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Clausewitz and the partisan: Accounting for unlimited enmity in the twenty-first century

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Abstract: Napoleon harnessed unlimited enmity to transform wars from limited ones to unlimited ones. Accordingly, Clausewitz developed the Trinity to describe this source of power. However, the increasing destruction due to interstate wars has led to a decrease in this type of conflict. At the same time, there has been an increase in partisan wars. The Trinity cannot explain partisan victories or state defeats. Using social psychology to explain the relationship of the partisan to the group, this research shows how partisans harness unlimited enmity to engage in existential wars. Furthering Clausewitzian philosophy, a new analogy, the singularity, is created to describe this power. Implications and conclusions drawn are at the end of the paper.

Keywords: Clausewitz, regular war, partisan, Trinity, singularity, irregular war

1 The Problem

Carl von Clausewitz is not dead, not any more than Aristotle or Confucius. The innumerable articles and books describing new wars and old wars and providing the obituary of Clausewitz have forgotten the General's dictum (Clausewitz 1976; *On War*, p. 581) that "war can be a matter of degree." *On War*, like *Republic* or the *Analects*, provides useful principles with which one can view the world. It is our responsibility to apply Clausewitzian philosophy to the concerned times, not to wedge the times onto the philosophy and declare that everything has changed when the result doesn't quite fit.

This research attempts to deconstruct Clausewitz' philosophy, primarily as described in his *On War*, to more fully account for the partisan of small wars,

revolutions, internal wars, guerrilla wars and insurgencies that have increased in the post 9/11 world (Allansson et al. 2017). I supplement the extracts from *On War* with a careful reading of Clausewitz' other earlier works, particularly his private correspondence. It was in his earliest writings after the Prussian defeat that one finds the fragile strands of his theory, truncated as they are in the unfinished *On War*. Clausewitz himself pointed out in *On War* that *On War* was "merely as a rather formless mass that must be thoroughly reworked once more..." and just a year before his death, he regarded the manuscript (Daase and Davis 2015, Clausewitz, p. 4) of *On War* as "nothing but a collection of materials from which a theory of war was to have been distilled." Necessarily, all analyses of Clausewitz' theory since his death in 1831 is based on presumptions, often coloured by the modern strategists' own experiences.

This article draws from Peter Paret's and Sibelle Scheipers' works, but limits the deep contextualisation of those authors (Paret, Clausewitz and Scheipers, *Small Wars*). Instead, I attempt to retain a few basic thrusts of Clausewitzian philosophy as it can be applied to the security environment of the twenty-first century. As Scheipers points out (48), over-contextualisation of Clausewitz can remove Clausewitz too far from contemporary security studies, as the reader falls further and further into German intellectualism with its *Sturm und Drang* of Hegel to Heidegger to the bleak plain of Wittgenstein. Rather than engaging in the intellectual dilettantism such a diverse incubator creates, this article attempts to draw out the philosopher's thoughts on political war and his descriptions of 'people's war' (Daase and Davis 2015, *Small Wars*, p. 196). If successful, this will allow some useful insights into the partisan and the likely wars of the 21st century.

In what became Clausewitz' opus, he developed a succinct model of war which he called the Trinity. *On War* describes how that trinity of forces collectivise violence through the mass production of military power. The Trinitarian process describes both how states develop their power and how, in the event of war, to separate the enemy from that source of power, the people, through the destruction of its covering army. However, the trinity

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has a significant flaw, sitting as it does at the end of the Napoleonic wars, in that it does not account fully for the partisan wars. To Clausewitz, the ‘most beautiful of wars’ (Scheipers 2017, pp. 47–63) was that of the people’s war, which was used to support an overthrown state. In his earlier writings, and his seminars at the Prussian War College, his examples of the Tyrol and Vendee were plainly illustrating violent action by the population in support of an overthrown government against an occupying enemy. In the eight pages devoted to the guerrilla in *On War*, he viewed people’s war as a strategic defensive. John Tetsuro Sumida’s (2008) fine analysis of Clausewitz (135), supports the idea that partisan war is the strategic defensive, and in the words of Clausewitz, a real war. Clausewitz had very early determined that defence was stronger than offence, and the strategic defensive, incorporating a partisan war, was strongest of all, and could prove decisive (Daase and Davis 2015, p. 482). In his Trinity, the partisan is obviously found in the passion of the people. The problem is that the Trinity, as written, fails to account for the partisan, the guerrilla, the irregular fighter.

One of the problems is the skitterish nature of Clausewitzian philosophy as evidenced above, and to which rubric Clausewitz is applied: normative or practical? A student of, and a participant in, the Napoleonic wars, Clausewitz built his theory around the idea that society was an integral part of war, which made war “a true political instrument, a continuation of political intercourse, carried on with other means.” (Clausewitz 1976, *On War*, p. 87). The best example of this is his famous dictum: *Der Krieg ist eine bloße Fortsetzung der Politik mid anderen Mitteln*.¹ Daase and Davis explain that

“the German word Politik can take on at least three meanings for which English provides distinct words. If one translates Politik with “policy”... one is likely to conclude that Clausewitz is making a normative argument... if however, one translates Politik with “politics” or “political affairs” as suggested by scholars such as Antulio Echevarria, Clausewitz’s dictum seems more appropriate understood as a descriptive statement.” (Daase and Davis 2015, p. 5)

The problem with the first translation is that it elevates Clausewitz away from his descriptive work on the character of war. If one accepts that policy is normative, then one must search in his works for a meta-theory of war that privileges the state as paramount, that is, a state-centric version of war. However, the partisan victories in Vietnam in and Afghanistan require a different definition. The advantage of the second definition is that it allows for flexibility,

something which Clausewitz understood when he wrote that war is a chameleon, and efforts must be adapted to the times. Understanding war as a continuation of the *politics* of capitals and parliaments allows multiple points of entry from the elements of power to war, from the state to the individual.

Fast forwarding to a twenty-first century filled with low-level conflicts where highly technical state war machines continue to fail, and this definitional issue has caused layer upon layer of conflicting analysis, with the likes of Michael Howard and Peter Paret on one side, and Mary Kaldor and Martin Van Crevald on the other side, as strategists divide themselves between Clausewitz’s military and political philosophies. This divide is not new: Leading to the First World War, the French concentrated on Clausewitz’ idea of mass which produced the stalemates of the First World War. The Germans achieved high success by using Clausewitz’ ideas of speed in 1871 and during the early period of the Second World War. Other theorists adopted Clausewitz political polemics: Lenin understood Clausewitz’ admonishment that war was fought for political objectives. In the U.S., much has been made of Colin Powell’s conversion to Clausewitz’ political theory after the Vietnam War which is said to have led directly to the Powell Doctrine (Strachan 2007, p. 23).

In view of this historical fracture over Clausewitzian philosophy and the fact that *On War* was unfinished, the missing explanations of the power of the partisan becomes paramount. The problem then becomes one about the draft-only quality of *On War* at the time of the author’s death and the quest becomes one of understanding how partisan war *would* have been explained by Clausewitz. There are enough surviving correspondences and manuscripts and hints in the unfinished *On War* itself to encourage this attempt. Through an analysis of Clausewitz’ works, I provide an extension of his ideas on power and use Clausewitz’ own analogy, the *singular-ity*, to further describe that engine of irregular war, the guerrilla or, the *partisan* (Paret 2015, *In His Time*, p. 46). My impetus for this study is the troubling fact that there has been a transformation of war, away from state-on-state conflicts to what the literature refers to as irregular wars, internal wars, civil wars or asymmetric wars (Deriglazova 2014, *Great Powers*). These wars on the global periphery and between partisans in the periphery that drag in the great powers are occurring more frequently (Reynolds, unpublished mss). From the RPG attacks that brought down advanced helicopters in Mogadishu, to the 9/11 attacks, to homemade explosive devices in Iraq, partisans are achieving instances of tactical superiority

¹ War is a mere continuation of... by other means

that lead to strategic success. Since 1945, there have been only 51 interstate wars and 418 internal conflicts (Reynolds 2016, Durability, p. 3). The militarily weak actors in these ethnic conflicts have steadily increased their ability to achieve their political objectives primarily through the production of asymmetry. The trend holds steady: In 2016, there were two interstate conflicts and forty-seven internal and internationalised-internal conflicts (Allansson et al. 2017), and all the while there have been no wars between great powers since 1945. This is a powerful argument against a normative interpretation of Clausewitz. The common denominator is the motivation of one group to take up arms against what, on paper, is the overwhelming power of the state. These partisans are able to translate the strength of their group identity into winning strategies that defeat greater material means and this is the aspect alluded to by Clausewitz as his ‘moral factors’, but not fully explained. In the past two hundred years, the victory of partisan has grown progressing from winning only twenty per cent of his conflicts to more than half that by the end of the twentieth century (Lyll and Wilson 2009, pp. 67–106).

Clausewitz’ examples of partisan war, the Spanish and Swiss of the early 18th centuries were translated by Carl Schmitt into the 20th century guerrilla of the jungle and mountain communist vanguard. The 21st century denizens of Islamic State and Al Qaida are triggered by the same existential threat to their tellurian identity (Schmitt 2007, Theory, p. 20). The tellurian nature of these partisans is triggered by the existential threat of change to their identity, i.e. their land, their language, religions, marriages and norms and values. The modern partisan has moved on from the ‘real enmity’ which ends up with the ejection of the invader from the sacred homeland. That territorial anchor has been translated from the physical to the abstract through the threat to identity, which being existential is absolute (Schmitt 2007, p. 13). The partisan reaction to Napoleon that Clausewitz observed was a response to territorial occupation and the threatening change portended by his revolutionary puppet governments. This changed war from those of limited observation, to those of political nationalism. Napoleon’s wars threatened the existential *political*, and hence, the *social structure* of his enemies. The action was political; that response was political. In a very real sense, the partisan has come full circle: from the 19th century rebel resisting the spread of empires to the 20th century revolutionary powered by unlimited nationalism that now has been replaced by the unlimited enmity of identity-action in defence of placeness.

2 The Trinity and the Singularity

The key to understand this transformation of the partisan in the twenty-first century starts with Clausewitz’ descriptions of the wars of Napoleon in the nineteenth century. Before Napoleon, war was limited in scope, seeking only to change components of the international system. Napoleon sought to change the system itself. The key enabler of this change was unlimited enmity powered by early French nationalism. Clausewitz intuited that the feelings powered by nationalism would work in a similar way on the partisan (Clausewitz 1976, On War, pp. 479–483). Clausewitz (Clausewitz, p. 89) theorised that politics was a process, of which war was both a part and a product, describing this in On War as a ‘remarkable trinity’ of passion (people), genius (the military commander) and reason (state). That trinity (Clausewitz, p. 89) in war was “primordial violence, hatred and enmity, which are to be regarded as blind natural force; of the play of chance and probability and its subordination as an instrument of policy, and reason.” The product of the trinity working on each other – power in its potential form, force in its kinetic form – was meant to separate the trinitarian components of adversarial states, thus collapsing resistance. War was a composite of these three elements in which all activities in conflict are influenced by hatred and aggressiveness and tempered by the reasonable policies of government which extract the energy that is used to animate the army (Paret 1985, The State, p. 369). The trinity collectivised war on a national scale that reflected the great change in the eighteenth century where personal enmity was redirected onto state policy with military power is seen as the key way to achieve policies. The partisan directs her own energy into action

Clausewitz saw Napoleon as the *genese* of a fundamentally new way of war in which unlimited force would be used to achieve unlimited objectives. The social forces that Napoleon harnessed had created a powerful war machine that could defeat empires with a single powerful blow. To Clausewitz, the concept of war and the actual battle could not be separated or changed (Clausewitz 1976, On War, p. 127). Power should be focused, overwhelmingly, on destroying the enemy. Clausewitz insisted that the purpose of war, i.e. the purpose in marshalling power was to destroy the enemy, therefore one must seek violent battle, being very clear through *all* his writings that the destruction of the enemy’s armed force was the central object of war. If the army was not destroyed, even with capitulation, the army could and would, be resurrected to fight again. Decisive battle must be absolute, ending with the destruction of the enemy. Under his Trinitarian

theory, only by destroying the army could the trinity be unbalanced and achieve the decisive defeat necessary to justify the costs of total mobilisation. Applying this to the partisan causes a disconnect- powerful states can easily destroy the partisan, but if destruction suffices, why do states increasingly lose partisan wars?

Clausewitz understood the potential of people's war to harness passion, the strongest element of the trinity in a strategic defensive, writing (Daase and Davis 2015, p. 196) that 'few people have a clear understanding of the full extent of this fearsome decisive measure...'. The wars of the twenty-first century, spreading Liberalism through humanitarian interventions and the imposition of social control, have not surprisingly, generated resistance groups that reject the neoliberalist model. These groups, bound together by identity, convert their knowledge of self into an advantage that translates into winning strategies that nullify the Clausewitzian advantages in the distribution of military power (Vasquez 2009, War Puzzle, p. 59). The true partisan acts, and acts violently; she is an army of one. The magnet of the trinity is unbalanced in the face of partisan violence (Clausewitz, p. 89). One can increase the power of the three poles, as is the instinct of the state, or one can reduce the distance between the poles and the magnet, as in the case of partisans. The latter has the effect of collapsing the poles until a *singularity* is achieved.

These systemic insurgents do not labour under a trinity of passion, government and military. Instead, all three are centred in the individual and produce an unlimited enmity because their adversary – states that spread neoliberalism through humanitarian interventions – require a change in the potential partisan's life (social) modality which is an existential threat. One can no longer separate the trinity and force defeat. Only destruction of the singularity can achieve the state war machine's goal of a transformative peace. In a Trinitarian war, disarming the adversary by destroying the army allows one to dictate peace. However, the partisan fights for her existential self, completely committed to her goal. The control of state war machines, honed ceaselessly through feedback loops, carefully delimit how war is supposed to be waged. The protagonist in partisan wars rarely achieves that level of control (Reynolds, Identity, mss). However, partisan war is not about the layering of bureaucracy or weapons. It is about the relationship of means to ends and how social conditions – Clausewitz' moral factors – facilitate the group mobilisation required to sustain conflict against a more powerful adversary. This is the practical application of Clausewitz' moral factors, only applied to the partisan's cause. How else to describe the willingness to engage in

war under vast power differentials? This is the problem the Trinity, as it is in *On War*, which is not explained.

3 The Partisan and Passion

In his earliest writings, Clausewitz focused on the philosophical underpinnings of the trinity, looking to explain the interplay between reason and passion. Clausewitz was very clear that the individual was decisive in war and his thought experiments explored the form and use of the individual in war. As Scheipers points out, Clausewitz understood that in freeing a nation from domination and foreign oppression, politicisation of the individual was the starting point of partisan war. This was opposite of, as later analyses on the trinity would have it, the monolithic reliance on battle, reason or genius. Indeed, Clausewitz would praise the power of the individual, seeing the difference between local regiments and those of his Prussian home: 'The troops that are passing by give a truly aesthetic impression, but one that is quite different from our military parades. While the [Prussian] display rigid formations, here you can clearly discern the individual in all its *singularity* in the open ranks and the steady movement of the procession coexists with diversity and the full expression of life'. This goes to the heart of the lacuna in his *On War* trinity: In Clausewitz' vision, the passion and free will of the partisan could be harnessed in a people's war. Critically, his formulation of the *Landswehr*, a Prussian partisan army, was grounded in location, a piece of ground that tied the partisan through identity to the defence of his sense of self (Daase and Davis 2015, p. 186). And Clausewitz was developing this line of thought as early as in 1807.

The Trinity's problem lay in the fact that it was the reason and genius that ameliorated the limitless enmity of the people. Without reason, it was simply mob violence. Clausewitz struggled with the variable of partisan motivations and how to integrate them into his meta-theory (Schiepers, p. 48). Clausewitz turned to Immanuel Kant's (2007) (1724–1804) understanding of freewill: Man existed in a world of communicative cognition, in which the explanation of objects created the understanding of the object. Kant could not simply leave the unexplained laying on God's doorstep. There could be no supra-natural (God-given) rules by which opposing forces could predict actions. Kant's 'free play' of imagination and understanding meant that the elements of conflict could only be known at the moment of discovery (Kant 2007, Critique, pp. 38–39). Significantly for our understanding of identity-conflict and the problems the war-machine has therein

is, if free will exists, then war derived from identity is essentially unknowable. In other words, the unknown in war is an expression of humanity's free will. Troubling for us, Clausewitz did not complete the logic: if humanity is truly free and imaginative, then conflict is essentially unknowable and unpredictable. These elements of imagination and understanding, of surprise and possibility, were strongest in the partisan. In his lecture notes of 1810–1811, Clausewitz wrote (Daase and Davis 2015, p. 23) that 'the individual... rifleman has a spirit of initiative, confidence in himself and in his fortune of which those who held the line can hardly imagine'. Harnessing this energy of the individual was to be done through the partisan, with Clausewitz cautioning that in small wars, this psychology (Paret and Moran, *Political Writings*, p. 282) must not be subordinated to the Army which seeks 'to defeat the enemy with mere form and affords the individual the least possible opportunity to use his intellectual powers'.

Clausewitz was writing that the moral forces underpinning military action was stronger than simple material means any state could bring to bear. He wrote (Paret 1985, *State*, p. 177) in 1809: "The modern art of war, far from using men as simple machines, must vitalize their energies as far as the nature of its weapons permits..." Clausewitz attributed this animating function, the image of the soul, to the people. This is where he found that the passion that powered the mobilisation of the state empowered the genius of the military. This created a knotted locus through which his theory which cannot pass without some transformation. The elements of the trinity cannot be separated, but he allowed that the power of passion meant that it would overcome the force of the other two. Passion collapses reason and genius into his *singularity*, sparking an operative mode completely at odds with the rules of organised warfare. True partisans are violent, and Clausewitz understood, and even advocated this early in his writings (Daase and Davis 2015, p. 205) that the partisan would "answer cruelty with cruelty [and] respond to atrocities with atrocity." Clausewitz found the thread of consistency between the state sponsored violence of the trinity and the passion fuelled violence of the partisans by connecting the survival of his Prussian state with the worthiness of a people who would fight for the survival of their identity. Undoubtedly thinking of the French, a people would never be able to throw off the yoke of a dictator through an educated and cosmopolitan culture. Instead it was the poor, indigent, rough-clothed men and women with little to lose who would accept risk of death as the first step to freedom. Fighting was how a people identified itself as worthy of freedom while at the same

time identifying what was worth fighting for. Fighting, and in the parlance of Clausewitz, the battle, was an implicit declaration and acceptance of a possible sacrifice of existence. This was, to Clausewitz, sublime.

It is through the political act of violence that passion is operationalized. This is illuminated through the counter-example of the man in prison. He may well be full of passion, but he lacks the freedom to effect action. What transformed the mob into a weapon of war was for Clausewitz, the idea that the act of violence in support of the goal of freedom was an expression of freewill. In the partisan, freewill could replace the genius and reason of his trinity. This theoretical somersault into practicality is very clear in his *Testimonial* where the integration of passion and reason is central to Clausewitz's thought, and it continued to play a crucial role in his later thinking, but was unfortunately occluded in *On War*. Clausewitz felt people were the wellspring of an undeniable energy that could overthrow a foreign power. He spent much time attempting to ensure that his audience understood that passion was multiplied by free will, which, in the partisan, took the place of the reason provided by the state.

Why is all this important? It provides a glimpse into Clausewitz's basic emotional response to the problems of war, particularly partisan war. I am *not* convinced that Clausewitz was going to be able to integrate the partisan into his theory. The long period of time between the development of his basic understanding of free will and passion, and the notes of 1827 show an expansion of his understanding, but the only historical link in his papers was the idea that partisan war was a supporting effort to the decisive battle. This in spite of his declaration that defensive war was stronger than offense, and 'people's war' being a strategic defence, was the strongest of all.

4 The Partisan

The strength of the partisan lies in the intersection of Clausewitz' friction of war and the superiority of the moral factors, which triggers the passion of the fighting spirit. This is the difference between a regular army and the partisan force. The willingness to sacrifice accounts for the decision to fight when the distribution of power is overwhelmingly in favour of states. Alexander Wendt (1992, pp. 391–425) called this as the 'distribution of knowledge' based on expectations of return for loyalty to the group. The partisan creates the conditions of identity through the social construction of meanings they prescribe to themselves. This knowledge is the product of the constant

kneading actions and boundary crossings and is so deeply rooted in the concepts of identity and security that social institutions must make way for individuals' conception of self and group identity.

When this identity is under attack, perceived or real, the partisan elevates their cultural worldview from its already central position to one of sacredness in the face of mortality (Chatard et al. 2011, p. 226). Perceived threats, like the uneven distribution of resources, would cause partisans to identify more strongly with their identity group. In other words, this *mortality salience* produces greater hostility towards critics of the partisan's identity and belief system, particularly the sub-structural role of religion, which produces a unique self-validity (Greenberg et al. 1997, pp. 61–139). Religious myths, symbolism and ceremonies often emphasise the idea of the *chosen people*. Charismatic leaders then harness religion and idealised identity (Vasquez 2009, p. 41) “to institutionalize violence and the bend the will of individuals and clans” towards receptive objectives. The partisan becomes aggressive, nationalistic and discriminatory, determined to protect the partisan-group identity that provides life-after-death, if not physically, then in remembrance (Chatard et al. 2011, p. 227). The partisan's constructed identity is so strong that they will “act as a group, for the interest of the group and in order to achieve a group goal – even when the personal costs may be very high” such as death, serious maiming, or the deaths of close family members (Abrams and de Moura 2002, p. 199). This *identity-action* generates unlimited animus which is so powerful that it can explain their actions which would appear to be irrational. Supra-positioning of one's god provides justification for any action, or in Clausewitz' terms, absolute war.

In the partisan singularity, the personal becomes political (van Stekelenburg and Klandermans 2013, p. 888) through the sharing of grievances across the group. The partisan's connection to his or her identity is amplified by the belief that connection to the group ensures a type of immortality. This would make the individual hew more tightly to ethnic identification and support the actions needed to win the conflict. This is a key to the identity-mobilisation that partisans often achieve in conflict. The partisan's strategic will and purpose is tied up in the simple structural connections between early self-identity, ethnic identity and political ideology. Threatening situations drive life-conservatism, i.e. conflict draws ethnically self-identified individuals closer together. Conversely, states can rarely achieve full mobilisation when combatting ethnic conflict; the citizenry is too diverse to consider threats from small partisan groups existential in nature.

5 Polarity and Escalation

Clausewitz addressed the difference between the power of the trinity and the singularity through his principle of polarity. He used the phrase ‘calculation of probabilities’ to describe the process of determining what level of risk would be acceptable to political objectives (Clausewitz 1976, On War, p. 80). Polarity of goals is easily recognisable in regular war. If it is advantageous for one side to attack, it is equally advantageous for the other to defend; if one side is victorious, then the other is defeated. If the objective of the attacker is worth little to the defender, the defender will only make a small effort to deny it. The greater the objective, the greater the resistance. States, rational and seeking stability are always willing to accept less, while invariably the partisan's goals are bound up in protecting identity. This is what Clausewitz meant (Clausewitz, p. 87) when he wrote “The political object is the goal, war is the means of reaching it, and means can never be considered in isolation of their [goal].” In partisan war, the polarity of adversaries lies in their relationship to the political object. For states, and particularly the great powers, the desire is for systemic control, flipping the indigenous to a neoliberal free-market patron. For the partisan, the goal is social stasis, with calls for independence to guarantee it and the redistribution of resources to provide human security for her people.

The operative mode of the singularity means that the political cannot be overcome through violent military action. If political polarity is a real thing, and it seems it is, then a goal mismatch perforce *must* follow and this explains why some groups engage in conflict when the power differential is so heavily in favour of the state as to make the act seem irrational to the observer. The state which is possessing vast resources lacks the strategic purpose, i.e., the existential threat to engage in absolute war. The resistance group possesses only few physical resources, but faced with a real or imagined threat to survival, is able to achieve total mobilisation. Full commitment to the *identity-conflict* is expressed in generational terms with fathers indoctrinating sons and daughters in the methods of warfare over historicized grievances.

Time is on the side of the partisan, who only attack when the strength of knowledge is in their favour. Herein the singularity comes to the fore again, overcoming Clausewitz' friction, the bane of his *genius* in war. To understand how the partisan personifies these moral factors, and their frictive role, we can use Kant again, hypothesising that knowledge conforms itself to already existing cognitive expressions, people therefore assign familiar definitions to what is new (Mensch 2011, pp. 109–127). Knowledge

can only exist in the domain of prior experience; the mind cannot predict what it does not know. The ‘tellurian character’ (Schmitt 2007, p. 13) of the partisan, bound to time and place, creates a very small space in which decision and action occur so rapidly that it approaches the Kantian antithetical of the unknowable. The partisan overcomes Clausewitz’ friction since the span of control is one, the individual, but this means the state must dominate, not a societal milieu, but myriad individuals. This is done through destruction, the death, of the partisan. For the partisan, the tension between unlimited animus and fear negates the pause for judgement. This unhinders freewill, allowing for the greatest action and spectacular sacrifice. Clausewitz wrote that for most people, fear and danger leads to indecision and immobility (Clausewitz, p. 585), but where it does not “we can be sure that we are in the presence of exceptional ability.” War, with its threat of mortality, is the most fertile field for this condition. Under the operative singularity, in the face of overwhelming force, guerrillas appear to meet this test. They often trudge under despicable philosophies of archaic totalitarianism, but the partisan approached the pure, absolute fighter, and this must be respected.

In partisan war, while in theory, partisans allow themselves unlimited action to achieve their objectives, many states constrain their methods through humanitarian law, or, *jus in bello*. This is an advantage to the partisan because in partisan wars, morale doesn’t collapse. In partisan wars, the enemy army is the people. Even if only a small percentage of any identifiable ‘people’ are involved in actual violence, the problem is that those partisans are powered by the ‘people’. Unlike the concept of the Trinitarian state which separates the people and the army, the partisan is not separate from her people. In Trinitarian war, if the moral factors could be contained, morale would collapse. The passion of the people, which powers the destructive policies enacted through military means, crumbles and the government yields. In partisan war, the speed-mechanised war machine has nothing to destroy, as the partisan is uninhibited by organisation. Moreover, the state must destroy the partisan herself to destroy the army of the partisan. In partisan wars, the objective is this new thing, the *people-army*. It is a basic component, produced by the singularity. In state war, the destruction of soldiers in combat can drive the people to demand peace. In partisan war, combat actions against the *people-army* only serve as the evidence of that identity, a creation of the group, is under attack. Like the Peninsular war (1808–1814), the conflict evokes a response *en masse* as a people defending themselves from an existential threat. To not defend is an unacceptable position that there is no *people*,

only self-interest. This is the opposite of what Clausewitz understood as to be the only reason that a people could consider themselves worthy of freedom. The partisan and the modern insurgent are motivated by their commitment to identity that is enlarged by these perceived threats. This willingness to endure is part and parcel of the motivation of the partisan, predicated on a sense of identity and solidarity.

Polarity also influences force, which paradoxically, is driven by fear. Fear can become a motive element that turns latent animus into kinetic action. Generally, the use of fear of the *other*, even improbable destruction, drives escalation of the application of power. Fear of the *reciprocal-equal* limits strategies of violence, since what happens to the other can just as easily happen to oneself, so states always frame their wars as good versus evil through reasoning for war, or *jus ad bellum*.

This provides a theoretical basis for escalation that would naturally lead to an extreme point, what Andreas Herberg-Rothe (2007, p. 76) called the “disinhibition of force.” This *threat* of the escalation of force causes one side to ameliorate its use of force. It is not the action of the enemy that explains this de-escalation, but that escalation could prove to be the motivation for an enemy escalatory strategy leading to one’s own destruction. The antidote to this destruction-fear is speed, which drives states to invest in new technologies meant to overpower an adversary—more force at the point of irrevocable, unavoidable attack. Increased application of force leads to shorter wars (Herberg-Rothe 2007, p. 94). This is borne out by several episodes in history. Napoleon’s use of rapidly mobile horse artillery and the German innovation of mechanised *blitzkrieg* has become the generally normative form of warfare (Howard 2001, War, p. 132) with on “tactics... based on overwhelming speed, concentration and surprise.” Rapid warfare is meant to destroy the morale of the adversary, as in the case of Prussia in 1806, France in 1940, and Iraq in 1991. Morale collapses because states are not prepared, cannot reach, nor match the violence of the attacker.

The partisans which lack resources are militarily weak groups and this may provide the incentive to strike early against soft targets (Posen 1993, pp. 27–47). Terrorism, the only escalatory offensive strategy available to the partisan, is not a dominating strategy, but the committed partisan can propel a group into the position of *escalation-equal*, a position from which the group can respond to any offensive action of the state. Few states fear their existential destruction at the hands of the partisan, but their populations do fear the sudden physical death and dismemberment when many partisans may visit to their malls and gathering places. It is this fear of destruction

that causes states to pause in their execution of sound war strategies. Fear of destruction and death lessens the will to war, leading to the increase in the battle victories of the partisan-terrorist.

6 Implications and Conclusions

The link between Clausewitz' passion and identity are now uncovered in modern combat, wherein soldiers are trained to task, employed by the state to achieve state objectives. This truly is the difference between armies of regular war and partisans. Operating under the singularity, passion rules the partisan, which drives war to the extreme. The partisan connects his acts of violence to the protection of his identity, a concept foreign to professional soldiers. ISIS, AQ, the Taliban, the Tamils, the Mujahedeen, the Viet Cong and the *Front de Liberation Nationale* (FLN) in the recent past were able to link the survival of the people with the support for conflict. The acts of violence, particularly against civilians are derived from the survival instinct triggered by conflict. The effect on the partisan (Schmitt 2007, p. 7) is that she "expects neither justice nor mercy from his enemy. She [he] is turned away from the conventional enmity of the contained war and given himself up to another – the real – enmity that rises through terror and counter terror, up to annihilation." This is the basis for Clausewitz' formulation of absolute war, described as enemies between whom there was no humanitarian limits to what force could be used for. Partisan war is absolute war. What Napoleon achieved with nationalism in the name of the state, today's partisan does with identity. Clausewitz understood that war occurs in time and place, thus making it a social, and ultimately, political phenomenon. Conflicts occur in time and place, and are subject to the partisans' own vision of themselves as a product of its history, and what they think the future state will be (Herberg-Rotha 2007, p. 86). In Clausewitz's words (Clausewitz, p. 76), social conditions "... are the forces that give rise to war; the same forces circumscribe and moderate it. They themselves, however, are not part of war; they already exist before fighting starts." It is these social conditions modulate the use of force, but in the partisan frees unlimited enmity.

The most part of the essay's in *On War* deals with the operational art of war, that of directing military forces in the offense or in the defence. It was this facet of Clausewitz' work that was seized upon, along with his mantra about mass and offense, by the vast network of schools, texts and lectures providing an irreversible momentum

which catapulted Clausewitz to the fore of western military thinking. The emphasis on the purely military forced the political into a secondary role. Mythologised good wars have been harnessed by a vast military industrial complex that cranks out tanks and bombers that are designed to fight the kind of war prevalent between the early nineteenth and end of the twentieth centuries. The ensuing military doctrines assumed enemies with unitary leaders, organised armies and fixed geographical boundaries. This creates a situation in which new adversaries must be viewed as unitary and organised because so much political capital, vast physical resources and money have been spent to create the weapons and organisations that can defeat those 'old' enemies in the decisive battle so important to Clausewitz (Kaldor 2005, pp. 491–498). States are defeated because they mythologise about big, state wars and spend the national treasure for converting power into force for these wars, not partisan wars.

Clausewitz understood the risks inherent on relying on this kind of force only, which could lead to establishing the wrong political objectives for the war, which could lead to a disastrous strategy. Not understanding the *operative affective* of the singularity has led to many badly managed wars against better prepared partisans. These failed wars, already exceedingly complex, become more so by the inability of Trinitarian war to achieve policy objectives. During the recent partisan wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, headquarters of ten to twenty thousand people compiled reams of orders and directives. In order to avoid the overwhelming cognitive slow down, the complexity of the war was distilled to the simple precept of violent of tactical action at the lowest level. This has become a self-fulfilling prophecy in which simple directives became the way to simplify the war. This drive to violence became singular in its own way, and the need for more and more tactical actions, the idea that just a few more battalions, just a bit more *mass*, would solve the riddle was paramount. But the idea of mass as strategy fails when balanced against Clausewitz' own definition that strategy is *the use of individual engagements to achieve the aim of the war* and the understanding that in identity wars, the adversary is the individual. To break the partisan, battles would become a never-ending series of executions of individuals. In a very real way, in partisan war, each individual becomes a battlefield.

I have cast *On War* as a political text to explore this *sense* of the partisan. This is not at odds with the normative/practical divide since *On War* was unfinished, and critically, does not express pertinent ideas from earlier in Clausewitz's research, particularly the fusion of war with the concept of the partisan. To be a partisan is being bound up in the society in which one exists, because the

society is bound up in the cause. Most articles exploring ‘irregular war’ miss this point, focusing as they do on the relationship between the two sides, generally via descriptions of method. Discussions of asymmetry have the same problems. Starting over with *On War* as philosophy allows us to elevate the partisan from function to form. The necessary first step has been to re-conceptualise the Trinity in order to reveal its inability to account for the partisan. In doing so, the singularity has emerged. I do not think Clausewitz would be disappointed.

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