

THE CLASH OF THE TRINITIES: A NEW THEORETICAL ANALYSIS OF THE GENERAL NATURE OF WAR

Daniel Maurer

Major Daniel Maurer begins assembling his framework by respectfully questioning the received wisdom that Clausewitz was the last and most comprehensive word on the subject of war's underlying nature. First, despite some common ground regarding the relevance of war's political basis, he finds no consensus (no "unified field theory") among practitioners, presidents, political scientists, sociologists, or historians – from Clausewitz to Wylie to Keegan – that satisfactorily accounts for all of war's varying shades, and which legitimately recognizes its basic elemental components, its evolving character, and the "Why?" that animates or inspires parties to engage in conflict. Noting that not even the U.S. Department of Defense has a doctrinal definition of war, Major Maurer cross-examines some well-known and entrenched interpretations, including those of H. R. McMaster, Rupert Smith, and Emile Simpson, in the hope of reconciling their differences and linking their similarities with a view toward a new explanation that is consonant with descriptions and forecasts of wars – past, present, and future.

Second, Maurer moves through and past Clausewitz, piercing the Clausewitzian trinity of passion, reason, and chance to unearth even more elemental components that comprise war regardless of scale. To accomplish this, Maurer embarks on a wholly original avenue of approach: thinking about war from the "perspectives of compounding relevant points of view existing simultaneously and in concert," what he analogizes to a musical fugue. This fugue of war, like its musical counterpart, is governed by a repeating theme – here, Maurer proposes choice as that single, dominating trait that defines war at any scale, imagined or studied. Maurer, ultimately, uses this theme to reconcile two of the more antagonistic or polarized stances on the nature of war.

Finally, building on Clausewitz's more abstract conceptions, Major Maurer describes war as a "clash of the trinities" in which basic elements – the biological actors, the material, and psychological fuel that empower and embolden them and their interactions – form a context-specific "ecology of war." He depicts this clash with a novel visual analysis, illustrated by historical vignettes: a series of embedded frames that encompass the polarized parties, their interactions, and the legitimizing authorities that move them.

More information about the programs of the Strategic Studies Institute (SSI) and U.S. Army War College (USAWC) Press may be found on the Institute's homepage at ssi.armywarcollege.edu.

Organizations interested in reprinting this or other SSI and USAWC Press executive summaries should contact the Editor for Production via e-mail at SSI_Publishing@conus.army.mil. All organizations granted this right must include the following statement: "Reprinted with permission of the Strategic Studies Institute and U.S. Army War College Press, U.S. Army War College."



This Publication



SSI Website



USAWC Website