

# Reclaiming the Clausewitzian Trinity

EDWARD J. VILLACRES and  
CHRISTOPHER BASSFORD

© 1995 Edward J. Villacres and Christopher Bassford

In a recent *Parameters* article, "US Military Doctrine and the Revolution in Military Affairs" (Autumn 1994), Dr. David Jablonsky made frequent reference to the theories of Carl von Clausewitz in order to illustrate points about strategy and doctrine. Jablonsky's discussion of his central subject demonstrated his usual flair and insight. On one particular point, however, his use of Clausewitz touched an ambiguity that is becoming troublesome to many students of the Prussian philosopher of war.

The problem appears in Jablonsky's discussion of "what Clausewitz had referred to as the 'remarkable trinity': the military, the government, and the people."<sup>1</sup> There is a serious discrepancy between this definition of the "remarkable trinity" and the definition given by Clausewitz himself in *On War*: Clausewitz defines the components of the trinity as (1) primordial violence, hatred, and enmity; (2) the play of chance and probability; and (3) war's element of subordination to rational policy.<sup>2</sup> By no means originating with Jablonsky, this discrepancy appears frequently in recent analyses, both those that enlist Clausewitz's support and those that attack the Prussian philosopher of war as benighted, evil, or simply irrelevant. In fact, the "remarkable" or "paradoxical" trinity<sup>3</sup> is one of the Clausewitzian concepts most frequently cited in all of recent military literature. Since interpretations of Clausewitz are a source of such extensive controversy, it seems important to differentiate between what Clausewitz actually said and other concepts of a trinity that are derived from, but not the same as, the "remarkable trinity" defined in *On War*.<sup>4</sup>

Definition of the trinity as "people, army, and government" seems to have originated in Harry Summers' important and influential study, *On Strat-*

# Report Documentation Page

*Form Approved*  
*OMB No. 0704-0188*

Public reporting burden for the collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to a penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number.

1. REPORT DATE <b>1995</b>	2. REPORT TYPE	3. DATES COVERED <b>00-00-1995 to 00-00-1995</b>			
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE <b>Reclaiming the Clausewitzian Trinity</b>		5a. CONTRACT NUMBER			
		5b. GRANT NUMBER			
		5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER			
6. AUTHOR(S)		5d. PROJECT NUMBER			
		5e. TASK NUMBER			
		5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER			
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) <b>U.S. Army War College,ATTN: Parameters,122 Forbes Avenue,Carlisle,PA,17013-5238</b>		8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER			
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)		10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)			
		11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)			
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT <b>Approved for public release; distribution unlimited</b>					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT					
15. SUBJECT TERMS					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT <b>unclassified</b>	b. ABSTRACT <b>unclassified</b>	c. THIS PAGE <b>unclassified</b>	<b>Same as Report (SAR)</b>	<b>11</b>	

egy: *A Critical Analysis of the Vietnam War* (1982). This version of Clausewitz's concept was derived from a secondary discussion in which Clausewitz developed a linkage between his "remarkable trinity" of war (violent emotion, chance, and rational policy) and the social trinity of people, army, and government. It appears in the introduction to Summers' book: "The task of the military theorist, Clausewitz said, is to develop a theory that maintains a balance among what he calls a trinity of war—the people, the government, and the Army."<sup>5</sup> That definition is repeated in *On Strategy II: A Critical Analysis of the Gulf War*: "Particularly apt was Clausewitz's emphasis on the 'remarkable trinity' of the people, the government, and the army as the essential basis for military operations."<sup>6</sup> Using this concept of the trinity throughout both books with great success, Colonel Summers made it a valuable analytical tool. It is nonetheless an alteration of the concept as it is expressed in *On War*. Perhaps it would be more accurate to refer to the concept in this form as the "Summersian Trinity."

Another possible source for this definition could be a passage from Michael Howard's brief book in the *Past Masters* series, entitled simply *Clausewitz*. The first chapter contains this observation: "But even as he redrafted yet another idea came to him: that of war as a 'remarkable trinity,' in which the directing policy of the government, the professional qualities of the army, and the attitude of the population all played an equally significant part."<sup>7</sup> Howard's discussion did not clearly delineate the original trinity when noting its relationship to the people, army, and government. This potential source of confusion is not cleared up until the final paragraph of the book, where Howard directly quotes Clausewitz's original definition.<sup>8</sup>

In any case, the "people, army, government" interpretation of the trinity has caught on among both proponents of Clausewitz and his critics. For example, this definition is repeated even in a recent book by one of the authors of the present article, Chris Bassford's *Clausewitz in English: The Reception of Clausewitz in Britain and America, 1815-1945*. Bassford's two brief references to the trinity are made matter-of-factly and there is no real discussion of the issue. Briefly summarizing post-1945 events in this field of study, Bassford used the phrases "Clausewitz's famous trinity of the people, the army, and the government" and "By clarifying the interplay among the trinity of army, government, and people . . . ."<sup>9</sup> Bassford, very much a proponent of Clausewitzian theory, was aware of the discrepancy between Summers' use of the trinity and

---

Captain Edward J. Villacres is an armor officer assigned to the Department of History at the US Military Academy, West Point, N.Y. He recently completed an M.A. degree in history at the University of Kansas and is currently working on his Ph.D. there.

Dr. Christopher Bassford is Associate Professor of National Policy Issues at the US Army War College and author of *Clausewitz in English: The Reception of Clausewitz in Britain and America, 1815-1945* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1994).

---

---

*“It is the trinity’s capacity to encompass so much of the nature of war, and so much of Clausewitzian theory, that makes it such a valuable, if complex, analytical tool.”*

---

Clausewitz’s, but decided—rather pedantically—not to belabor the issue because it fell outside the chronological limits of his book.

More important, the “people, army, government” construct has been used by authors like Martin van Creveld and John Keegan to consign Clausewitz to irrelevance.<sup>10</sup> These writers like to claim that this essentially social paradigm is obsolete and so, therefore, is all of Clausewitzian theory. The state, in this view, is rapidly becoming irrelevant to warmaking, and distinctions between the “people” and the “army” are meaningless when wars are in fact fought not between states but between armed and irrevocably hostile populations. Thus future war, to use Van Creveld’s term, will be “non-trinitarian.”

### *Another View*

The alternative way to define the composition of this “remarkable trinity” is as, first, violent emotion and hatred; second, chance and probability; and third, the subordination of war to rational thought as an instrument of policy. This view is supported by three prominent interpreters of Clausewitz: Peter Paret, Raymond Aron, and Azar Gat. In the new version of *Makers of Modern Strategy*, Paret gives this definition:

The second major dialectical relationship that runs through the eight books of *On War* is encompassed in the assertion that real war is a composite of three elements. Its dominant tendencies, Clausewitz declared, “always make war a remarkable trinity,” composed of violence and passion; uncertainty, chance, and probability; and political purpose and effect.<sup>11</sup>

Paret also defines the trinity this way in his book *Clausewitz and the State*:

Real war, Clausewitz declared, was a composite of three elements: violence and passion; the scope afforded by all human intercourse to chance and probability, but also to genius, intelligence, [and] courage; and its subordination to politics, which, Clausewitz characteristically argued, made it subject to reason.<sup>12</sup>

In *Clausewitz: Philosopher of War*, Raymond Aron gives a definition that incorporates the linkage of the trinity to its corresponding elements of society (the people, military, and government) but still maintains the primary focus on the dominant tendencies of war:

From the dualist conception follows, in the final stage, in Chapter 1 of Book 1, the definition of the strange trinity: original violence (people), free activity of the spirit (war leader), supremacy of understanding (government).<sup>13</sup>

Azar Gat similarly defines the “remarkable trinity” in *The Origins of Military Thought: From the Enlightenment to Clausewitz*. He echoes the view that it refers to violence, chance, and politics:

The unity of the phenomenon of war, that is, the constitutive element common to all wars, is salvaged. The “primordial violence, hatred, and enmity” of the nature of war are directed by the “commander’s creative spirit” through the “play of chance and probability” to achieve the political aim. This is the “remarkable trinity” which is presented by Clausewitz at the end of the first chapter of Book I, and which makes war “more than a true chameleon that slightly adapts its characteristics to the given case.”<sup>14</sup>

### *The Consequences for Theory*

Thus the lines are drawn between two very different approaches to this influential concept. The most direct way to clarify this matter is to examine the relevant passage in *On War* itself:

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

The first of these three aspects mainly concerns the people; the second the commander and his army; the third the government. The passions that are to be kindled in war must already be inherent in the people; the scope which the play of courage and talent will enjoy in the realm of probability and chance depends on the particular character of the commander and the army; but the political aims are the business of government alone.

These three tendencies are like three different codes of law, deep-rooted in their subject and yet variable in their relationship to one another. A theory that ignores any one of them or seeks to fix an arbitrary relationship between them would conflict with reality to such an extent that for this reason alone it would be totally useless.

Our task therefore is to develop a theory that maintains a balance between these three tendencies, like an object suspended between three magnets.<sup>15</sup>

Let us analyze this quotation in detail.

In arguing that war is more than a chameleon (an animal that merely changes color to match its surroundings, but otherwise remains identical),

Clausewitz is saying that war is a phenomenon that, depending on conditions, can actually take on radically different forms. The basic sources of changes in those conditions lie in the elements of his “trinity.”

Far from comprising “the people, the army, and the government,” Clausewitz’s trinity is really made up of three categories of forces: irrational forces (violent emotion, i.e. “primordial violence, hatred, and enmity”); non-rational forces (i.e. forces not the product of human thought or intent, such as “friction” and “the play of chance and probability”); and rationality (war’s subordination to reason, “as an instrument of policy”).<sup>16</sup>

Clausewitz then *connects* each of those forces “mainly” to one of three sets of human actors: the people, the army, and the government:

- The people are paired mainly with irrational forces—the emotions of primordial violence, hatred, and enmity, or, by implication, the lack thereof. It is quite possible to fight and even win wars whose outcome is of little concern to one’s people, especially if that is the case on both sides.

- The army (which refers, of course, to military forces in general) and its commander are paired mainly with the non-rational forces of friction, chance, and probability. Fighting organizations deal with those factors under the creative guidance of the commander (and creativity depends on something more than mere rationality, including, one hopes, the divine spark of talent or genius).

- The government is paired mainly with the rational force of calculation—policy is, ideally, driven by reason. This corresponds to the famous argument that “war is an instrument of policy.” Clausewitz knew perfectly well, however, that this ideal of rational policy is not always met: “That [policy] can err, subserve the ambitions, private interests, and vanity of those in power, is neither here nor there. . . . [H]ere we can only treat policy as representative of all interests of the community.”<sup>17</sup>

We stress the word “mainly”<sup>18</sup> because it is clear that each of the three categories that together constitute the actual trinity affects all of these human actors to some quite variable extent. The army’s officers and men and the political leaders are also, to varying degrees in different societies, members of “the people.” In democratic societies, at least, the people are expected to play a role in rational decisionmaking, whereas political leaders are as often driven by personal needs as by rational calculation of their societies’ practical requirements. Events on the army’s battlefields have a tremendous influence both on the people and on the political leadership, while popular and political factors, in turn, affect the army’s performance.

Thus, when Clausewitz speaks of war as a “total phenomenon,” he is not talking about war in the abstract (“absolute war”), nor about war “in theory.” He is talking about *real* war, war as we actually experience it, and he is describing just why it is that war is so dynamic, so unpredictable, so kaleidoscopic in its appearance. The concluding simile in our excerpt from *On War* is a nearly exact analogy: Clausewitz is saying that theory must be, as war

---

***“Fighting organizations deal with the non-rational forces of friction, chance, and probability under the creative guidance of the commander.”***

---

is, “like an object suspended between three magnets.” He is referring to the observed scientific fact that such a pendulum, once set swinging among three centers of attraction, behaves in a nonlinear manner—it never establishes a repeating pattern. As it enters a phase of its arc in which it is more strongly affected by one force than the others, it gains a momentum which carries it on into zones where the other forces can begin to exert their powers more strongly. The actual path of the suspended object is never determined by one force alone but by the interaction among them, which is forever and unavoidably shifting.

The trinity also provides us with clues as to what Clausewitz meant by his famous phrase, “war is a continuation [*fortsetzung*] of politics by other means.” This oft-quoted sentence contains two very different messages because of the dual meaning of the German word he used: *Politik*. That one word encompasses the two quite different English words “policy” and “politics.” The *policy* aspects he discusses are those connected with the trinity’s element of rational calculation. *Politics*, on the other hand, encompasses the whole trinity: Politics is a struggle for power between opposing forces—political events and outcomes are rarely if ever the product of any single actor’s conscious intentions. Politics, as any intelligent watcher of the evening news soon realizes, is a chaotic process involving competing personalities (whose *individual* actions may indeed have a rational basis), chance and friction, and popular emotion. (Is the candidate’s most brilliant speech blown off the airwaves by a natural disaster in the countryside? Will his embarrassing slip of the tongue get picked up by the evening news? Can a widespread “throw-the-bums out” mentality engulf even the most responsible politician?) The “remarkable trinity” is, in fact, Clausewitz’s description of the psychological environment of politics, of which “war is a continuation.” The only element of this political trinity that makes it unique to *war* is that the emotions discussed are those that might incline people to violence, whereas politics in general will involve the full range of human feelings. Thus Clausewitz tells us that the conscious conduct of war (strategy, etc.) *should* be a continuation of rational calculation and policy, but also that war *inevitably* originates and exists within the chaotic, unpredictable realm of politics.

The trinity metaphor, as given here, therefore serves to sum up much of Clausewitz's approach to war. In itself, however, Clausewitz's description of the interaction among the elements of the trinity leaves out the fact, strongly emphasized elsewhere in *On War*, that war is always an interaction between opposing *groups*. That is, this trinity exists on all sides of any conflict, thus further complicating the picture.

An approach to theory that denies or minimizes the role of any of these forces or the interaction among them is, therefore, by definition wrong. The soldier who expects the events of war to unfold in any other way—particularly in a rational, orderly way—is doomed to be surprised, disappointed, and frustrated.

### *The Meaning for Military Analysis*

Interpreting the meandering course of any real-world war as the product of a trinity of forces (emotion, chance, and rationality) is altogether different from discussing a trinity of actors (people, army, and government). The concept of the "remarkable trinity" is a basis for the practical political-military analysis of particular wars, not a description of the social structures—which may alter over time—that support war. There is, of course, a significant analytical benefit to be gained by noting the relationships among the people, army, and government—ignoring any of these elements or distorting their relationship will undermine any society's war effort—but this version of the trinity is derived from an *illustration* of Clausewitz's key concept, not the concept itself.

Therefore, the positive use of the "people, army, government" construct is valid and useful when it is employed by a Clausewitzian proponent like Harry Summers, but it by no means explores all of the important implications of the trinitarian concept. When, on the other hand, writers such as Martin van Creveld or John Keegan use the "people, army, government" construct in attempts to define and thence to marginalize Clausewitzian theory, the result is neither valid nor useful.<sup>19</sup>

The latter point is true whether or not one accepts arguments that the state is becoming an irrelevant factor in modern war. There are, in fact, many arguments to be made in defense of the Summersian approach. In any conflict organized enough to be called war, there will be some kind of leadership organization, some group of fighters, some kind of population base—if not people, army, and government *per se*, then people, army, and government analogs. Regarding the alleged death of the state, a much stronger argument can be made that the Western-style "nation state" is in fact in the ascendancy worldwide: A great many of the conflicts we are seeing are in fact the struggles of ethnic nations to establish their own states on the ruins of the more traditional imperial states. (Writers like Van Creveld and Keegan frequently confuse the terms "state" and "nation-state," two non-contiguous concepts.)



This is clearly the case in the former Soviet Union and the former Yugoslavia. The establishment of an independent Eritrea and a proto-Palestine offers rather different examples. There are in fact many weak states out there, but most of the successful low-intensity wars Van Creveld cites have merely resulted in the replacement of such weak states by new and stronger states, and almost all of the warfare going on at present is between states and state-wannabees. As for the drug-war variant, note that Colombia effectively destroyed the Medellin Cartel when it ceased to be merely a criminal organization and sought to vie with the state for primacy. And let us remember that any warfare in which the United States engages is going to be “state warfare” on at least one side.

Further, Clausewitz’s ideas are not nearly so time- and culture-bound as Van Creveld and Keegan imply. The states of Clausewitz’s era bore little resemblance to either the United States or the two Vietnams of the 1960s, and yet the relevance of *On War* to the Vietnam War is clear; indeed, it was that conflict which brought Clausewitz to the fore in American military circles.

We can, however, quite easily disregard the whole issue of the state and simply analyze military-political events in terms of Clausewitz’s original trinity of emotion, chance, and policy (or our reformulation of it: irrational, non-rational, and rational factors). Take for example the conflict in the former Yugoslavia. Keegan claims that this is an entirely “apolitical” war, driven exclusively by irrational ethnic hatreds and fought by peoples, not armies.<sup>20</sup> Thus only one leg of Clausewitz’s trinity is operative (the people, if we accept the “people, army, government” paradigm; violent emotion, if we take Clausewitz’s own construction). But this is clearly nonsense. The Bosnian War is being fought by conventional armies pursuing rational if extremely brutal political policies. These policies are aimed at the creation of new, independent, ethnic-based political entities—in other words, “nation-states,” which Yugoslavia was not.<sup>21</sup>

Let us look at Clausewitz’s trinity as it has manifested itself in Serbia. The breakup of Yugoslavia was driven by the needs of politicians like Slobodan Milosevic to find a new basis of legitimacy for their continuance in power. With Marxism dead, there was not much to turn to except ethnic identification, a violent emotion always latent in the Balkan peoples. Milosevic sensibly—rationally—grabbed that powerful handle. This was a successful approach for Milosevic in Serbia itself. He sustained it as long as he could do so profitably. Emotions got out of hand, however, and the pendulum moved into the irrational zone. When Bosnian Serb atrocities and intransigence provoked the international community into actions that threatened his political future, Milosevic’s government altered its policies. Cut off from Serbian governmental support, the Bosnian Serb army became in essence an independent force; the pendulum was now in the zone of military chance, probability, and talent. The army’s unexpectedly successful response to a Muslim counteroffensive, without Milosevic’s guidance or assistance, put its leaders (Radovan Karadzic and

---

***“One can identify all of Clausewitz’s most profound insights with one or another element of the trinity.”***

---

Ratko Mladic) in the driver’s seat. The pendulum will no doubt drift further before this article gets into print.

The Bosnian War has come to involve a huge number of players. Some of them are states, many are non- or sub-state actors, others are supra-national organizations. Trying to describe each player as a unit made up of “people, army, and government” would be a dubious enterprise. No matter how we tally up the players, however, the forces of Clausewitz’s original trinity are clearly at work, and in exactly the dynamic manner he described.

Herein lies the great value of the “trinitarian” approach to war. Exclusively rational models cannot account for the willingness of peoples to plunge their societies into the nightmarish chaos of war. Simplistic “cultural” explanations like Keegan’s miss the dynamic effect of calculating (if often stupid or self-centered) leaders. Technological models—and most discussions of “future war” are heavily if not exclusively technology-driven—cannot describe the real wars that we have already experienced in the post-Cold War era. The courses of these wars have in fact been driven not by technology (which remains essentially a tool), but by the complex interplay among opposing sets of popular emotions, military skills, and political calculations.

Political-military analysis, which should precede any attempt to make strategy, has to be based on the real, if messy (or, more properly, nonlinear), factors that Clausewitz describes.

### ***Conclusions***

Many readers find Clausewitzian theory to be frustratingly complex. The standard Clausewitz set for satisfactory theory is, however, difficult to argue with: that it not conflict with reality. A theory that accurately depicts the complexities of war is thus necessarily complex (which is not to say that every complex theory is necessarily correct). Nor should we forget that Clausewitz saw his theory as a basis for study, not as doctrine.

Despite the oft-noted fact that *On War* is an unfinished work, the ideas Clausewitz expressed in it are remarkably well integrated. If we pick up and follow any one major thread of his argument, we will eventually find it firmly connected to each of the other key ideas. It would be a mistake, therefore, to approach the trinity concept as a discrete bit of wisdom that can somehow be

extracted from the larger work. The trinity establishes a dialectical relationship among the dominant tendencies of war that are revealed by analysis in the rest of the book; it combines the elements that make war such a complex phenomenon. One can identify all of Clausewitz's most profound insights with one or another element of the trinity. The component dealing with violence and emotion (irrational forces) relates directly to his discussion of moral forces in war and the proposition that war is distinguished from other forms of human interaction by its resort to organized violence. The component dealing with chance and probability (non-rational forces) reflects his ideas about the role of military genius and the creative spirit in dealing with the fog and friction of war; operational ideas like the "center of gravity"<sup>22</sup> also relate to this aspect of the trinity. The component dealing with war's subordination to policy (rational forces) relates to his ideas about the relationship between ends and means, war as the continuation of policy, and the dichotomy between limited and absolute war.

Thus we can see that in this one, briefly described concept, Clausewitz unified many of the ideas he developed over 30-plus years of studying the nature of war: It represents his thinking at its most mature and sophisticated level. Clausewitz subtitled the section where he introduces the concept as "The Consequences for Theory," and it is the last section of Chapter One, Book One, the only part of the book Clausewitz considered finished (and probably the last part he wrote before he died). The trinity is therefore best understood as the theoretical capstone of Clausewitz's entire work. A thoughtful reading of the relevant passage in *On War*, combined with a willingness to integrate the points made there with the rest of the philosopher's argument, will make this clear. It is the trinity's capacity to encompass so much of the nature of war, and so much of Clausewitzian theory, that makes it such a valuable, if complex, analytical tool.

To reduce the original trinitarian concept to an allegedly obsolete social paradigm of "people, army, and government," as Clausewitz's recent critics have done, is not merely an oversimplification and a distortion of its meaning: It fundamentally misses the point of this great body of military theory. It would be a tragic mistake to accept the consequences of that error. Our military educators' often annoying fixation on Clausewitz's work has brought a much-needed professional sophistication to the thinking of America's military institutions in the generation since Vietnam. There is nothing better on the horizon.<sup>23</sup>

#### NOTES

1. David Jablonsky, "US Military Doctrine and the Revolution in Military Affairs," *Parameters*, 24 (Autumn 1994), 18-36. Jablonsky also uses the trinity, very effectively but in much the same manner, as the basis for the 59-page introduction to his book, *Churchill and Hitler: Essays on the Political-Military Direction of Total War* (Portland, Ore.: Frank Cass, 1994).

2. Admittedly, this distinction does not contradict the main thrust of Jablonsky's article about the "Revolution in Military Affairs," but our intent here is to clarify the source of the concept that Jablonsky attributed to Clausewitz and invoked to put the RMA into a societal context.
3. Translations of the original German phrase, *wunderliche Dreifaltigkeit*, differ significantly: remarkable, paradoxical, strange. "Marvelous" or "fascinating" might best capture Clausewitz's meaning.
4. Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. & trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1976).
5. Harry G. Summers, Jr., *On Strategy: A Critical Analysis of the Vietnam War* (Novato, Calif.: Presidio Press, 1982), pp. 26-27.
6. Harry G. Summers, Jr. *On Strategy II: A Critical Analysis of the Gulf War* (New York: Dell, 1992), p. 11.
7. Michael Howard, *Clausewitz* (Oxford, Eng.: Oxford Univ. Press, 1983), p. 20.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 73.
9. Christopher Bassford, *Clausewitz in English: The Reception of Clausewitz in Britain and America, 1815-1945* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1994), pp. 24, 203.
10. See Martin van Creveld, *The Transformation of War* (New York: The Free Press, 1991); John Keegan, *A History of Warfare* (New York: Knopf, 1993). See also Steven Metz, "A Wake for Clausewitz: Toward a Philosophy of 21st-Century Warfare," *Parameters*, 24 (Winter 1994-95), 126-32.
11. Peter Paret, "Clausewitz," in *Makers of Modern Strategy: From Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age*, ed. Peter Paret (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1986), pp. 186-213.
12. Peter Paret, *Clausewitz and the State: The Man, His Theories, and His Times* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1976), p. 368.
13. Raymond Aron, *Clausewitz: Philosopher of War*, trans. Christine Booker and Norman Stone (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1985), p. 85.
14. Azar Gat, *The Origins of Military Thought: From the Enlightenment to Clausewitz* (Oxford, Eng.: Oxford Univ. Press, 1989), p. 236.
15. Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 89.
16. This breakdown of Clausewitz's trinity into "rational, non-rational, and irrational forces" appeals to us because it seems to represent a symmetrical and inclusive approach to reality. It is also, at least potentially, a distortion of Clausewitz's argument. Concerning this specific approach, West Point professor Tony Echevarria says "[Bassford's] own interpretation of Clausewitz's understanding of the relationship between war and politics . . . , while accurate, betrays a decidedly contemporary political-scientific framework of analysis—one which the 19th century philosopher of war would not have had available to him." Antulio J. Echevarria, draft review of "Clausewitz in English" submitted to *Armed Forces and Society*.
17. Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 606.
18. It reads "*mehr ... zugewendet*" in the original German.
19. But then, neither Van Creveld nor Keegan is really interested in advertising (or, in Keegan's case, even in comprehending) the actual character of Clausewitz's ideas. Van Creveld, who in 1986 authored an article entitled "The Eternal Clausewitz," in *Clausewitz and Modern Strategy*, ed. Michael Handel (London: Frank Cass, 1986), pp. 35-50, has come to regard Clausewitz as a competitor whose influence has to be diminished; the depth of his actual understanding of *On War* varies greatly. Keegan's problems with Clausewitz are explored in Christopher Bassford's article "John Keegan and the Grand Tradition of Trashing Clausewitz," *War in History*, November 1994, pp. 319-36.
20. Keegan, *Warfare*, p. 58.
21. There was, however, some reason to hope that a Yugoslav nationality could be created in the future, much as a French nationality was created in the later Middle Ages.
22. The concept of an operational or strategic "center of gravity" is in essence a probabilistic tool to reduce the inevitable complexities and swirling uncertainties of war to a manageable level. Maintaining our focus on a small number of key factors (preferably just one) does not reduce the "fog of war," it simply makes it less distracting. Identifying those factors, as anyone who has tried it soon learns, is a creative rather than a purely rational process.
23. Certainly not in Keegan's nor Van Creveld's work, nor even in the useful writings of Alvin and Heidi Toffler. That fact stands out even in a recent attempt to substitute those writers for Clausewitz and to bury the Prussian philosopher: Steven Metz, "A Wake for Clausewitz," *Parameters*, 24 (Winter 1994-95), 126-32. As Metz correctly notes, there is virtually nothing in Keegan's book that is of any relevance for real-world policies, programs, or strategies. The Tofflers acknowledge that their vision of a "Third Wave" provides only an additional overlay, not a replacement, for the existing world; Metz asserts that they say very little about the strategic, political, social, or psychological elements of war, precisely the areas in which Clausewitz excels. In fact, the only writer that Metz describes as truly grappling with the key new problems of war, Ralph Peters, is himself a fervent proponent for the study of Clausewitz.