of Clausewitz have not completely discredited him.

On War provides a theory of war and distinguishes between war in theory and reality reflecting the years Clausewitz spent as a soldier and witness to decades of bloody war. From all of the details he provides, Clausewitz’s greatest contribution is that he discusses the reasons for war (which are inherently political) and marries these to the conduct of war. Few of his contemporaries made this link—instead, they focused on the conduct of war in isolation of the reasons made by political leaders to use war to achieve one of three means: submission, concessions or overthrow.

³⁸ Ibid, p. 526.

³⁹ Ibid, p.94.

The next chapter discusses the arguments made by Clausewitz's critics. Similar to his contemporaries, many modern-day war theorists ignore or underestimate the importance of the link between the reasons for war and its conduct.

Chapter 3: Clausewitz and His Critics

While *On War* is cited widely by military and academic communities, it is fair to say that Clausewitz has also endured his fair share of criticism. This chapter analyzes contemporary criticism of Clausewitz that focuses on two distinct interpretations of *On War*: 1) that Clausewitz's work is a flawed, outdated theory, and 2) that contemporary war is inherently different from war in Clausewitz's era. It is important to examine contemporary criticism of Clausewitz because, at the heart of this criticism, is a belief that Clausewitz is no longer relevant.

While this chapter focuses upon his contemporary critics. It is important to note that Clausewitz also has many contemporary supporters as well, including the much respected Colin Gray, a noted military historian and contemporary strategic theorist. Gray notes in his essay, "How Has War Changed Since the End of the Cold War?", that the nature of war has not changed:

Whatever about warfare is changing, it is not, and cannot be, warfare's very nature. If war's nature were to alter, it would become something else. This logical and empirical point is important, because careless reference to the allegedly "changing nature of war" fuels expectations of dramatic, systemic developments that are certain to be disappointed. The nature of war in the 21st century is the same as it was in the 20th, the 19th, and indeed, in the 5th century BC. In all of its more important, truly defining features, the nature of war is eternal. No matter how profound a military transformation may be, and strategic history records many such, it must work with a subject that it cannot redefine.⁴⁰

In other words, Clausewitz's observation that the nature of warfare is constant throughout time remains as accurate now as it was then.

⁴⁰ Colin Gray, "How Has War Changed Since the End of the Cold War?" in *Parameters*, Spring 2005, pp. 14-26.

As well, Bernard Brodie, Christopher Bassford, Peter Paret, Michael Howard, Atulio Echevarria, and Beatrice Heuser all argue that Clausewitz is still relevant in contemporary strategic thought.⁴¹

Hasty Generalizations: Temporal and Logical Arguments

The first group of critics tends to reject Clausewitz based on temporal and/or logic arguments. This group is exemplified by Liddell Hart and John Keegan, both of whom are renowned experts in the field of war studies. John Keegan believes that Clausewitz's theory is inherently flawed due to Clausewitz's limited ability to understand war outside of the context of the old, European state system. In *A History of Warfare*, Keegan argues that Clausewitz was mistaken in his beliefs about the reasons for war, specifically the declaration that war is a continuation of politics. Liddell Hart, on the other hand, blamed Clausewitz for the catastrophe that was WWI, believing that it was Clausewitz's teachings that were responsible for the focus on the offensive and the brutal war of attrition that was fought attempting to make war in reality reflect Clausewitz's war in theory. Hart, therefore, criticizes Clausewitz for his ideas about the conduct of war.

John Keegan is a renowned military scholar and has published many books on strategy and warfare.⁴² Keegan analyzes the phenomenon of warfare seeking to gain an understanding of the causes and nature of warfare. For Keegan, war is an inherently

⁴¹ Brodie, Bernard, "The Continuing Relevance of On War," in Clausewitz, Carl von, Howard, Michael, and Paret, Peter eds., *On War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976). Paret, Peter, *Makers of Modern Strategy: From Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986). Howard, Michael, *Clausewitz* (London: Oxford University Press, 1983). Heuser, Beatrice, *Reading Clausewitz* (London: Pimlico Publishing, 2002). Echevarria, Antulio, *Clausewitz and Contemporary War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

⁴² Keegan, John. *The Face of Battle* (London, 1976), *The Nature of War* (New York: Holt Rinehart and Winsten, 1981), *The American Civil War* (London: Hutchinson, 2009).

cultural institution. In his book, *A History of Warfare* (1993)⁴³, Keegan begins by questioning one of the central theses of Clausewitzian thought; the idea of war as a continuation of politics by other means. According to Keegan, war is definitely not the continuation of politics by other means. Keegan believes that Clausewitz is talking about *western European* political interactions in his analysis of war as a political tool.

Keegan analyzes warfare by beginning with the question of whether violence, and therefore, the organized violence that is warfare, is inherent to the human condition rather than a concerted tool of statecraft decided on by state leadership to achieve national interests. Keegan decides that he cannot prove this. After much debate, Keegan decides that war is a cultural phenomenon that can eventually be untaught.⁴⁴ Even if Keegan's thesis is correct, that war is a cultural phenomenon, it does not follow that Clausewitz' theorem is incorrect. To the contrary, it would seem that, in fact, Clausewitz and Keegan do agree on this point. For Clausewitz, the relationship between politics and strategy, and thus the relationship between politics and war, is about the nature of culture and society, but for different ends, a point Keegan ignores or assumes as irrelevant.

Keegan believes that warfare is a fundamentally human institution based on cultural experiences, and that Clausewitz's analysis of war is superficial and lacking in perspective. On the opening page of *A History of Warfare*, Keegan directly challenges Clausewitz by intentionally using the header, "What is War?" Keegan chooses to begin his analysis by saying what war is not; "War IS NOT THE continuation of policy by other means. The world would be a simpler place to understand if this dictum of

⁴³ Keegan, John. *A History of Warfare*, (Toronto: Vintage Books Canada, 1993).

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 3-60.

Clausewitz's were true"⁴⁵ (Emphasis in original). Keegan argues that Clausewitz is being too naïve in suggesting that war can be turned on and off by decision makers. Keegan believes that war is more than politics, it is a part of our nature—man is a war-making animal—he would conduct war whether or not specifically directed. Keegan, therefore, is more Hobbesian than a 21st century war scholar. It is interesting to note that Clausewitz explains first and foremost that, “war is thus an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will.”⁴⁶ In other words, Keegan believes that war is inherent in human nature, whereas Clausewitz believes that war is a means to an end.

Keegan thinks that Clausewitz's theory of warfare is incomplete because he is a man of his times. Accordingly, Clausewitz is merely a reflection of the European state system of which he was a member:

Clausewitz's thought is incomplete. It implies the existence of states, of state interests and of rational calculation about how they may be achieved. Yet war antedates the state, diplomacy and strategy by many millennia. Warfare is almost as old as man himself, and reaches into the most secret places of the human heart, places where self dissolves rational purpose, where pride reigns, where emotion is paramount, where instinct is king. Man is a political animal.... Clausewitz went no further than to say that a political animal is a war-making animal.⁴⁷

Keegan is proposing that war is about more than rational actions. War cannot be controlled because it is about emotions and man's apparent animalistic nature. Clausewitz actually agrees with Keegan about this point, discussing these factors on the second page of *On War*. Not only does Clausewitz discuss the 'passionate' causes of war, but also he points out that the circumstances, institutions and so forth are determining factors in

⁴⁵ Keegan, 1993, p.3.

⁴⁶ Clausewitz, Carl von. *On War*, eds. Howard, Michael, Paret, Peter (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 75.

⁴⁷ Keegan, p.2.

conflict (p.76). Clausewitz directly references culture; a factor which Keegan has proclaimed as the true nature of warfare:

Two different motives make men fight one another: hostile feelings and hostile intentions...Even the most savage, almost instinctive, passion or hatred cannot be conceived as existing without hostile intent. Savage peoples are ruled by passion, civilized peoples by the mind. The difference, however, lies not in the respective natures of savagery and civilization, but in their attendant circumstances, institutions, and so forth...Even the most civilized of peoples, in short, can be fired with passionate hatred for each other...It would be an obvious fallacy to imagine war between civilized peoples as resulting merely from a rational act on part of their governments.⁴⁸

So it appears that Clausewitz does, in fact, recognize that war is a cultural practice, but Keegan continues to question the place of culture within Clausewitz's theory. He reflects on this by saying of Clausewitz: "had his mind been furnished with just one extra intellectual dimension – and it was already a very sophisticated mind indeed – he might have been able to perceive that war embraces much more than politics: that it is always an expression of culture, often a determinant of cultural forms, in some societies the culture itself."⁴⁹ Keegan believes that Clausewitz's theory requires that war take, "narrowly definable forms – siege, pitched battle, skirmish, raid, reconnaissance, patrol and outpost duties – each of which had its own recognized conventions."⁵⁰ Thus, Clausewitz's theory is not applicable to more modern forms of military engagements, nor applicable to the older forms of military combat that would have been practised, for example by the ancient Greeks, or tribal civilizations. After Keegan has gone to some lengths to assert that it is culture that defines war, not politics, he provides examples of different cultures at war including examples from tribal and feudal societies. Keegan

⁴⁸ Clausewitz, p.76.

⁴⁹ Ibid, p.12

⁵⁰ Keegan, p.5.

seeks to show that these cultures did not practise 'politics' in the way that Clausewitz would have understood. Instead, for these societies, war was just a cultural practice:

To look beyond military slavery into the even stranger military cultures of the Polynesians, the Zulus and the samurai, whose forms of warfare defied altogether the rationality of politics as it is understood by Westerners, is to perceive how incomplete, parochial and ultimately misleading is the idea that war is the continuation of politics.⁵¹

The point that Keegan misses is that Clausewitz allows for Keegan's understanding within his own theory. For Clausewitz, war is innately a social, or cultural act, but that it also has objectives beyond acts of savagery and barbarianism - indeed wars are a tool. In 18th Century Prussia, conflict between states often resorted to the tool of war being utilized. This is not to say that Clausewitz was so blinded as to ignore history and recognize the tool was used in different ways, to different ends by different groups. In other words, Clausewitz understood that war was used differently by different cultures throughout history, but he realized that this did not change the fact that war is a tool to be used to achieve political goals.

The theme of *A History of Warfare* is to find a way for human culture to live peacefully.⁵² Keegan uses historical examples to try and prove how cultures practised war without the existence of politics, arguing that their different cultures molded the way in which war was practised by a society. It is evident that each society reflects its beliefs and attitudes towards war in the way that their fighting forces are organized, and used. Keegan is really discussing is the different expressions of war, which are actually a reflection of different cultural practices and beliefs. This is not to say that war is not part

⁵¹ Keegan, p. 24.

⁵² Ibid, p.60.

of culture, because obviously it is. Keegan's belief that war is culture as opposed to politics is considered incorrect by Byrne:

Keegan is mistaken in separating politics and culture. By definition, "culture" includes all of the activities of man; Keegan seems to restrict it only to the area of emotions. Culture includes politics, and in fact, politics is the process which adjudicates between the often competing values each underline emotions and other aspects of culture. One cannot simply exclude rational decision-making from culture; it is an integral component. Similarly, one cannot exclude culture from politics.⁵³

Keegan is correct that war is part of culture, but that does not tell us anything about the reasons for war, which is what Clausewitz was trying to explain in *On War*. The point of Clausewitz's explanation of the political reasons for war is to explain why and how war is fought. Politics is that which gives shape to war, that which is reflected in all aspects of war. With Keegan's critique it becomes apparent that culture, as an explanation for warfare, does not tell us anything different from that which Clausewitz already explained. Everything humans do is culture, so Keegan has stated the obvious, not dismantled Clausewitz's argument.

Keegan and Liddell Hart's impression of Clausewitz was affected by what they saw as 'Clausewitz' in WWI. For Keegan, politics was not to be found in the practices of WWI. Keegan and Hart both believed that Clausewitz's theory provided for military domination over policy. Military leaders assumed absolute control over policy driving their nations towards victory for the sake of victory itself. As a further critique of the

⁵³ Byrne, Jim. "Keegan vs von Clausewitz" The Defence Associations National Network's *National Network News*, vol.6 no.1 (Spring 1999). Originally http://www.sfu.ca/~dann/Backissues/nn6-1_14.htm (Accessed on July 3, 2012).

political nature of war, Keegan argues that WWI approached absolute war due to the separation of war from politics.⁵⁴

The problem with this view is that Clausewitz clearly states that the theoretical abstraction that is absolute war is never achievable due to the limiting factors that are extended upon war by the political realm.⁵⁵ With this understanding it becomes clear that WWI could not have been an absolute war because it is not achievable - absolute war is a theory only.

With this in mind, it is important to reflect upon what Keegan said about WWI and absolute war or what Keegan refers to as 'true war'⁵⁶:

In the First World War 'real war' and 'true war' rapidly became indistinguishable; the moderating influences which Clausewitz, as a dispassionate observer of military phenomena, had declared always operated to bring a war's potential nature and actual purpose into adjustment dwindled into invisibility... The war's political objects were forgotten, political restraints were overwhelmed... politics even in the liberal democracies was rapidly reduced to a mere justification of bigger battles... Politics played no part in the conduct of the First World War worth mentioning.⁵⁷

Absolute war, in theory, is war without any limits. As destructive as WWI was, it was not a war without limits. No one disputes WWI was a horrible, bloody war, but it was not absolute war - violence without purpose, without political goals, without restraint, especially political restraint. For Keegan to argue that there were no political objectives in the war is faulty logic. The fact that the objectives of the states participating in WWI changed throughout the course of the war suggests limits (in multiple forms for example,

⁵⁴ Keegan, 1994, Ibid.

⁵⁵ Clausewitz, p. 78 and see my discussion in Chapter Two *On War: In Theory and in Reality*.

⁵⁶ Keegan, p. 21.

⁵⁷ Ibid, p.21.

the number of fighting men, whether, new weapons) necessitate changes to battle plans. If there were no limits, there would be no need to change battle plans.

The fact that military commanders may have acted in ways unnecessarily harsh or cruel does not change the fact that the military was seeking to achieve political goals. Basically, Keegan argues for more civilian oversight, which is a fair comment. This is an argument about control of decisions and appropriate oversight, but this doesn't negate the argument that initial decisions to go to war were inherently political decisions.⁵⁸

Overall Keegan's motive is to discredit Clausewitz in hopes of delegitimizing war as a rational tool of the state, and in many ways, simplifying war to human nature. His misinterpretation of politics as an inherently western creation is guided by the fact that he believes politics to be something that it is not. Once it is understood that politics is the 'why' for war, then the distinction is clear. Keegan wishes to see war as a cultural phenomena, exclusively, because he believes that culture can be untaught, therefore, erasing war from human interaction.

Liddell Hart's criticism is also rooted in a belief that Clausewitz's theory is flawed. Hart criticized Clausewitz as being responsible for German militarism.⁵⁹ Hart was also deeply affected by the destruction of WWI, as he was a participant who saw, first hand, the destruction and carnage of the Great War. This led him to be overly critical of Clausewitz, blaming him for the brutality of the war. Hart famously derided

⁵⁸ Cohen, Eliot, *Supreme Command: Soldiers, Statesmen, and Leadership in Wartime* (New York: The Free Press, 2002), see Conclusion.

⁵⁹ Altermann, Eric. *The Uses and Abuses of Clausewitz* (<http://www.carlisle.army.mil/USAWC/Parameters/Articles/1987/1987%20alterman.pdf>) p. 22. (Accessed on July 8, 2012).

Clausewitz as the Mahdi of Mass.⁶⁰ Hart, like Keegan, believes that Clausewitz's theory excuses military domination over policy.

In his two books, *Strategy* (1957), and *Thoughts on War* (1954), Hart claims that Clausewitz is mistaken in his declaration that 'strategy is the use of the engagement for the purpose of the war':

One defect of this definition is that it intrudes on the sphere of policy, or the higher conduct of the war, which must necessarily be the responsibility of the government and not of the military leaders it employs as its agents in the executive control of operations. Another defect is that it narrows the meaning of 'strategy' to the pure utilization of battle, thus conveying the idea that battle is the only means to the strategical end.⁶¹

Hart criticizes Clausewitz on the grounds that he believes that Clausewitz's theory allows for the intrusion by military strategists into political matter, which are solely the jurisdiction of politicians. Hart offers a different definition of strategy; "the art of distributing and applying military means to fulfill the ends of the policy."⁶² Hart suggests that military commanders exercise too much control over policy. The problem is that similar to Keegan, he does not realize that he and Clausewitz share many of the same points. Clausewitz explains that strategy is used for the purpose of the war, which implies that Clausewitz recognizes the subordination of the military to political goals—war is a tool of policy. Clausewitz argues throughout *On War* that every war is a reflection of its

⁶⁰ "Liddell Hart called him (Clausewitz) the Mahdi of mass and mutual slaughter. More specifically, he said that Clausewitz had caricatured and oversimplified Napoleon's method, emphasizing troop concentration... Clausewitz was said to have exalted the clash of armies, because he concentrated on mass strength and superiority of numbers rather than on operations or decisive sectors of the front." Aron, Raymond, p. 233-234.

⁶¹ See Hart, Liddell, *Thoughts on War* (Faber and Faber Publishing: London, 1954), p. 229 and *Strategy* (Penguin Publishing: Toronto, 1991) p. 319.

⁶² Hart, 1991, p. 319.

political reality. In his paper, *Clausewitz and the Indirect Approach: Misunderstanding the Leader*, Kenneth Davison⁶³ asserts that Hart has made a serious mistake in his logic:

It is a gross misunderstanding to conclude, that Clausewitz intended the military to determine the policy that is 'continued.' He repeatedly stressed that "political aims are the business of government alone" and that military operations are subservient to political aims since both the military objective and the amount of effort to be expended in the attempt to attain that objective are to be determined by the political goal. He emphasized that political leaders, not military commanders, were to make political decisions.⁶⁴

Essentially Davison is suggesting Clausewitz should be recognized for stating the importance of civilian oversight of the military. That does not mean that the political leaders are in control of military tactics or operations. The military operationalizes the political objective. While the political leaders may indeed provide advice or help with some aspects of military decision-making (indeed they should as they, not the military, are responsible to the people), it does not hold that the political leaders are making operational and tactical decisions at all times. In many cases, they have no expertise in these areas. This also does not imply that military leaders make overall decisions without any consultation with their political masters. Hart, like Keegan, believes that military leaders overstepped their 'place' in WWI. Even if one accepts this as being true, it does not follow that Clausewitz is responsible for this problem.

Hart was also extremely critical of Clausewitz because he believes that Clausewitz was the advocate of annihilation and slaughter. Hart believed that Clausewitz was the expositor of Napoleon. According to Hart, it was Clausewitz that had attempted to codify the 'Napoleonic spirit':

⁶³ Davison, Kenneth. *Clausewitz and the Indirect Approach: Misreading the Master*. *Airpower Journal*, Winter 1988, (<http://www.airpower.maxwell.af.mil/airchronicles/apj/apj88/win88/davison.html>) (Accessed on June 25, 2012).

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

How arose this conception that the national goal in war could be attained only by mass destruction, and how did it gain so firm a hold on military thought? The decisive influence was exerted not by Napoleon himself, though his practical example of the beneficent results of 'absolute war' was its inspiration, but by his great German expositor, Carl von Clausewitz. He it was who, in the years succeeding Waterloo, analyzed, codified, and deified the Napoleonic method.⁶⁵

Paradoxically, Hart actually understood that Clausewitz was not an advocate of slaughter and annihilation battle, yet Hart blames Clausewitz's writing style, which he believes does not allow for most readers to understand Clausewitz's true ideas:

Unfortunately, his qualifications came on later pages, and were conveyed in philosophical language that befogged the plain soldier, essentially concrete minded. Such readers grasped the obvious implications of the leading phrases, and lost sight of what followed owing to distance and obscurity...not one reader in a hundred was likely to follow the subtlety of his logic, or to preserve a true balance amid such philosophical jugglery. But everyone could catch such ringing phrases as 'we have only one means in war, the battle. 'Only great generals can produce great results.' 'Let us not hear of generals who conquer without bloodshed.'⁶⁶

Essentially, Hart acknowledges that Clausewitz is not actually guilty of the things of which he accuses him, but is, in fact, guilty of writing without clarity. His criticism, therefore, is selective and not a reason to dismiss Clausewitz completely.

Many prominent German military thinkers were also guilty of misrepresenting Clausewitz, emphasized by their belief in the superiority of the offensive, and their quest for 'annihilation battle' as the key to victory. This misrepresentation of Clausewitz by German military leaders led to criticisms that were leveled against Clausewitz by Hart and Keegan. In, *Reading Clausewitz (2002)*, Beatrice Heuser discusses the offensive-defensive conduct of war debate. Heuser notes that it was Germany's General, von Moltke, who placed more emphasis of 'annihilation battle' than Clausewitz ever did.

⁶⁵ Liddell Hart, *Thoughts on War* (London: Faber and Faber, 1954), p. 133.

⁶⁶ Hart, Liddell. *The Ghost of Napoleon* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1935), p.121, 124-6.

Helmuth Von Moltke - a chief of the Prussian General Staff - believed that the highest aim in war was the annihilation of the enemy army.⁶⁷ This is important to note, because von Moltke has received credit as the man who is largely responsible for the popularity of *On War*. Von Moltke's misguided obsession with 'annihilation', which was informed also by a misguided interpretation of Clausewitz, led to German strategic thought being dominated by 'annihilation.' Therefore, Hart may want to critique von Moltke more so than Clausewitz.

After analyzing the criticisms of Keegan and Hart it is apparent that they both have similar concerns with regards to Clausewitz's distinction between military and political influence over policy. Clausewitz is clear that the military is subservient to its political masters, but that it is important to realize where the realm of the politician ends and the general begins.⁶⁸ Both Keegan and Hart actually shared a lot in common with Clausewitz with regards to their theories. The main issue, as it relates to this thesis, is that Keegan and Hart are criticizing the political nature of war. Keegan is critical of Clausewitz because Keegan believes that politics is based on rationality, whereas war is an irrational act. Hart's criticism is different from Keegan in that he questions the relationship between the military and political decision makers. Hart also criticizes what he believes is Clausewitz's focus upon offensive or annihilation warfare. Both suggest, due to these faults of Clausewitz's arguments, that he is not relevant for either past or future conflicts. Their warnings that civilian/military oversight is important is needed and a fair and useful reminder, but it does not negate Clausewitz's ideas about the reasons for war and conduct of war.

⁶⁷ Heuser, p. 104.

⁶⁸ Clausewitz, p. 605-610.

New War Theorists

The second group of critics is referred to as the ‘new war’ theorists. They believe that Clausewitz is no longer relevant because war has fundamentally changed since the time of Clausewitz. They are not necessarily disputing the utility of Clausewitz’s theory so much as disputing its relevance with regards to contemporary war. That is not to say that war does not change. It is obvious that tactics, weapons, economic, political and social constructs that define war are always evolving. The point is, according to Clausewitz, *that war itself* does not change.

Martin van Creveld is a leading writer on military history and strategy, having authored more than twenty books. A respected scholar, van Creveld’s book, *The Transformation of War*,⁶⁹ was published in 1991. In the book, van Creveld argues against a Clausewitzian understanding of modern warfare, with a specific emphasis on a change in the reasons and conduct of war. Like most of the new wars theorists, van Creveld believes that the dramatic changes in military technology, in combination with societal changes, have rendered Clausewitz irrelevant to the modern world. Van Creveld understands this change as fundamentally a change in the nature of warfare citing the usual factors of low-intensity warfare, the end of conventional warfare, the rise of non-state actors, and, the favorite of many Clausewitzian critics, nuclear weapons.

As necessary to advance his theory, van Creveld discusses Clausewitz and his relevance to modern warfare. Van Creveld holds a great amount of respect for Clausewitz in saying that “among military theorists, Clausewitz stands alone.”⁷⁰ Van Creveld believes that Clausewitz’s most important idea is that war is a social activity, whereby

⁶⁹ van Creveld, Martin. *The Transformation of War* (New York: The Free Press, 1991)

⁷⁰ Ibid, p. 34.

war is a reflection of the social relationships in society. This idea informs van Creveld's beliefs about the problem with the Clausewitzian understanding of warfare. For van Creveld, Clausewitz is inherently influenced by warfare as an activity of the 'state'.⁷¹ As well, van Creveld believes that Clausewitz is also greatly influenced by his time period, which was of course the time of Napoleon and the revolution in military affairs (RMA):

Suffice it to say that, between 1793 and 1815, a new form of war arose which smashed the ancien regime to smithereens. In the process, the organization of armed conflict, its strategy, and command, to mention but a few features, were all transformed beyond recognition. More important still, the scale on which war was waged also increased dramatically, and, above all, so did the sheer power with which it was waged.⁷²

The logic of consequences extolled by van Creveld is as follows: If the nature of warfare can change (and Clausewitz wrote at a time when war was different) then Clausewitz is irrelevant to contemporary analysis. The problem for van Creveld, however, is that Napoleon does not represent a change in the nature of warfare. Napoleon represents a change in the tactical, organizational, and societal expression of war. To understand this, it is essential to reference Book One of *On War*; "On the nature of War". Clausewitz explains that war is an act of force to compel the enemy to do one's will. This act of force is an inherently political one, with the political realities being reflected in the type of war that is to be conducted by both sides. As Clausewitz explains, war is influenced by many different factors including, danger, physical exertion, intelligence and friction.⁷³ These enduring characteristics of war, explained in Book One, are the enduring legacy of Clausewitz. If van Creveld could prove that these characteristics, which Clausewitz defines as factors of 'war,' are irrelevant in modern times, then his assertion that war has

⁷¹ Ibid, p. 36.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Clausewitz, p. 122.

changed would be valid. Instead, van Creveld has mistaken a RMA (conscriptio, and the decisive battle of Napoleon's time) for the transformation of the nature of warfare. It is necessary to discuss briefly 'RMA theory' as it is integral to the criticism leveled against Clausewitz.

After *Operation Desert Storm* (Iraq, 1991) the debate about RMA dominated contemporary strategic analysis. The American military's defeat of the Iraqi forces, after they invaded Kuwait in 1990, sparked widespread discussion as to whether or not the world was witnessing a RMA.⁷⁴ The essence of the RMA was the ability of the Americans to engage in decisive military engagements, while keeping their military personnel in relative safety. This was achieved by overwhelming technological superiority including, but not limited to, the use of smart weapons, satellite guided munitions, advanced aircraft, and improved command and control.⁷⁵ (For lay people "shock and awe".) These advantages enabled the US military to use force in a more decisive manner, while at the same time reducing the amount of casualties and collateral damage, thereby making the use of military force more permissible.⁷⁶ As well, the advantage that this revolution has conferred upon the Americans leaves them with no peer competitors,⁷⁷ ensuring their place as the dominant military power among states. In the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the first Gulf War, it appeared as if a new age had been ushered in. The problem that this presented was, and is, defining

⁷⁴ See Theodore Galdi. *Revolution in Military Affairs?* (CRS 95-1170F, 1995) <http://www.iwar.org.uk/rma/resources/rma/crs95-1170F.html> (Accessed June 28, 2012); Bjorn Moller, *Revolution in Military Affairs: Myth or Reality?* <http://www.copri.dk/publications/Wp/WP%202002/15-2002.doc> (Accessed June 28, 2012); Steven Metz, *Strategy and the Revolution in Military Affairs: From Theory to Policy*, <http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/ssi/stratma.pdf>. (Accessed June 28, 2012).

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Metz, *ibid.*

⁷⁷ John Mearsheimer, the famous neorealist coined this term.

RMA. This has been the subject of endless debate, and is essentially the most relevant point to van Crevelde's criticism.

Marshal Ogarkov, the Chief of the Soviet General Staff in the 1970s and 1980s, originally advanced the theory of RMA which he referred to as the "Military Technological Revolution" (MTR).⁷⁸ The Soviets were concerned that the technological advances that were being developed had the ability to change fundamentally the face of warfare, making conventional weapons as effective and deadly as weapons of mass destruction.⁷⁹ Current RMA theory was developed as a successor to the MTR idea, indicating that a RMA is not actually a change in the nature of warfare, as much as it is a change in the tactical and operational expression of war. Essentially then, a RMA is about the evolution of warfare, used as a way to describe the fundamental changes to the expression of war as opposed to the nature of war. The problem with this explanation of RMA is that fundamental 'revolutions' in warfare have been about much more than just technological changes. Antulio Echevarria explains that technological change has no effect on the nature of warfare:

Technological advances will not alter the framework of war since they affect the grammar of war, not its logic. In other words, new technologies change only war's form, not its nature. War is multidimensional and chameleon-like, composed of subjective as well as objective natures.⁸⁰

Napoleon, who van Crevelde references with regard to RMA, changed the face of warfare by exploiting the transformation of society:

He employed a massive army produced by universal conscription and the advent of a truly citizen-based military force. He used the most advanced logistics

⁷⁸ Metz, *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ Galdi, *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ Antullio Echevarria. *War, Politics, and RMA: The Legacy of Clausewitz* (Washington: National Defense University, 1996) p.78.

planning of his day, and he operated based on a decisive notion of strategic action. This revolution, incorporating such new features as citizen armies, long-range rifles, artillery, and mechanization would transform the nature of warfare.⁸¹

This quote was chosen specifically because it makes reference to the ‘nature of warfare.’

The problem with the use of the term the ‘nature of warfare’ is that many authors use this term in reference to changes like the ones that occurred with Napoleon and Desert Storm, when really these are changes in the tactical conduct of war, not in its fundamental characteristics. RMA does not represent a change in the nature of warfare and is a descriptive analysis of the changing face of warfare.

Van Creveld also believed that Clausewitz was wrong about the reasons for war. According to van Creveld, Clausewitz’s theory represents an understanding of the European state system and its politics. As such, van Creveld argues that Clausewitz’s theory is too rooted in state-centric warfare.

At the end of Book One, chapter one, Clausewitz discusses the remarkable trinity:

War is more than a true chameleon that slightly adapts its characteristics to the given case. As a total phenomenon its dominant tendencies always make war a remarkable trinity, composed of primordial violence, hatred, and enmity, which are to be regarded as a blind natural force; of the play of chance and probability within which the creative spirit is free to roam; and of its element of subordination, as an instrument of policy, which makes it subject to reason alone.⁸²

Clausewitz explains that primordial violence, hatred, and enmity, which he refers to as a blind natural force, represents the people; “the passions that are to be kindled in war must already be inherent in the people.”⁸³ The play of chance and probability within which the creative spirit is free to roam,’ refers to the commander and his army, of which

⁸¹ Mazar, Michael. *The Revolution in Military Affairs: A Framework for Defense Planning* (US Army War College: Strategic Studies Institute, 1994), pp. 1-2.

⁸² Clausewitz, p. 89.

⁸³ Ibid.

Clausewitz says, “the scope which the play of courage and talent will enjoy in the realm of probability and chance depends on the particular character of the commander and the army.”⁸⁴ Finally the “element of subordination, as an instrument of policy, which makes it subject to reason alone,” refers to the government. Clausewitz emphasizes that “the political aims are the business of government alone.”⁸⁵

Clausewitz again stresses the descriptive nature of this analogy noting that the relationship between the three elements is not fixed, but always in flux; “A theory that ignores any one of them or seeks to fix an arbitrary relationship between them would conflict with reality to such an extent that for this reason alone it would be totally useless.”⁸⁶ Moreover the trinity acts upon each of the actors as well. The people, army, and government are all affected and influenced by emotion, chance, and rationality.⁸⁷ This trinity is also often referred to as the play of emotion, chance, and rationality.

The trinity emphasizes those criticisms, which Keegan and van Creveld have with the Clausewitzian understanding of the nature of warfare. The trinity, which can be regarded as Clausewitz’s true understanding of war, emphasizes that ‘rationality’ is but one of three elements that are always in a state of flux. Therefore, while war is indeed a ‘continuation’ of politics by other means, it is also influenced by emotions and chance. Van Creveld is using the trinity to undermine Clausewitz’s reasons for war.

The main problem with Clausewitz, for van Creveld, is that he wants to define Clausewitz as a ‘man of his time.’ Van Creveld explains that Clausewitz was deeply affected by the European state-system, as emphasized by the dominant form of

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Bassford, Christopher. *Tip Toe Through The Trinity* (Working Paper v.14 May 2012) <http://www.clausewitz.com/readings/Bassford/Trinity/Trinity8.htm> .

government in Clausewitz's own time: the state.⁸⁸ Van Creveld explains that it was not people or armies that made war, it was governments: "organized violence should only be called 'war' if it were waged by the state, for the state, and against the state was a postulate that Clausewitz almost took for granted."⁸⁹ It is interesting to note that van Creveld describes Clausewitz as 'almost' taking for granted this defining characteristic of war. In Book Six Clausewitz discusses the people in arms, with a specific emphasis on war that is not sanctioned by the state, or waged on behalf of the state.⁹⁰ While this type of conflict may have been irregular, if not foreign, to Clausewitz and the practitioners of warfare during Clausewitz's time, it is apparent that Clausewitz had experience dealing with these types of conflicts.⁹¹

The second part of the Clausewitzian trinity discussed by van Creveld is the army: "If it was governments that made war, their instrument for doing so consisted of armies. Armies were defined as organizations that served the government, whether monarchical, republican, or imperial."⁹² This is essentially a continuation of the first point that van Creveld made: if it is the state that is the only arbiter of war, then it follows that it is only carried out by armies, which have been sanctioned by the state. As noted in the above paragraph Clausewitz does recognize non-state centric warfare, and thus also recognizes non-state sanctioned armed forces.

The last element of trinitarian warfare as explained by van Creveld is the people. Prior to Napoleon, the people were to pay taxes and generally be excluded from war as

⁸⁸ Van Creveld, p.36.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Clausewitz, p. 479-483.

⁹¹ Clausewitz would have definitely been aware of non-state war. Specifically Clausewitz would have known about the Spanish uprising against Napoleon as well as the many interactions the Prussian had with the Cossacks and other non-state actors.

⁹² Van Creveld. p.38.

much as was possible. The reality is that while not direct participants in war, the people felt war through starvation, the sacking of cities, and other suffering that they experienced. After the French revolution the people became part of war directly. Whereas before the people were to pay taxes and essentially mind their own business, now they were full participants in national struggle.⁹³ The main point that van Creveld wants to make is that, “the trinity by which war was and was not made, the Clausewitzian trinity consisting of the people, the army, and the government, remained unaffected by the French revolution.”⁹⁴ While the revolution changed the role of the ‘people’ it did not change, in van Creveld’s view, their position of subservience to state interests.

This idea of ‘trinitarian’ warfare is really useful when considered in relation to warfare in the contemporary period. Van Creveld is attempting to draw a distinction between Clausewitz and modern warfare by emphasizing that only ‘state armies’ are relative to Clausewitz’ version of war, while in the contemporary context there are non-state actors waging war:

The Clausewitzian Universe rests on the assumption that war is made predominantly by states or, to be exact, by governments. Now states are artificial creations; corporate bodies that possess an independent legal existence separate from the people to whom they belong and whose organized life they claim to represent. As Clausewitz himself was well aware, the state, thus understood, is a modern invention.⁹⁵

If van Creveld can prove that Clausewitzian theory is only concerned with state-based and state-sanctioned forces, then he can claim that war is fundamentally different than it was during Clausewitz’s time, thus rendering Clausewitz irrelevant, but Clausewitz is more nuanced than van Creveld gives him credit. The people, military, and

⁹³ Ibid, p.39.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid, p. 49.

government can represent different time periods because they reflect the three facets of every state that has participated in war throughout time - people, fighting forces (military), and political leadership (government).

While van Creveld's criticism is rooted in RMA theory and a criticism of the reasons for war, Mary Kaldor's criticism of Clausewitz is more a reflection of western societal changes with regards to warfare. Kaldor's book, *New and Old War: Organized Violence in a Global Era* (2006)⁹⁶, also seeks to create a distinction between Clausewitzian warfare and contemporary warfare:

Every society has its own characteristic form of war. What we tend to perceive as war, what policy-makers and military leaders define as war, is, in fact a specific phenomenon which took shape in Europe somewhere between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries...It was a phenomenon that was intimately bound up with the evolution of the modern state.⁹⁷

She provides a chart in her book, which seeks to illustrate the way in which war has evolved since the 17th century. According to Kaldor, while the expression of warfare, as well as the relations between people, army, and government have changed and evolved, 'war was recognizably the same phenomenon.'⁹⁸

Kaldor emphasizes that this form of war was defined by the Clausewitzian dictum of war as an act of violence intended to compel the opponent to fulfill one's will. "Hence war, in the Clausewitzian definition, is a war between states for a definable political end, that is, state interests."⁹⁹ Kaldor then attempts to dissect Clausewitz and *On War* so that she can distinguish 'new wars' from 'old wars'.

⁹⁶ Kaldor, Mary. *New and Old War: Organized Violence in a Global Era* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006).

⁹⁷ Kaldor, p.15.

⁹⁸ Ibid, p. 17.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

Kaldor states that the central thesis of *On War* is that war tends towards extremes.¹⁰⁰ In so doing, she revisits the problem suggested by Keegan and Hart (for example WWI), absolute war, and its tendency towards the extreme. She adds that since most wars today are intrastate and have non-state actors, Clausewitz's interstate, state military vs. state military wars, are not comparable. In some respects, this is a fair criticism: non-state actors use different tactics and have different objectives. However, war as a tool and a phenomenon has not changed despite a changing of its characteristics.

According to Kaldor, Clausewitz developed the theories of attrition and maneuver warfare, which were so integral to the wars of the 19th and 20th century. As well, Kaldor attributes the Napoleonic method to Clausewitz. Clausewitz is not the father of attrition, or maneuver warfare. Clausewitz provides a descriptive analysis of war, not a prescription for certain strategies. From a cursory discussion of Clausewitz, Kaldor moves on to discuss 'total war' and the same discussions that Keegan, Liddell Hart, and van Creveld had about the relationship between politics and the military with regards to total war.

Kaldor differs from the others in her analysis of what constitutes new wars:

The political goals of the new wars are about the claim to power in the basis of seemingly traditional identities – nation, tribe, and religion. Yet the upsurge in the politics of particularistic identities cannot be understood in traditional terms... The process known as globalization is breaking up the cultural and socio-economic divisions that defined the patterns of politics which characterized the modern period.¹⁰¹

Kaldor's idea is that modern wars are no longer about inter-state rivalries, and national interests. Instead, the new wars are about identity politics, and grievances, that inherently target civilians as opposed to soldiers. This process hastens societal disintegration, which

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, p. 23.

¹⁰¹ Ibid. pp.72-73.

is also influenced by economic factors affecting the combatants.¹⁰² Kaldor believes that globalization is changing the political dynamic because the state is being replaced by trans-national identities and understandings. At its core this process of globalization is changing the organization of society. Whereas before national cultures were produced by intellectuals and the elites in respective nations, now this structure is being broken down and replaced by a global culture emphasized by mass consumerism and the English language. Kaldor also believes that globalization has led to the creation of trans-national institutions that have changed the nature of sovereignty at the state level. These are all fair comments from Kaldor, but these ideas that she has put forward are not central to a discussion of war and its inherent nature.

Helen Dexter, who has been directly influenced by Kaldor's theory, in her piece, "New War, Good War and the War on Terror: Explaining, Excusing and Creating Western Neo-Interventionism," argues that since the fall of the Soviet Union there has been a change in the justification for armed force. Whereas before armed force was used to respond to state insecurity, now armed force was being used to respond to humanitarian crises.¹⁰³ According to Dexter:

Rather than a revolution in military affairs, the end of the Cold War witnessed a revolution in the social relations of warfare. New wars take place within the context of a failed state or weak state. The warfare that Kaldor describes is new in comparison to traditional state-centric or 'Clausewitzian' warfare. New wars blur the lines between crime, warfare and human rights violations and represent a growing privatization of violence.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² Schuurman, p. 2.

¹⁰³ Dexter, Helen. "New War, Good War and the War on Terror: Explaining, Excusing and Creating Western Neo-Interventionism", in *Development and Change* 38(6):1055-1071(Oxford: Institute of Social Studies, 2007) p.1

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*, p. 44.

Dexter, like Kaldor, believes that the new wars operate outside the Clausewitzian paradigm. According to Dexter wars that have occurred since the fall of the Soviet Union have ‘disproved Clausewitz’s’ central premise that war is a continuation of policy. This suggests that if war is an end to itself it is then violence for no other purpose than violence. This is contradictory to the ideas advocated by Dexter and Kaldor. They attempt to draw an analysis between morality and war, making the argument, as Keegan does, that war is not political because violence is not a rational act. (Essentially they are also arguing for a cultural understanding of war instead of a political one, but this is more a reflection of a moralistic belief about war than a commentary on Clausewitz and politics.) They are also commenting on what they see as the transfer of combat away from primarily state interests.

It appears that the theories, which declare ‘new’ forms of warfare, may be premature in their assessments. It is easy to comprehend why scholars thought that the nature of armed force was changing in the world. In the aftermath of the fall of the Soviet Union, Pax Americana and the U.N. seemed to offer the possibility of a world without major war. In his book, *The Invention of Peace and the Reinvention of War* (2002),¹⁰⁵ Michael Howard comments on this phenomenon:

The consensus seemed cemented by the challenge from Saddam Hussein, a local warlord anachronistically using force to create a regional hegemony, against whom the United Nations came together under US leadership in a show of collective security considerable more credible than that evoked by the Korean challenge in 1950. At last the world seemed free in the sense understood by the men of the Enlightenment: free for travel, free for the communication of ideas, free above all for commerce. One enthusiastic American analyst suggested

¹⁰⁵ Michael Howard, *The Invention of Peace and the Reinvention of War* (London: Profile Books, 2000),

not only that a new world order had begun, but that history itself had come to an end.¹⁰⁶

Martha Finnemore, a noted constructivist author, wrote a book titled *The Purpose of Intervention: Changing Beliefs About the Use of Force* (2003).¹⁰⁷ Finnemore examines ‘how’ beliefs and justifications for the use of force have changed over time. Finnemore explains that the change is a result of a change in the values and norms of the international community, which are a reflection of an increasingly legalized international system (U.N.). Specifically relevant to this thesis, Finnemore argued that war has not changed; rather, attitudes about the permissibility of the use of force have changed. In other words, the nature of war is eternal, but beliefs about when war should be used change over time. This helps to explain the contrast between Clausewitz and his critics. For the critics, war is seen as an irrational act of violence that has no place in the contemporary international system, whereas the use of force was more permissible and accepted in Clausewitz’s time. This suggests that the critics may conflate the changing attitudes towards the use of force with a change in the nature of warfare.

Similar to Keegan and Hart, there are many interesting ideas about warfare in the contemporary put forward by van Creveld and Kaldor. These ideas call into question both the political reasons for war and the conduct of war. Van Creveld argues that the political nature of war has changed from Clausewitz’s time, but he also suggests that there has been a change in the conduct of war. Similar to van Creveld, Kaldor also argues that globalization has changed the political realities of war.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, p. 92.

¹⁰⁷ Finnemore, Martha, *The Purpose of Intervention: Changing Beliefs About the Use of Force* (Ithica: Cornell University Press, 2003).

These critics are important because they advance the literature and prompt a rethinking of war in general. However, their selective criticism of parts of *On War* are not enough to make Clausewitz's theory of war irrelevant. Rather, there is an argument to be made that Clausewitz's reasons for war and conduct for war are even more important today because of the new technology and actors in the world today. As history has shown, war continues to be waged. Therefore, any lessons that can be learned about it should not be dismissed as relics of a bygone era. The usefulness of Clausewitz's theory is that it encompasses the whole of war, as opposed to merely an examination of its distinct parts.

Chapter 4: Clausewitz and His Wars

To analyze whether Clausewitz would recognize modern warfare it is necessary to compare first the wars of Clausewitz's time to the variables from *On War*, specifically: 1) Reasons for war (Political Objectives) and, 2) Conduct of War (offensive/defensive war and limited/total War). Once the wars of Clausewitz have been categorized, the same variables can be compared and contrasted to modern wars to determine if there are similarities between the two time periods. This chapter analyzes four wars from Clausewitz's time that are mentioned in *On War*: 1) the War of Austrian Succession, 2) the Seven Years War, 3) the War of the First Coalition and 4) the Napoleonic wars. Each of these wars will be examined and classified according to the variables listed above. Each examination is limited to classifying the wars according to the variables as gleaned from Clausewitz's work and descriptions. While some brief context will be provided there will not be detailed examinations of the wars of Clausewitz's time - only information pertinent for classifying the wars according to the variables is required.

While Clausewitz's intention was to write a theory of war that was relevant to all time periods, in reality he focused on wars from his own time periods as his main subjects:

Clausewitz himself asserts that the utility of an historical illustration is generally inversely proportional to its age, and he announces that he will avoid in this work examples antedating the War of the Austrian Succession... Thus, Clausewitz, confines himself in this work, with but rare exceptions, to historical examples deriving from the seventy-five years ending with Waterloo, which was the last battle he knew and which occurred sixteen years before his death.¹⁰⁸

The above quote does not conclude that Clausewitz's method was flawed; after all, it is evident in *On War* that Clausewitz realizes the limitations of proposing a universal theory

¹⁰⁸ Bernard Brodie, "The Continuing Relevance of *On War*" in *On War*, p. 55.

based upon a snapshot in time. Clausewitz's merely uses these wars as examples in his book because they are the wars with which he is familiar, which made them easier for him to use as examples in *On War*. Clausewitz's purpose was to make *On War* about warfare in general as opposed to a historical review of the phenomenon. Accordingly, he used examples with which he was most familiar to highlight his ideas.

Reasons for War

Clausewitz explains that the reasons for war are always political. While the political objectives that a state seeks to achieve through war are different in every case, Clausewitz explains that they fall into three general categories, the latter two being related: 1) Concession, 2) Submission, and 3) Overthrow. When a state seeks concessions from another state through the use of war it usually does not have the ability to impose its will upon its enemy. Instead, it seeks limited aims such as the annexation of a small amount of territory or other minor concessions at peace negotiations. Submission and overthrow are related to each other in that submission can involve the overthrow of the enemy, but it is not necessarily required. The difference between submission and concessions lies in the relationship of power. Weaker states generally do not have the ability to force their will upon other states and must instead attempt to gain concessions through the use of war. For example, Prussia did not have the ability to impose its will upon the Austro-Hungarian Empire, with regard to its wish to acquire Silesia. Conversely, stronger states have the ability to impose their will on other states forcing them to submit to their goals, as exemplified by France during the Napoleonic wars. This is the first variable that is examined and defined for the wars of Clausewitz's time.

The conduct of a war is a reflection of its political goals. That is why it is important to define the political objective first. If a state is seeking concessions from another state, then it follows that the effort put forth by the attacking state will correspond to those goals. On the other hand if the goal of the attacking state is submission or overthrow then the war will reflect those characteristics. This is not to suggest that a war will only have one political objective; indeed, it may change given the limits of war discussed by Clausewitz. As well, we begin with the instigator of war. The attacked state will have a different objective. For consistency sake, and for ease of comparison, the instigators point of view is analyzed.

Conduct of War

There are two sets of variables, each with two different possibilities, related to the conduct of war: 1) Offensive/Defensive war, and 2) Limited or Total war. Offensive wars are characterized by initiative in that a state seeks to achieve a victory or goal through the use of force. Defensive wars, on the other hand, are about preservation. In its most basic understanding, offense is about the attack and defense is a reaction to an attack. A state that utilizes offensive war is seeking to achieve a goal, whereas the goal of the defender is to persevere. The relationship between offensive and defensive wars is always in flux. For example, one state may take the initiative to seize a piece of territory from another state; once this has been achieved that state now switches from an offensive to defensive posture, hoping to preserve their gains, (in one instance, once the Prussians had completed their capture of Silesia they enacted a defensive posture). As well, wars can be of a limited or total nature. This is defined by the political goals and is reflected in them.

Limited wars are a reflection of the politics of concession, whereas total war is related to submission.

To understand the relationship between these characteristics, described by Clausewitz, and the wars discussed in *On War* it is necessary to classify the variables according to each war which was previously introduced in Chapter 1:

Table 2: Clausewitzian Wars

			Reason for War	Conduct of War	
War	Date	Instigator	Initial Political Objectives: Concessions or Submission or Overthrow	Offensive or Defensive war	Limited or Total War
War of Austrian Succession	1740-1748	Prussia	Concessions: Conquest and annexation of Silesia	Offensive	Limited
Seven Years' War	1756-1763	Prussia	Concessions: Acquisition of Austrian territory	Offensive	Total/ Limited
War of the First Coalition	1792-1797	Habsburg Empire/France	Submission/ Overthrow: Overthrow of French Republic	Offensive	Total
Napoleonic	1803-1815	France	Submission/ Overthrow: Overthrow and creation of French Empire	Offensive	Total

Each of the wars, as noted in Table 2, lasted for many years. Each war, therefore, has many battles and important turning events. In order to classify the wars, this thesis takes its cue from Clausewitz. In general, the war classification is dominated by the events of the first year and the instigator (the state) that launches the attack. However, this does not

mean that all of the reasons for the wars are overthrow and the conduct is always offensive. Especially in modern war, many other tools are employed before war is used and so the reasons for war can also be concession and the conduct defensive. There are a few methodological weaknesses with this approach. First, there is a certain amount of subjectiveness in applying the variables. However, as the purpose of this thesis is to determine whether or not Clausewitz is still relevant and it is not an in-depth study of the wars, Clausewitz's description of his wars and the definitions of the variables are used as a guide to minimize random assignment of variables or inconsistent assignment of variables. Second, the scope of this thesis is not long enough to provide detailed analysis of each event and battle of the wars. It is sufficient to apply the variables for the first years of the war as determined by Clausewitz and the COW database. If there is concordance with the variables across time periods, this is the minimum proof needed to conclude that Clausewitz may still be relevant. Third, the wars are determined by Clausewitz and do not include all wars of his time. The COW wars have 1000 battle deaths as a criterion and therefore do not include all wars between 1990-2012. The sampling of wars in this study is not exhaustive, but restricted to interstate wars and wars as captured in *On War* and COW. This is acceptable given that the variables, as provided by Clausewitz, **can** be applied to modern times. That they may not be the "best" descriptions of modern interstate wars or the most "complete" descriptions does not matter - simply that the elements of *On War* as expressed via the variables have some semblance of relevance for today's interstate wars.

War of Austrian Succession

As its name suggests, the War of Austrian Succession began with the death of Emperor Charles VI who was the leader of the Holy Roman Empire, Austria, and the Habsburg Monarchy.¹⁰⁹ When Charles died he left no male heir to the throne. In an attempt to deal with this situation Charles had previously secured the right of females to inherit the throne of the Habsburg monarchy through the Pragmatic Sanction of 1713.¹¹⁰ Charles' heir was Maria Theresa, who, by all accounts, was not prepared properly by her father to become the leader of the Habsburg dynasty.¹¹¹ While Maria Theresa was granted the Habsburg throne, she was not entitled to become Holy Roman Emperor. It was hoped that her husband, Francis Stephen the Duke of Lorraine, would become the Holy Roman Emperor. Francis was challenged by Charles Albert, the Elector of Bavaria, for the right to be the next emperor. Charles Albert also made a claim upon much of Maria Theresa's territorial inheritance.¹¹² In addition to Charles Albert, the Spanish, French, and Prussians also sought to use the death of Charles VII as an excuse to acquire territory from the Austrians. The main threat to Maria Theresa lay with Prussia, led by Frederick II. Frederick sought to gain Silesia from Austria, offering Maria Theresa the chance to cede it to him without the need for war. For the purpose of this thesis this examination focuses exclusively upon the war between the Prussians and Austrians.¹¹³

The instigator of the war of Austrian Succession was the Prussians, led by Frederick II. The political objectives of the war were stark: to acquire territory given a

¹⁰⁹ Reed Browning, *The War of Austrian Succession* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), p. 37.

¹¹⁰ Robert Kann, *A History of the Habsburg Empire: 1525-1918* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1974), pp. 57-60.

¹¹¹ Browning, *ibid.*

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p.38.

¹¹³ The War of Austrian Succession encompasses many different wars fought after the death of the Holy Roman Emperor. As it is Frederick II who is mentioned in *On War*, this examination will classify his war with the Austrians, so as to not cause confusion with regards to the classification of the variables.

leadership vacuum. In exchange for Frederick's support for the Austrian succession plan, he demanded that the province of Silesia be transferred to Prussia. Frederick intended to seize Silesia regardless of the support of the Austrian throne, but gave Maria the chance to cede it to him without conflict.¹¹⁴ On December 16, 1740, Frederick II led the Prussians into Silesia and an occupation.

The reason for war, or political objective, of this war was concessions. Frederick sought to acquire Silesia through its occupation. Frederick's army was not seeking submission or overthrow due to the limited nature of its demands.

As for the conduct of the war, it was a limited, offensive war. As discussed earlier, the type of war is a reflection of its political goals. Since the Prussians were seeking limited concessions from the Austrians it follows that the type of war was also of the limited variety. The war was of an offensive nature due to the necessity of capturing territory first. After the conquest of Silesia the army of Frederick would have adopted a defensive posture. In December of 1740, the Prussians stationed a large army along the Oder river. On the 16th of the same month, the army invaded Silesia. The Austrian military that was stationed in Silesia was no match for the invading Prussians. Realizing that there was almost no chance to defeat the Prussians, the Austrians retreated.

The outcome of the war was the recognition by Austria to the claims of Prussia over Silesia in the Peace of Breslau. Silesia was then incorporated into Prussia.

¹¹⁴ Browning, p. 41.

Seven Years' War (Third Silesian War)

The Seven Years' war is very interesting because it is a result of the war of Austrian Succession detailed above eight years later.¹¹⁵ The treaty that ended the war of Austrian Succession granted Frederick II the province of Silesia, as noted above. The Austrians found themselves weakened, while the Prussians came out of the conflict as an emerging power. The immediate cause of the war was that it brought about what is referred to as the diplomatic revolution in Europe.¹¹⁶ Prior to the events of the war of Austrian Succession, Austria had been allied with Britain, while Prussia had been allied with the French. Austria was upset with Britain's support for Prussian ownership of Silesia, as well as British pressure on the Austrians to surrender more territory to other foes. This caused the Anglo-Austrian alliance to falter. Austria decided that the biggest threat to itself came from the Prussians, so accordingly, they allied themselves with the French. The British, on the other hand, believed that Austria was no longer powerful enough to act as a counterweight to the French, who were their chief rival. As a result the British allied themselves with Prussia instead. The result was a massive shift in European alliances.

The Seven Years' war was a massive war in scale that spanned the world, with fighting in North America, India, and Europe. For the sake of clarity, this analysis focuses on the war between the Austrians and the Prussians, referred to as the Third Silesian War because this was the aspect of the Seven Years' war that Clausewitz was familiar with.

¹¹⁵ Szabo, Franz. *The Seven Years War in Europe: 1756-1763* (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2008), p.2.

¹¹⁶ Ibid, pp. 10-17.

After the diplomatic revolution, Frederick II became concerned that the Austrians were considering invading Silesia and taking revenge for the previous loss of this territory. In addition, the Austro-French alliance added a third partner, Russia. Believing that it was only a matter of time until his territory was invaded, Frederick and the Prussians launched a pre-emptive attack with the invasion of Saxony. The first half of the war saw the Prussians win many victories. The Austro-French-Russian alliance fought back fiercely against this Prussian invasion, and were joined also by Sweden in its war against Prussia. With so many countries against the Prussians, the situation shifted dramatically with its enemies invading Prussian territory many times. As the years passed on the situation looked increasingly grim for Frederick II and the Prussians. Fortunately for the Prussian, the death of the Russian Empress knocked the Russians out of the war. The Empress was succeeded by Peter III, who was notably Pro-Prussian. As well, Peter negotiated a settlement between the Swedes and the Prussians, which freed the Prussian army to resume its war against the Austrians. The fighting ended with the signing of the Treaty of Herbertsburg in 1763. The treaty recognized Silesia as property of the Prussian state, thus ending the Silesian wars.

The reasons for war in this case were the continued ownership of Silesia by the Prussians and the conquest of Silesia by the Austrians. The Prussians sought concessions through their invasion of Saxony (Austrian territory), hoping to weaken the hostile forces, forcing Austria to recognize its claims to the province of Silesia. The anti-Prussian alliance sought to submit the Prussians to their will by destroying the ability of the Prussians to resist. This is one of the interesting cases that does not fit neatly into either

category. Since the wars are being classified according to the invading state's point of view, it follows that this war is classified as a limited one.

The war is classified as an offensive war, due to Prussia's initiation by the conquest of Saxony. Similar to the reasons for war, this war is not easily definable in this category. Frederick II believed that he was about to be invaded by the Austrian alliance, and entered into a pre-emptive war. Nonetheless, many throughout history have claimed defensive reasons for waging an offensive war (The Bush Doctrine and the invasion of Iraq, for example).¹¹⁷

Finally this war is classified as a limited war. This war did not involve the total mobilization of the states involved, nor were the political reasons for war those of submission or overthrow. Both sides, while undertaking massive endeavors, were essentially fighting over one 'limited' portion of territory.

War of The First Coalition

The war of the first coalition was a result of the upheaval of the revolution in France. In 1792 Louis XVI and the French monarchy were deposed by revolutionaries and replaced by a new regime. This revolution represented a true break with the past, emphasized by the sovereignty of the people. While attempting to flee the country, the King and his family were captured and forcibly returned to Paris. These developments horrified the other nobles in Europe. Not only did this revolution represent a threat to the hierarchical structures of their respective countries, but it also represented a threat to the monarchs themselves. To complicate matters further, Holy Roman Emperor Leopold II

¹¹⁷ Jervis, Robert, "Understanding the Bush Doctrine", *Political Science Quarterly* 118(3), 2003, pp. 365-388.

was the brother of Marie Antoinette, the wife of King Louis. In reaction to the capture of the French Royal family, Leopold and Frederick William II—King of Prussia—issued the *Declaration of Pillnitz* in August of 1791. The declaration called upon European powers to intervene if the life of Louis XVI was in jeopardy.¹¹⁸

The French were concerned that the other European powers were planning to invade France and restore the monarchy to power. Accordingly, the French Assembly voted in favor of war on April 20, 1792. Instead of waiting for an attack to happen, the French Republic invaded Austrian Netherlands. The revolution had left the French military disorganized and unprepared for battle. As a result, the French army suffered a significant defeat against the Holy Roman Empire. In response an allied force, led by the Prussians, invaded French territories. The Prussians indicated their intention to restore the monarchy to the throne through the destruction of the French army and its will to resist.

The Prussians continued to capture more territory until, at Valmy, on September 20, 1792, their offensive was halted by the French. After this setback the Prussian army retreated from France in an effort to preserve the strength of its military. In January of 1793, the French Republic executed Louis XVI. This act rallied more allies to the anti-French camp, creating the ‘First Coalition.’ To defend itself against this coalition, the French Republic instituted conscription, which allowed the French to raise massive armies. By 1793 the French had 750,000 soldiers at its disposal, far more than could be raised by any of the other European states.¹¹⁹ This new army remained on the offensive so that it would be able to live and arm itself off of newly occupied areas. Over the next

¹¹⁸ For more information see: Biro, Sydney Seymour. *The German policy of revolutionary France: a study in French diplomacy during the war of the first coalition, 1792-1797*. Vol. 1. (Harvard University Press, 1957). Blanning, Timothy CW. *The French Revolutionary Wars, 1787-1802* (New York: Arnold, 1996). Lefebvre, Georges, *The French Revolution*. Vol. 1. (Columbia University Press, 1962).

¹¹⁹ Bell, David, *The First Total War* (New York: Mariner Books, 2007), p. 149.

several years the French pressed their advantage, winning many battles and occupying more territory than they did at the beginning of the campaign. The treaty of Campo Fornio was signed in 1797 ending the war of the first coalition. As a result the continuation of the French Republic was ensured. In addition, the French Republic had captured territory throughout Europe.

The political objectives in this case were a reflection of the upheaval that Europe was facing during the French Revolution. The war of the First Coalition represented an existential threat to the First French Republic, as the main goal of the coalition was to return the monarchy to its place in society. The French goal was submission, whereby the French military needed to destroy the ability of the coalition to threaten the continued existence of the Republic. The coalition, on the other hand, was seeking submission and overthrow. The original intent of the allied Prussian army that marched on France, was to destroy the French resistance and return the monarchy to power.

Due to the magnitude of what was at stake in this conflict, the war of the coalition was an offensive total war. The French Republic mobilized the entire French nation to meet the threat of the coalition army. There was no other objective than the destruction of the will of the coalition. This action required the French to seize the initiative in order to achieve its goals, utilizing offensive war to pre-empt the actions of the coalition. Total war is intrinsically linked to the political objectives of overthrow, and the offensive; the conduct of war is always a reflection of the reasons for war, which is evident from the example above.

Napoleonic Wars

Similar to the war of the First Coalition, the Napoleonic wars were also offensive total wars, which were a reflection of the political objectives, submission and overthrow.

It is difficult to define where the French Revolutionary wars end and the Napoleonic wars begin. The war of the First Coalition ended in 1797. The war of the Second Coalition began in 1798 in an effort to reverse the gains that were made by the French army in the previous war. The French suffered losses during the war of the Second coalition, but came out of the war still intact. It is important to understand that the French losses in the war of the Second Coalition led to a coup in November of 1799, which ended with Napoleon seizing power. Some scholars suggest that this marks the beginning of the Napoleonic wars, while others contend that the beginning of the Napoleonic wars was 1803.¹²⁰ Regardless of which date is accepted as the beginning of the Napoleonic wars, this conflict is one of the defining moments in European history. As well, as is evident from discussion in Chapters 2 and 3, the Napoleonic wars had a tremendous impact upon Clausewitz and his philosophy of war.

There is a massive amount of literature already written about Napoleon and his wars.¹²¹ As such, the explanation of these wars will be limited in scope. These wars span from approximately 1803-1815, and include the wars of the Third, Fourth, Fifth, Sixth and Seventh Coalitions. In summary, these wars were characterized by continuous war between the French Empire and its numerous European foes. Napoleon achieved many

¹²⁰ McLynn, Frank, *Napoleon* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 2011). As well, see authors below.

¹²¹ For further reading about the Napoleonic wars see: Fremont, Gregory and Fisher, Todd, *The Napoleonic Wars: The Rise and Fall of an Empire* (Oxford: Osprey Publishers, 2006). Gates, David, *The Napoleonic Wars: 1803-1815* (Random House Publishing, 2011). Rothenberg, Gunther, *The Napoleonic Wars* (New York: Harper Collins Publishing, 2006).

victories, essentially defeating all of Europe except for the British.¹²² Napoleon's success ended in 1812 when his army failed in its attempt to conquer Russia, which signaled a dramatic shift in the war. The Europeans, who had previously been dominated by Napoleon, regrouped forming the Sixth Coalition. This coalition won a string of military victories marching all the way to Paris by March of 1814.¹²³ Napoleon was defeated and exiled to the island of Elba. With the defeat of his empire, the coalition forces reinstated the Bourbon monarchy. Napoleon escaped his exile in 1815 and returned to mainland France, once again taking command of the French military. Napoleon hoped to defeat the coalition forces before they had the ability to regroup. Napoleon was defeated at the battle of Waterloo, which ended the Napoleonic wars. The outcome of the war was the restoration of the monarchy, a diminished France, and a much stronger Britain.

The political objectives by all parties involved in the Napoleonic wars were the same, submission and overthrow. For these series of conflict France is examined as the instigator. Napoleon wanted to crush all threats to his Empire, while installing his subordinates as the new leaders in the conquered territories. There were no concessions to be had in the Napoleonic wars, as the outcome would decide the leadership of many European countries. Similarly Napoleon's adversaries sought to destroy Napoleon and his armies so that they could restore the monarchy.

Accordingly, these conflicts were total, offensive wars. In order to achieve submission it is necessary to seize the initiative. Napoleon's army could only be destroyed through the conquest of France and destruction of his army, while Napoleon's Empire could only continue on through the conquest of its European adversaries. The

¹²² Bell, p. 267.

¹²³ Lefebvre, George, *Napoleon: From Tilsit to Waterloo 1807-1815* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), pp. 309-353.

wars are classified as total because they represented a total mobilization of France's state resources. These wars were inherently life or death struggles for the states involved, which necessitated the mobilization and application of the maximum amount of force available to each state, particularly France.

The wars of Clausewitz's time were not uniformly of the same variety. The First two wars (War of Austrian Succession and the Seven Years War) were limited wars fought for minor territorial acquisitions. Neither of these conflicts threatened the stability of the states involved, nor were they a threat to the respective regimes. On the contrary, the second two wars (War of the First Coalition and the Napoleonic Wars) were total wars, characterized by the clash of national armies fighting for the survival of separate political systems. The political reasons also varied among the wars, encompassing concessions, submission, and overthrow. The important part to take away from this analysis is to realize that the wars of Clausewitz's time were not uniform in their reasons for war or their conduct of war. This grants some flexibility for symmetry between modern warfare and 'Clausewitzian warfare.' So long as some of the modern wars share some of the same variables of Clausewitz's wars, then it may be possible to say that Clausewitz's ideas are still relevant today.

Chapter 5: Clausewitz and Contemporary Warfare

Now that the variables have been applied to the wars mentioned by Clausewitz in *On War*, it is necessary to categorize the wars of the modern era according to the same criteria. It will then be possible to draw conclusion about the utility of *On War* in the modern era of warfare. While the variables for analyzing modern conflict stay the same (that is, the reasons for war remain concession, submission or overthrow and the conduct of war variables are offensive/defensive and limited/total war) there are contemporary differences that should be made clear so as not to cause confusion during the comparison of contemporary warfare and the wars of Clausewitz. In Clausewitz's time there was no international system that dealt with the 'legality' of warfare. Since the time of Clausewitz, the rules of warfare have been codified. The international community has recognized that wars of aggression are no longer acceptable in the international arena. After World War II, the international community founded the United Nations. The preamble of the U.N. Charter says:

WE THE PEOPLES OF THE UNITED NATIONS DETERMINED to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind, and to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small, and to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained, and to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom, AND FOR THESE ENDS to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours, and to unite our strength to maintain international peace and security, and to ensure, by the acceptance of principles and the institution of methods, that armed force shall not be used, save in the common interest, and to employ international machinery for the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples.¹²⁴

The U.N. Charter placed limits on the use of force, clearly stating that war was now

¹²⁴ *Charter of the United Nations: Preamble* (<http://www.un.org/en/documents/charter/preamble.shtml>) (Accessed on May 28, 2013).

illegal except in three circumstances: 1) threats to international peace and security, 2) breaches of peace and 3) self-defence against aggression.¹²⁵ In the case of the first two circumstances, action against belligerents would require authorization from the Security Council. The third reason for war, self-defence, does not require Security Council approval as it is recognized as an inherent right of states. This change in internationally accepted norms and laws that govern international conflict reflect the classification of offensive and defensive wars in the contemporary era. Not only are the conduct of modern wars classified as either offensive or defensive according to the criteria set forth in *On War*, but also by current international law. For example, any state that threatens international peace and security, breaches the peace, or engages in armed aggression is conducting an offensive war. On the other hand, any state that is authorized by the Security Council, or is repelling an act of aggression is conducting a defensive war. These distinctions will become clearer in the examples to follow.

The other variables are unaffected by contemporary nuances. The political reasons for war have always varied, but have been coherently reflected by the categories of concessions, submission and overthrow. Similarly, whether a war is total or limited remains a reflection of the political objectives and is, accordingly, unchanged from generation to generation. For example, the ferocity of total warfare may indeed increase over time due to the technological and societal changes that have occurred over time (for example, RMA). Total war is now so destructive because it involves the use of nuclear weapons. However, even with these changes, the character of war remains the same. The following table classifies the nine wars analyzed according to the variables:

¹²⁵ *Chapter VII: Action With Respect to Threats to the Peace, Breaches of the Peace, and Acts of Aggression* (<http://www.un.org/en/documents/charter/chapter7.shtml>) consulted on May 28, 2013.

Table 3: Modern Interstate Conflicts 1990 – 2012.

War	Date	Instigators perspective	Reasons for War		Conduct of War	
			Major objective today	Major objective in Clausewitzian terms (Submission, concession or overthrow)	Offensive or Defensive	Limited or Total War
Gulf War ¹²⁶	1990-1991	US	Expel Iraq from Kuwait	Submission	Defensive	Limited
Bosnian Independence	1992-1995	US - NATO	End armed conflict	Concessions	Defensive	Limited
Azerbaijan-Armenia	1993-1994	Armenia	Territorial acquisition	Concession	Offensive	Limited
Ecuador-Peru	1995	Ecuador	Removing Peruvian patrols from disputed areas	Concession	Offensive	Limited
Eritrea-Ethiopia	1998-1999	Eritrea	Invasion of disputed territory	Concessions	Offensive	Limited
Kosovo	1999-	US-NATO	End violence	Concessions	Offensive	Limited
Pakistan-India	1999	Pakistan	Pakistani intrusion into Kashmir	Concessions	Offensive	Limited
Invasion Afghanistan	2001-2014	US – NATO Coalition	Expel Osama bin Laden and Taliban	Submission	Defensive	Total
Invasion Iraq	2003-2011	US (Coalition of the willing)	Expel Saddam Hussein and destroy WMD	Overthrow	Offensive	Total

Similar to the previous chapter, this chapter discusses briefly why each of the wars has been classified according to the different variables. This classification provides an

¹²⁶ Note, for example, Iraq was the instigator. It invaded Kuwait, however, as there were so few battle deaths, this stage of the war is not captured in COW. Therefore, it is essential that the war is categorized according to the stage of the war for which there were 1000 battle deaths.

understanding of the variables from *On War*, which can then be correlated with variables from the previous chapter.

Gulf War

The Gulf War (August 1990 – February 1991) was a war between an American-led, U.N.-authorized, coalition force against Iraq. The key issue was the invasion and occupation of Kuwait by Iraq, which was seen as an act of aggression by the international community.¹²⁷ This conflict was hugely important to the maintenance of the new international order. The Cold War was ending, ushering in a new era of international peace and security (or so it seemed). Geoff Simons, in his book *Iraq: From Sumer to Post-Saddam* (2004), argues that it was about more than that:

The prosecution of the 1991 Gulf War by the US-led coalition was intended to serve a number of purposes. It was useful to demonstrate to the world that any grave threat to American interests would not be tolerated, particularly where these required the unimpeded supply of fuel to the world's most energy-profligate nation. It was useful to signal the new global power structure, the 'New World Order' in which a post-Cold War United States could operate without the bothersome constraint of another global superpower. It was essential in these circumstances that Iraq be mercilessly crushed.¹²⁸

Others, such as Francis Fukuyama, heralded the end of history, writing that western liberal democracy and its values had triumphed over its competitors.¹²⁹ While Fukuyama

¹²⁷ For a more in-depth discussion of the Gulf War see: Finlan, Alastair, *Essential Histories: The Gulf War 1991* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2003). Gordon, Michael R., and Bernard E. Trainor, *The Generals' War: The Inside Story of the Conflict in the Gulf* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1995). Cleveland, William L., and Martin P. Bunton. *A History of the Modern Middle East*. Vol. 2. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1994). Sifry, Micah L., and Christopher Cerf, eds. *The Gulf War Reader: History, Documents, Opinions*. (Times Books, 1991). Scales, Robert H. *Certain Victory: The US Army in the Gulf War*. (Potomac Books, Inc., 1998). Simons, Geoff, *Iraq: From Sumer to Post-Saddam* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004). See also Security Council Resolutions 660 and 661 (1990).

¹²⁸ Simons, p.3.

¹²⁹ Fukuyama, Francis, "The end of history?" *The NationalInterest*, Vol. 16 (1989).

was referring to the collapse of the Soviet Union, it nonetheless exemplifies the feeling that the international order had changed.

Saddam Hussein, the Iraqi dictator, desired Kuwait. Kuwait had been prized by Iraq since the British had granted Kuwait independence in 1961. Iraq wanted Kuwait because of its vast oil reserves and long coastline which would provide Iraq with greater access to the sea.¹³⁰ In 1961, Iraq had attempted to annex Kuwait, but was thwarted by British efforts. Iraq believed that it had historical rights to Kuwait, as Kuwait had once belonged to the Ottoman province of Basra. It was the British who had divided Kuwait and Iraq, leaving the Iraqis cutoff from the sea.¹³¹ Against these historical realities Saddam once again pressed his case for dominion over Kuwait.

On August 2, 1990, Iraq launched its invasion of Kuwait. Vastly outnumbering the Kuwaiti military, Iraq easily conquered Kuwait. That same day, the U.N. Security Council met and passed Resolution 660 (1990), which called for the immediate withdrawal of Iraq from Kuwait.¹³² This was followed on August 6th by resolution 661, which authorized economic sanctions against Iraq.¹³³ Despite the U.N. resolutions, Iraq still did not leave Kuwait. Between then and November 1990 the international community attempted to come to a solution with no success. On November 29, 1990, the Security Council authorized the use of force against Iraq, provided it failed to leave Kuwait by January 15, 1991.¹³⁴

¹³⁰ Gordon, p. 7.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² *Resolution 660 (1990): The Situation Between Iraq and Kuwait* (<http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/575/10/IMG/NR057510.pdf?OpenElement>), Accessed on May 29, 2013.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ *Resolution 678 (1990): November 29, 1990* (<http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/575/28/IMG/NR057528.pdf?OpenElement>), Accessed on May 29, 2013.

In the run-up to January 15, 1991, the United States created a large coalition to go to war with Iraq. On January 17, after Iraq had failed to respect its obligations under the Security Council resolutions, the coalition began its attack with a heavy aerial bombardment. On February 24, 1991, coalition ground forces crossed into Kuwait and began the ground invasion—by February 28, 1991, Kuwait had been liberated.

For classification purposes this war is being analyzed from the perspective of the instigators, the United States and its coalition partners. Although Iraq invaded Kuwait first, there were not 1,000 battle deaths. This does not qualify it for analysis as per the guidelines set forth in the COW database. This an interesting case study for Clausewitz's variables as it reflects the modern understanding of a defensive war. Although the Americans went on the 'offensive' by attacking the Iraqi forces, they were actually acting in a defensive manner by seeking to reverse the act of aggression made upon Kuwait by Iraq. Essentially the coalition was seeking to re-establish the status-quo. While the conduct of war was limited, the political objective was submission. The coalition sought to expel Iraqi forces from Kuwait and discourage Iraq from reattempting an annexation. It was a limited war because *Operation Desert Storm* was limited in scope, which was a reflection of its political goals (for example, the coalition was not authorized to invade Iraq and overthrow Saddam). As explained in Chapter One, limited warfare is linked to defensive wars. What is interesting about the Gulf War is the coalition's goal of submission. In most cases 'submission' is usually a characteristic of offensive total wars, but in this circumstance, 'submission' is in the pursuit of limited goals. As well, limited wars are usually a reflection of power relationships. With its overwhelming superiority, the coalition was easily able to destroy Iraq's capability to resist, yet the coalition

pursued very narrow political goals as mandated by the UN Security Council. For example, it did not seek the overthrow of Iraq or seek to occupy the capital city, Baghdad.

War of Bosnian Independence

The war of Bosnian Independence was a three-year war (1992-1995), between rival factions seeking to secure territory in the aftermath of the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia. Bosnia was a multi-ethnic territory comprised of Bosniak Muslims, Serbs, and Croats, each of whom sought to gain autonomy and control of Bosnia-Herzegovina for their respective peoples. Each of the peoples was supported by a break-away state of the former Yugoslavia. After three years of fighting, NATO, with a Chapter VII mandate from the UN Security Council, entered the war in an attempt to end the fighting.¹³⁵ The collapse of Yugoslavia is usually given as the reason for the war for Bosnian Independence. Alastair Finlan, in his book *The Collapse of Yugoslavia: 1991-1999* (2004), explains that the collapse of Yugoslavia was the result of the interplay of three key figures and factors: Josip Tito, Slobodan Milosevic and the imbalance of power.¹³⁶ Tito was the architect of the Yugoslavian federation, Milosevic was the nationalistic Serbian spark, and the imbalance of power among the members of the federation led to its inevitable collapse. In their book, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina: Ethnic Conflict and International Intervention* (2000), Paul Shoup and Steven Burg argue

¹³⁵ For a more in depth discussion of the War of Bosnian Independence see: Burg, Steven and Shoup, Paul, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina* (New York: M.E. Sharp Inc., 2000). Finlan, Alastair, *The Collapse of Yugoslavia 1991-1999* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2004). Holbrooke, Richard, *To End a War* (New York: The Modern Library, 1998). Ramet, Sabrina, *Central and Southeast European Politics since 1989* (Cambridge: University Press, 2010).

¹³⁶ Finlan, pp. 15-17

that the war of Bosnian Independence was a result of ethnic conflict; “the struggle between mobilized identity groups for greater power”¹³⁷ backed by break-away republics. This war came about against the backdrop of the end of the Cold War, and the optimism in Europe of a new age of international diplomacy and cooperation.

There were many different factions involved in the war of Bosnian Independence. Finlan cites at least thirteen players in the conflict: Bosnian Muslims, Bosnian Serbs, Bosnian Croats, Croats, Croatian Serbs, Kosovars, Macedonians, Montenegrins, Serbians, Slovenians, Vojvidinans, NATO and the U.N.¹³⁸ While these different factions are definitely relevant to the war as a whole, it is necessary to focus upon the inter-state combatants and participants. As a result, for the purpose of this thesis, the focus is exclusively upon the intervention by NATO in the war of Bosnian Independence.¹³⁹

After declaring its independence in March of 1992, Bosnia-Herzegovina descended into war with Croats, Serbs, and Bosniaks fighting for control of Bosnia. This war was characterized by rape, ethnic cleansing and forced removal of citizens from their territories. On February 21, 1992, the Security Council passed resolution 743, which created UNPROFOR (United Nations Protection Force). The purpose of UNPROFOR was to deliver humanitarian aid and protect civilian populations. In February of 1993, the U.N. Security Council passed resolution 808, which established a tribunal for the prosecution of war criminals.¹⁴⁰ That was followed up in April by Resolution 816, which authorized Chapter VII operations to enforce a no-fly zone in Bosnia-Herzegovina to

¹³⁷ Burg, p. 4.

¹³⁸ Finlan, p. 19.

¹³⁹ The UN is not considered for analysis because UNPROFOR had a humanitarian mandate from the Security Council. NATO, in contrast, had a mandate to use force for specific purposes.

¹⁴⁰ *U.N. Security Council Resolution 800: February 22, 1993* (<http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N93/098/21/IMG/N9309821.pdf?OpenElement>).

support sanctions previously authorized by the Security Council.¹⁴¹ The no-fly zone was enforced by NATO beginning on April 13, 1992. Protected civilian areas continued to be attacked, resulting in massacres of civilian populations. As a result, on February 9, 1994, NATO began providing air support to attack targets that UNPROFOR identified as being responsible for civilian attacks. On February 28, 1994, NATO shot down four Serb fighters for failing to respect the no-fly zone. Over the course of the next year NATO continued to carry out bombing missions against Serb aggressors. In retaliation, the Serbs took U.N. peacekeepers hostage, seized the city of Srebrenica and massacred 8,000 civilians there. In response, NATO, with support from UNPROFOR, began a bombing campaign on August 30, 1995. NATO demanded an end to the siege of Sarajevo and a withdrawal of all heavy weapons by Serb forces, and the end to attacks on safe zones. The air strikes continued until September 20, 1995 when the Serb leaders withdrew. This action led to the Dayton Peace accords and the end of the war.

Similar to the Gulf War, this was another war where the classification of variables was not exclusively of one type. The political goal of NATO was concessions; they were not seeking to wipe out Serbian leadership or its military force. NATO was inflicting damages upon Serb infrastructure and fighting forces in order to get the Serbs to agree ultimately to conditions established by the UN Security Council and the Contact Group of States (especially the US and the EU). This is another example of a defensive war as NATO was originally enforcing a no-fly zone authorized by the UN Security Council. As well, the bombing campaign was done to protect UNPROFOR, civilians and enforce UN sanctions. This was a limited war because NATO was pursuing limited objectives. By

¹⁴¹ *U.N. Security Council Resolution 816: March 31, 1993* (<http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N93/187/17/IMG/N9318717.pdf?OpenElement>).

bombing Serbian targets NATO forced the Serbs to accept the demands of the UN Security Council and the contact group, and enter peace negotiations.

Azerbaijan-Armenian War

The Azerbaijan-Armenian conflict has its roots, as do the Bosnian and Kosovo wars, in historical ethnic and cultural rivalries.¹⁴² In 1988, the ethnic Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh sought to secede from Azerbaijan. This was not well received in Azerbaijan and led to bloodshed between Armenia and Azerbaijan. In 1923, Stalin had given the region of Nagorno-Karabakh (majority Armenian) to the Soviet Republic of Azerbaijan. The Armenians sought to right the wrongs that they perceived had been done to them, by reunifying Nagorno-Karabakh with Armenia.¹⁴³ Believing that this action represented a threat to the future of Azerbaijan as a whole, these two countries began fighting in 1988, which carried on into 1993. This case study specifically examines the time period from 1993-1994 as that is when the fighting escalated and was classified as a 'war' by the COW database. During that year there were 14,000 recorded battle deaths.¹⁴⁴ Nagorno-Karabakh is situated on the southeastern border of Armenia right on the southwest border of Azerbaijan. In January of 1993, the Armenians launched offensive attacks against Azerbaijan-held villages pushing back the Azerbaijan forces. Seeking to quell the war, the United Nations Security Council passed resolution 822 in 1993 demanding Armenia withdraw its forces from Azerbaijan and the return to

¹⁴² For more information on the Azerbaijan-Armenian War see: Croissant, Michael, *Armenian-Azerbaijan Conflict: Causes and Implications* (London: Praeger Press, 1998). De Waal, Thomas, *Black Garden: Armenia and Azerbaijan Through Peace and War* (New York: NYU Press, 2003). Cheterian, Vicken, *War and Peace in the Caucasus: Russia's Troubled Frontier* (New York: Columbia University Press: 2008).

¹⁴³ Croissant, Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ COW Database, Ibid.

negotiations by both parties. The resolution also urged both parties to cease hostilities.¹⁴⁵ Armenian offensives continued into the fall of 1993. By this time, the Azerbaijan political situation became more volatile and a new president, Heidar Aliiev, was elected. By this time the Armenians had control of all of Southwest Azerbaijan.¹⁴⁶ Aliiev sought to increase the size of his military force by calling up young men and boys to fight back against the Armenians. With little to no success in their counter-offensive, the Azerbaijanis and Armenians reached a cease-fire in 1994. Nagorno-Karabakh gained its de facto independence from Azerbaijan, but there is still animosity in the area today.

This case study is one of a classic, limited, offensive war. These types of wars are generally typical of smaller powers. This case is being examined through the viewpoint of the Armenians as they were the instigators of this particular conflict, especially the time period 1993-1994 that was examined. Not being able to actually force Azerbaijan to do their will, the Armenians wore them down so as to seek favorable status at peace negotiations. Similarly, the political objectives were limited territorial acquisitions. This was an offensive war as the Armenians were seeking territorial conquest.

Ecuador-Peru War

The war between Ecuador and Peru is known as the Cenepa war (January 26 – February 28, 1995). The conflict was related to territorial control of a disputed piece of land. As with many wars, this war was a continuation of a long-term dispute between the

¹⁴⁵ U.N. Security Council Resolution 822: April 30, 1993 (<http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N93/247/71/IMG/N9324771.pdf?OpenElement>).

¹⁴⁶ De Waal, p. 225.

two states.¹⁴⁷ The Cenepa valley was considered by both states to belong to their respective territories. There was an escalation of hostilities in 1994 as Ecuador and Peru accused each other of violating their territorial integrity of their respective states. Tensions were further increased as each state continued to reinforce the area with more soldiers and military hardware.

The Ecuadorians discovered that the Peruvians had set up a base, complete with a heliport, in the disputed area. This incited an attack by the Ecuadorians, who were the instigators of the war. This is a murky war to classify as there are conflicting reports from both parties as to the exact circumstances that led to the Ecuadorian attack upon the Peruvian soldiers. Nonetheless for the purposes of classification the Cenepa war will be examined from the perspective of Ecuador.

After the Ecuadorian attack on January 26, 1995 the belligerents fought back and forth until February 28, when Peru and Ecuador agreed to a ceasefire. In the aftermath of the conflict both sides agreed to mediation with regards to the settlement of border issues. This war is a classic, clean cut example, of a limited, offensive war. The political objective of the Ecuadorians was concessions. Ecuador wanted to strengthen its position with regards to its territorial ambitions in the Cenepa valley. It is an offensive war, because not only did the Ecuadorians go on the offensive in an attempt to secure territory, but also they were fighting a war of aggression. This war was limited as there was no intention, nor ability by Ecuador, to destroy Peru; the main goal was the acquisition of a small piece of territory.

¹⁴⁷ See: Marcella, Gabriel, *War and Peace in the Amazon: Strategic Implications for the United States and Latin America of the 1995 Ecuador-Peru War*. (DIANE Publishing, 1995). Herz, Monica and Nogueira, Joao, *Ecuador vs. Peru: Peacemaking amid Rivalry*. (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002).

Eritrea-Ethiopia

The war between Eritrea and Ethiopia (1998-2000) was another war fought over disputed territory. The difference between the Eritrean - Ethiopian and other territorial wars mentioned earlier is that this war was set against the backdrop of ethnic divisions, post-colonial political arrangements, independence movements, and a civil war.¹⁴⁸

The flash point for this war was an invasion of the disputed territory of Badme by Eritrean forces. Although the war has been represented as a disagreement over a territorial pursuit, Leenco Lata, in his article “The Ethiopian-Eritrea war”, suggests that this was done more as way of presenting the dispute to the international community.¹⁴⁹ Lata argues that the war was really an extension of a civil war between one people spread over two different countries.

The Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) had fought to defeat the ruling communist government throughout the 1970s, and 1980s, until its victory in 1991. During the civil war the EPRDF was composed of several factions united against their common enemy. Among those groups was the Eritrean People’s Liberation Front (EPLF). In the aftermath of the revolution the Eritreans were given control over an autonomous territory of Ethiopia, which later became Eritrea. These groups coexisted for a period of time, but could not come to an agreement.

The Eritrean leadership had ulterior motives in mind when it invaded the disputed territory of Badme. Jon Abbink explains that Eritrea sought to gain three things through the attack: regional dominance over Ethiopia, economic advantages and weakening of the

¹⁴⁸ See: Gilkes, Patrick, and Martin Plaut, *War in the Horn: the conflict between Eritrea and Ethiopia* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1999). Abbink, John. "Ethiopia—Eritrea: proxy wars and prospects of peace in the horn of Africa." (*Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 21.3, 2003): 407-426). Lata, Leenco. "The Ethiopian-Eritrea war." (*Review of African Political Economy* 30.97, 2003): 369-388.

¹⁴⁹ Lata, *Ibid.*

regime in Ethiopia.¹⁵⁰ On May 12, 1998, Eritrean forces attacked Badme, this was followed the next day by the full mobilization of the Ethiopian Army. The Ethiopian and the Eritrean's dug in after the initial fighting. In February of 1999 the Ethiopian army launched a large offensive to recapture the town of Badme. The Ethiopians were successful and continued their advance into Eritrean territory. By the time the war ended in May of 2000, Ethiopia had captured significant portions of Eritrean territory.

This is an interesting case study because it highlights Clausewitz's warning about the unpredictability of military engagements. What began as a limited offensive war by Eritrea escalated, whereby Eritrea's capacity to resist Ethiopian advances was destroyed. Since this case is classified according to the original Eritrean intervention, it is classified as a limited, offensive war seeking concessions. The original intent of the Eritreans was the capture of a small amount of territory, which would enable them to hold a dominant position in the region. If it were classified according to the perspective of the Ethiopians, then that would change the variables to reflect a total defensive war seeking submission.

Kosovo

The war in Kosovo (February 28, 1998 – June 11, 1999) was a conflict involving NATO, Kosovo (consisting of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) and the Armed Forces of the Republic of Kosovo (FARK)) and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (modern day Serbia).¹⁵¹ Similar to the Bosnian War of Independence, the Kosovo war is a

¹⁵⁰ Abbink, Jon (2003). "Badme and the Ethio-Eritrean Border: The challenge of demarcation in the Post-war period" (*Africa: rivista trimestrale di studie documentazione*: 58, 1-4), pp. 219–231.

¹⁵¹ Webber, Mark. "The Kosovo war: a recapitulation", *International Affairs* 85(3), 2009, pp. 447-459. Weller, Marc. *Contested statehood: Kosovo's struggle for independence*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). Daalder, Ivo H., and Michel E. O'Hanlon, *NATO's War to Save Kosovo* (Brookings Inst Press, 2000). Roberts, Adam, "NATO's 'Humanitarian War' over Kosovo" ,*Survival* 41(3), The International Institution for Strategic Studies, 1999, pp.102-123.

continuation of the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia. The original belligerents in this conflict were Kosovo and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY). Kosovo militants carried out attacks against Serb security forces who subsequently retaliated against the KLA. Not wanting a repeat of earlier Yugoslavian conflicts, the international community led by the U.N. and NATO, attempted to calm the situation.¹⁵² The Serbs and their leader, Slobodan Milosevic, did not want a repeat engagement with NATO so they sought to increase the expulsion of Kosovars, as well as their footprint in the area in the hope of deterring NATO action.¹⁵³ NATO was concerned that there would be a humanitarian disaster (ethnic cleansing of Kosovars by Serbian security forces) if it did not do something to curb Serbian aggression.¹⁵⁴ In the fall of 1998, several U.N. resolutions were passed demanding that FRY security forces cease all actions against civilians. However, none of these resolutions gave authorization for the use of force. If NATO were to become engaged it would have to do so without the approval of the UNSC.¹⁵⁵

On March 24, 1999, NATO began a bombing campaign aimed at driving the Serbs out of Kosovo to allow the return of peacekeepers and refugees. The bombing campaign continued until June 11, 1999, when FRY forces withdrew from Kosovo. After the bombing campaign, NATO sent a stabilization (KFOR) force to Kosovo. This war is classified as a limited, offensive/defensive war seeking concessions. This war is hard to characterize due to the political realities of the war. NATO's stated purpose was to protect civilians from potential harm from the FRY army, but there was no UNSC

¹⁵² Webber, p. 449.

¹⁵³ Ibid, p. 450.

¹⁵⁴ Roberts, p. 104.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid, p. 105.

authorization for the campaign, which would indicate that it should be classified as an offensive war. In terms of political considerations, NATO was seeking concessions from Yugoslavia in the form of a withdrawal from Kosovo. On balance, it was a limited war in that NATO states had no intention of annexing Kosovo or Serbia (although it supported a process to permit Kosovo to separate one day).

India-Pakistan

The war between India and Pakistan is also known as the Kargil war (May-July 1999).¹⁵⁶ This war was exceptionally dangerous due to the possibility of escalation between two nuclear-armed states. The town of Kargil is located on the Indian side of the Line of Control (LOC). After the dissolution of the Indian Raj into Pakistan, East Pakistan (Bangladesh), and India, there were several conflicts fought over disputed territories. India and Pakistan separated their disputed areas along the LOC in Kashmir, a territory that is coveted by both nations. During the 1990s, tensions flared in Kashmir due to separatist activities by militants supported by Pakistan.

On May 3, 1998 Pakistani forces entered into Kargil on the Indian side of the LOC. From their initial incursion, the Pakistani force attacked and killed Indian soldiers. In response to the act of aggression, India mobilized 200,000 troops to strike back against Pakistan. As mentioned earlier, this was a very volatile situation. What began as an attack and occupation by a relatively small amount of Pakistani forces quickly escalated into the mobilization of hundreds of thousands of troops. There was a danger that this conflict could get out of hand, especially considering that they were both nuclear states. From the

¹⁵⁶ Singh, Jasjit, *Kargil 1999: Pakistan's Fourth War for Kashmir* (New Delhi: Knowledge World, 1999). Dixit, Jyotindra Nath, *India-Pakistan in War and Peace* (Psychology Press, 2002). Acosta, Marcus P, "The Kargil Conflict: Waging War in the Himalayas" *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 18(3), 2007, pp. 397-415.

initial incursion in May 1999, Pakistan and India fought until July 26, 1999 when India expelled Pakistan from its territory and declared victory.

This war is classified as a limited, offensive war seeking concessions. Pakistan was fighting an offensive war as they invaded the Indian side of the LOC. The purpose was to gain territory and an advantage in future dealings with India. The fighting force is a reflection of the political will, which was reflected in the size and objectives undertaken by the invading Pakistani forces.

Afghanistan

The war in Afghanistan (2001- present) was a direct retaliation for the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 (9/11). This war has been ongoing since 2001 and has had many different stages. This case study focuses on the initial invasion by the United States and its allies following 9/11. The scope, duration, and magnitude of this war makes it simply too large to be studied as a whole within this study. This is not only a reflection of the scale of the war, but also a reflection of the shifting nature of the war in Afghanistan over time. The mission has switched from one of invasion and overthrow to nation building to counter terrorism. Each shift in political goals necessitates a new classification according to the variables that are being drawn upon.¹⁵⁷ This case study is interesting because it was a war seeking complete submission and overthrow of the enemy, yet was inherently defensive, according to modern analysis. Although it has been

¹⁵⁷ For further reading see: Coll, Steve, *Ghost wars: The secret history of the CIA, Afghanistan, and Bin Laden, from the Soviet invasion to September 10, 2001*. (Penguin Books, 2004). Maley, William, *The Afghanistan Wars*. (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009). Jones, Seth G. *In the graveyard of empires: America's war in Afghanistan* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2010). John Quigley, "The Afghanistan War and Self-Defense" (37 Valparaiso University Law Review, 541, 2003). Williamson, Myra, *Terrorism, war and international law: the legality of the use of force against Afghanistan in 2001* (Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2009).

such a large war in terms of the number of combatants and a long war in terms of duration, the objectives are relatively straight forward to classify.

After the 9/11 attacks, the United States once again demanded that the Taliban hand over Osama Bin-Laden and all other Al-Qaeda members responsible for the attack. The UN Security Council immediately recognized the US's right to self-defence which gave the US Chapter VII authorization to counter attack (UNSC Resolution 1368, 2001). On October 2, 2001, NATO invoked Article 5 and agreed to assist the US in a coalition effort to seize Osama Bin Laden, remove the Taliban and invade Afghanistan. This action was the beginning of the war on terror. This was is an example of a total, defensive war seeking submission and overthrow. This war is classified as a defensive war because the U.N. charter recognized the inherent right of self-defence for all states. The U.S. was defending itself from an attack on its soil that had claimed more than 3,000 lives. This was clearly a total war to seek submission and overthrow of the Taliban in Afghanistan. These goals of the United States were non-negotiable. After the American demands were not met they brought the full weight of their military power to bear on the regime in Afghanistan with the help of NATO and a coalition of states.. The clear goal of the U.S. military in Afghanistan was to destroy the ability of the Taliban, and by extension Al-Qaeda, to attack the US or its allies again.

Iraq War (2003-2011)

Similar to the case of the war in Afghanistan, the war in Iraq was a massive war both in scale and duration. It is, therefore, important to emphasize that this case study will not be a thorough analysis of the entirety of the war in Iraq, due to the limited scope of

this thesis.¹⁵⁸ The Iraq war is another interesting case study because it provides a contrast with the war in Afghanistan. Both of these wars were fought after the terrorist attacks of 9/11 under the banner of the war on terror. Yet, the war in Afghanistan is considered a defensive war, whereas the war in Iraq is an offensive war. As the following case study will show, it is not always easy to determine the character of the variables.

The Iraq 2003 war was a continuation of the Gulf War of 1991. Following the end of the Gulf War the UN Security Council passed resolution 687.¹⁵⁹ The resolution required Saddam to unconditionally give up his nuclear, biological, and chemical weapon aspirations (WMDs). The resolution authorized the use of any means necessary to ensure Iraqi compliance with its obligations. This failure, in the eyes of the Americans, would lead to the invasion of Iraq in 2003.

Iraq was disarmed under the watch of United Nations inspectors led by the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) and the International Atomic Energy Agency's Action Team. While these efforts oversaw the destruction of Iraq's WMD capability, there were also difficulties in dealing with the Iraq regime. In 1995, Hussein Kamal, the head of Iraq's WMD program defected from Iraq to the US. He revealed that Iraq had continued to produce WMD components in violation of their commitment to U.N. resolution 687.¹⁶⁰ Over the next several years, the Americans grew tired of the obstructionist Saddam: "the efforts to enforce UNSC resolutions by measures involving a

¹⁵⁸ For further reading on the Iraq war see: Murray, Williamson, and Scales, Robert, *The Iraq War: A Military History* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2003). Corvarribus, Jack, Lansford, Tom, and Watson, Robert, *America's War on Terror* (England: Ashgate Publishing, 2009). McGoldrick, Dominic, *From 9/11 to the Iraq War 2003: International Law in an Age of Complexity* (Portland: Hart Publishing, 2004). Keegan, John, *The Iraq War* (London: Random House Publishing, 2004).

¹⁵⁹ U.N. Security Council Resolution 687: April 3, 1991 (<http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/596/23/IMG/NR059623.pdf?OpenElement>) (Accessed on June 2, 1013)

¹⁶⁰ Bluth, Christoph. "The British road to war: Blair, Bush and the decision to invade Iraq." *International affairs* 80(5) (2004), p.872.

cycle of inspections, Iraqi resistance, air strikes, Iraqi concessions and the promise of lifting sanctions were reaching their limits in 1997.”¹⁶¹ In retaliation for Iraq’s failure to comply, the United States and the United Kingdom launched *Operation Desert Fox* (December 16-19, 1998). The four-day air attack sought to destroy Iraq’s WMD infrastructure, while also demonstrating to Iraq the consequences of failing to fulfill its international obligations. This bombardment was not authorized by the UN Security Council.

In the same year, the United States government passed the Iraq Liberation Act,¹⁶² which made regime change the official policy of the United States going forward. While the goal of regime change was the official policy of the U.S. government, the situation did not radically change until 9/11. In the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, there was discussion about retaliating against Saddam.¹⁶³ After the successful overthrow of the regime in Afghanistan, the United States turned its attention to Iraq. In the lead-up to the Iraq war, the United States attempted to gain the support of the international community for an invasion through UNSC resolutions. Most important to this effort was UNSC resolution 1441, which found Iraq in breach of its obligations contained in the agreement following the Gulf War as well as numerous other UNSC resolutions. While the resolution did refer to Iraq as a threat to international peace and stability, it did not provide the context for military action by other states.¹⁶⁴ With the failure to secure international approval for the invasion, the Americans organized a coalition to invade

¹⁶¹ Ibid, p.873.

¹⁶²¹⁶² Iraq Liberation Act of 1998 (<http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/z?c105:H.R.4655.ENR:>) Consulted on May 30, 2013.

¹⁶³ Isikoff, Michael, and Corn, David, Hubris: *The Inside Story of Spin, Scandal, and the Selling of the Iraq War* (New York: Crown Publishers), pp. 66-83.

¹⁶⁴ UNSC Resolution 1441: November 8, 2002 (<http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N02/682/26/PDF/N0268226.pdf?OpenElement>).

Iraq. On March 19, 2003, the coalition began its attacks against Iraq with strikes aimed at killing leadership targets. By April 12, 2003, the coalition had seized Baghdad. This war provides a contrast to the war in Afghanistan. They were both total wars- the American coalition sought and achieved the complete submission and overthrow of the Hussein regime through the complete destruction of its ability to resist. The difference lies in the offensive/defensive classification of the war. Whereas, the invasion of Afghanistan was classified as a defensive war due to the inherent right of self-defence and UNSC authorization to use force, the Iraq war cannot be classified in the same way. While it may be true that Saddam posed a threat to international peace and stability, the war did not satisfy the criteria necessary to be classified as such.

This analysis and categorization has shown that modern wars do indeed share some of the same variables that characterize *On War* and the wars of Clausewitz's time. Similar to the wars of Clausewitz's time, the wars of the modern era are not uniform in nature. Modern wars are mostly of a limited nature. This is due in part to many different reasons including, but not limited to the international system - especially the charter of the UN, WMDs, rules of war and international norms. While it would not be wrong to say that *most* modern wars are of the limited variety, there is still the capacity within the international system for total wars. This is also reflected in the fact that most modern wars seek concessions as the primary political goal, but submission and overthrow still remain political goals in the modern era. This shows that, at the very least, Clausewitz is still relevant to a modern understanding of warfare. That does not mean that all of *On War* is universally valid; instead, it confirms that at least some parts of *On War*,

especially those dealing with reasons for war and conduct for war, are still relevant today, which means that Clausewitz still has value in the modern era.

Chapter 6: The Continuing Relevance of Clausewitz

This thesis explored whether or not Carl von Clausewitz's theory of war is still relevant to modern interstate wars. This thesis specifically analyzed the question of whether or not Clausewitz's arguments for the reasons for war, and its conduct, are still applicable in a modern context. In other words, if Clausewitz were alive today, would he recognize the interstate wars of the modern era, and the decisions made to engage in war? This question is critical to contemporary strategic studies because Clausewitz's work is at the center of other debates, specifically the RMA debate, as well as being a focal point for military study - especially by US forces.

Clausewitz wrote *On War* more than 200 years ago, yet it remains the subject of numerous papers, books, and debates within the academic and military communities. This alone would suggest that there is some intrinsic value to *On War*. Even the most casual reader of military history and strategic studies would seem to be inclined to conclude that there must be something useful in *On War* that has allowed it to remain a staple of military education in the 21st century. After much research and study this thesis can state equivocally that Clausewitz would, indeed, recognize the interstate wars of the modern era as being the same phenomenon that he wrote about in *On War*. In other words, Clausewitz is still relevant to the study of modern interstate warfare. The technological military advancements that characterize the modern military may be unrecognizable to Clausewitz, but Clausewitz would still recognize the reasons for war and the conduct of war.

This thesis began with a brief introduction to the ideas central to *On War*. This provided a general summary of the key points of *On War* that were used as variables for

comparing modern interstate wars to the wars of Clausewitz's time. This was followed by an examination of contemporary criticism of Clausewitz's work. This is necessary because if Clausewitz's critics can be satisfied then it logically follows that Clausewitz is indeed relevant. Conversely, if Clausewitz's critics were in fact correct then it would suggest that at the very least Clausewitz is not as important to strategic discourse as has been suggested. This was followed by an analysis and classification of war in the time of Clausewitz, and the contemporary era, according to the variables taken from *On War*. This final chapter draws conclusions based upon the evidence gathered in the previous chapters.

On War

Clausewitz was both a soldier and a philosopher. *On War* was unique because Clausewitz reflected on both the reasons for war and the conduct of war. This was a novel approach to a study of the phenomenon of war as other analyses of war were focused exclusively upon one or the other. Clausewitz was a man of the 18th century Western European state system and, accordingly, was a reflection of his times. Clausewitz was different because he was able to realize that his theory of warfare needed to transcend his time period if it was truly to be a study of the nature of warfare.

Clausewitz explained that the universal nature of war is reflected through these key characteristics: war is an act to force the enemy to do one's will, achieved by bringing the maximum amount of force upon the enemy. War in reality limits the exertion of force through several factors, thus political considerations become the driving force behind war; these political factors are a reflection of the trinity (violence, chance,

and rationality), which are also related to the people, military and government. Finally, the political act of achieving submission can also be achieved without the physical defeat of the enemy via a psychological or moral defeat

From *On War*, it was possible to distinguish key variables that could be used to make a comparison between war, as explained in *On War*, and the wars of the modern era - the reasons for war and the conduct of war. The “for war” variable identified was the political objective of war (submission, concession or overthrow). The conduct of war variables are offensive or defensive war and limited or unlimited war. To ensure that ‘like’ wars were compared, this study compared Clausewitz’s wars to modern interstate wars between 1990 and 2012.

The Critics

Before analyzing and comparing the wars of Clausewitz’s time and the contemporary era it was essential to explore the criticisms leveled against Clausewitz by his critics. Clausewitz’s critics can be separated into two groups: those critics who believe that Clausewitz is essentially mistaken in his beliefs about war, due to logical errors, and temporal relevance, and those critics who believed that Clausewitz was mistaken about the nature of warfare.

Keegan and Hart were representatives of the first group of critics. Keegan believed that Clausewitz’s work was flawed due to his work being a reflection of the 18th century, European state system. Keegan also believes that Clausewitz’s work is flawed because he doesn’t understand the place of war in human nature. For Keegan, war is a part of humanity itself, whereas Clausewitz sees war as a tool of the state. Keegan

believes that war is a reflection of culture not politics. Hart, on the other hand, criticizes Clausewitz as being an advocate of the ‘offensive’ and political subservience to military goals. Both Keegan and Hart are heavily influenced by World War I, which they perceive as a reflection of Clausewitzian-thought. The problem here is not that Keegan and Hart are totally mistaken about their views on war, because they are not—indeed they actually agree with Clausewitz about more than on which they disagree. Keegan is correct that violence is a part of human nature. Keegan is also correct when he states that war is a reflection of culture. Finally, Keegan makes a valid point when he states that Clausewitz is a reflection of his times. Nevertheless, these arguments do not mean that Clausewitz, or his theory of war, are wrong. Both Keegan and Hart failed to analyze Clausewitz’s theory as a whole, instead focusing on certain aspects of Clausewitz’s theory and jumping to hasty conclusions.

The second group of critics that were discussed in this thesis are the ‘new war’ theorists. Just as Keegan and Hart focus on specific aspects of Clausewitz’s theory so too do the new war critics. These critics argue that the nature of war has changed due to the change in the reasons for war. Much of this discussion is rooted in the RMA debate, which holds that RMA’s are essentially a change in the nature of war. As Clausewitz explains, an RMA is, in fact, a change in the tactical, organizational, and technological aspects of war—not a change to war itself. As well, these critics believe that political changes have altered the reasons for war, which would also mean that *On War* is no longer relevant. The critics, like those mentioned previously, are not necessarily wrong in their observations; it is that they have misunderstood what those observations mean in regards to the validity of *On War*. Since none of the arguments of the critics actually

refute Clausewitz's theory then it shows that *On War* may still have relevance in the contemporary era. This alone is not enough to validate my hypothesis, which is why the results of the case-study comparison are of the utmost importance to this thesis.

Case Study Comparison

The application of the variables gleaned from *On War* has shown that the wars of the modern era do share some of the same characteristics as those of the modern era. This does not mean that all of *On War* is universally valid, nor does it mean that Clausewitz is without fault or criticism. Instead, what this comparison shows is that, at the bare minimum, Clausewitz is still relevant in the grand scheme of contemporary strategic thought. An analysis of the results of the data reveals the following similarities and differences amongst the wars of Clausewitz's time and the modern era:

Table 2: Clausewitzian Wars

War	Date	Instigator	Reason for War	Conduct of War	
			Initial Political Objectives: Concessions or Submission or Overthrow	Offensive or Defensive war	Limited or Total War
War of Austrian Succession	1740-1748	Prussia	Concessions: Conquest and annexation of Silesia	Offensive	Limited
Seven Years' War	1756-1763	Prussia	Concessions: Acquisition of Austrian territory	Offensive	Total/ Limited

War of the First Coalition	1792-1797	Habsburg Empire/France	Submission/ Overthrow: Overthrow of French Republic	Offensive	Total
Napoleonic	1803-1815	France	Submission/ Overthrow: Overthrow and creation of French Empire	Offensive	Total

The wars of Clausewitz's reveal that 50 percent of the wars sought concessions, while the other 50 percent tried to achieve submission and overthrow. 100 percent of the wars of Clausewitz's time were offensive wars. Finally, 50-75 percent of the wars of Clausewitz's time were total compared to 25-50 percent limited wars. This data suggests that the wars of Clausewitz's time were not defined by a single character. What jumps out from this table is that all four of the wars were offensive. This is in contrast to the several defensive wars that were noted in the modern era. As was discussed in Chapter Three, this is likely reflective of a change in the international system, specifically the codification of international laws, norms, and beliefs about the use of force. Also this is a consequence of using the instigators' perspective when applying the variables to the individual cases.

Table 3: Modern Interstate Conflicts 1990 – 2012.

War	Date	Instigators perspective	Reasons for War		Conduct of War	
			Major objective today	Major objective in Clausewitzian terms (Submission, Concessions, Overthrow)	Offensive or Defensive	Limited or Total War
Gulf War	1990-1991	US	Expel Iraq from Kuwait	Submission	Defensive	Limited

Bosnian Independence	1992-1995	US - NATO	End armed conflict	Concessions	Defensive	Limited
Azerbaijan-Armenia	1993-1994	Armenia	Territorial acquisition	Concession	Offensive	Limited
Ecuador-Peru	1995	Ecuador	Removing Peruvian patrols from disputed areas	Concession	Offensive	Limited
Eritrea-Ethiopia	1998-1999	Eritrea	Invasion of disputed territory	Concessions	Offensive	Limited
Kosovo	1999-	US-NATO	End violence	Concessions	Offensive	Limited
Pakistan-India	1999	Pakistan	Pakistani intrusion into Kashmir	Concessions	Offensive	Limited
Invasion Afghanistan	2001-2014	US - NATO	Expel Osama bin Laden and Taliban	Overthrow	Defensive	Total
Invasion Iraq	2003-2011	US (Coalition of the willing)	Expel Saddam Hussein and destroy WMD	Overthrow	Offensive	Total

The data from the modern wars is double the sample size, which allows for more comparisons with the Clausewitz sample. Sixty-six percent, or 6 of 9 cases of the modern wars sought concession as their major political objective, compared to 11 percent seeking concessions and 22 percent seeking overthrow. Since two of Clausewitz's wars also sought concessions this suggests that then at least some of Clausewitz's ideas about war still resonate today. With regards to the offensive/defensive categories there is a definite shift from Clausewitz's time. Thirty-three percent of the modern wars conducted defensive wars from the perspective of the instigator, while 66 percent fought offensive wars. Even though the 'law of war' and beliefs about the use of force have changed, the majority of modern interstate wars are offensive wars. Finally, 78 percent of modern wars are limited wars compared to just 22 percent total wars. This result is significantly different from the wars of Clausewitz's time, where 50 percent of wars were total wars.

Many factors may affect this, including the aforementioned destructive capability of modern warfare, combined with a norm that abhors or at least attempts to limit total wars.

Interestingly, comparisons of the data can be drawn between both time periods and across the variables. Ecuador, Armenia, Eritrea, Pakistan, and Prussia all reflected the same variables. Each of these states sought concessions with regards to territorial acquisition, which they enacted through limited offensive wars. Similarly, the Napoleonic war, War of the First Coalition, and the invasion of Iraq were all offensive wars that sought overthrow through total war. This shows that, regardless of whether or not a war belongs to Clausewitz's time period or the modern era, there are elements of similarities between wars in different time periods. In other words, Clausewitz would definitely recognize the wars of the modern era.

As for the wars that are not uniformly the same according to the variables, the simple explanation is that not all wars are homogeneous. They do, in fact, change. Clausewitz posited that was because they were reflective of the political decisions/motives of the time. That is the genius of Clausewitz—he understood that, due to war's inherent nature, it was impossible to create a scientific theory about war whereby every war would follow the same criteria. Instead, he created a descriptive analysis of the phenomenon, which enables us to identify the key descriptive features of war.

So What?

Clausewitz was a man of the 18th century European state system. He understood the limitations of a theory of warfare that would exclusively focus upon a small snap shot in time. Nevertheless, Clausewitz sought to write a book that would encompass not only

military tactics and strategies, but also descriptions about the universal nature of warfare. The wars of Clausewitz's time were big, bloody, interstate (as well as intrastate) wars. They varied in terms of the reasons for war and the conduct of war. Clausewitz realized that these wars did not represent all the wars of human existence, which is why he described them using variables that would be general enough that they could apply to other time periods, which this thesis helps prove. While the technological advancements of the modern era have actually increased the potency and lethality of the weapons involved, this has not changed the fact that the variables described by Clausewitz are still applicable today. In other words, while the superficial aspects of war have changed, the nature of war has not. As well, this indicates that Clausewitz is useful both to historians and contemporary strategists. It is not a coincidence that *On War* has been a staple of military education since the 1970's.

The brilliance of the Clausewitzian method is that it is an objective overview of war, providing a useful roadmap for understanding a very complex and ever changing phenomenon. As this thesis has shown, Clausewitz and *On War* are still as relevant in the 21st century as they were in the 19th century. Despite the best efforts of his critics, they have been unable to prove that Clausewitz should be laid to rest.

Now that this thesis has shown that Clausewitz is, indeed, still relevant to modern interstate warfare because of the similarities between the variables as noted in *On War*, and modern warfare, it now follows that the next step in future research is to apply a similar analysis to modern intrastate wars and Clausewitz's era of wars. This can be achieved by comparing intrastate wars from Clausewitz's era with modern intrastate wars. Such an analysis is important for two reasons. First, intrastate wars (especially civil

wars) are particularly deadly and intractable. Therefore, any new insights as to their nature that can be gleaned from *On War* are worth the time and energy. Second, intrastate wars as studied by Clausewitz do not receive as much attention as do the interstate wars. For reasons of historical accuracy, more insights into Clausewitz's intrastate wars would be a contribution to the literature.

Beyond the study of war, Clausewitz's lesson about politics is important. Essentially, he alludes to the need for sound political decisions when contemplating the use of force. The debate about war today, however, tends not to engage deeply in whether or not the right political decisions are made. The U.N. Charter has limited war to three justifiable reasons, which were mentioned in Chapter 5. However, as can be seen by NATO's use of force in Kosovo, the US invasion of Iraq, as well as the lack of action with regards to Rwanda and the ongoing humanitarian disaster in Syria, the really crucial stage of war is not its conduct but the decision to use force in the first place; that is, the politics of other means.

Clausewitz and *On War* remains an invaluable tool that provides readers with an objective analysis of war, reminding us that war cannot be thought of in rigid, dogmatic ways. There are always lessons to be learned from historical events—indeed, those who fail to heed them, are doomed to repeat them.

Appendix A: Definitions

War: Is nothing but a duel on a larger scale. War is thus an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will.¹⁶⁵

Modern War: For this thesis modern war refers to interstate wars (that is wars involving more than one state) occurring between 1990 and 2012 in which there were at least 1000 battle deaths according to the COW database.

Instigator: This refers to the state that began the war.

Political Objective: The reason to go to war always lies in some political situation, and the occasion is always due to some political object. Politics thus determines both the military objective to be reached and the amount of effort it requires. War is nothing but the continuation of policy by other means.¹⁶⁶ Clausewitz explains that war is fought for three reasons:

Concessions: When a state seeks concessions they are seeking to obtain limited objectives from another state through strengthening their bargaining position in relation to their enemy.

Submission: When a state seeks submission they are imposing their will upon their enemy, thereby forcing them to accept their terms.

Overthrow: Is related to submission in that when one state is replacing the ruling regime they are forcing them into submission. The difference is that submission can be related to minor objectives as well as those of conquest and overthrow.

¹⁶⁵ Clausewitz, p. 75.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid, p. 86-87

Overthrow is unique in that one state is destroying the sovereignty of the other state.

Conduct of War: Clausewitz explains that the conduct of a war can reflect two different sets of variables, total/limited war and offensive/defensive war:

Total War (Defeat): This type of war is characterized by the complete defeat of the enemy through the destruction of their centre of gravity (the hub of all power) and their will to resist. As war is an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will, total war is to demand the complete submission of your enemy whereby you impose your will on them. It often involves the annexation of territory, forced “colonization” of people and surrender of sovereign control of state decision-making.

Limited War: Is a war that seeks to obtain limited objectives, such as the conquest of a small piece of territory, thereby using it as leverage in future negotiations. The difference between limited war and total war is that total war seeks submission whereas limited war seeks favorable bargaining power or benefits. In modern times, limited war is often after the re-establishment of the status quo (in terms of territory taken or the position of militaries) prior to the conflict.

Offensive War: According to Clausewitz the main feature of an offensive battle is the out-flanking or bypassing of the defender—that is, taking the initiative. In modern terms, it means to strike first. Defensive wars are a reaction to an attack.

The object of offensive attack is the subjugation of the enemy, and the destruction on their will to resist.¹⁶⁷

Defensive War: This type of war is about preservation. It is a negative form (negative suggests you do nothing) of action aimed at destroying enough of the enemy's power to force them to renounce their intentions. Every single act of resistance is directed to that act alone, and that is what makes our policy negative.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁷ Ibid, p. 521-526.

¹⁶⁸ P. 357-362.

Appendix B: Tables

Table 1: Clausewitzian and Contemporary Interstate Wars:

War	Dates	Main Belligerents
War of Austrian Succession	1740-1748	France, Prussia, Spain vs. Habsburg Monarchy, Great Britain and Russia
Seven Years' War	1756-1763	Great Britain, Hanover, Prussia vs. France, Austria, Russia, Spanish Empire
War of the First Coalition	1792-1797	French Republic vs. Habsburg Monarchy, Holy Roman Empire, Prussia, Great Britain, Ottoman Empire
Napoleonic wars	1803-1815	France vs. Great Britain, Austria, Russia, Prussia, Spain, Portugal, Ottoman Empire
Modern Interstate Wars	Dates	Main Belligerents
Gulf War	1990-1991	(Iraq vs. Kuwait, later US coalition vs. Iraq)

War	Dates	Main Belligerents
Bosnian Independence	1992-1995	Serbia and Montenegro (FRY) vs. Bosnia Herzegovina, later US – NATO versus FRY
Azerbaijan-Armenia	1993 -1994	Azerbaijan versus Armenia
Ecuador-Peru	1995	Ecuador versus Peru
Eritrea-Ethiopia	1998-1999	Eritrea versus Ethiopia
Kosovo	1998-1999	Serbia vs. Province of Kosovo later US Coalition/NATO versus Serbia
Pakistan-India	1999	Pakistan versus India
Invasion Afghanistan	2001-2014	Afghanistan versus US, later US/NATO versus Afghanistan/Taliban
Invasion of Iraq	2003-2011	US (coalition of the willing) vs. Iraq

Table 2: Clausewitzian Wars:

			Reason for War	Conduct of War	
War	Date	Instigator	Political Objectives: Concessions or Submission or Overthrow	Offensive or Defensive war	Limited or Total War
War of Austrian Succession	1740-1748	Prussia	Concessions: Conquest and annexation of Silesia	Offensive	Limited
Seven Years' War	1756-1763	Prussia	Concessions: Acquisition of Austrian territory	Offensive	Total/ Limited
War of the First Coalition	1792-1797	Habsburg Empire	Submission: Overthrow of French Republic	Offensive	Total
Napoleonic	1803-1815	France	Submission: Overthrow and creation of French Empire	Offensive	Total

Table 3: Modern Interstate Conflicts 1990 – 2012:

War	Date	Instigators perspective	Reasons for War		Conduct of War	
			Major objective today	Major objective in Clausewitzian terms (Submission, Concessions, Overthrow)	Offensive or Defensive	Limited or Total War
Gulf War	1990-1991	US	Expel Iraq from Kuwait	Submission	Defensive	Limited
Bosnian Independence	1992-1995	US – NATO	End armed conflict	Concessions	Defensive	Limited
Azerbaijan-Armenia	1993-1994	Armenia	Territorial acquisition	Concession	Offensive	Limited
Ecuador-Peru	1995	Ecuador	Removing Peruvian patrols from disputed areas	Concession	Offensive	Limited
Eritrea-Ethiopia	1998-1999	Eritrea	Invasion of disputed territory	Concessions	Offensive	Limited
Kosovo	1999-	US-NATO	End violence	Concessions	Offensive	Limited
Pakistan-India	1999	Pakistan	Pakistani intrusion into Kashmir	Concessions	Offensive	Limited
Invasion Afghanistan	2001-2014	US - NATO	Expel Osama bin Laden and Taliban	Submission	Defensive	Total
Invasion Iraq	2003-2011	US (Coalition of the willing)	Expel Saddam Hussein and destroy WMD	Overthrow	Offensive	Total

Table 4: On War:

Book One: “On the Nature of War”	Describes war and its nature including: what war is, moral forces in war, uncertainty in war and friction from the point of view of the soldier. It is in this Book that Clausewitz first discusses the “reasons for war.”
Book Two: “On the Theory of War”	Discusses Clausewitz’s theory of war including an analysis of war as neither a science nor an art. He provides historical examples of war and outlines his analytical approach.
Book Three: “On Strategy in General”	An in depth analysis of strategy including discussion of: force, concentration of forces, time, space and the impact of moral factors on strategy. His years as a military leader helped to inform this chapter.
Book Four: “The Engagement”	Examines the main aspect of war, fighting, focusing on strategy and tactics.
Book Five: “Military Forces”	Discusses the troops and underlines the specialness of war and the character of man needed.
Book Six: “Defense”	Describes and analyzes the relationship between attack and defence with a focus upon defence in war.
Book Seven: “The Attack”	Similar to Book Six except with a focus upon the attack or offensive in battle.
Book Eight: “War Plans”	Examines absolute and real war as well the character of total war, limited war, offensive war and defensive war. It represents the conclusion of the book and is both a summary and a cautionary tale for future politicians and soldiers. This book, along with books five and six, discuss the “conduct of war”

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