

Clausewitz and the Global War on Terrorism

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Many years ago, Clausewitz put forward some general tenets of war. Interestingly, Clausewitz's opinions are still applicable today, and they are very influential in the military decisions in many countries, including the US. First, the theory of war attempts to unearth the way an army can dominate physical as well as material advantage at a critical point. Given that this is not achievable at times, the theory puts forward some ways to gauge moral factors. That is the possibility of mistakes of the opponent, the impression that a bold action creates, and the desperation of an army. According to Clausewitz, all these aspects fall under the warfare theory, and they reflect the shared experiences in times of war. There is the need to regularly think of the most dangerous of the three aspects and explore them to ensure success. Such a move will help you to make valiant decisions founded on reasons that critics will not be able to defeat (Gatzke 1942).

Second, Clausewitz says that while depending on the physical or moral advantage, it is essential to attempt to assess the possibility of victory on your side in times of war. Nevertheless, this may not be possible. Therefore, you ought to act against this prospect in case there is no better option. If you are to give up, you should only abandon the reason when it is essential, when everything appears to be machinating against you. Thus, even when it is clear that you might lose, you should not consider your undertaking irrational or impossible, mainly if you optimally use the limited options you have (Kader 2006). Again, you must not fall short of calmness and determination, which are critical to preserving in times of war. The absence of these two qualities dramatically affects performance. Hence, according to Clausewitz, you should acquaint yourself with the idea of an honorable conquest/defeat. He emphasizes that one must always remember this idea because, in its absence, there would be no significant outcomes. According to Gatzke (1942), Frederick II often made use of this reasoning during the Silesian wars. The leader was acquainted with it, and this helped him in conducting impactful attacks on the Austrians.

Third, in all the actions that you take, you typically have to choose between the highly audacious and the meticulous solution. According to Gatzke (1942), it is essential to understand that the theory of warfare advocates for both. Instead, the theory states that the nature of battle determines the ultimate decision or the boldest action to take. Thus, the approaches allow the leader of the fighters to act with grit, enterprise spirit, and self-confidence. Therefore, you can make decisions concerning your natural force. However, it is essential to recall that there will be no significant achievement short of audacity.

1.1.2. The Theory of Combat

Warfare is a blend of numerous unique engagements, and success in the war depends on them. That

is, a group of practical commitments attracts good outcomes. As Clausewitz says, the vital element in warfare is the art of conquering your enemies in battle (Gatzke 1942). For that reason, Clausewitz describes several principles for use in combat.

To start with, as a fighter, you will need to take the general defense principles into account. The tenets stipulate that you should keep your soldiers covered most of the time. The truth is that you will be open to attacks at all times, except when you are the one attacking. Therefore, it is essential to be on the defensive most of the time. Again, do not take all your soldiers to the battlefield all at once (Kader 2006). With the remaining soldiers, you can quickly turn the tide of the combat. Furthermore, you should be less concerned about the size of your front. The rearmost soldiers are always available. You can use the troops to renew fighting at the same location or shift the fight to other nearby areas. The opponent, when attacking one part of the soldiers, often tries to go around and surround you simultaneously. The troops left behind can counter this attempt and, therefore, provide the necessary support. If you have many reserve soldiers, only a section of them should remain immediately at the rear of the front. Others should stay far behind. That way, they can counter any attempt by the enemy to envelop you (Gatzke 1942).

During warfare, you are not supposed to remain entirely passive. Attack the enemy head-on and from the sides, irrespective of whether he is attacking you. Such efforts will make the opponent deploy soldiers to attack you, and your troops in the rear will target them. You can also take advantage of a defensive position when the foe strikes. Moreover, you can withdraw your fighters at the time the enemy is about to attack, therefore luring him into unfamiliar territory where you can attack him from all sides. The decision to allow only a small section of your troops into the battlefront and leave some directly behind and others obliquely in the rear is essential for this move. Next, at the point where you remain passive, you need to employ the art of fortification. To make this useful, you should do it with several independent groups with sound profiles. Another point under the defense principle is about aiming. You must set high aims during a war. In case your goal is near to the ground, while that of the opponent is high, you will end up getting the worst results. Next, after setting a top target (the annihilation of the opponent column), you need to pursue the aim with the utmost energy and all your strength (Gatzke 1942).

Typically, the enemy will follow his goal from a different location. If you hunt him from the right side, he will attempt to use his tactics from the left side. Therefore, if you relax before the nemesis does or use less energy than him, he will be able to benefit fully from his tactics, while you shall partially gain from yours. He will, therefore, overwhelm you, and victory will belong to him. You will, therefore, give up on your partial gains. In the case of Emperor Napoleon, he attacked from the right and attempted to extend his attack using the left wing. Archduke Charles also used the same tactic. However, unlike Charles, who was indecisive, Napoleon attacked with boundless determination and energy. Thus, he won the battle. The indecisiveness of Archduke Charles made him stop halfway, and hence, the advantages that he had earned with his troops did not have any consequence (Gatzke 1942).

Lastly, it is vital to pursue a single primary goal with unlimited energy and willpower. If you follow the

aim and fail, there will be a great danger. However, to be increasingly cautious at the expense of your ultimate goal violates the military arts and principles. Such an action is an unwelcome type of caution and is in contrast with the nature of warfare. For inordinate achievements, you must aim high. When confronted by an audacious enterprise, the solution is not to abandon the things that will help you accomplish your goal. You should act like Napoleon, who pursued big goals with total determination. Clausewitz notes that even the few defensive wars that men have ever won, most of them followed the principles described above (Gatzke 1942).

The second thing that you need to consider is the general offense principles, which describe more ways of attacking the enemy. According to the rules, you need to attack the opponent from one point with high energy to leave the rest of his troops in confusion but occupied. Such action will enable you to use equal or lesser force with a possibility to emerge victoriously. Moreover, you have to direct your primary thrust against the aggressor's wing by confronting it from the front and the side or by surrounding it and attacking it from behind. This move will help you discontinue the line of retreat of the opponent. Even when you are stronger than the enemy, you must direct your primary attack against one point of the enemy's wing to increase your strength at this location. Typically, the critical goal is to improve the possibility of winning, and all the decisions for the warfare must focus on this aim. Understanding this issue can help transform an indecisive triumph into a decisive victory via the determined pursuit of the foe (Gatzke 1942).

Again, if the aggressor has an army large enough to attack you from all directions, you should direct your energy in attacking the fighters concentrically (from all sides) to disorder the troops. Confronting them from all sides allows the enemy to deploy more troops on the battlefield; hence, you should not forget to leave a section of your army behind. Avoid long and continuous lines of soldiers, which would only facilitate parallel attacks that are less effective in modern wars. Also, remember to make use of surprise attacks, which are very useful, especially at night. If you can use them fruitfully, then you will be more fortunate in times of war. Surprise attacks can help you make the most out of a small army (Gatzke 1942).

The third group of principles under the combat theory concerns the use of troops. First of all, the tenets state that you should use firearms to conduct an attack if you have them. The principles further specify that you should avoid using cavalry before the aggressor suffers substantially from your infantry as well as the artillery. Despite the fact that it is less mobile, artillery fire is more effective than the infantry. When beginning a fight, you need to use a big part of your artillery. However, if you have many troops, you can reserve the artillery. After the artillery, you should deploy a small part of the infantry, such as the marksmen, to help discover the direction of the battle. If the light infantry can counter the fighters of the aggressor, you should not hasten to deploy your remaining troops. You should attempt as much as possible to deplete the opponent with this preliminary attack. If the enemy uses a massive number of fighters on the battlefield that your few soldiers cannot withstand, you need to increase the infantry. At this time, the cavalry must be in proximity to the fighting soldiers but not too close to risk destruction by the enemy. When the cavalry is near enough, you can quickly take advantage of a favorable turn of the warfare (Gatzke 1942).

The fourth group of principles under the combat theory describes the use of terrains. It explains how soldiers can use the ground to their advantage. The territory serves as an obstacle to the enemy, therefore giving you the chance to reinforce your front. Features such as large rivers and lakes can help protect your soldiers from the enemy (Gatzke 1942).

1.1.3. Center of Gravity

The center of gravity refers to the epicenter of all power and undertakings upon which all the activities of the war depend. It is that aspect, ability or position from which the enemy troops get their freedom of action, physical control or the will to engage in war. The explanation of the center of gravity may be natural, but identifying it is not. It may be a tangible object or an abstract thing, such as the determination to fight. Moreover, the center of gravity can change in times of warfare; hence, there is a need for constant reevaluation (Echevarria 2002).

We can look at the concept of the center of gravity as the central point of a military power base in times of war at the strategic level. The operative and tactical centers depend on the strategic epicenters of gravity. Clausewitz maintained that identifying the center of gravity is essential in determining the right military goal. Thus, the key to overwhelming the aggressor is to uncover his center of gravity and then target it. You will be able to collapse the enemy without losing much of your resources by attacking the center of gravity rather than focusing on other areas. Nonetheless, it is good to realize that you may not be able to discover the actual center of gravity of the enemy immediately. It, therefore, means that you may get to know the center of gravity when the war is underway. Similarly, the center of gravity of the aggressor can change when the battle is ongoing, depending on the turn of events during that time. Therefore, it is of paramount importance to continually analyze the opponent and his centers of gravity so that you will know when there is a change (Echevarria 2002).

Moreover, it is essential to understand that there may be different opinions concerning the center of gravity of the enemy. For instance, in the case of modern-day wars, the air force, army and commanders may not agree on the center of gravity of the aggressor. What the Air Force commander considers as the center of gravity may be different from what the other two commanders think. However, this does not mean that one is right while others are wrong. Each leader may have a different center of gravity because of the distinctive nature of his branch of the troops. However, the strategic center of the enemy is one. Therefore, the different commanders must also find out the center of gravity of the foe that they will target while depending on the strategic control base (Echevarria 2002).

2. Chapter Two

2.1. Conceptual and Theoretical Framework for Organized Violence

2.1.1. Violence, Power, and Politics

Politics and warfare are inseparable, and both are social forces that control the distribution of power among various groups (Waldman, 2010). According to Clausewitz, war or violence is a part of political activities, and it is not autonomous. The limits of military operations are on the political lines that exist both in war and peace. Clausewitz further says that the political influence on war is not part of war, but it contradicts it instead. The strategies that prompt warfare also restrict and control it. Thus, politics positions itself above combat and adapts it to match its needs. Therefore, according to Clausewitz, war is not an autonomous act emanating from external or internal factors. Instead, it is an issue of political choice, indicating the different political goals that transform battle into annihilation. War is an extension of politics in other ways, which means that political purposes are the end and warfare is the means. Political motives dominate the battle, and the gains that will come along with fighting determine the extent of the war. However, if there are no gains or if the cost of the war surpasses the political objectives, the perpetrators abandon it, and peace prevails (Lindell, 2009).

2.1.2. Warfare, Terrorism, and Clausewitz

Clausewitz's theories are applicable to counterterrorism activities. Though not referring to the art of fighting terrorism, Clausewitz precisely points out that war integrally encompasses the determination of the person. He, therefore, puts forward a current pressure point in the world's most significant threat: terrorism and terrorist groups. While tracking down the terrorists-like any other enemy- is an essential aspect in precisely using the trinity described by Clausewitz, a practical application should consider the part played by chance as well as the probability of war. Hence, in dealing with the terrorist menace, you can lessen the influence of possibility and likelihood by restricting the mobility of the terrorists and confining them in their area of operation (Small Wars Journal 2012).

While restraining terrorists to specific areas is not possible, the extremists must plan, train, and continue with their operations, irrespective of who constitutes the commander or the militia. Thus, they frequently pursue and sometimes benefit from the terrain that makes it possible for them to press on with their operations undercover from the common targeting techniques. Good examples of this include the Al Qaeda activities in Afghanistan and the Al Shabaab operations in East Africa. Extremists prosper in secret areas and enable administrations that support terrorist operations. Therefore, in precisely locating such locations, you can effectually confine the radicals and eliminate them (Small Wars Journal 2012).

2.1.3. Causes of the War on Terror

Warfare is one of the leading reasons for terrorism. Without wars, some terrorist groups could not exist. The war in the Middle East has given birth to the Islamic State. Similarly, Al-Qaeda, Hezbollah, and other terrorist groups are the outcome of regional skirmishes. The foundation of these extremist organizations is a political sensation, which is also the cause of the radicalization of foreigners from the West (Brookings 2016). Warfare and terrorism are indeed a halt of humanity, actions that appear to weaken and downgrade the values at the center of human rights, as well as the legal system that safeguards them (Council of Europe 2015). For that reason, governments around the world, including the US, have embarked on the fight against terrorism. Again, terrorism promotes the growth of homegrown extremism, and this is a significant threat to national security. Therefore, governments have no option but to fight the vice.

3. Chapter Three

3.1. War on Terrorism

3.1.1. The Relevance of Clausewitz Theories to Modern Warfare

Clausewitz wrote the theories of war more than 150 years ago. Many scholars have extensively studied the work, and they have found it to be beneficial. Many facets of Clausewitz's ideas and concepts continue to attract considerable attention. The work is still relevant in the modern world and militaries from around the world- such as the US military- use it for civil as well as soldierly purposes. The principles described in the theories are still applicable in modern-day warfare, such as the fight against terrorism (Small Wars Journal 2012).

Although Clausewitz wrote the work before most of the modern menaces like terrorism, it is still relevant today. The theories characteristically suggest an approach to counteracting an aggressor through the understanding that war occurs in the setting of a paradoxical trinity. The theories precisely describe the solutions to the present-day struggle to ouster the threats that come along with the non-state actors. Notably, the modern application points out that we must be determined to pinpoint the individuals who have joined the enemy and track them down. Moreover, it describes how to restrict the influence of chance by geographically confining the enemy while reinforcing global capacity to limit the aggressor's maneuver and offer a substitute policy to activities like terrorism by de-legitimizing the practice. While the theorist aimed to come up with a framework that balances these aspects, a modern use would encompass the development of an approach that combines them to concomitantly influence the elements in one's favor (Small Wars Journal 2012).

3.1.2. Study Case: US War on ISIS

The US war on ISIS has not been a successful one, mainly because the administration is not willing to take part in ground combat. The country restricts its soldiers to training and air combat while relying on Iraqi and Kurdish fighters for the ground fight. This move limits the US's capability to fight the extremists (Roff 2014). On the other hand, ISIS applies exemplary tactics to counter any aggression against them. They appear to efficiently apply the principles of war described by Clausewitz, which has made it hard for the US and other forces to defeat them.

Though it seems unlikely for terrorists to use or even be aware of the principles, the activities of ISIS prove the effectiveness of the policies put forward by Clausewitz. First, ISIS knows how to concentrate warfare power at the central location and time. Though airstrikes from the US and allies are challenging this massing strategy, they still appear helpful to the extremists. Another principle by Clausewitz that ISIS seems to use efficiently is that of the objective. The group directs its fighting operation toward a bright, influential and achievable target. The extremists instituted goals at the tactical, operative as well as strategic levels. For instance, they tactically aimed at securing the open channel between Syrian and Iraq, then taking control of towns near the River Euphrates before targeting bigger cities around Tigris, for example, Mosul (Hein 2017).

Third, ISIS can fruitfully employ offensive principles. That is, seizing, retaining and exploiting the initiative. They have applied these tactics efficiently in Baghdad. To the world, this terrorist group emerged out of nowhere and headed to Baghdad, whereas the US continued to beg Iraq to respond. Other principles that ISIS uses the surprise attacks, an economy of force, unity of command and many others. For the United States to defeat ISIS, they need to weaken the capacity of the group to employ these fighting tactics. In so doing, the extremists will become vulnerable and easy to attack (Hein 2017).

3.1.3. Are Clausewitz's Theories Timeless?

One of the primary ideas that the Prussian theorist puts forward is that warfare compares to a chameleon that adapts its features to a given situation. This statement shows that Clausewitz considered conflict as something that would occur in different forms rather than one way. Clausewitz further says that he is aware that each battle mirrors its era and that warfare typically remains in the process of constant change. Thus, his work acknowledges the adaptability of combat, which makes them theories of all time. Much of the work that Clausewitz wrote relates to the wars of his era. However, scholars have interpreted the opinions within contemporary contexts, and they have found that they are also applicable to modern warfare. Interestingly, the US military, among other militaries around the world, is using these theories in their operations, which further proves that the opinions are timeless (Oldemeinen 2012).

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