

INTRODUCTION

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The title of this volume is not wholly original. Peter Paret gave his seminal biography of Clausewitz a very similar title.¹ However, Paret's interest in the relationship between Clausewitz and the state was different from the one explored in this volume. Paret sought to locate Clausewitz's work primarily in the context of his personal development, and within the intellectual currents of his time. A central theme was the psychological significance that loyalty and service to the state held for Clausewitz. His maturation as a theorist was made possible because he was able to gain increasingly greater freedom from and mastery over this attachment, and so ultimately achieved the emotional and cognitive independence that marks his mature work. These biographical concerns do not figure in this volume, which seeks to explore Clausewitz's ideas on the relationship between the state and war. Our focus is on theory, independent for the most part of the man and his times.

Clausewitz, of course, did not write a genuine theory of the state. Yet it is precisely for his views on the state that he has been criticized since the end of the Cold War. As the state seemed to be losing its monopoly of violence in the Middle East, the Balkans, Africa, and elsewhere, Clausewitz has stood accused of increasing irrelevance, and of retrospective responsibility for the terrible wars that states had conducted in the short 20th century.² The purpose of this volume is not systematically to take issue with these recent critiques and defend Clausewitz. The assessments of the anti-Clausewitzians have merely served as a spur to probe more deeply Clausewitz's views on the state and war, and beyond that his views on the relationship between politics and war. Everyone nowadays has heard the phrase that "war is a continuation of politics by other means." Like many other important and challenging ideas, it has come to have a ring of self-evident truth about it, which may be why deeper and more systematic investigations are largely absent in modern Clausewitz scholarship. This volume seeks to address this shortcoming.

The contributions to this volume underline that every age fashions its own image and interpretation of Clausewitz. The Clausewitz that Peter Paret and Michael Howard established through their writings and translations held strongly that war was (and at least implicitly should be) subject to governmental policy and control,³ an interpretation that contrasted with those that dominated in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when war, while recognizable as a political act, was nev-

1 Peter Paret, *Clausewitz and the State: The Man, His Theories and His Times* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976).

2 The main trio of critics were Martin van Creveld, John Keegan and Mary Kaldor. For a more extensive discussion see the contribution by Daniel Moran below.

3 See the contribution by Antullio Echevarria below.

ertheless understood primarily as an independent domain of military-professional activity, centering on the single-minded pursuit of decisive victory. The work of Howard and Paret was especially welcome in an era that feared the dangers of nuclear escalation and cherished the achievements of the liberal-democratic state. As those threats have faded from view, however, new issues have come to the fore.⁴ Although civilian political control of war and the exercise of restraint over violence remain central concerns in liberal democracies, the profound and rapid political and military changes that the world has witnessed since the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 have led to a renewed search for meanings in Clausewitz that can assist in understanding and navigating the choppy waters of contemporary global politics and conflict. So far, the precise nature and direction of these changes have not revealed a clear pattern. As a consequence, much remains inchoate in the scholarship that has sought to address them.⁵

In a sense, the situation is no different from the early reactions to the French Revolution, which took decades to coalesce around a politically and intellectually manageable set of views. Clausewitz's ideas played a seminal role in making sense of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic experiences in the military sphere. That his work has survived the great changes and upheavals of the past two hundred years is owed to two reasons: his compelling analysis of war, and the importance he attached to the relationship between politics and war. And this much, at least, is certain: whichever way the world will go in the twenty-first century, war and politics, including the role of the state, will continue to be central themes. It stands to reason that Clausewitz will remain a point of departure, but as concerns and analyses shift and settle, so too will the predominant interpretations of his work.

This volume does not claim to define a new Clausewitz. But the sum of the contributions does bring into focus the range of issues on which Clausewitz can be fruitfully interrogated regarding the general topic of the state, politics, and war. Three thematic strands run through this book. A volume on *Clausewitz, the State, and War* must, first of all, make some attempt at definition. In the opening chapter, Andreas Herberg-Rothe tries to pin down Clausewitz's concept of the state. As Clausewitz does not offer a definition of the state, Herberg-Rothe focuses his attention on the contexts within which the state is discussed in relationship to Clausewitz's primary interest, war. Identifying five different conceptualizations of this relationship, he concludes that Clausewitz possessed a rich and flexible idea of the state that was not tied exclusively to any particular historical manifestation. Rather, Clausewitz came to see the state in broad, abstract terms as an "organic unity" in

4 Cf. the wide-ranging set of topics (some by contributors in this volume) covered in Hew Strachan and Andreas Herberg-Rothe, eds, *Clausewitz in the Twenty-First Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

5 Compare, for example, the very different futures that are sketched in Martin van Creveld, *On Future War* (London: Brassey's, 1991); Mary Kaldor, *New and Old Wars: Organized Violence in a Global Era* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999); Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1998); and Philip Bobbitt, *The Shield of Achilles* (New York: Anchor, 2003).

which a government apparatus, an army, and a people interacted to conduct war. In the real world both the state and war are as much a reflection of objective socio-political circumstance as of subjective socio-political instrumentality.

A second strand in the volume emphasizes that Clausewitz's thinking was a less straightforward process than a reading of *On War* alone might suggest. The contributions by Anders Palmgren and Jan Willem Honig illustrate that Clausewitz's thinking was subject to substantial hesitations, changes, and side-steps. Palmgren argues that Clausewitz's understanding of the relationship between politics and war progressed along a circuitous road, and required him to "interweave" a much wider and richer set of variables than is normally signified by the word "politics" in order to come to a clear understanding of war. Honig injects a note of caution against the widespread notion that Clausewitz's increasing engagement with history revealed to him the importance of political control over war. Clausewitz's intermittent but lifelong study of the limited wars that antedated the French Revolution instead exhibits a marked resistance against probing the political dimensions of early modern warfare. Andreas Herberg-Rothe, in his second contribution, further reinforces the point that Clausewitz's ideas evolved in significant, sometimes ambiguous, ways. By considering Clausewitz's changing views of the complex relationship between war and "existence," and its resonances in Hegel and Hobbes, Herberg-Rothe shows that Clausewitz can be placed within broader political-theoretical traditions whose concerns point beyond the boundaries of war itself.

Taken together, these three chapters underline the value of reading beyond *On War*. Clausewitz's other works—only a handful of which have been translated into English or other languages—can shed an important light on how he arrived at the positions expressed in *On War*. Extending the reading even further, to include the literature that influenced Clausewitz, reveals the interconnectedness of his ideas with European intellectual traditions well beyond the military-theoretical realm. A clearer understanding of the extensive debts he owed to other thinkers allows us to grasp the true scope and originality of his ideas. A wider reading finally brings out that Clausewitz employed and developed a linguistic and conceptual vocabulary which is not always easy to convey accurately to a modern audience. Much can get lost in translation across language and time. However, these three chapters illustrate that a sustained and detailed engagement with his conceptual language is important to Clausewitz scholarship and can bring significant rewards.

The contribution of Daniel Moran turns the evolutionary approach of the previous chapters around, and asks to what extent the expectations we associate with an author's late works influence the way we understand and read his ideas. Moran ultimately sees Clausewitz's views on the relationship between the state and war as constituting a cautionary tale that expresses a desire for political control over war, but fails to establish clearly under what circumstances and in what ways this might be achieved.

One of the most famous Clausewitz interpreters, who took up the challenge of resolving this dilemma, was Raymond Aron. For him, as Murielle Cozette shows, finding a way to control war was a central, lifelong preoccupation. Critical for Aron was his borrowing of the image of policy as the "intelligence of the personified

state.” On the basis of this image, Aron created a highly original interpretation of Clausewitz which, however, was not without its problems. Cozette points out that the main product of his effort to engage with Clausewitz’s ideas, *Penser la guerre*, proved to be, in the words of one critic, “Aron’s book against himself,” in which the liberal thinker came up against the limits of liberal thought.

Aron realized better than most that Clausewitz did not see the relationship between war and policy as simply one of subordination. This theme is also central to Antullio Echevarria’s chapter, which argues that many Cold War-era interpreters of Clausewitz tended to overlook the limits that Clausewitz placed on policy, and the extent to which it should and could influence military operations. Ascribing primacy to policy, in Echevarria’s view, misconstrues Clausewitz’s ultimate argument, which saw policy interacting on a co-equal basis with the forces of violence and chance inherent in war, and with the hostility exhibited by society.

The contributions by Moran, Cozette, and Echevarria represent a third strand in the book, which evaluates Clausewitz’s late ideas and their possible limits. Herberg-Rothe, in his third and final contribution, concludes the volume with a more speculative counterpoint, grounded in Clausewitz but going beyond him in considering the ideal of the “democratic warrior.” The varied range of threats the world faces, and the pressing political need to limit violence and war, he argues, requires a new kind of soldier in whom particular manifestations of the three poles of the Clausewitzian Trinity are combined. The democratic warrior would be an exponent of a cohesive democratic community who possesses an ability to fight in support of a prudent policy of containment.

Earlier eras of Clausewitz scholarship were marked by a relative uniformity in analytical approaches and a relative harmony in interpretations. Today’s Clausewitz, as the contributions in the volume illustrate, is subjected to a wider range of methods of enquiry from a wider range of disciplines with, inevitably, a more varied assortment of interpretations. This diversification in scholarship is a mark of Clausewitz’s success and standing, but it also raises the question how well his ideas will withstand the new forms of scrutiny to which they are now subjected. If this volume is any indication, there is value to be had from continuing to engage with Clausewitz and, more specifically, that that value lies primarily in extending the meaning not of *Krieg*, but of *Politik*. The temptation to see war as “simply” the pursuit of *Politik* by the post-Westphalian state must be resisted. Clausewitz would surely have agreed. As the contributions offered here amply illustrate, he possessed a rich understanding of the range of interactions that may arise among political authority, political and social interests, and violence, an understanding that remains no less relevant to the challenges of our time than of his.