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## Carl von Clausewitz and his philosophy of war: The evolution of a reputation, 1831-2021

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*Abstract:* This article is concerned with the evolution of the reputation of the Prussian soldier and philosopher of war, Carl von Clausewitz (1780-1831). It examines developments in debates about the reception, and relevance, of Clausewitz's work for strategic thought in both the historical and contemporary contexts. This article takes note of many of the misperceptions and misinterpretations directed at Clausewitz's work since his death. Much of the criticism directed at Clausewitz is rooted in a visceral dislike of past proponents of Clausewitz for their aggressive and militaristic policies. An appreciation of this history greatly facilitates interpretations of Clausewitz's work. Finally, it is argued that the notion of Clausewitz as advocate of militarism and aggressive war has been discredited. Indeed, in today's Federal Republic of Germany, the reformers of the Wars of Liberation against Napoleon, of which Clausewitz was one, and the resistance involved in the bomb plot of 20 July 1944, has come to represent a useable historical tradition.

'Clausewitz's greatest lesson for my profession was that the soldier, for all his patriotism, valor, and skill, forms just one leg in a triad. Without all three legs engaged, the military, the government, and the people, the enterprise cannot stand'.

General Colin L. Powell, United States Army, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1989-93.<sup>1</sup>

'You will be horrified to hear that I have never read Clausewitz [...]. The opinion on Clausewitz in our general staff was that of a theoretician to be read by professors'.

Former General Leo Geyr von Schweppenburg to Basil H. Liddell Hart, 24 September 1961.<sup>2</sup>

'Do not concern yourselves with what Clausewitz meant. What do you think?'

Field Marshal Erwin Rommel.<sup>3</sup>

### I

From the second half of the nineteenth century onwards, the philosophies of the Prussian military thinker Carl von Clausewitz (1780-1831) became enduring articles of faith amongst all the world's leading militaries. In addition to Germany, Britain and the United States,<sup>4</sup> the influence of Clausewitz has extended to the Russia/ the

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<sup>1</sup> Colin Powell, with Joseph E. Persico, *A Soldier's Way: An Autobiography* (London, 1995), p. 209.

<sup>2</sup> Williamson Murray, 'A whale against an elephant; Britain and Germany' in James Lacey (ed.), *Great Strategic Rivalries: From the Classical World to the Cold War* (New York, 2016), p. 604 (n.9).

<sup>3</sup> Ralf Georg Reuth, *Rommel: Das Ende einer Legende* (Munich, 2004), p. 81.

<sup>4</sup> Stuart Kinross, *Clausewitz and America: Strategic Thought and Practice from Vietnam to Iraq* (London, 2008).

Soviet Union,<sup>5</sup> China,<sup>6</sup> France,<sup>7</sup> Israel,<sup>8</sup> Japan,<sup>9</sup> Latin America,<sup>10</sup> South Africa,<sup>11</sup> and elsewhere. The holy text of this enduring faith was, and is, Clausewitz's posthumously published book, *Vom Kriege* (*On War*). In 1943, Hans Rothfels hailed *On War* as 'the first study of war that truly grapples with the fundamentals of its subject, and the first to evolve a pattern of thought adaptable to every stage of military history and practice'.<sup>12</sup> Today, interest in Clausewitz shows no sign of abating. A large proportion of the scholarly debates on Clausewitz continues to revolve around the question of whether he is still 'relevant',<sup>13</sup> while some scholars have built their careers on criticising Clausewitz.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Olaf Rose, *Carl von Clausewitz: Zur Wirkungsgeschichte seines Werkes in Rußland und der Sowjetunion 1836-1991* (Munich, 1995); For Trotsky, Clausewitz was 'one of the greatest of theoreticians of military matters ... War is politics, and the army is the instrument of that politics'. Oscar Jonsson, *The Russian Understanding of War: Blurring the Lines between War and Peace* (Washington, DC, 2019), p. 35; Byron Dexter, 'Clausewitz and Soviet Strategy', *Foreign Affairs*, 29/1 (1950), pp. 41-55; Werner Hahlweg, 'Lenin und Clausewitz: Ein Beitrag zur politischen Ideengeschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts', *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte*, 36:1 (1954), 30-59/ 36:3 (1954), pp. 357-87; V.I. Lenin, *Clausewitz' Werk 'Vom Kriege': Auszüge und Randglossen* (East Berlin 1957); Azar Gat, 'Clausewitz and the Marxists: Yet Another Look', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 27:2 (1992), pp. 363-82; William E. Odom, *The Collapse of the Soviet Military* (New Haven, CT, 1998), pp. 1-15; Alexander Swetschin, *Clausewitz: Die klassische Biographie aus Russland*, eds. Olaf Rose and Hans-Ulrich Seidt (Bonn, 1997).

<sup>6</sup> The first Chinese version of *On War* appeared in 1911. On similarities between Clausewitz and Sun Tzu, see Michael I. Handel, *Masters of War: Classical Strategic Thought* (London, rev. third edn. 2001), p. 21. Mao Zedong was a serious student of Clausewitz, evidenced in his 1938 lecture, 'On protracted war'. Mao Zedong, *Selected Military Writings of Mao Tse-tung* (Beijing, 1967), pp. 226-7. See also Yu Tiejun, 'The Western Master and Bible of War: Clausewitz and his "On War" in China' in Reiner Pommerin (ed.), *Clausewitz goes Global: Carl von Clausewitz in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Berlin, 2014), pp. 42-59. China has an impressive list of its own philosophers of war: Ralph D. Sawyer, ed. and trans., *The Seven Military Classics of Ancient China* (New York, 2007).

<sup>7</sup> Benoît Durieux, *Clausewitz en France: Deux siècles de réflexion sur la guerre 1807-2007* (Paris, 2008). The first French translation of *On War* first appeared in 1845 and a commentary was published by an instructor at the military academy of Saint-Cyr in 1849 (Eugene Carias, *La pensée militaire française* (Paris, 1960), p. 252). Clausewitz had many champions in France, notably Marshal Ferdinand Foch (Hans W. Gatske, Introduction' in Carl von Clausewitz, *Principles of War* (Harrisburg, PA, 1942), p. 9; Beatrice Heuser, *The Evolution of Strategy: Thinking War from Antiquity to the Present* (Cambridge, 2010), p. 18). See also Douglas Porch, 'Clausewitz and the French' in Michael I. Handel (ed.), *Clausewitz and Modern Strategy* (Abingdon, 1986), pp. 287-302; Hervé Coutau-Bégarie, 'X1st Century's Clausewitz in France' in Pommerin (ed.), *Clausewitz goes Global*, pp. 107-121

<sup>8</sup> Avi Kober, 'Clausewitz and 21st Century Israeli military thinking and practice' in Pommerin (ed.), *Clausewitz goes Global*, pp.150-172.

<sup>9</sup> A Japanese translation of *On War* was apparently proved very useful to Japanese army officers in the war against Russia in 1904-5: Werner Hahlweg, 'Introduction', Carl von Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege* (Bonn, 1952), p. 52. 前原透 (Tohru Maehara), **日本陸軍へのクラウゼウッツの影響-上-兵語「殲滅」「殲滅戦」などから** (*Nihon rikugun e no Clausewitz no eikyou*) [The Influence of Clausewitz upon the Imperial Japanese Army] *軍事史学 (Gunji-Shigaku) [Journal of Military History]*, 19/1 (1983), pp. 13-26; Yasuyuki Kawamura, 'Clausewitz' Einfluss auf das japanische Militärwesen und militärische Denken' in *Clausewitz-Gesellschaft e.V. Band 3: Jahrbuch 2007* (Hamburg, 2007), 72-82; Takeshi Oki, 'Clausewitz in the 21st Century Japan' in Pommerin (ed.), *Clausewitz goes Global*, pp. 203-209.

<sup>10</sup> Gabriel Marcella, 'Military strategy in Latin America' in David R. Mares and Arie M. Kacowicz (eds), *Routledge Handbook of Latin American Security* (London, 2016), pp. 162-3.

<sup>11</sup> Thean Potgieter and Francois Vrey, 'Clausewitz, Guerrilla Warfare, and the liberation struggle in South Africa: Can it be linked?' in Pommerin (ed.), *Clausewitz goes Global*, pp. 287-310.

<sup>12</sup> Hans Rothfels, 'Clausewitz' in Edward Mead Earle, Gordon A. Craig and Felix Gilbert (eds), *Makers of Modern Strategy: Military Thought from Machiavelli to Hitler* (Princeton, NJ, 1943), p. 93.

To his proponents Clausewitz's wisdom is 'timeless', and he was no militarist, at least not in the sense that he believed in the domination of the policy process by the armed forces. Neither was he a moralist: war was something that resided, however unfortunately, in the human condition. The business of the strategist was to ameliorate the impact of this 'very imperfect political instrument', by seeking to minimise its duration and its effects on society.<sup>15</sup> This necessitates a proper understanding of the relationship between political ends and military means. The reason for going to war represents the political aim of the would-be belligerent; and the strategy adopted entails a definition of operational objectives.<sup>16</sup>

The best-known theoretical model employed by Clausewitz is his so-called the 'Trinity'. This 'paradoxical trinity' consists of 'primordial violence, hatred, and enmity'. Although explicitly mentioned on only one page of *On War*,<sup>17</sup> it is crucial to understanding his thinking. Thomas Waldman noted that, 'properly understood', context is not actually part of the nature of war'. Nevertheless, 'nature, as expressed in the trinity, cannot be understood without reference to context, as it helps us explain why war's nature manifests itself in divergent ways throughout history'.<sup>18</sup>

Clausewitz was clear that winning requires a proper understanding of the nature of war: 'War...is an act of violence to compel our opponent to fulfil our will'.<sup>19</sup> This simple formulation belies the fact that there exists a variety of victories, and different modes of will and assorted clashes of combatant will. Clausewitz's trinity casts the nature of war as the interplay of three fundamental elements: reason, passion, and chance. The expanding complexity of the world today incentivises the adoption of Clausewitzian analytical method, rather than the other way around. To attain victory, one must understand the relationships between these elements, the continuities and differences in war, and then see how they shape the conflict at hand.

Intellectually, both Romanticism and the Enlightenment shaped Clausewitz.<sup>20</sup> That we should regard Clausewitz as an Enlightenment figure is useful in analytical terms given the palpable influence of war on eighteenth century thought. That said, Azar Gat is of the view that Clausewitz maintained a rather militaristic concept of war for his entire life.<sup>21</sup> Regardless, scholars are now in broad agreement on the ideological

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<sup>13</sup> Martin van Creveld, for example, cast doubt on Clausewitz's contemporary relevance because *On War*, as with all 'classical strategy', was held to be the 'product of specific periods and circumstances'. Martin van Creveld, *On Future War* (London, 1991), p. 206. Van Creveld still rated Clausewitz's *On War* 'The second best book on war ever written', inferior only to Sun Tzu's *The Art of War* (p. 231). John Keegan's criticisms, on the other hand, had little of van Creveld's even-handedness. Christopher Bassford, 'John Keegan and the grand tradition of trashing Clausewitz', *War in History*, 1:3 (1994), pp. 319–36.

<sup>14</sup> Colin M. Fleming, 'New or Old Wars? Debating a Clausewitzian future', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 32:2 (2009), pp. 213-41.

<sup>15</sup> Christopher Coker, *Rebooting Clausewitz: On War in the 21st Century* (London, 2017), p. 10.

<sup>16</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret. Introductory essays by Peter Paret, Michael Howard and Bernard Brodie. Commentary by Bernard Brodie (Princeton, NJ, 1984), p. 579.

<sup>17</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 89.

<sup>18</sup> Thomas Waldman, *War, Clausewitz and the Trinity* (Farnham, 2013), p. 72.

<sup>19</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 75.

<sup>20</sup> Azar Gat, *The origins of military thought from the Enlightenment to Clausewitz* (Oxford, 1989); Peter Paret, trans. Reinhold Janke, *Clausewitz in seiner Zeit: Zur Kriegs- und Kulturgeschichte der Jahre von 1780 bis 1831* (Würzburg, 2017).

<sup>21</sup> Gat, *The origins of military thought from the Enlightenment to Clausewitz*, p. 201.

affinity between war, Enlightenment thought, and its legacy.<sup>22</sup> Clausewitz's intellectual achievements are symptomatic of a creativity displayed by the German nation that appeared, on occasion, boundless.<sup>23</sup> Clausewitz's *On War* typified the deep philosophical bent in German scholarly and intellectual life.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, as H.L. Mencken observed, '[it is] in the German universities ... where, since [Martin] Luther's day, all the world's most painful thinking has been done'.<sup>25</sup>

Many of those who have denied the contemporary applicability of Clausewitz's theories do so because they assert that his predominance has normalised and even promoted war as a viable policy option. One critic asserted that one could legitimately argue that there was a 'revealing' continuity between Clausewitz, Bismarck and Hitler.<sup>26</sup> Opponents of such views have often engaged in counterfactual speculation in order to refute such attitudes.<sup>27</sup> Such figures ask if Clausewitz prevent future mistakes,<sup>28</sup> or seek to predict his actions in given situations.

This article will examine the extraordinary rise and fall of the reputation of Clausewitz in the years before 1945. It will then examine his rehabilitation, not just as a strategist, but also as a renowned philosopher of war, society and politics.

## II

The deification of Clausewitz as a strategist did not take place until some years after his death.<sup>29</sup> This began to change after Helmuth von Moltke became chief of staff of the Prussian army in 1857, as he readily admitted that Clausewitz was 'the military mind which most influenced my work'.<sup>30</sup> After Moltke led the Prussian army to stunning successes in the wars of German unification,<sup>31</sup> Clausewitz's star rose rapidly in tandem with that of the new Imperial German army. Acknowledged as the leading national exponent of the martial arts,<sup>32</sup> other states emulated the German army, even adopting the spiked helmet - the *Pickelhaube* - and the 'goose-step' (*Stechschritt*) drill-march.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Elisabeth Krimmer and Patricia Anne Simpson (eds), *Enlightened War: German Theories and Cultures of Warfare from Frederick the Great to Clausewitz* (Rochester, NY, 2011).

<sup>23</sup> Rüdiger Safranski, *Romantik: Eine deutsche Affäre* (Munich, 2007), p. 178.

<sup>24</sup> Rothfels, 'Clausewitz', p. 93.

<sup>25</sup> Cited in Lewis S. Feuer, *Ideology and the Ideologists*, intro. Irving Lewis Horowitz (New York, 2017, [1975, 2010]), p. 37.

<sup>26</sup> Anatol Rapoport, 'Concluding Remarks', Carl von Clausewitz, ed. and intro. Anatol Rapoport, *On War* (London, 1968), p. 411.

<sup>27</sup> Coker, *Rebooting Clausewitz*. For an imaginary interview with Clausewitz, see Jan Willem Honig, 'A Brief Encounter with Major-General Carl von Clausewitz (1780-1831)' in Richard Ned Lebow, Peer Schouten and Hidemi Suganami (eds), *The Return of the Theorists: Dialogues with Great Thinkers* (Basingstoke, 2016), pp. 126-33.

<sup>28</sup> Bruce Fleming, 'Can reading Clausewitz save us from future mistakes?', *Parameters*, 34:1 (2004), pp. 62-76.

<sup>29</sup> Reactionaries in the Prussian army had preferred Karl Wilhelm von Willisen's formulaic *Theorie des Grossen Krieges* (Berlin, 1840) to Clausewitz. Michael Howard, 'The influence of Clausewitz', *On War*, p. 27

<sup>30</sup> Cited in van Creveld, *On Future War*, p. 34.

<sup>31</sup> Howard, 'The influence of Clausewitz', p. 30.

<sup>32</sup> R. Gerald Hughes, 'War as Political Violence' in Marie Breen-Smyth (ed.), *The Ashgate Research Companion to Political Violence* (Farnham, 2012), pp. 355-6.

<sup>33</sup> Jorit Wintjes, 'German Army Culture, 1871-1945' in Peter R. Mansoor and Williamson Murray (eds), *The Culture of Military Organizations* (Cambridge, 2019), p. 111.

Otto von Bismarck, Minister President of Prussia from 1862, had not resorted to conflict lightly: 'I would have grasped at any solution that led to the expansion of Prussia and German unity without war'.<sup>34</sup> Bismarck agreed with Clausewitz that 'war is such a dangerous business',<sup>35</sup> and that there was 'no question of a purely military evaluation of a great strategic issue, nor of a purely military scheme to solve it'.<sup>36</sup> Bismarck's understanding of Clausewitz was undoubtedly superior to that of the soldiers,<sup>37</sup> and both men shied away from the observance of 'pure theory' (which had been the dominant paradigm in Germany).<sup>38</sup> Alas, the success of German arms in the wars of unification only increased the militarisation of German society. Signally, as chancellor of the new *Reich*, Bismarck appeared in the *Reichstag* in uniform whilst one of his successors, Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg – as a mere major – had to defer to the colonels and generals at the Imperial Court.<sup>39</sup>

Once Bismarck departed the scene in 1890, the leadership of Germany disastrously neglected many fundamentals pertaining to the demarcation of politics and war.<sup>40</sup> It was certainly true that many military plans 'seriously violated the diplomatic freedom of the state'.<sup>41</sup> The powerful *Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands* (SPD) vigorously opposed this militarisation of political life.<sup>42</sup> Society in Imperial Germany was extremely polarised before 1914 and the army believed itself – and not the SPD – embodied the true Germany. At the same time, Germany was facing a number of enemies externally.<sup>43</sup> The answer to this political problem was a military solution: the Schlieffen Plan, named for the chief of the Imperial German General Staff between 1891 and 1906, aimed to prevent Germany being involved in an extended two-front war. It was perhaps the ultimate example of military necessity overriding political requirements.<sup>44</sup> Schlieffen described *Vom Kriege* 'the greatest book on war ever written',<sup>45</sup> while hailing Clausewitz for his preservation of the notion of 'true War' alive

<sup>34</sup> Cited in Marcus Jones, 'Strategy as Character: Bismarck and the Prusso-German Question, 1862-1878' in Williamson Murray, Richard Hart Sinnreich and James Lacey (eds), *The Shaping of Grand Strategy: Policy, Diplomacy, and War* (Cambridge, 2011), p. 86. See also Jones, 'Strategy as Character', pp. 109-10. On the limited utility of war in the Bismarckian era, see Karl-Ernst Jeismann, *Das Problem des Präventivkrieges im europäischen Staatensystem mit besonderem Blick auf die Bismarckzeit* (Freiburg/ Munich, 1957).

<sup>35</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 75.

<sup>36</sup> Clausewitz: letter to Major C. von Roeder, 22 December 1827. 'Zwei Briefe des Generals von Clausewitz: Gedanken zur Abwehr', *Militärwissenschaftliche Rundschau*, 2 (1937), p. 6.

<sup>37</sup> Gordon A. Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army 1640-1945* (Oxford, 1955), p. 181.

<sup>38</sup> Hermann Oncken, 'Die Utopia des Thomas Morus und das Machtproblem in der Staatslehre' (1922) in *Nation und Geschichte: Reden und Aufsätze 1919-1935* (Berlin, 1935), p. 394.

<sup>39</sup> Michael Vollert, 'Zabern 1913 – eine politische Krise des Deutschen Reiches', *Clausewitz-Gesellschaft e.V. Band 8: Jahrbuch 2012* (Hamburg, 2013), p. 265.

<sup>40</sup> 'When the great star fell, many Germans had a chilling presentiment that their country had suffered an irreplaceable loss governed with such intelligence and assurance. Time was to prove them correct'. Gordon A. Craig, *Germany, 1866-1945* (Oxford, rev. edn. 1981), p. 178.

<sup>41</sup> Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army 1640-1945*, p. xvii.

<sup>42</sup> Niall Ferguson, *The Pity of War* (London, 1998), pp. 26-7; Nicholas Stargardt, *The German Idea of Militarism: Radical and Socialist Critics 1866-1914* (Cambridge, 1994). In the election of 1912, the SPD became the largest party in the Reichstag. Thomas Berg, 'Wahlen im Kaiserreich anno 1912 - Wahlkampf im Obrigkeitsstaat' in Nikolaus Jackob (ed.), *Wahlkämpfe in Deutschland: Fallstudien zur Wahlkampfkommunikation 1912-2005* (Wiesbaden, 2007), pp. 59-71.

<sup>43</sup> This diplomatic exclusion (*Auskreisung*) led to fear of encirclement (*Einkreisung*). Klaus Hildebrand, *Deutsche Außenpolitik 1871-1918* (Munich, third edn. 2008), pp. 32-7.

<sup>44</sup> Ludendorff viewed Schlieffen as 'one of the greatest soldiers who ever lived'. General Ludendorff, *My War Memories 1914-1918, Volume I* (London, 1919), p. 24.

<sup>45</sup> Gatske, 'Introduction' in Clausewitz, *Principles of War*, p. 5.

amongst the Prussian officer corps.<sup>46</sup> Regardless, while German military thought had reached its zenith with Clausewitz's systematic methodology, it had declined significantly by the time of Schlieffen's oversimplified and formulaic approach.<sup>47</sup> Schlieffen's rigid theoretical framework and his operational planning aimed at perfection. This system, which made no allowance for failure, stemmed from the fact that, unlike Moltke, Schlieffen was unable to appreciate the inevitable limitations of any general staff system.<sup>48</sup> That said, Schlieffen had enough appreciation of Clausewitz to advise that, should his plan fail, then Germany should seek a negotiated peace.<sup>49</sup>

That Schlieffen's successors were not disposed to accept political compromise in the wake of the Schlieffen Plan's failure initiated an era of terrible 'misfortune [for] Germany and Europe'.<sup>50</sup> War, as Clausewitz noted, has its own logic and, once started, cannot be easily halted.<sup>51</sup> Imperial Germany turned Clausewitz's dictum that political ends should drive military strategy on its head as the army came to dictate that 'military necessity' should drive policy and strategy.<sup>52</sup> Following this logic, Field Marshal Paul von Hindenburg and General Erich Ludendorff became the effective rulers of Germany, prosecuting the war with little thought to diplomacy.<sup>53</sup>

After the First World War, disparate interests invoked Clausewitz. Bernd Faulenbach, referring to the Versailles Treaty as part of the 'latent "cold" war' waged against Germany,<sup>54</sup> noted that Wilhelm Dilthey had inverted Clausewitz's best-known maxim: 'peace itself is only a continuation of war by other means'.<sup>55</sup> Conversely, the identification of Clausewitz with the excesses of the German state remained the norm in Britain, symptomatic of the Germanophobia engendered by the Great War. During the Anglo-Irish War (1919-21), the Conservative MP Oswald Moseley denounced the policy of official British government reprisals as being 'copied and taken en bloc from the doctrines of the German military ... [and] closely pursued by that nation throughout the War'. For Moseley, British policy in Ireland represented 'the old, well-known system, outlined in the doctrines of Clausewitz and others, of collective punishment'.<sup>56</sup>

The German army's high command remained loyal to Clausewitz. Ludendorff told the official commission investigating the war that: 'The German General Staff is

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<sup>46</sup> Rothfels, 'Clausewitz', p. 93.

<sup>47</sup> Herbert Rosinski, 'Scharnhorst to Schlieffen: The Rise and Decline of German Military Thought', *Naval War College Review*, 29/3 (1976), pp. 83-103.

<sup>48</sup> Helmut Otto, *Schlieffen und der Generalstab: Der preußisch-deutsche Generalstab unter der Leitung des Generals von Schlieffen 1891-1905* (East Berlin, 1956), p. 126.

<sup>49</sup> Bernard Brodie, 'The Continuing relevance of *On War*', Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 56.

<sup>50</sup> Gerhard Ritter, *Der Schlieffen-Plan: Kritik eines Mythos* (Munich, 1956), p. 93.

<sup>51</sup> Margaret Macmillan, 'It would be stupid to think we have moved on from war. Look around', *The Guardian* (London), 24 June 2018.

<sup>52</sup> Murray, 'A Whale against an Elephant; Britain and Germany', pp. 372-3.

<sup>53</sup> Alexander Watson, *Ring of Steel: Germany and Austria-Hungary at War, 1914-1918* (London, 2014), pp. 327-9.

<sup>54</sup> Bernd Faulenbach, *Ideologie des deutschen Weges: Die deutsche Geschichte in der Historiographie zwischen Kaiserreich und Nationalsozialismus* (Munich, 1980), p. 19.

<sup>55</sup> Dilthey cited in Oncken, 'Die Utopia des Thomas Morus und das Machtproblem in der Staatslehre', p. 396.

<sup>56</sup> *Hansard*, HC Deb, fifth series, volume 142, column 1174, 1 June 1921. On the debates here, see John N. Horne and Alan Kramer, *German Atrocities, 1914: A History of Denial* (New Haven, CT, 2001).

based upon the teachings of the great war philosopher Clausewitz'.<sup>57</sup> Based on such testimony, Clausewitz looked like an advocate of aggressive war and the progenitor of German militarism.<sup>58</sup> But, as Hew Strachan has noted, that the individuals 'who blamed Clausewitz for the slaughter of the First World War were guilty of finding things in the text of *On War* that were not there'.<sup>59</sup> Liddell Hart, for example, ascribed the concept of 'absolute war', embraced by all of the major powers' general staffs, to Clausewitz.<sup>60</sup> Liddell Hart wrote that 'Clausewitz had proclaimed the sovereign virtues of the will to conquer, the unique value of the offensive carried out with unlimited violence by a nation in arms and the power of the military action to override everything else'.<sup>61</sup>

In reality, from the Napoleonic Wars onwards, the focus of Prussian-German military writers on tactics and military operations had contributed to an anti-intellectual culture that inhibited the discussion of strategy, and therefore discarded Clausewitz's insistence upon war being a continuation of politics.<sup>62</sup> Thus, while Clausewitz was venerated in the German army, his real value as a strategist, was not appreciated. An author called Leinveber railed against the fact that, while Clausewitz had stressed the superior strength of the defensive in war,<sup>63</sup> the General Staff had ignored this.<sup>64</sup> That German strategy in the Great War contradicted everything that Clausewitz had advocated<sup>65</sup> was lost on most observers. In attacking Clausewitz as the 'Mahdi of mass and mutual massacre',<sup>66</sup> Liddell Hart initiated a tradition in English-language scholarship seemingly ignorant of the Prussian general's stress on the relationship between war and politics, although, as Strachan noted, 'many recent historians seem to be unaware that he ever wrote about anything else'.<sup>67</sup>

### III

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<sup>57</sup> Major General Sir Frederic Maurice, *British Strategy: A Study of the Application of the Principles of War* (London, 1929), 45.

<sup>58</sup> Christopher Bassford, *Clausewitz in English: The Reception of Clausewitz in Britain and America, 1815-1945* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 113-94.

<sup>59</sup> Hew Strachan, *Clausewitz's On War: A Biography* (London, 2007), p. 146.

<sup>60</sup> Hew Strachan, 'Clausewitz and the First World War' in *Journal of Military History*, 75:2 (2011), pp. 367-91.

<sup>61</sup> Basil Liddell Hart, *Foch: The Man of Orleans* (London, 1931), p. 22.

<sup>62</sup> 'Introduction' and 'Conclusion' in Mansoor and Murray (eds), *The Culture of Military Organizations*, pp. 10, 458.

<sup>63</sup> General Friedrich von Bernhardi (1849-1930), author of the influential *Deutschland und der nächste Krieg* (Stuttgart, 1912), whilst referring Clausewitz as 'the greatest of military authorities' contradicted the latter completely by concluding that the offensive always held great prospects of success than did the defensive. In fact, the rise of the 'Cult of the Offensive' in the nineteenth and early twentieth century was down to the Swiss strategist Antoine-Henri Jomini (1779-1869), not Clausewitz. Heuser, *The Evolution of Strategy*, pp. 146-7. Bernhardi cited on p. 147.

<sup>64</sup> Leinveber, *Mit Clausewitz durch die Rätsel und Fragen, Irrungen und Wirungen des Weltkrieges* (Berlin, 1926). When the Germans went on the defensive in the Western Front with the withdrawal to the *Siegfriedstellung* ('The Hindenburg Line') in 1917, they achieved a fair measure of success. Ludendorff later testified that he and Hindenburg had decided to build the *Siegfriedstellung* in order to shorten the front and economise on troop numbers. Ludendorff, *My War Memories 1914-1918: I*, p. 308. On the withdrawal to the *Siegfriedstellung*, see Michael Geyer, 'Rückzug und Zerstörung 1917' in Gerd Krumeich (ed.), *Die Deutschen an der Somme 1914-1918: Krieg, Besatzung, Verbrannte Erde* (Essen, 2006), pp. 163-179.

<sup>65</sup> Christopher Clark, *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914* (London, 2013), p. 486.

<sup>66</sup> Basil H. Liddell Hart, *The Ghost of Napoleon* (London, 1933), p. 120.

<sup>67</sup> Strachan, 'Clausewitz and the First World War', p. 391.



A major problem for proponents of Clausewitzian thinking, as for the concept of appeasement,<sup>68</sup> undoubtedly lies in the association with Adolf Hitler.<sup>69</sup> Academic scholarship reflected the Third Reich's enthusiasm for Clausewitz. The *Historische Zeitschrift*, the leading history journal in Germany,<sup>70</sup> saw state-approved academic promotion of Clausewitz,<sup>71</sup> especially after Karl Alexander von Müller succeeded Friedrich Meinecke as editor in 1935.<sup>72</sup>

Traditionally, scholars have asserted that, despite the board brush of Nazi progenitor applied to Clausewitz, there was no real evidence that Hitler ever studied Clausewitz in any depth.<sup>73</sup> It is a commonly held belief that Hitler's familiarity with Clausewitz derived from cheap popular pamphlets.<sup>74</sup> In fact, in 1921 Professor Karl Haushofer introduced Hitler, through his student Rudolf Hess, to Clausewitz's patriotic *Bekenntnisdenkschrift* of 1812.<sup>75</sup> On 20 July 1921, inspired by Clausewitz's 1812 diatribe against Napoleon,<sup>76</sup> Hitler made a speech in Munich's *Zirkus Krone* denouncing the foreign occupiers of Germany. Henceforth, Haushofer later blustered, 'Clausewitz and Adolf Hitler [were] indivisible as wordsmiths'.<sup>77</sup>

<sup>68</sup> R. Gerald Hughes, *The Postwar Legacy of Appeasement: British Foreign Policy since 1945*, (London, 2014).

<sup>69</sup> Norbert Krueger, 'Adolf Hitlers Clausewitzkenntnis', *Wehrwissenschaftliche Rundschau*, 18 (1968), pp. 467-71.

<sup>70</sup> Founded by Heinrich von Sybel in 1859, the *Historische Zeitschrift* focussed on political history whilst stressing the contemporary relevance of that brand of history. On the *HZ*, see Margaret Festieg, *The Origins and Development of Scholarly Historical Periodicals* (Tuscaloosa, AL, 1986), pp. 20-38.

<sup>71</sup> Konrad Lehmann, 'Ermattungsstrategie: oder nicht?', *HZ*, 151:1 (1935), pp. 48-86; Wilhelm Smidt, 'Eine unbekannte Schrift über die mittelalterliche "Kaiserpolitik" aus dem Jahre 1855', *HZ*, 152:1 (1935), pp. 90-97; Eberhard Kessel, 'Zur Entstehungsgeschichte von Clausewitz' Werk vom Kriege', *HZ*, 152:1 (1935), pp. 97-100; Herbert Rosinski, 'Die Entwicklung von Clausewitz' Werk "Vom Kriege" im Lichte seiner "Vorreden" und "Nachrichten"', *HZ*, 151:2 (1935), pp. 278-93; Ernst Buchfinck, 'Moltke und Schlieffen', *HZ*, 158:2 (1938), pp. 308-22; Gerhard Ritter, 'Die Lehre Carls von Clausewitz vom politischen Sinn des Krieges', *HZ*, 167:1 (1943), pp. 41-65; Gisbert Beyerhaus, 'Descartes oder Clausewitz? Eine Auseinandersetzung mit der Foch-Legende', *HZ*, 168:3 (1943), pp. 564-78.

<sup>72</sup> Christoph Cornelißen, 'Herausgeber in schwierigen Zeiten: Gerhard Ritters Beziehungen zum Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte und zur Historischen Zeitschrift (1930-1950)' in Matthias Middell, (ed.), *Historische Zeitschriften im internationalen Vergleich* (Leipzig, 1999), p. 167; Peter Lambert, *The Politics of German Historians, 1914-1945* (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Sussex, 1986), p. 13.

<sup>73</sup> Jehuda L. Wallach, 'Misperceptions of Clausewitz' *On War by the German Military*, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 9:2-3 (1986), pp. 218-9.

<sup>74</sup> Konrad Heiden, *The Fuehrer*, trans. Ralph Mannheim (London, 1999 [1944]), p. 297.

<sup>75</sup> Holger H. Herwig, *The Demon of Geopolitics: How Karl Haushofer "Educated" Hitler and Hess* (Lanham, MD, 2016), p. 94; Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf: Eine kritische Edition*, edited by Christian Hartmann, Othmar Plöckinger, Roman Töppel, and Thomas Vordermayer (Munich/ Berlin, 2017), p. 394 (n.72). In his *Bekenntnisdenkschrift*, sent to Major-General August von Gneisenau, Clausewitz had called for a national war of liberation against Napoleonic France. 'Testimonial (*Bekenntnisdenkschrift*)' (1812) in Christopher Daase and James W. Davis (eds), intro. James W. Davis, *Clausewitz on Small War* (Oxford, 2015), pp. 169-216. *Politisches Testament* and *Bekenntnisdenkschrift* are synonyms. Clausewitz may well have deliberately chosen the more Germanic synonym. I am grateful to Wini Davies for this point. Haushofer called for reforms so that Germany could properly attain Clausewitz's 'social trinity'. Herwig, *The Demon of Geopolitics*, pp. 48, 25.

<sup>76</sup> In *Mein Kampf* Hitler denounced the manner in which peoples allowed themselves to fall into terminal decline in the wake of defeat. Hitler wrote approvingly that 'Clausewitz in his *Drei Bekenntnisse* incomparably singles out this idea and nails it fast for all time'. Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, trans. Ralph Manheim, intro. D.C. Watt (London, 1994), p. 610.

<sup>77</sup> Herwig, *The Demon of Geopolitics*, p. 94.

In 1924, Hitler quoted Clausewitz in a lengthy self-justificatory speech at his trial following the failed Munich *putsch*.<sup>78</sup> When Hitler and Hess were imprisoned in Landsberg, Haushofer repeatedly visited what he called his 'young lions' to discuss Clausewitz,<sup>79</sup> as well as texts such as Friedrich Ratzel's *Politische Geographie*. On 20 April 1939 Haushofer marked the Führer's fiftieth birthday by hailing him a 'statesman' who combined 'Clausewitz's blood and Ratzel's space and soil'.<sup>80</sup> Hitler had dictated much of *Mein Kampf* to Hess in prison,<sup>81</sup> but at Nuremberg the US Chief of Counsel, Sidney S. Alderman, wrote that 'Haushofer was Hitler's intellectual godfather. It was Haushofer, rather than Hess, who wrote *Mein Kampf*'.<sup>82</sup>

The standard English translation of *Mein Kampf* contains only two references to Clausewitz,<sup>83</sup> but the definitive German language edition highlights the influence of Clausewitz, 'with whose writings Hitler repeatedly engaged',<sup>84</sup> far more frequently. The notion that Hitler was a disciple of Clausewitz was something that the Nazi propaganda was keen to promote, with Minister of Propaganda Joseph Goebbels, himself an enthusiast for the Prussian strategist<sup>85</sup> and his struggle against Napoleon,<sup>86</sup> testifying that one inspirational speech by the Führer 'was filled with the spirit of Clausewitz'.<sup>87</sup> On successive New Year's Eves, German state radio broadcast excerpts from Clausewitz's *Bekennnisdenschrift*. The 1941 broadcast, Goebbels recorded, even served to give the Reich a Clausewitzian political slogan for 1942, viz. 'I hate the false wisdom that wants to evade danger'.<sup>88</sup>

In the autumn of 1944, the Nazi regime organised the 'Clausewitzian' *Volkssturm* ('People's storm') for a final defence of Germany.<sup>89</sup> On 18 October, the anniversary of the victory over Napoleon at the Battle of the Nations in 1813, the *Volkssturm* was presented to the public in Königsberg.<sup>90</sup> Nine days later Goebbels exhorted the

<sup>78</sup> Claudia Koonz, *The Nazi conscience* (Cambridge, MA, 2003) p. 24; Timothy W. Ryback, *Hitler's private library: The books that shaped his life* (London, 2009), p. 179.

<sup>79</sup> Herwig, *The Demon of Geopolitics*, p. 95.

<sup>80</sup> Holger H. Herwig, 'Geopolitik: Haushofer, Hitler and Lebensraum', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 22:2-3 (1999), pp. 225, 233. By April 1940, Haushofer acclaimed Hitler for having fused the lessons of the *Bekennnisdenschrift* and *Vom Kriege* in his own person to achieve the perfect Clausewitzian synthesis of the relationship between war and politics. Herwig, *The Demon of Geopolitics*, p. 96.

<sup>81</sup> In truth, many other people – including Hess – had a hand in 'writing' *Mein Kampf*. Ian Kershaw, *Hitler 1889-1936: Hubris* (London, 1998), p. 242.

<sup>82</sup> Cited in Herwig, *The Demon of Geopolitics*, p. xi. In truth, Hitler did not impress Haushofer. Peter Padfield, *Hess: The Führer's Disciple* (London, 1995), pp. 24-5.

<sup>83</sup> Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 1994, pp. 610, 612.

<sup>84</sup> Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 2017, p.1018 (n.47).

<sup>85</sup> Goebbels adjudged Clausewitz the supreme theorist of war. Joseph Goebbels, 'Die harte Lehre' (leading article), *Das Reich*, 7 February 1943.

<sup>86</sup> In 1915, Goebbels wrote pieces citing songs dating from the 'Wars of Liberation' against Napoleon. Ralf Georg Reuth, *Goebbels: The Life of Joseph Goebbels, the Mephistophelean Genius of Nazi Propaganda* (London, 1993), p. 15.

<sup>87</sup> Diary entry for 11 September 1943. Joseph Goebbels, *Tagebücher 1924-1945, Band 5: 1943-1945*, edited by Ralf Georg Reuth (Munich/ Zürich, 1999), p. 1953.

<sup>88</sup> Diary entry for 1 January 1942. Goebbels, *Band 4: 1940-1942*, pp. 1730-1 (quote at p. 1731); diary entry for 1 January 1943. Goebbels, *Band 5: 1943-1945*, p. 1858.

<sup>89</sup> The *Volkssturm* was supposed to emulate the Prussian *Landsturm* that fought in the *Befreiungskriege* ('Wars of Liberation') against Napoleon. Franz W. Seidler, *Deutscher Volkssturm: Das letzte Aufgebot 1944/45* (Munich/ Berlin, 1991), pp. 261-2.

<sup>90</sup> Michael P. Vollert, 'Der Volkssturm – ein gescheiterter Versuch, die Niederlage des Deutschen Reiches abzuwenden', *Clausewitz-Gesellschaft e.V. Band 14: Jahrbuch 2018* (Hamburg, 2018), p. 119.

*Volkssturm* to embrace the spirit of the Prussian general and create a storm that would set the earth of the Reich ablaze, thereby engulfing the invaders.<sup>91</sup>

**[Insert Figure 1: Teutonic Knight, 1944. Text below cartoon should read:**

As the Soviet Army reached the borders of the Reich in 1944, a cartoon in *Punch* suggested that the Reich was about to feel the full effect of the coming Red Storm. Curiously, the Teutonic Knight is cast in heroic mode but the futility of his resistance in the coming battles are all too apparent.

**Full-page cartoon – paid for by the author.**

**E.H. Shepard, *Punch*, 11 October 1944**

**©Punch Cartoon Library/ TopFoto]**

Even as Germany teetered on the brink of destruction, Goebbels continued with the production of a film charting an 1807 episode of resistance to Napoleon. When Goebbels announced that *Kolberg* was about to be released,<sup>92</sup> the Führer had ‘tears in his eyes’, which Goebbels regarded as a great ‘political victory’.<sup>93</sup> By this time, however, there was a glaring disparity between Germany’s prospects of victory over the Allies, and Prussia’s struggle against Napoleon. Goebbels nevertheless drew parallels with the contemporary situation and the struggles of August von Gneisenau and Gerhard von Scharnhorst<sup>94</sup> in preparing Prussia for the *Volkskrieg* (People’s War) against Napoleon after 1808.<sup>95</sup> The cultural sections of German newspapers, which had to utilise ‘every method to assist in reinforcing our national resistance and our war morale’, were thus encouraged to discuss Clausewitz’s writings.<sup>96</sup>

In Hitler’s flat in the early 1920s, Ernst Hanfstaengl recalled that Clausewitz’s *On War* sat on a bookshelf next to Ludendorff and Houston Stewart Chamberlain’s biography of Richard Wagner.<sup>97</sup> It was certainly true that Hitler had a brilliant memory and would quote large portions of Clausewitz, sometimes passing them off as his own thoughts.<sup>98</sup> During the war, Hitler was given to quoting Clausewitz to rebut any criticism from his generals.<sup>99</sup> The Führer’s powers of recall do not tell us anything about his understanding of Clausewitz. Repeated references to Hitler as a follower of Clausewitz nevertheless appeared in print thousands of times after 1945.<sup>100</sup> Hitler undoubtedly got a great deal wrong in his reading of Clausewitz, not least in

<sup>91</sup> Goebbels, *Band 5: 1943-1945*, p. 2105 (n). Goebbels presided over a mass swearing-in on 12 November 1944. Reuth, *Goebbels*, p. 341. Clausewitz had envisaged an important role for the *Landsturm* in any *Volkskrieg*: ‘Testimonial (*Bekennnisdenkschrift*)’ (1812); and ‘The arming of the people (*Volksbewaffnung*)’ (1832) in Daase and Davis (eds), *Clausewitz on Small War*, pp. 196, 200-1 and pp. 224-5.

<sup>92</sup> *Kolberg* (dir: Veit Harlan, 1945) premiered on 30 January 1945. The commonly held belief that entire *Wehrmacht* divisions were diverted as to the production as extras is false. Frank Noack, *Veit Harlan: "des Teufels Regisseur"* (Munich, 2000), p. 222.

<sup>93</sup> Diary entry for 2 December 1944. Goebbels, *Band 5: 1943-1945*, p. 2112.

<sup>94</sup> Clausewitz was a friend of Gneisenau and a disciple of Scharnhorst. On this triumvirate, see Hans Delbrück, *Geschichte der Kriegskunst im Rahmen der politischen Geschichte. Band 4: Neuzeit* (Berlin, 1920), pp. 522-30.

<sup>95</sup> Diary entry for 5 March 1945. Goebbels, *Band 5: 1943-1945*, p. 2133.

<sup>96</sup> Diary entry for 3 April 1945. *The Goebbels Diaries: The Last Days*, ed. Hugh Trevor-Roper, trans. Richard Barry (London, 1979), p. 307.

<sup>97</sup> Ernst Hanfstaengl, *Zwischen Weißem und Braunem Haus: Erinnerungen eines politischen Außenseiters* (Munich, 1970), p. 52.

<sup>98</sup> Volker Ulrich, *Hitler: Ascent 1889-1939*, trans. Jefferson Chase (New York, 2016), p. 389.

<sup>99</sup> Franz von Halder, *Hitler als Feldherr* (Munich, 1949), p. 49; Heinz Guderian, foreword by B.H. Liddell Hart, *Panzer Leader* (London: Futura, 1974), p.378.

believing that his works confirmed the danger of a 'drop of poison in the blood of a people' undermining racial purity.<sup>101</sup> When the Franco-Prussian Treaty was ratified in March 1871, Clausewitz had written: 'I believe, I must confess, that the shameful blot of a cowardly capitulation is never wiped away; that this drop of poison in the blood of a people is transmitted to posterity and will cripple and undermine the energy of later generations'.<sup>102</sup> This is seen as evidencing Clausewitz's inspiration of Hitler,<sup>103</sup> but it is important to note that Clausewitz's worldview had been shaped long before the institutionalisation of a nationalist politics that were racialised and eugenicised in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>104</sup> It was this pseudo-scientific ideology, and not the patriotism of Clausewitz, that inspired Hitler's policies against the 'poisoning' of the blood.<sup>105</sup>

Konrad Heiden, an early biographer of Hitler, noted that while General Hans von Seeckt had adhered to the Clausewitzian principle that the aim of war was peace,<sup>106</sup> Hitler saw no difference between the two as 'There is always struggle'.<sup>107</sup> Nevertheless, Clausewitz inspired many of Hitler's thoughts and statements: for instance, his assertion that '[t]he war leader who takes no risks gains no prize'.<sup>108</sup> The desire to identify the regime with Clausewitz was no accident. The editor of an abridged version of *Vom Kriege* that appeared during the Third Reich naturally linked Clausewitz to Hitler. 'If one lets Clausewitz' theory affect one's senses and bring them into connection with the political and martial occurrence of the last years, then one will perceive that one's psychical deportment and one's notion of the nature of war has found a perfect embodiment in the Führer'.<sup>109</sup> Similarly, the editor of a Clausewitz anthology observed that: 'In the current German fight for freedom, the German people...turns to Clausewitz, the German philosopher of war; for it has, admiringly and gratefully, experienced the unity of political combat and ingenious generalship in its Führer Adolf Hitler to an historically unique extent'.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> For example, H.R. Trevor-Roper, 'Introduction', *Hitler's War Directives 1939-1945* (London, 1966), p. 15.

<sup>101</sup> Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 2017, p. 1693.

<sup>102</sup> Otto Hintze, *Die Hohenzollern und ihr Werk: 500 Jahre vaterländischer Geschichte* (Berlin, 1915), p. 467.

<sup>103</sup> In *Mein Kampf* approvingly quotes Clausewitz on the 'drop of poison'. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 1994, p. 612.

<sup>104</sup> Peter G.J. Pulzer, *Die Entstehung des politischen Antisemitismus in Deutschland und Österreich 1867-1914* (Göttingen, 2004); Brian Vick, 'The Origins of the German Volk: Cultural Purity and National Identity in Nineteenth-Century Germany', *German Studies Review*, 26:2 (2003), pp. 241-256; George J. Stein, 'Biological Science and the Roots of Nazism', *American Scientist*, 76:1 (1988), pp. 50-58.

<sup>105</sup> The anti-Semitic Nuremberg laws of 1935 aimed to 'maintain the purity of German blood'. Franz Neumann, *Behemoth: The structure and practice of National Socialism 1933-1944* (New York, 1944), p. 113.

<sup>106</sup> Commander-in-Chief of the *Reichswehr*, 1920-6. General von Seeckt, *The Future of the German Empire: Criticisms and Postulates*, trans. Oakley Williams (London, 1930).

<sup>107</sup> Heiden, *The Fuehrer*, p. 248.

<sup>108</sup> Conversation of 25 August 1942. *Hitler's Table Talk, 1941-1944: His Private Conversations*, intro. H.R. Trevor-Roper, trans. Norman Cameron and R.H. Stevens (London, 2000 [1953]), p. 659. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 2017, p. 1269 (n.7). Hitler's words are rendered here as: 'Whoever does not take risks in the pursuit of war can achieve nothing'.

<sup>109</sup> Karl von Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege: Um Veraltetes gekürzte Ausgabe*, ed. Friedrich von Cochenhausen (Leipzig, 1943), p. x.

<sup>110</sup> Cited in P.M. Baldwin, 'Clausewitz in Nazi Germany', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 16:1 (1981), p. 13.

As with figures such as Martin Luther and Friedrich Nietzsche, Clausewitz was widely seen as a source of intellectual inspiration for Hitler and the Nazis.<sup>111</sup> The association of figures such as the Nazi intellectual Carl Schmitt with Clausewitz's legacy compounded this view.<sup>112</sup> In a perceptive recent study, Stephen G. Fritz noted that Hitler embraced ideas from both Clausewitz and Ludendorff but bent them according to his own self-serving logic. This combined Clausewitz's conception of war as being essentially political with Ludendorff's notion of war waged to preserve the very existence of the state. Since the way to ensure the survival of the nation was to annihilate enemy states, any war would inevitably escalate to an absolute state. Unable to discern Clausewitz's battle of annihilation and a war of extermination, Hitler embarked on an unwinnable war.<sup>113</sup>

The Nazi regime remained oblivious to its violations of Clausewitz's principles to the very end. Indeed, the plan for the defence of Berlin in 1945 was codenamed *Fall Clausewitz*.<sup>114</sup> In this, Hitler asserted that 'The Reich capital will be defended to the last man and to the last bullet!'<sup>115</sup> This vision of *Götterdämmerung* had nothing to do with Clausewitz, although Hitler's final testament urged the German people not to 'give up the struggle, but rather continue it against the enemies of the Fatherland, no matter where, true to the creed of a great Clausewitz'.<sup>116</sup>

#### IV

After the collapse of Nazi Germany, Clausewitz's standing was at an all-time low (as was the reputation of the German people).<sup>117</sup> At the same time, militarism was utterly discredited as a basis for national policy.<sup>118</sup> This, unsurprisingly, had a negative impact upon Clausewitz's reputation.<sup>119</sup> Even so, his insights remained relevant, as the course of the war had demonstrated. Colin Gray noted that German policy in both world wars, and Japan's decision to attack the United States in 1941, had entirely neglected Clausewitz's elucidation of the proper relationship between war and politics. Between 1914-1918 and 1939-1945, 'Germany effectively lost the political plot ... [waging] warfare more as an end in itself than for reasonable and plausibly attainable political objectives'.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Baldwin, 'Clausewitz in Nazi Germany', p. 6.

<sup>112</sup> Benno Teschke, 'Carl Schmitt's concepts of War: A categorical failure' in Jens Meierhenrich and Oliver Simons (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Carl Schmitt* (Oxford, 2016), p. 388; Timo Pankakoski, 'Containment and intensification in political war: Carl Schmitt and the Clausewitzian heritage', *History of European Ideas*, 436, (2016), pp. 649-73.

<sup>113</sup> Stephen G. Fritz, *The first soldier: Hitler as military leader* (New Haven, CT, 2018), pp. 15, 17.

<sup>114</sup> 'Grundsätzlicher Befehl für die Vorbereitungen zur Verteidigung der Reichshauptstadt des Befehlshabers des Verteidigungsbereichs Berlin, Abt. Ia op Nr. 400/45 g. vom 9.3.1945 mit Anlagen' in Bengt von zur Mühlen (ed.), *Der Todeskampf der Reichshauptstadt* (Berlin/ Kleinmachnow, 1994), p. 31.

<sup>115</sup> David Clay Large, *Berlin: Biographie einer Stadt* (Berlin, 2002), p. 337.

<sup>116</sup> Adolf Hitler, 'My Political Testament', 29 April 1945. Jeremy Noakes (ed.), *Nazism 1919-1945: A Documentary Reader, Volume 4: The German Home Front in World War II* (Exeter, 1998), p. 669.

<sup>117</sup> Exemplified by A.J.P. Taylor, *The Course of German History: Survey of the Development of German History Since 1815* (London, 1945).

<sup>118</sup> On post-war debates in West Germany and Japan, see V.R. Berghahn, *Militarism: The History of an International Idea* (Cambridge, 1981), pp. 49-66.

<sup>119</sup> Bassford, *Clausewitz in English*, pp. 197-200.

<sup>120</sup> Colin S. Gray, *War, Peace and International Relations: An Introduction to Strategic History* (London, second edn. 2012), p. 25. See also Bernard Brodie, 'A guide to the reading of *On War*', Clausewitz, *On War*, pp. 698-9; and Michael Geyer, 'German Strategy in the Age of Machine Warfare,

Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan also failed to observe Clausewitz's work on the actual conduct of war. The Prussian general had specifically warned that offensives always lost momentum, weakened by the very act of the advance.<sup>121</sup> This phenomenon was partly down to what Clausewitz termed 'friction',<sup>122</sup> 'the force that makes the apparent[ly] easy so difficult'.<sup>123</sup> The invasion of Poland in 1939 had already demonstrated significant problems.<sup>124</sup> Planning for Operation Barbarossa - the invasion of the Soviet Union - was certainly optimistic,<sup>125</sup> in spite of a thorough examination of Clausewitz's writings.<sup>126</sup> As early as 1804 Clausewitz had predicted that Napoleon would be defeated if he invaded Russia.<sup>127</sup> That this was the case was due to enormous 'space' in Russia, a view confirmed by later analyses.<sup>128</sup> The German military, for all its supposed devotion to Clausewitz, paid scant attention to his thinking before embarking upon war against Russia in both world wars.<sup>129</sup>

In his memoirs, Field Marshal Erich von Manstein charged Hitler with violating Clausewitzian principles: 'his political measures in the east ran entirely counter to the requirements of his [military] strategy, depriving it of whatever chance it may have of a speedy victory'.<sup>130</sup> David Stahel asserts that Germany's failure to defeat the Soviet Union in 1941 is explicable by Clausewitz's theory of the culminating point of the attack.<sup>131</sup>

Clausewitz established that most attacks diminish in strength the longer they continue, whereupon a critical point is eventually reached at which the power of the attack is superseded by the strength of the defence. This he determined to be the culminating point or climax of the attack, which he then added was usually, but not always, followed by an extremely powerful enemy counter-blow. This basic hypothesis formed an intriguing theoretical starting point

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1914-1945' in Peter Paret (ed.), with Gordon A. Craig and Felix Gilbert, *Makers of Modern Strategy: From Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age* (Princeton, NJ, second edn. 1986), pp. 527-97.

<sup>121</sup> Clausewitz, *Principles of War*, pp. 21-7.

<sup>122</sup> Rolf-Dieter Müller, *Der Feind steht im Osten: Hitlers geheime Pläne für einen Krieg gegen die Sowjetunion im Jahr 1939* (Berlin, 2011), p. 61.

<sup>123</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 121.

<sup>124</sup> Müller, *Der Feind steht im Osten*, p. 173.

<sup>125</sup> Müller, *Der Feind steht im Osten*, p. 238.

<sup>126</sup> As well as Clausewitz, these studies focussed on individuals such as Armand-Augustin-Louis de Caulaincourt, the soldier-diplomat who advised Napoleon not to invade Russia. Hans Heinrich Wilhelm, 'Motivation und "Kriegsbild" deutscher Generäle und Offiziere im Krieg gegen die Sowjetunion' in Peter Jahn and Reinhard Rürup (eds), *Erobern und Vernichten: Der Krieg gegen die Sowjetunion 1941-1945* (Berlin, 1991), pp. 153-82.

<sup>127</sup> Hew Strachan, 'Time, Space and Barbarisation: The German Army and the Eastern Front in Two World Wars' in George Kassimeris (ed.), *The Barbarisation of Warfare* (London, 2006), p. 65.

<sup>128</sup> Alfred Franke, 'Wehrgeographisches zum Russlandfeldzug Napoleons', *Zeitschrift für Geopolitik*, XI (1934), pp. 449-61.

<sup>129</sup> Strachan, 'Time, Space and Barbarisation', p. 65.

<sup>130</sup> Erich von Manstein, trans. and ed. Anthony G. Powell; intro. Martin Blumenson; foreword by B.H. Liddell-Hart, *Lost Victories* (London, 1987, [1958]), p. 176. On Manstein's criticisms of Hitler and the Stalingrad campaign, see Joachim Wieder, ed. Heinrich Graf von Einsiedel, *Stalingrad und die Verantwortung des Soldaten* (Munich, 1993), pp. 135-8. Criticising Manstein's account as flawed (pp. 140-2), Wieder concludes: 'In the final analysis, memoirs serve to justify their author!' (p. 135).

<sup>131</sup> On this, see Rothfels, 'Clausewitz', p. 112.

for the problem of whether it was possible to pre-date the German military failure in 1941.<sup>132</sup>

The upshot of this analysis is that Operation Barbarossa had failed by mid-August 1941 - something that was evident to Wolfgang Schütz at the time. He observed that Clausewitz's account of Napoleon's defeat in Russia in 1812, demonstrated just why Hitler, too, would lose.<sup>133</sup> For Napoleon, the key to success was speed. The Russians countered this with scorched earth, guerrilla warfare while relying on the size of their country and the severity of the weather. 'Delaying the lightning-strokes meant defeating them, because an army of the size which [Napoleon] needed to rely on could not be maintained over the winter in a hostile country. Winter could be expected to arrive as the decisive ally. Therefore, the invader had to be kept at bay until then. As in 1941 so in 1812'.<sup>134</sup> While Schütz had highlighted Clausewitz's prescience, many more works published during the war simply identified Clausewitz with some deeply unpleasant ideologies and individuals. In 1943, Julius Braunthal wrote that many of the most unpleasant characteristics of the Nazi regime were Prussian rather than German.<sup>135</sup> The reality was that, while ostensibly embracing Prussian 'values', Nazi Germany was the antithesis of many of them. Herbert Marcuse and Felix Gilbert produced a report for US intelligence arguing that 'Prussia as a political unit has been dissolved, the Prussian nobility has lost its powerful position, and the forces that make for [Nazi] imperialist aggression are not typically Prussian'.<sup>136</sup> The Soviets targeted captured Prussian officers for their *Nationalkomitee Freies Deutschland* (NKFD),<sup>137</sup> lauding Clausewitz for his refusal to participate in Napoleon's invasion of Russia.<sup>138</sup> Moscow achieved a propaganda coup when Bismarck's great-grandson, Heinrich Graf von Einsiedel, became vice-president of the NKFD.<sup>139</sup>

Any distinction between National Socialism and Prussia was not popular with the populations fighting Germany.<sup>140</sup> Churchill told the House of Commons that 'Nazi tyranny and Prussian militarism are the two main elements in German life which

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<sup>132</sup> David Stahel, *Operation Barbarossa and Germany's defeat in the East* (Cambridge, 2010), p. 3.

<sup>133</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *The Campaign of 1812 in Russia*, trans. Francis Egerton (London, 1843).

<sup>134</sup> W.W. Schütz, 'Clausewitz and Russia', *The Spectator* (London), 15 August 1941. See also W.W. Schütz, 'War against Russia' in W.W. Schütz, with B. De Sevin, *German Home Front* (London, 1943), pp. 11-72.

<sup>135</sup> Julius Braunthal, *Need Germany Survive?* (London, 1943), p. 66.

<sup>136</sup> Herbert Marcuse and Felix Gilbert, 'The Significance of Prussian Militarism for Nazi Imperialism: Potential Tensions in United Nations Psychological Warfare' (20 October 1943) in Franz Neumann, Herbert Marcuse and Otto Kirchheimer, ed. Raffaele Laudani, foreword by Raymond Geuss, *Secret Reports on Nazi Germany: The Frankfurt School Contribution to the War Effort* (Princeton, NJ, 2013), p. 62.

<sup>137</sup> Marcuse and Gilbert, 'The Significance of Prussian Militarism for Nazi Imperialism', pp. 69-70 and Franz Neumann, 'The Free Germany Manifesto and the German People' in Neumann, Marcuse and Kirchheimer, *Secret Reports on Nazi Germany*, pp. 151, 165. On the NKFD, see Gerd R. Ueberschär (ed.), *Das Nationalkomitee "Freies Deutschland" und der Bund Deutscher Offiziere* (Frankfurt a.M., 1996).

<sup>138</sup> Christopher Clark, *Iron Kingdom: The Rise and Downfall of Prussia, 1600-1947* (London, 2007), p. 674.

<sup>139</sup> Andreas F. Lowenfeld, 'The Free Germany Committee: An historical study', *Review of Politics*, 14:3 (1952), p. 349.

<sup>140</sup> Berghahn, *Militarism*, p. 46. For fears that Prussia-Germany portended a world of militarised states, see Harold D. Lasswell, 'The Garrison State', *American Journal of Sociology*, 46:4 (1941), p. 455.



must be absolutely destroyed'.<sup>141</sup> For Lord Vansittart, a senior diplomat and an archenemy of Germany,<sup>142</sup> much of the long history of Prussian-German state criminality was traceable to Clausewitz.<sup>143</sup> By the war's end, some observers declared Clausewitz not only immoral but also obsolete. Three months after the atomic bombs had dropped on Japan, the Labour MP Major Donald Bruce told the House of Commons: 'The old diplomacy is completely dead. With the coming of the atomic bomb, we could, if we wished, tear up completely Clausewitz's classic 'On War''.<sup>144</sup>

#### IV

The post-war renaissance in Clausewitz's reputation had two main causes. First, the interest his writings generated amongst the West's nuclear strategists; and, second, by virtue of a reappraisal of his legacy in the newly founded Federal Republic of Germany (FRG). Nuclear weapons fundamentally changed the nature of war, as Bernard Brodie recognised in 1946.<sup>145</sup> Brodie nevertheless remained a disciple of Clausewitz<sup>146</sup> as the latter understood 'the nexus between politics and strategy so much more clearly than virtually all his peers and successors'.<sup>147</sup> Many of Brodie's fellow strategists were, however, less astute and within a few years, Clausewitz's name was being linked with aggressive nuclear warfighting doctrines.

From 1953, US nuclear strategy was explicitly influenced by Clausewitz derived from President Dwight D. Eisenhower's longstanding admiration of the general. In 1955, the president pronounced Clausewitz 'the chief of the great military students and philosophers. He codified all the principles of war that have been developed over the ages and made certain observations that have an ageless application to warfare'.<sup>148</sup> Eisenhower was intrigued by Clausewitz's denial of the existence of 'absolute war' and by whether or not the advent of nuclear weapons had changed the fundamental nature of major power conflict.<sup>149</sup> The Eisenhower administration thus significantly expanded the US nuclear arsenal to give credence to the doctrine of 'massive retaliation', a phrase coined by Secretary of State John Foster Dulles in a speech of January 1954.<sup>150</sup> In a nuclear age, so American policymakers and strategists reasoned, no opponent would risk an 'absolute war' with the United States.<sup>151</sup>

In time, so-called neo-Clausewitzians came to dominate the field of nuclear strategy. These individuals sought to 'rationalise' (to critics, 'normalise') nuclear weapons in

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<sup>141</sup> *Hansard*, HC Deb, fifth series, volume 392, column 88, 21 September 1943.

<sup>142</sup> Sir Robert Vansittart, *Black Record: Germans Past and Present* (London, 1941).

<sup>143</sup> *Hansard*, HL Deb, fifth series, volume 136, columns 75-6, 1 May 1945.

<sup>144</sup> *Hansard*, HC Deb, fifth series, volume 415, column 1323, 7 November 1945.

<sup>145</sup> Bernard Brodie (ed.), *The Absolute Weapon: Atomic Power and World Order* (New York, 1946).

<sup>146</sup> Ken Booth, 'Bernard Brodie' in John Baylis and John Garnett (eds), *Makers of Nuclear Strategy* (London, 1991), pp. 26, 32-38, 44-6, 49.

<sup>147</sup> Bernard Brodie, *War & Politics* (London, 1973), p. 441.

<sup>148</sup> William B. Pickett, 'Eisenhower as a student of Clausewitz', *Military Review*, 65:7 (1985), pp. 21-27. Quote at 26. See also William B. Pickett, 'Eisenhower, Clausewitz, and American power', *SHAFR Newsletter*, 23:4 (1991), pp. 28-40.

<sup>149</sup> Bassford, *Clausewitz in English*, pp. 157-62.

<sup>150</sup> Fred Kaplan, foreword by Martin J. Sherwin, *The Wizards of Armageddon* (Stanford, CA, 1991 edn.), pp. 174-5.

<sup>151</sup> John Lewis Gaddis, *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History* (Oxford, 1997), pp. 233-4.



terms of traditional power politics.<sup>152</sup> Herman Kahn even titled one tome *On Thermonuclear War*,<sup>153</sup> while insisting on the necessity of ‘thinking the unthinkable’.<sup>154</sup> Niall Ferguson recently opined that, just as Clausewitz believed that wars after Napoleon need not be of the absolute variety, so Henry Kissinger argued that limited wars could still be fought in the nuclear age.<sup>155</sup> This was greeted with alarm by many critics who thought the notion of ‘limited’ war was a dangerous illusion. The proposition that *On War* remained relevant,<sup>156</sup> and any notion that nuclear weapons represented a simple augmentation of national arsenals, caused commentators to recoil from ‘Clausewitzian’ recipes for nuclear suicide<sup>157</sup> and denounced such a mindset for ‘unthinking the thinkable’.<sup>158</sup> Anatol Rapoport, for example, argued that neo-Clausewitzians, acting ‘[i]n the name of realism’, were ‘perpetuat[ing] an obsolete collective state of mind which has brought humanity to the brink of disaster’.<sup>159</sup> In truth, nuclear strategists who understood Clausewitz were the exception. One such example was Thomas Schelling who distinguished between brute force, such as the use of atomic weapons, and more calculated uses of coercion that have specific ends in mind.<sup>160</sup>

In post-war West Germany, conservatives were initially concerned with rehabilitating Clausewitz in order to facilitate the resurrection of an honourable Prussian-German tradition. This entailed arguing that Clausewitz had never advocated war, had asserted the primacy of politics, and fostered the rise of the military professional.<sup>161</sup> The conservative historian Gerhard Ritter<sup>162</sup> was a particularly ardent exponent of this school of thought.<sup>163</sup> Although Ritter denied that Germany had embarked upon a war of conquest in 1914,<sup>164</sup> he conceded that the Great War had militarised

<sup>152</sup> Henry A. Kissinger, foreword by Gordon Dean, *Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy* (New York, 1957); André Beaufre, *Dissuasion et stratégie* (Paris, 1964); Raymond Aron, *Penser la guerre, Clausewitz* (Paris, 1976).

<sup>153</sup> Herman Kahn, *On Thermonuclear War* (Princeton, NJ, 1960).

<sup>154</sup> Herman Kahn, *Thinking about the Unthinkable* (London, 1962); *Herman Kahn, Thinking About the Unthinkable in the 1980s* (New York, 1984).

<sup>155</sup> Niall Ferguson, *Kissinger 1923-1968: The Idealist* (London, 2015), p. 869.

<sup>156</sup> Gerd Stamp (ed.), *Clausewitz im Atomzeitalter: Auszüge aus seinem Werk “Vom Kriege”* (Wiesbaden, 1960).

<sup>157</sup> Anatol Rapoport, *Strategy and Conscience*, introduction by Karl Deutsch (New York, 1964).

<sup>158</sup> A.H.S. Candlin, ‘Unthinking the thinkable’, *Journal of the Royal United Service Institution*, 114:653 (1969), pp. 39-41.

<sup>159</sup> Rapoport, ‘Introduction’, Clausewitz, *On War*, pp. 73-7; 80. Quotes at p. 80.

<sup>160</sup> Thomas C. Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven, CT, 1966), pp. 1-34.

<sup>161</sup> Hans Herzfeld, ‘Zur neueren Literatur über das Heeresproblem in der deutschen Geschichte’, *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 4:4 (1956), p. 366-7.

<sup>162</sup> Gerhard Ritter (1888-1967) obtained his doctorate at Heidelberg in 1911 and served with distinction in the First World War. In 1944, the Nazis placed him in a concentration camp for his association with the resistance. After 1945, he came to dominate the historical profession in West Germany. Lambert, *The Politics of German Historians, 1914-1945*, pp. 20-1. On Ritter and the 20 July bomb plot, see Christoph Cornelißen, ‘Hans Rothfels, Gerhard Ritter und die Rezeption des 20. Juli 1944: Konzeptionen für ein “neues Deutschland”?’ in Johannes Hürter and Hans Woller (eds), *Hans Rothfels und die deutsche Zeitgeschichte* (Munich, 2005), pp. 97-120. For a biography, see Christoph Cornelißen, *Gerhard Ritter: Geschichtswissenschaft und Politik im 20. Jahrhundert* (Düsseldorf, 2001).

<sup>163</sup> Gerhard Ritter, *Staatskunst und Kriegshandwerk*, v. 1, *Die altpreußische Tradition (1740-1890)* (Munich, 1954), pp. 67-96.

<sup>164</sup> Ritter was a bitter critic of Fritz Fischer and his thesis that Germany was responsible for the First World War. See Fritz Fischer, *Griff nach der Weltmacht: Die Kriegzielpolitik des kaiserlichen Deutschland 1914-1918* (Düsseldorf, 1961); and Fritz Fischer, *Weltmacht oder Niedergang: Deutschland im ersten Weltkrieg* (Frankfurt a.M., 1965). For Ritter’s response, see Gerhard Ritter,

Germany.<sup>165</sup> In Ritter's *magnum opus*, on the 'problem of militarism' in Germany,<sup>166</sup> and elsewhere, he was insistent that such a societal phenomenon was not unique to Germany.<sup>167</sup>

The work of Ritter *et al* added scholarly weight to West German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer's dubious assertion that the German soldier had always 'fought honorably' in the Second World War.<sup>168</sup> The concept of a tradition of the 'good' German soldier was a convenient myth embraced with alacrity by the West German government for domestic reasons - and to facilitate the creation of new German armed forces (*Bundeswehr*). To further encourage this, *Wehrmacht* veterans also distinguished between soldiery and Nazi criminality with General Franz von Halder lamenting the 'tragedy of true soldiery ... [as] soldiers were the whipping boys of the dictators'.<sup>169</sup> Adenauer needed the goodwill of such men. When asked if 'the generals of Adolf Hitler [would] also be the generals of Konrad Adenauer?', the chancellor replied: 'I don't think that NATO will accept 18-year-old generals from me'.<sup>170</sup>

Rearmament was one of the levers for attaining Adenauer's primary goals in foreign policy: regaining sovereignty and integrating the FRG into the West. Over time, the FRG carefully distanced itself from the *Wehrmacht*, and sought other reference points for the state and the *Bundeswehr*. The ruling elite in the FRG used the vehicle of the military resistance to Hitler that had sought to kill Hitler in the plot of 20 July 1944 as a way of identifying an honourable past for the German soldier. Hans Rothfels, keen to repudiate the idea of National Socialism as being part of the continuity of German history, argued that the 20 July plotters 'lived and died for the idea of atonement'.<sup>171</sup> In his farewell letter, Carl Goerdeler phrased it thus: 'I ask the world to accept our martyrdom as penance for the German people'.<sup>172</sup> Within the *Bundeswehr*, the stress placed on the resisters of 20 July was considerable: the first

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'Eine neue Kriegsschuldthese? Zu Fritz Fischers Buch "Griff nach der Weltmacht"', *Historische Zeitschrift*, 194:3 (1962), pp. 646-68. For Fischer's riposte, see Fritz Fischer, 'Weltpolitik, Weltmachtstreben und deutsche Kriegsziele', *Historische Zeitschrift*, 199:2 (1964), pp. 265-346.

<sup>165</sup> Christoph Cornelißen, 'Politische Historiker und deutsche Kultur: Die Schriften und Reden von Georg v. Below, Hermann Oncken und Gerhard Ritter im Ersten Weltkrieg' in Wolfgang J. Mommsen (ed.), *Kultur und Krieg: Die Rolle der Intellektuellen, Künstler und Schriftsteller im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Munich, 1996), pp. 119-142.

<sup>166</sup> Gerhard Ritter, *Staatskunst und Kriegshandwerk: das Problem des "Militarismus" in Deutschland*, 4 volumes (Munich: 1954, 1960, 1964, 1968): v.1, *Die altpreußische Tradition (1740-1890)*; v.2, *Die Hauptmächte Europas und das wilhelminische Reich (1890-1914)*; v.3, *Die Tragödie der Staatskunst: Bethmann Hollweg als Kriegskanzler (1914-1917)*; v.4, *Die Herrschaft des deutschen Militarismus und die Katastrophe von 1918*.

<sup>167</sup> Gerhard Ritter, 'Das problem des Militarismus in Deutschland', *Historische Zeitschrift*, 177:1 (1954), p. 48; Gerhard Ritter, 'The historical foundations of National Socialism' in International Council for Philosophy and Humanistic Studies and UNESCO (eds), *The Third Reich* (London, 1955), p. 386

<sup>168</sup> Adenauer to the *Bundestag*, 3 December 1952. Hajo Herrmann, "Supersoldiers": *die Wehrmacht im Urteil ausländischer Experten* (Munich, 2006), p. 28. Prominent figures in the West made similarly dishonest statements. Wilhelm Hillek, *Deutsche Soldaten: Mörder oder Helden? Die Wahrheit über das deutsche Soldatentum* (Munich, 1997), p. 405.

<sup>169</sup> Cited in Alfred Vagts, *A History of Militarism* (New York, 1959), p. 494.

<sup>170</sup> Dermot Bradley, 'The *Bundeswehr* and German Reunification, 1955-91', *Irish Studies in International Affairs*, 3:4 (1992), p. 59.

<sup>171</sup> Hans Rothfels, *The German Opposition to Hitler: An Appraisal* (Hinsdale, IL, 1948), p. 26.

<sup>172</sup> Don Allen Gregory, *After Valkyrie: Military and Civilian Consequences of the Attempt to Assassinate Hitler* (Jefferson, NC, 2018), p. 118.

officer training course thus featured a Major Dr Trentzsch lecturing on the subject 'The soldier and 20 July 1944'.<sup>173</sup>

*On War* was not the only book that the Nazis appropriated,<sup>174</sup> but Clausewitz's close identification with German arms necessitated its rehabilitation.<sup>175</sup> Werner Hahlweg was a major figure in this process. In 1952, he edited and annotated what became the best German-language version of *On War*,<sup>176</sup> and was involved in re-publishing other material from Clausewitz.<sup>177</sup> Five years later, Hahlweg published what soon became the standard German-language work on Clausewitz.<sup>178</sup> In West Germany, the establishment of the *Führungsakademie der Bundeswehr (FüAkBw)* in 1957 signalled a resurrection of tradition.<sup>179</sup> This is the senior military academy of the German armed forces and it has never sought to conceal the fact that it is the *de facto* successor of the Prussian *Kriegsschule* established by Clausewitz *et al* in 1810. The *FüAkBw* instantly became a bastion of Clausewitzian thought<sup>180</sup> and, in 1961, the *Clausewitz-Gesellschaft* was established.<sup>181</sup> On 1 July 1965, Bonn's defence minister, Kai-Uwe von Hassel, issued the *Traditionserlass* ('tradition decree'). The *Traditionserlass*, updated in 1982, distanced the *Bundeswehr* from the *Wehrmacht*, and specifically commended the resisters of the 20 July 1944 bomb plot.<sup>182</sup>

It was clear that the conservative elite of the Federal Republic had harnessed Clausewitz's legacy. Opponents on the left, who had denounced rearmament with the slogan '*Ohne mich*' ('Without me'),<sup>183</sup> were similarly ill-disposed towards any rehabilitation of Clausewitz. In 1969, Hans-Ulrich Wehler famously denounced the manner in which Clausewitz had sought to undermine civilian control over the military,<sup>184</sup> and thereby sustained the *Sonderweg*<sup>185</sup> - the 'special path' that had retarded the historical development of the German nation.<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> Bradley, 'The *Bundeswehr* and German Reunification, 1955-91', p.59.

<sup>174</sup> For example, Christopher B. Krebs, *A most dangerous book: Tacitus's Germania from the Roman Empire to the Third Reich* (New York, 2011), pp. 214-44.

<sup>175</sup> In 1993 the *Bundeswehr* base near Burg in Lower Saxony was named for Clausewitz.

<sup>176</sup> This appeared in 19 editions, the last being in 1991.

<sup>177</sup> See, for example, *Schriften, Aufsätze, Studien, Briefe: Dokumente aus dem Clausewitz-, Scharnhorst- und Gneisenau-Nachlass sowie aus öffentlichen und privaten Sammlungen*, foreword Karl Dietrich Erdmann, ed. Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften (Göttingen, 1966); Werner Hahlweg (ed.), *Carl von Clausewitz: Schriften, Aufsätze, Studien, Briefe* (Göttingen, 1966).

<sup>178</sup> Werner Hahlweg, *Carl von Clausewitz: Soldat, Politiker, Denker* (Göttingen, 1957). After his death, the revelation that Hahlweg had joined the SS in 1933, and the Nazi Party in 1936, damaged his reputation.

<sup>179</sup> On this, see Donald Abenheim and Uwe Hartmann, *Einführung in die Tradition der Bundeswehr: Das soldatische Erbe in dem besten Deutschland, das es je gab* (Berlin, 2019).

<sup>180</sup> Claus von Rosen and Uwe Hartmann, 'The reception of Clausewitz in Germany' in Pommerin (ed.), *Clausewitz goes Global*, p. 127.

<sup>181</sup> *Clausewitz-Gesellschaft e.V.*, <https://www.clausewitz-gesellschaft.de/> (accessed 18 April 2020).

<sup>182</sup> Christian EO. Millotat and Manuela R. Krueger, 'Der Offizier als Träger von Tradition und Traditionspflege', *Clausewitz-Gesellschaft e.V. Band 14: Jahrbuch 2018*, p. 136.

<sup>183</sup> Michael Werner, *Die Ohne-Mich-Bewegung: Die bundesdeutsche Friedensbewegung im deutsch-deutschen Kalten Krieg (1949–1955)* (Münster 2006)

<sup>184</sup> Hans-Ulrich Wehler, "Absoluter" und "Totaler" Krieg: Von Clausewitz zu Ludendorff', *Politische Vierteljahresschrift*, 10:2-3 (1969), pp. 220-48.

<sup>185</sup> Hans-Ulrich Wehler, "Deutscher Sonderweg' oder allgemeine Probleme des westlichen Kapitalismus', *Merkur*, 5 (1981), pp. 478-87.

<sup>186</sup> Horst Möller, 'Deutscher Sonderweg - Mythos oder Realität? Ein Colloquium im Institut für Zeitgeschichte', *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 30:1 (1982), pp. 162-5; Walther L. Bernecker and

The communist German Democratic Republic (GDR) also condemned the appropriation of Clausewitz by the Federal Republic. Unlike the left in the FRG, however, the GDR claimed Clausewitz for itself. The ruling *Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands* (SED) transferred the grave of Clausewitz and his wife from Breslau – now Wrocław in Poland - to his birthplace in Burg, and sanctioned the publishing of an approved edition of *Vom Kriege*.<sup>187</sup> As part of the celebrations for the bicentenary of Clausewitz's birthday, the SED established a Clausewitz medal and published a selection of his military writings.<sup>188</sup> Clausewitz was a notable beneficiary of the GDR's rehabilitation of Prussia, which even embraced the aristocratic Stauffenberg for having made contact with the communist resistance.<sup>189</sup> The GDR saw itself as the product of the progressive forces in German history. The Wars of Liberation against Napoleon were lauded as Clausewitz and the other 'reformer-patriots'<sup>190</sup> had defied their king and sided with Russia, foreshadowing the friendship between the GDR and the Soviet Union (*Deutsch-russische Waffenbrüderschaft*).<sup>191</sup> Clausewitz and his fellow reformers, lauded for leading a *Volkskrieg* against Napoleon, had rid the Prussian army of mercenaries and the privileges enjoyed by those of noble birth.<sup>192</sup> The monument to the Battle of the Nations (*Völkerschlachtdenkmal*), inaugurated on battle's centenary in 1913,<sup>193</sup> also became a focal point for commemoration by the East German regime.<sup>194</sup> Just as the Prussian reformers had rid Germany of the French, so the SED aimed to rid the FRG of the Americans. Clausewitz was an archetype for East Germans for his role in the Convention of Tauroggen in December 1812, which secured the defection of General Ludwig Yorck's corps to the Russian army.<sup>195</sup> In a rare demonstration of unity, both the FRG and the GDR both issued postal stamps commemorating Clausewitz's bicentenary in 1980.<sup>196</sup>

## V

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Klaus Peter Prem, 'Die Deutsche Frage in historischer Perspektive und in der heutigen politischen Konstellation', *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 30:2 (1982), pp. 365-7; Jürgen Kocka, 'Asymmetrical historical comparison: The case of the German *Sonderweg*', *History and Theory*, 38:1 (1999), pp. 40-51; Helmut Walser Smith, 'When the *Sonderweg* debate left us', *German Studies Review*, 31:2 (2008), pp. 225-40; Jürgen Kocka, 'Looking back on the *Sonderweg*', *Central European History*, 51:1 (2018), pp. 137-42.

<sup>187</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, edited by Ernst Engelberg and Otto Korfes (East Berlin, 1957).

<sup>188</sup> Claus von Rosen and Uwe Hartmann, 'The reception of Clausewitz in Germany' in Pommerin (ed.), *Clausewitz goes Global*, p. 129.

<sup>189</sup> Rolf Schneider, 'Die DDR und Preußen', *Der Spiegel*, 8 September 1975; Raina Zimmering, *Mythen in der Politik der DDR: Ein Beitrag zur Erforschung politischer Mythen* (Opladen, 2000), pp. 301-57.

<sup>190</sup> Kulturbund der DDR, *Preussen in der Geschichte des deutschen Volkes* (Potsdam, 1981), p. 42.

<sup>191</sup> Dietrich Orlow, 'The GDR's Failed Search for a National Identity, 1945-1989', *German Studies Review*, 29:3 (2006), p. 545.

<sup>192</sup> Akademie der Wissenschaften der DDR, *Information GDR: The Comprehensive and Authoritative Reference Source of the German Democratic Republic*, Volume 1 (Oxford, 1989), p. 104.

<sup>193</sup> Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann, *Die Politik der Geselligkeit: Freimaurerlogen in der deutschen Bürgergesellschaft, 1840-1918* (Göttingen, 2000), p. 318.

<sup>194</sup> Steffen Poser, 'Zur Rezeptionsgeschichte des Völkerschlachtdenkmals zwischen 1914 und 1989' in Katrin Keller and Hans-Dieter Schmid (eds), *Vom Kult zur Kulisse: Das Völkerschlachtdenkmal als Gegenstand der Geschichtskultur* (Leipzig, 1995), pp. 92-104.

<sup>195</sup> David P. Harding, 'The demoralization of the East German officer corps and the Prussian military tradition' in Laurence H. McFalls and Lothar Probst (eds), *After the GDR: New Perspectives on the Old GDR and the Young Länder* (Amsterdam, 2001), pp. 127-8.

<sup>196</sup> Rosen and Hartmann, 'The reception of Clausewitz in Germany', p. 130.

The US withdrawal from Vietnam in 1973, and the fall of South Vietnam two years later, represented a stunning blow to the prestige of the strongest military power in history. How had the United States been unable to prevail against North Vietnam? It was clear that the generals and the planners in the Pentagon had to reappraise their complete strategic outlook. Vietnam had been an object lesson in everything that Clausewitz had warned against. The US planners who attempted to preserve the state of South Vietnam had neglected Clausewitz's maxim that one must not begin a war without knowing exactly whom one was fighting and for exactly what political objective. In Vietnam, the politicians did not know the capabilities and limits of its military; the military did not know what its primary objective was; and the population came to increasingly distrust its leaders and fear that its military was waging an aggressive, unnecessary and barbaric war.<sup>197</sup>

The post-Vietnam revival of interest in Clausewitz naturally focussed on his prescribed formulae for success in war. Clausewitz had been active in the resurrection and reform of Prussia following its shattering defeat by Napoleon in 1806. As part of this, Clausewitz strove to end the military isolation of war from society and politics.<sup>198</sup> Well over a hundred year later, it seemed logical to many commentators that Clausewitz's theories could assist the United States in its recovery from the national trauma of Vietnam.<sup>199</sup> For a US military establishment in deep institutional shock, Clausewitz's theories provided a blueprint for starting over again with a rethink of the meaning, and formulation, of strategy.<sup>200</sup> In 1982, Colonel Harry Summers Jr. published an influential Clausewitzian take on recent history.<sup>201</sup> Two years later, the US Secretary of Defense, Caspar Weinberger, enunciated the so-called Weinberger Doctrine. This decreed that: war was the option of last resort; a clear political objective in the event of war; an assurance of support from the American people and Congress; and continual reassessment of the relationship between objectives and military capabilities. Signalling a significant intellectual debt, Weinberger quoted Clausewitz's statement that no rational person starts a war without a clear idea of his or her goal.<sup>202</sup>

## VI

In 1990, Summers observed that 'What we found to our amazement is that Clausewitz spoke almost directly to the American experience, like no one else did'.<sup>203</sup> The embrace of Clausewitz certainly brought a much-needed professionalism to strategic thought in US military institutions,<sup>204</sup> as his approach facilitated the

<sup>197</sup> Andreas Herberg-Rothe, 'Ein Preuße in den USA', *Europäische Sicherheit*, 10 (2003), pp. 48-9.

<sup>198</sup> Peter Paret, *The Cognitive Challenge of War: Prussia 1806* (Princeton, NJ, 2018), p. 117.

<sup>199</sup> Richard R. Muller, 'The airpower historian and the education of strategists' in Richard Bailey, James W. Jr. Forsyth and Mark O. Yeisley (eds), *Strategy: Context and Adaptation from Archidamus to Airpower* (Annapolis, MD, 2016), p. 120.

<sup>200</sup> Stephen Melton, *The Clausewitz Delusion: How the American Army Screwed Up the Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan (A Way Forward)*, (Minneapolis, MN, 2009), pp. 4-6.

<sup>201</sup> Colonel Harry Summers Jr., *On Strategy: A Critical Analysis of the Vietnam War* (Mineola, NY, 2007 [1982]). For a Clausewitzian take on the First Gulf War, see Colonel Harry Summers Jr., *On Strategy II: A Critical Analysis of the Gulf War* (New York, 1992).

<sup>202</sup> Handel, *Masters of War*, p. 240.

<sup>203</sup> Joel Achenbach, 'War and the cult of Clausewitz', *Washington Post*, 6 December 1990.

<sup>204</sup> Edward J. Villacres and Christopher Bassford, 'Reclaiming the Clausewitzian Trinity', *Parameters*, 25:3 (1995), p. 9; Michael I. Handel, 'Clausewitz in the age of technology', *Journal of Strategic*



development of educational models for 'complex, contingent, and dangerous' matters.<sup>205</sup> Failure in Vietnam had convinced the US military of the centrality of Clausewitz's conception of the relationship between war and politics. The Prussian, in providing the didactic framework that the US military required,<sup>206</sup> had found a home across the ocean.<sup>207</sup> General Colin Powell typified the attitudes of many of his contemporaries when he wrote that the work of 'That wise Prussian Karl [sic] von Clausewitz was an awakening for me'.<sup>208</sup> Then, the Berlin Wall fell and the Soviet empire collapsed.

Following the end of the Cold War the prospect of major interstate war receded. In February 1993, the then director of the CIA, James Woolsey, told the US Senate that 'We have slain a large dragon ... but we live now in a jungle filled with a bewildering variety of poisonous snakes, and in many ways the dragon was easier to keep track of'.<sup>209</sup> These 'snakes' included terrorists, sub-state warlords, jihadists, and a bewildering array of asymmetric threats. In short, the nature of armed conflict was changing. Many observers therefore opined that Clausewitz's analysis of warfare was, at best, obsolescent. For critics, the Clausewitzian worldview - a supposed belief in the utility of war as a policy instrument - was what lay at the heart of the US interventions in overseas wars. Yet Clausewitz explicitly acknowledged that policy could be an alien element in war.<sup>210</sup> In major conflicts, as one might expect, war and policy are synonymous but the scope for divergence in 'limited' or so-called 'discretionary' wars is all too real.<sup>211</sup>

In the post-Cold War environment, Clausewitz has been criticised for neglecting technology, intelligence,<sup>212</sup> and non-state actors.<sup>213</sup> These had all contributed to the rise of what has been termed 'new wars', primarily in parts of the world where the authority of the state has been diminished ('both a cause and a consequence of violence').<sup>214</sup> Stephen Melton saw failure in Afghanistan and Iraq as being rooted in the 'historicism of Clausewitz', which 'has served us poorly in the thirty years since military theoreticians made him the centrepiece of our new joint doctrine'.<sup>215</sup> Against this criticism, Herfried Münkler highlights Clausewitz's description of war as 'a true chameleon'. To judge the nature of war by any specific example is therefore to fall into the trap of buying into the collective memory of a given political community at a

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*Studies*, 9:2-3 (1986), p. 51.

<sup>205</sup> Jon T. Sumida, *Decoding Clausewitz: A new approach to On War* (Lawrence, KS, 2008), p. 5.

<sup>206</sup> Kinross, *Clausewitz and America*, p. 76.

<sup>207</sup> Harry G. Summers Jr., 'Clausewitz and strategy today', *Naval War College Review*, 26:2 (1983), pp. 40-46; Michael I. Handel, 'Corbett, Clausewitz, and Sun Tzu' *Naval War College Review*, 53:4 (2000), pp. 106-124; Brett Friedman, 'Creeping death: Clausewitz and comprehensive counterinsurgency', *Military Review*, 94:1 (2014), pp. 82-89.

<sup>208</sup> Powell with Persico, *A Soldier's Way*, p. 208.

<sup>209</sup> Amy B. Zegart, *Spying Blind: The CIA, the FBI, and the Origins of 9/11* (Princeton, NJ, 2007), p. 212 (n).

<sup>210</sup> Strachan, *Clausewitz's On War*, pp. 169-71.

<sup>211</sup> Hew Strachan, 'Strategy or Alibi? Obama, McChrystal and the Operational Level of War', *Survival*, 52:5 (2010), p. 165.

<sup>212</sup> Phillip S. Meilinger, *Thoughts on War* (Lexington, KY, 2020), p. 14.

<sup>213</sup> Hugh Smith, *On Clausewitz: A Study of Military and Political Ideas* (Basingstoke, 2004), p. 49.

<sup>214</sup> Mary Kaldor, 'In defence of new wars', *Stability*, 2:1:4 (2013), p. 2. Kaldor nevertheless wrote that our understanding of 'new wars ... depends heavily on what we learn from reading [Clausewitz's] *On War*' Mary Kaldor, 'Inconclusive wars: Is Clausewitz still relevant in these global times?', *Global Policy*, 1:3 (2010), p. 272.

<sup>215</sup> Melton, *The Clausewitz Delusion*, p. 243.

certain time. Clausewitz applied himself to nature of war by his 'Trinity': violence as the original element of war; the role of chance in war; and war as a political instrument.<sup>216</sup> Clausewitz's Trinitarian approach enables us to make assessments of wars and conflicts that include supposedly 'game-changing' technologies and ideas,<sup>217</sup> such as the Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA).<sup>218</sup> The ability of Clausewitzian thought to deal with all of these is located in his recognition of the necessity of theory.

Theory will have fulfilled its main task when it is used to analyze the constituent elements of war, to distinguish precisely what at first sight seems fused, to explain in full the properties of the means employed and to show the probable effects, to define clearly the nature of the ends in view, and to illuminate all phases of warfare in a thorough critical inquiry.<sup>219</sup>

The Universalist approach inherent in the theoretical bent of *On War* is integral to its utility,<sup>220</sup> but politicians rarely scrutinise Clausewitz closely.<sup>221</sup> Pentagon planning for the 2003 invasion of Iraq, for example, typified the flawed intellectual stance whereby such powerful institutions seem to assume that they have re-invented and tamed war.<sup>222</sup> A year after the invasion of Iraq, Paul Kennedy was forthright in his criticism of US policymakers.

[I]t now appears that many army generals warned that maintaining law and order in Iraq would be much more difficult than simply ousting Saddam, that urban warfare would be horrible, and that casualties would rise. But the Cheney-Rumsfeld-Wolfowitz<sup>223</sup> team had no intention of listening to professionals - unless of course the soldiers agreed with their own rosy interpretation of how the war would go ... [although, as] Clausewitz so frequently warned, it rarely ends up where it was planned to conclude.

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<sup>216</sup> Herfried Münkler, 'Was ist neu an den neuen Kriegen?' in Helmut König, Manfred Sicking (eds), *Der Irak-Krieg und die Zukunft Europas* (Bielefeld, 2004), pp. 102-3. Münkler bases this argument on Carl von Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, ed. Werner Hahlweg (Bonn, 1980), pp. 212-3.

<sup>217</sup> Handel, *Masters of War*, p. 5.

<sup>218</sup> A much-discussed concept following the First Gulf War of 1991. Andrew Futter and Jeffrey Collins 'Introduction; Reflecting on the global impact of the RMA' in Andrew Futter and Jeffrey Collins (eds), *Reassessing the Revolution in Military Affairs: Transformation, Evolution and Lessons Learnt* (Basingstoke, 2015) p. 1. RMA is rooted in the concept of a Military Revolution (MR), a term coined by the historian Michael Roberts in the 1950s, in connection with developments in 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century Sweden. Michael Roberts, *The Military Revolution, 1560-1660: An Inaugural Lecture delivered before the Queen's University of Belfast* (Belfast, 1956).

<sup>219</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 141.

<sup>220</sup> Donald Stoker, *Why America loses Wars: Limited War and US Strategy from the Korean War to the Present* (Cambridge, 2019), p. 5.

<sup>221</sup> John E. Shepherd Jr., 'On War: Is Clausewitz still relevant?', *Parameters*, 20:3 (1990), p. 85.

<sup>222</sup> Clayton Dennison, 'Operation Iraqi Freedom: What went wrong? A Clausewitzian analysis', *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies*, 9:3 (2007), pp. 1-34.

<sup>223</sup> Dick Cheney (US Vice-President, 2001-9); Donald Rumsfeld (US Secretary of Defense, 2001-6); Paul Wolfowitz (US Deputy Secretary of Defense, 2001-5). These men lobbied hard for regime change in Iraq. Michael A. Reynolds, 'The Wars' entangled roots: Regional realities and Washington's vision' in Beth Bailey and Richard H. Immerman (eds), *Understanding the U.S. Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan* (New York, 2015), pp. 43-4.

Kennedy charges that the so-called neo-conservatives never even considered this, as '[m]oral degeneration in war is something that the higher military leaders, although they worried that the post-battle situation would not be pleasant, did not anticipate'.<sup>224</sup>

## VII

'It is time that action be taken at last. However, whoever dares to act must recognise that they are likely to enter German history as traitors. Yet, if he fails to act, he would be a traitor to his own conscience'. Claus von Stauffenberg, 1944.<sup>225</sup>

A proper appreciation of Clausewitz has often been lacking in politicians. There is, of course, a certain irony here given Clausewitz's privileging of political decision makers over the military. One exception amongst politicians was Britain's Ramsay MacDonald. In 1917, undeterred by the fact that Clausewitz supposedly personified Prussian-German militarism, MacDonald stated:

What is to be the Europe of the future? I do not mean the military position; I mean the political one. I come back to the point I made first of all, and I emphasise that war is not merely a military affair, but war is also a political affair. As Clausewitz lays down so clearly in his great book on war, the results of war are political, and unless we are bending our energies and turning our attention to the political aftermath of the War, then we are not in a position to use the opportunities a successful war presents to us.<sup>226</sup>

Clausewitz understood that only a final victory that attained a pre-defined political goal made war worth fighting.<sup>227</sup> He did not start out with such a nuanced opinion. The Clausewitz of the Battle of Jena (1806) privileged military success over politics, while the Clausewitz of the Battle of Waterloo (1815) viewed war as 'a modification of political intercourse', a way of pursuing the political interest, and attaining political ends 'by means of fighting'.<sup>228</sup> Many critics of Clausewitz fail to acknowledge this evolution in thought. For detractors, Clausewitz is a philosopher of a kind of war that no longer exists.<sup>229</sup> This takes too little account of the fact that much of Clausewitz's later thinking demonstrated a willingness to focus on unconventional limited wars as

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<sup>224</sup> Paul Kennedy, 'The degeneration of war: Once you start a war, it is very difficult to control its degeneration and its consequences - a fact that President Bush probably failed to consider', *The Guardian* (London), 11 May 2004.

<sup>225</sup> Bundesministerium der Verteidigung, 'Rede der Bundesministerin der Verteidigung Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer anlässlich des feierlichen Gelöbnisses am 20. Juli 2019 im Bendlerblock', <https://www.bmvg.de/de/aktuelles/rede-der-ministerin-feierliches-geloebnis-am-20-juli-2019-75700> (accessed 8 May 2020).

<sup>226</sup> *Hansard*, HC Deb, fifth series, volume 90, columns 344-5, 12 February 1917.

<sup>227</sup> Kaiser, 'Back to Clausewitz', p. 685; Stoker, *Why America loses Wars*, p. 18.

<sup>228</sup> Andreas Herberg-Rothe, *Clausewitz's Puzzle: The Political Theory of War* (Oxford, 2007), p. 34; Beatrice Heuser, 'Clausewitz's ideas of strategy and victory' in Strachan and Herberg-Rothe (eds), *Clausewitz in the Twenty First Century*, pp. 138-62.

<sup>229</sup> Sean McFate, *The New Rules of War: Victory in the Age of Durable Disorder* (New York, 2019), p. 29; Richard H. Shultz Jr., foreword by Gen. Joseph L. Votel, *Transforming US Intelligence for Irregular War: Task Force 714 in Iraq* (Washington DC, 2020), p. 2.



well as Napoleonic warfare.<sup>230</sup> In fact, given the omnipresence of Clausewitzian concepts such as 'friction' in contemporary war, and as the successful prosecution of war becomes increasingly convoluted, the relevance of Clausewitz actually increases.<sup>231</sup> Since one veteran of Afghanistan has termed counterinsurgency 'a thinking man's fight',<sup>232</sup> this increased relevance applies to both conventional *and* unconventional warfare ('small wars' as Clausewitz termed them), regardless of time and place.<sup>233</sup>

**[Insert: Figure 2: David Cameron and Clausewitz, 2010. Text below cartoon should read:**

In June 2010, having just become UK prime minister, David Cameron had to deal with the on-going war in Afghanistan. Nick Garland urged him to take heed of Clausewitz's advice.

**Half-page cartoon – paid for by the author.  
Nick Garland, *Daily Telegraph*, 30 June 2010  
©Telegraph Media Group Limited**

Emile Simpson has noted that, contrary to the framework prescribed by Clausewitz, in the recent war in Afghanistan the application of force aimed to achieve 'directly political outcomes'.<sup>234</sup> In order for such opinions to achieve wider currency, English-speaking critics of Clausewitz's alleged neglect of low-intensity conflict must take account of the recent translation of his lectures on small wars.<sup>235</sup> From these it is clear that Clausewitz, while stressing 'the use of the engagement for the purpose of the war', in no way sought to prescribe policy.<sup>236</sup> Surveying matters today, Clausewitz's definition of strategy has the advantage of being that much more restricted than it is now.<sup>237</sup> It is with good reason that Clausewitz remains required reading in military academies and universities worldwide.<sup>238</sup>

Debates as to the relevance of Clausewitz will continue without end. However, recent years have seen the discrediting of the notion that Clausewitz, Bismarck and

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<sup>230</sup> Meilinger, *Thoughts on War*, p.12.

<sup>231</sup> Steve Leonard, 'That Clausewitz-is-irrelevant "Hot Take" isn't blasphemous. It's just wrong', Modern War Institute at West Point, 5 March 2019. <https://mwi.usma.edu/clausewitz-irrelevant-hot-take-isnt-blasphemous-just-wrong/> (accessed 17 April 2020).

<sup>232</sup> Matt Zeller, *Watches Without Time: An American Soldier in Afghanistan* (Charlottesville, VA, 2012) p. 221.

<sup>233</sup> Jack S. Levy, 'Clausewitz and People's War', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 40:3 (2017), pp. 450-6; Werner Hahlweg, 'Clausewitz und der Guerillakrieg' in Clausewitz-Gesellschaft (ed.), *Freiheit ohne Krieg? Beiträge zur Strategie-Diskussion der Gegenwart im Spiegel der Theorie von Carl von Clausewitz* (Bonn 1980), pp. 349-58; Peter Paret, 'Clausewitz' Vorlesungen über den Kleinen Krieg an der neuen Kriegsschule in Berlin, 1810-1812', *Clausewitz-Gesellschaft e.V. Band 6: Jahrbuch 2010* (Hamburg, 2009), pp. 34-45; Sibylle Scheipers, *On Small War: Carl von Clausewitz and People's War* (Oxford, 2018).

<sup>234</sup> Emile Simpson, *War from the Ground Up: Twenty-First Century Combat as Politics*, preface by Sir Michael Howard (London, 2018 edn.), p. 42.

<sup>235</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, 'Lectures on Small War, held at the War College in 1810 and 1811' in Daase and Davis (eds), *Clausewitz on Small War*, 19-168. Originally published as 'Meine Vorlesungen über den Kleinen Krieg, gehalten auf der Kriegs-Schule 1810 und 1811' in Hahlweg (ed.), *Carl von Clausewitz: Schriften, Aufsätze, Studien, Briefe*, pp. 226-449.

<sup>236</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 177.

<sup>237</sup> Hew Strachan, 'The lost meaning of strategy', *Survival*, 47:3 (2005), p. 34.

<sup>238</sup> Giuseppe Caforio, *Social Sciences and the Military: An Interdisciplinary Overview* (London, 2006), p. 221.

Hitler all hail from the same tradition. In today's Federal Republic of Germany this malign linear narrative has been replaced by a more positive discourse. In this a straight line is drawn from Clausewitz and the Wars of Liberation<sup>239</sup> through to the resistance behind the 20 July bomb<sup>240</sup> plot to today's *Bundeswehr*, the guarantor of German democracy since 1955.<sup>241</sup> This was part of an 'invented tradition'<sup>242</sup> that was part of the founding myth (*Gründungsmythos*) of the Federal Republic.<sup>243</sup> Today, the *Clausewitz-Gesellschaft* enjoys a close relationship with the *Bundeswehr* and the socio-political elite in German society.<sup>244</sup> In the 2005 yearbook of the *Clausewitz-Gesellschaft*, Christian Millotat wrote that

Carl von Clausewitz was not just the medium for the Prussian military reformers, on whom, alongside the rebellion of conscience of 20 July 1944, our *Bundeswehr* builds its tradition. For politicians and soldiers the general [Carl von Clausewitz] has remained relevant when it comes to analysing, interpreting or restructuring political and military phenomena.<sup>245</sup>

This process has not been without problems. The annual meeting of the *Clausewitz-Gesellschaft* in 2013, for example, witnessed a proposal to strip certain indicted war criminals of honorary membership (this included generals Manstein and Halder).<sup>246</sup> The society's board made clear that such honorary membership had died with the individuals and that, in the new Germany, such individuals would no longer be acceptable as honorary members.<sup>247</sup> In today's Federal Republic, the Prussian reformers, the military resistance to Hitler and the history of the *Bundeswehr* itself

<sup>239</sup> Ulrich C. Kleysler, 'Das Jahr 1813 – Mythos und Realität', *Clausewitz-Gesellschaft e.V. Band 9: Jahrbuch 2013* (Hamburg, 2014), pp. 204-37. In 2008 the *Bundeswehr* introduced a medal 'for special gallantry and extraordinary conduct in combat'. Answering criticism of the 'new' Iron Cross, the Federal government argued that the Iron Cross was initiated the Wars of Liberation in 1813. Karen Hagemann, *Revisiting Prussia's Wars against Napoleon* (Cambridge, 2015), p. 229.

<sup>240</sup> The *Gelöbnis* - the oath sworn by recruits to the *Bundeswehr* - is taken annually on 20 July. This occasion has seen speeches by numerous luminaries. 'Gelöbnis von Rekruten der Bundeswehr am 20. Juli 2008 in Berlin: Gelöbnisansprache von Helmut Schmidt, ehemaliger Kanzler der Bundesrepublik Deutschland', *Clausewitz-Gesellschaft e.V. Band 4: Jahrbuch 2008* (Hamburg, 2009), pp. 10-3; and 'Feierliches Gelöbnis der Bundeswehr am 20. Juli 2009 in Berlin: Gelöbnisansprache der Kanzlerin der Bundesrepublik Deutschland Dr. Angela Merkel', *Clausewitz-Gesellschaft e.V. Band 5: Jahrbuch 2009* (Hamburg, 2009), pp. 8-12.

<sup>241</sup> Carl von Stauffenberg, the man who planted the bomb on 20 July 1944, was a direct descendant of the reformer August von Gneisenau. Doris Astrid Muth, 'Reichsritter - Domherren – Widerstandskämpfer: Zur Familiengeschichte der Schenken von Stauffenberg' in Jakobus Kaffanke, Edwin Ernst Weber, Thomas Krause (eds), *Es lebe das "Geheime Deutschland"! Claus Schenk Graf von Stauffenberg: Person – Motivation – Rezeption* (Berlin, 2011), p. 45.

<sup>242</sup> A concept brought to prominence by Hobsbawm and Ranger in 1983. See Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 1983).

<sup>243</sup> Sönke Neitzel, 'Der 20. Juli und die *Bundeswehr*: Das blasse Vermächtnis', *Der Spiegel*, 29 July 2019.

<sup>244</sup> Its membership is composed of former and serving *Bundeswehr* personnel as well as notables from all areas of German life. This includes many academics. At the current time, for example, Prof. Dr. Michael Staack of Helmut Schmidt University, the *Bundeswehr's* own university, is a member of the society's advisory board. Honorary members of the society have included Erich von Manstein (1963) and Franz Halder (1963), Werner Hahlweg (1987) and Peter Paret (1999). Clausewitz-Gesellschaft e.V. (ed), *Clausewitz-Gesellschaft: Chronik 1961–2011* (Hamburg, 2011), pp. 269-70.

<sup>245</sup> Christian E.O. Millotat, 'Festvortrag: Carl von Clausewitz und sein Einfluss auf Politiker und Soldaten von heute', *Clausewitz-Gesellschaft e.V. Band 1: Jahrbuch 2005* (Hamburg, 2005), p. 55.

<sup>246</sup> Gregor Peter Schmitz, 'Clausewitz-Gesellschaft: Wo Kriegsverbrecher wohlgeblieben bleiben', *Der Spiegel*, 18 March 2014.

represent the cornerstones of an officially sanctioned tradition. Every *Bundeswehr* officer is, naturally, entirely familiar with these three ‘pillars’.<sup>248</sup> In 2013, at the bicentenary of the Battle of the Nations, the president of the European parliament Martin Schulz declared that, when Wilhelm II inaugurated the *Völkerschlachtdenkmal* in 1913, his fellow Social Democrat Georg Ledebour had lamented ‘the degeneracy of the national ideal...which was born as a child of the aspirations for freedom’.

It is this Tradition in which we want to put ourselves today. We are here not only at a German, but also at a European place of remembrance. Today people from all over Europe come together on the battlefields of that time to talk about our future together. Today we no longer understand the wars of the past as heroic national myths that have been used too often to make people die miserably for the great power fantasies of their rulers. Today we see that wars have brought endless suffering to people on all sides. We have learned from past mistakes.<sup>249</sup>

This speech reflects nothing so much as the changes wrought in Germany since 1945.<sup>250</sup> As one of the architects of the victory over Napoleon, the *Weltanschauung* constructed by Clausewitz insisted upon the subordination of the military to the political. As General Colin Powell stated in 1990: ‘The fact that military planning must flow from clear political direction is not a new theory ... I think history will show that it drove [Generals] Eisenhower and Marshall and Pershing and Grant and Washington, and you can discover that theory in the works of Clausewitz’.<sup>251</sup> The historical processes discussed in this article mean that the reputation of Clausewitz has assessed on his own merits and largely cleared of association with the darker aspects of the German past. Engaging with Clausewitz’s work is now less problematic than is the case with, say, Carl Schmitt. The evolution of the Prussian general’s reputation means that we can now debate his writings without being condemned for endorsing the apocalypse. One hundred and eighty-nine years after his death, only a fool would discount the Prussian Master of War.

R. Gerald Hughes  
Aberystwyth © 2020

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<sup>247</sup> Statement of Kurt Hermann, president of the *Clausewitz-Gesellschaft*, 3 April 2014. [https://www.clausewitz-gesellschaft.de/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/2014\\_Apr\\_03\\_Brief\\_Präsident.pdf](https://www.clausewitz-gesellschaft.de/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/2014_Apr_03_Brief_Präsident.pdf) (accessed 25 April 2020).

<sup>248</sup> Neitzel, ‘Der 20. Juli und die *Bundeswehr*’.

<sup>249</sup> ‘Leipzig 1813 – 1913 – 2013: Jubiläum Völkerschlacht und Völkerschlachtdenkmal - Rede von Martin Schulz, Präsident des Europäischen Parlaments’, 18 October 2013. [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/former\\_ep\\_presidents/president-schulz-2012-2014/fr/press/press\\_release\\_speeches/speeches/sp-2013/sp-2013-october//leipzig-1813---1913---3](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/former_ep_presidents/president-schulz-2012-2014/fr/press/press_release_speeches/speeches/sp-2013/sp-2013-october//leipzig-1813---1913---3) (accessed 8 May 2020).

<sup>250</sup> Hagemann, *Revisiting Prussia's Wars against Napoleon*, p. 399.

<sup>251</sup> Michael D. Pearlman, *Warmaking and American Democracy: The Struggle over Military Strategy, 1700 to the Present* (Lawrence, KS, 1999), p. 5.