

war is the continuation of politics by other means

War is the Continuation of Politics by Other Means: Understanding Clausewitz's Enduring Insight

war is the continuation of politics by other means—a phrase that has echoed through centuries of military and political thought. Coined by the renowned Prussian general and military theorist Carl von Clausewitz, this statement captures the intricate relationship between warfare and political objectives. It suggests that war is not an isolated phenomenon but rather an extension of political discourse when diplomacy fails. To fully appreciate this idea, it's essential to explore the layers behind this concept, its historical significance, and its relevance in today's geopolitical landscape.

The Origin and Meaning Behind "War is the Continuation of Politics by Other Means"

Carl von Clausewitz wrote extensively about war in his seminal book, **On War** (Vom Kriege), published posthumously in the 19th century. His assertion that "war is the continuation of politics by other means" emphasizes that war is fundamentally a political act. Unlike popular perceptions that frame war as purely chaotic or driven by passion and violence, Clausewitz argued that war serves a calculated purpose tied to political goals.

Politics as the Root Cause of War

Politics, in the broadest sense, refers to how groups organize power, resolve conflicts, and pursue collective goals. When political dialogue or negotiation reaches an impasse, states or factions may resort to war as a method to achieve their aims. This dynamic explains why wars often have underlying causes such as territorial disputes, ideological clashes, or economic interests.

In a way, war becomes a tool—albeit a destructive one—to enforce political will when other avenues prove ineffective. Thus, understanding political contexts is crucial to analyzing any conflict or military action.

Why War Cannot Be Separated from Politics

Viewing war as a purely military or violent event misses the broader strategic context. The political objectives shape the conduct, scale, and duration of warfare. This connection between politics and war manifests in several important ways:

Strategy and Political Objectives Are Intertwined

Military strategies are designed with political outcomes in mind. For instance, a campaign might aim not just to defeat enemy forces but to capture critical territories, disrupt governance, or undermine morale. These goals reflect broader political ambitions such as regime change, territorial expansion, or securing resources.

The Limits of Military Power

War alone cannot dictate the final outcome without political support and legitimacy. Even a victorious military campaign can fail to achieve its intended political goals if it lacks diplomatic recognition or popular acceptance. Conversely, political leaders may choose to halt military operations to pursue peace negotiations, reflecting the primacy of political considerations over battlefield success.

Historical Examples That Illustrate the Concept

Understanding how "war is the continuation of politics by other means" plays out in history helps demystify modern conflicts and the motives behind warfare.

The Napoleonic Wars

Napoleon Bonaparte's military campaigns were deeply intertwined with his political ambitions to reshape Europe. His conquests were not random acts of aggression but deliberate moves to consolidate power and spread revolutionary ideals. The eventual downfall of Napoleon was as much political—coalitions forming against him—as it was military.

World War I and the Failure of Diplomacy

The First World War erupted after a series of failed diplomatic efforts and rising nationalist tensions. The war was essentially a violent outcome of competing political alliances and imperial ambitions. Even as battles raged, political negotiations and treaties shaped the conflict's trajectory and eventual resolution.

The Cold War and Proxy Conflicts

During the Cold War, direct military confrontation between superpowers was largely avoided. Instead, the United States and Soviet Union engaged in proxy wars—such as in Korea and Vietnam—using military force as an extension of their ideological and political rivalry. These conflicts were deeply political, with war serving as a means to influence global power balances.

Modern Implications: War and Politics in the 21st Century

In today's complex world, the relationship between war and politics remains as relevant as ever.

Modern conflicts—from civil wars to international interventions—continue to reflect the political aims of the actors involved.

Asymmetric Warfare and Political Messaging

Non-traditional forms of warfare, such as insurgencies and terrorism, emphasize the political nature of conflict. These actors often seek to undermine state authority and gain political recognition rather than achieving outright military victory. Their strategies rely heavily on political messaging and winning “hearts and minds.”

Diplomacy, Sanctions, and Hybrid Warfare

States increasingly blend military actions with diplomatic efforts, economic sanctions, cyber operations, and propaganda—tactics collectively known as hybrid warfare. This multifaceted approach underscores that politics remains central even in conflicts that involve advanced technology and unconventional methods.

Why Understanding This Concept Matters

Recognizing that war is ultimately a political instrument sheds light on how conflicts start, evolve, and end. It encourages a more holistic view of international relations and security, highlighting the importance of:

- **Preventive diplomacy:** Investing in dialogue and negotiation to avoid the escalation of tensions.
- **Strategic clarity:** Defining clear political objectives before engaging in military action to avoid prolonged conflicts.
- **Post-conflict reconstruction:** Addressing political and social factors to secure lasting peace after hostilities.

For policymakers, military leaders, and scholars, this framework provides a lens to analyze conflicts beyond battlefield tactics, focusing on the underlying political calculus that drives decisions.

Reflections on the Phrase in Contemporary Discourse

While Clausewitz's quote remains widely respected, it's also worth noting that war's nature is evolving. Some argue that modern conflicts challenge traditional definitions of war and politics, especially with non-state actors and globalized communication. Nonetheless, the core idea—that political objectives guide and ultimately justify warfare—continues to offer profound insight.

The phrase "war is the continuation of politics by other means" invites us to look beyond the immediate violence and consider the broader human factors at play. It challenges simplistic narratives and encourages deeper understanding of why wars happen and how they might be prevented.

In this light, every military engagement is not just about armies clashing but about ideas, power, and the pursuit of political goals, making the study of politics inseparable from the study of war.

Frequently Asked Questions

Who originally said 'war is the continuation of politics by other means' and what does it mean?

The phrase was originally said by Carl von Clausewitz, a Prussian military theorist. It means that war is a tool used by political entities to achieve their political objectives when other means of diplomacy or negotiation fail.

How does Clausewitz's concept relate to modern warfare?

Clausewitz's concept remains relevant as modern warfare is often driven by political motives, such as securing resources, asserting power, or addressing ideological conflicts, rather than purely military objectives.

Can war ever be separated from politics according to Clausewitz?

No, according to Clausewitz, war cannot be separated from politics because it is an instrument of policy; military actions are always influenced by political goals and considerations.

How does the idea that war is a continuation of politics influence diplomatic strategies?

This idea suggests that diplomacy and military action are interconnected tools of statecraft, encouraging leaders to consider the political consequences of war and the use of military force as part of a broader political strategy.

What implications does the phrase have for conflict resolution?

It implies that resolving conflicts requires addressing underlying political issues, as military solutions alone do not end the political disputes that cause war.

How has the interpretation of Clausewitz's phrase evolved in contemporary international relations?

In contemporary international relations, the phrase underscores the complexity of conflicts, highlighting that wars are seldom isolated events but part of larger political struggles involving multiple actors and interests.

Does the phrase justify the use of war as a political tool?

The phrase itself is descriptive rather than prescriptive; it explains the relationship between war and politics but does not justify or condemn the use of war as a political tool.

How can understanding this concept help in preventing wars?

By recognizing that war is driven by political aims, policymakers can focus on diplomatic engagement, negotiation, and addressing political grievances to prevent conflicts from escalating into war.

Are there exceptions where war is not a continuation of politics by other means?

Some argue that certain conflicts, such as civil wars fueled by ethnic hatred or ideological extremism, may not fit neatly into Clausewitz's framework, but generally, most wars have political dimensions.

Additional Resources

War is the Continuation of Politics by Other Means: An In-Depth Examination

war is the continuation of politics by other means, a phrase famously coined by the Prussian military theorist Carl von Clausewitz in the 19th century. This statement encapsulates the intrinsic connection between war and politics, illustrating how warfare functions as an extension of political objectives when diplomatic or peaceful methods fail. Understanding this concept is crucial for analyzing international

conflicts, military strategies, and the broader implications of geopolitical tensions in today's global landscape.

Theoretical Foundations: Clausewitz's Enduring Insight

Clausewitz's assertion situates war not as an isolated act of violence but as a deliberate tool employed by states to achieve political ends. This perspective challenges simplistic views of war as mere chaos or irrational aggression. Instead, it frames armed conflict within a rational political context, where war becomes a continuation of policy through violent means.

The phrase "war is the continuation of politics by other means" underscores the interplay between political objectives and military tactics. Political goals shape the conduct of war, determining when, where, and how conflicts unfold. Conversely, military realities influence political decisions, sometimes compelling shifts in strategy or negotiation stances. This reciprocal relationship is a defining feature of modern warfare and diplomacy.

War as an Instrument of State Policy

In practice, war often emerges when diplomatic negotiations or economic pressures fail to resolve disputes between nations. Political leaders may resort to military action to protect national interests, assert dominance, or respond to perceived threats. For instance, territorial disputes, ideological conflicts, or competition over resources can escalate into armed confrontations when political dialogue breaks down.

States utilize war strategically to:

- Force adversaries to concede on political demands.

- Enhance national security and deter future aggression.
- Project power and influence on the international stage.
- Respond to internal political pressures or unify domestic populations.

These objectives highlight why war is not random violence but a calculated extension of policy aimed at achieving specific outcomes.

Modern Implications: War and Politics in Contemporary Conflicts

The concept that war serves as an extension of politics remains highly relevant in contemporary international relations. Conflicts in regions such as the Middle East, Eastern Europe, and parts of Africa reveal how political ambitions, alliances, and rivalries often dictate military engagements.

Case Study: The Russia-Ukraine Conflict

The ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine exemplifies the principle that war is the continuation of politics by other means. Political tensions over sovereignty, territorial integrity, and geopolitical alignment have driven military confrontations. Russia's military actions are closely linked to its political objectives of maintaining influence over Ukraine and countering NATO expansion.

This conflict demonstrates the complexity of modern warfare, where political goals are pursued through a combination of conventional military force, cyber warfare, and propaganda campaigns. The war's evolution reflects shifts in political calculations and international responses, underscoring the

inseparability of war and politics.

The Role of Diplomacy and International Law

While war is often seen as a last resort, the international system includes mechanisms aimed at preventing conflicts or limiting their scope. Diplomatic efforts, peace treaties, and institutions such as the United Nations seek to resolve disputes through dialogue and legal frameworks.

However, when these mechanisms fail, states may resort to war as a political tool. This dynamic illustrates the delicate balance between peaceful conflict resolution and military confrontation.

Understanding that war is intrinsically political helps policymakers design more effective strategies for conflict prevention and management.

Strategic Considerations: The Pros and Cons of War as Policy

Engaging in war as a means of political continuation carries significant advantages and risks. From a strategic standpoint, war can:

- Quickly alter political realities by changing territorial control or regime dynamics.
- Signal resolve and deter adversaries from future challenges.
- Unify fragmented political entities under a common cause.

However, the costs are substantial:

- Human suffering and loss of life.
- Economic devastation and disruption of trade.
- Potential for unintended escalation or prolonged conflict.
- Damage to international reputation and diplomatic relations.

These consequences highlight why war is often considered a tool of last resort and why political leaders must weigh military actions against broader implications.

Balancing Military Means with Political Ends

A critical aspect of Clausewitz's dictum is that the use of military force must remain subordinate to political objectives. Failure to align war strategy with political goals risks unnecessary bloodshed or strategic failure. History offers numerous examples where military victories did not translate into political success, such as the Vietnam War or the Soviet-Afghan War.

Effective policymakers recognize that war is not an end in itself but a means to achieve political stability, security, or influence. This understanding informs decisions about when to initiate conflict, how to conduct military operations, and when to seek peace.

Conclusion: The Enduring Relevance of Clausewitz's Insight

The assertion that war is the continuation of politics by other means remains a foundational concept for comprehending the nature of armed conflict. It provides a framework for analyzing how political objectives shape warfare and how military actions influence political landscapes. As global tensions

persist and new forms of conflict emerge—ranging from cyber warfare to proxy battles—this principle continues to guide scholars, military strategists, and policymakers in navigating the complex interplay between war and politics.

Recognizing war as a political instrument rather than isolated violence fosters a more nuanced understanding of international relations and the challenges of maintaining peace in an interconnected world.

War Is The Continuation Of Politics By Other Means

war is the continuation of politics by other means: *The Concept of the Political* Carl Schmitt, 2024-05-31 Arguably Schmitt's most influential work . . . recognized as one of the most important tracts of modern political thought. —Samuel Earle, *The New Statesman* In this, his most influential work, legal theorist and political philosopher Carl Schmitt argues that liberalism's basis in individual rights cannot provide a reasonable justification for sacrificing oneself for the state—a critique as cogent today as when it first appeared. George Schwab's introduction to his translation of the 1932 German edition highlights Schmitt's intellectual journey through the turbulent period of German history leading to the Hitlerian one-party state. In addition to analysis by Leo Strauss and a foreword by Tracy B. Strong placing Schmitt's work into contemporary context, this expanded edition also includes a translation of Schmitt's 1929 lecture *The Age of Neutralizations and Depoliticizations*, which the author himself added to the 1932 edition of the book. An essential update on a modern classic, *The Concept of the Political, Expanded Edition* belongs on the bookshelf of anyone interested in political theory or philosophy. Contains much of what is fundamental in Schmitt's understanding of the political nature of man and the state, including his contentious definition of the political as the distinction between friend and enemy . . . Its scholarship is unquestionable. —Joseph W. Bendersky, *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory* The best introduction to Schmitt's thought. —Mark Lilla, *New York Review of Books* [A] foundational work . . . Minor disagreements over terms fade . . . in light of the superb job Schwab has done rendering Schmitt's long, multi-clausal German sentences into concise, pellucid English. —Robert D. Rachlin, *HNNet*

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transformation of racism. -- Race purity and State racism: the Nazi transformation and the Soviet transformation. Five: 4 February 1976 Answer to a question on anti-Semitism. -- Hobbes on war and sovereignty. -- The discourse on the Conquest in England: royalists, parliamentarians, and Levellers. -- The binary schema and political historicism. -- What Hobbes wanted to eliminate. Six: 11 February 1976 Stories about origins. -- The Trojan myth. -- France's heredity. -- Franco-Gallia.--Invasion, history, and public right. -- National dualism. -- The knowledge of the prince. -- Boulainvillier's Etat de la France.--The clerk, the intendant, and the knowledge of the aristocracy. -- A new subject of history. -- History and constitution. Seven: 18 February 1976 Nation and nations. -- The Roman conquest. -- Grandeur and decadence of the Romans. -- Boulainvilliers on the freedom of the Germans. -- The Soissons vase. -- Origins of feudalism. -- Church, right, and the language of State. -- Boulainvilliers: three generalizations about war: law of history and law of nature, the institutions of war, the calculation of forces. -- Remarks on war. Eight: 25 February 1976: Boulainvilliers and the constitution of a historico-political continuum. -- Historicism. -- Tragedy and public right. -- The central administration of history. -- The problematic of the Enlightenment and the genealogy of knowledges. -- The four operations of disciplinary knowledge and their effects. -- Philosophy and science. -- Disciplining knowledges. Nine: 3 March 1976 Tactical generalization of historical knowledge. -- Constitution, Revolution, and cyclical history. -- The savage and the barbarian. -- Three ways of filtering barbarism: tactics of historical discourse. -- Questions of method: the epistemological field and the antihistoricism of the bourgeoisie. -- Reactivation of historical discourse during the Revolution. -- Feudalism and the gothic novel. Ten: 10 March 1976 The political reworking of the idea of the nation during the Revolution: Sieyes. -- Theoretical implications and effects on historical discourse. -- The new history's grids of intelligibility: domination and totalization. -- Montlosier and Augustin Thierry. -- Birth of the dialectic. Eleven: 17 March 1976 From the power of sovereignty to power over life. -- Make live and let die. -- From man as body to man as species: the birth of biopower. -- Biopower's fields of application. -- Population. -- Of death, and of the death of Franco in particular. -- Articulations of discipline and regulation: workers' housing, sexuality, and the norm. -- Biopower and racism. -- Racism: functions and domains. -- Nazism. -- Socialism. Course Summary Situating the Lectures: Alessandro Fontana and Mauro Bertani Index.

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communications studies, cultural history, military history and politics. It will also prove fascinating and accessible to the general reader.

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war is the continuation of politics by other means: *The Campaign of 1812* Carl Von Clausewitz, 2023-12-27 In *The Campaign of 1812*, Carl Von Clausewitz meticulously analyzes the military strategies, political decisions, and societal impacts surrounding Napoleon's invasion of Russia. Written in a style that intertwines rigorous military analysis with philosophical insights, this work exemplifies Clausewitz's famous dictum that war is merely the continuation of politics by other means. He delves deep into the strategic blunders and operational failures of the campaign, illustrating the interplay between logistics and larger geopolitical consequences, all while contextualizing his observations within the wider framework of Napoleonic warfare. Carl Von Clausewitz, a Prussian general and military theorist, drew upon his extensive experience in the Napoleonic Wars to craft this incisive account. His background as a soldier and a theorist provided him with a unique vantage point to scrutinize warfare's complexities, making this work not only reflective of his scholarly pursuits but also a product of firsthand experience in the crucible of battle. His theories on the fog of war and the nature of conflict were profoundly shaped by the tumultuous events of 1812. *The Campaign of 1812* is essential reading for historians, military strategists, and anyone intrigued by the complexities of war and politics. Its analytical depth and philosophical underpinnings provide valuable insights into the nature of military command and strategy, making it a timeless resource for understanding both historical and contemporary warfare.

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2019-12-17 A new edition of von Clausewitz's classic treatise on military strategy, reinterpreted by Graham Harman through the philosophy of speculative realism. Prussian General Carl von Clausewitz famously wrote that 'War is the continuation of politics by other means'. But what does Clausewitz mean to a world where economic, political and cultural conflicts are increasingly framed as wars? Written after the Napoleonic Wars but left unfinished at the author's death and not published until 1832, *On War* is one of the most influential and important works on military strategy ever written. This new edition presents this classic text with a new introduction by Graham Harman, who reads Clausewitz's ideas about war, politics and military strategy through the lens of speculative realism.

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war is the continuation of politics by other means: *The Philosophy of Enchantment* R. G. Collingwood, 2005 This is the long-awaited publication of a set of writings by the British philosopher, historian, and archaeologist R.G. Collingwood on critical, anthropological, and cultural themes only hinted at in his previously available work. At the centre of the book are six chapters of a study of folktale and magic, composed by Collingwood in the mid-1930s and intended for development into a book. Here Collingwood applies the principles of his philosophy of history to problems in the long-term evolution of human society and culture. This is preceded, in Part I, by a range of contextualizing material on such topics as the relations between music and poetry, the nature of language, the value of Jane Austen's novels, the philosophy of art, and the relations between aesthetic theory and artistic practice. Part III of the volume consists of two essays, one on the relationship between art and mechanized civilization, and the second, written in 1931, on the collapse of human values and civilization leading up to the catastrophe of armed conflict. These offer a devastating analysis of the consequences that attend the desertion of liberal principles, indeed of all politics as such, in the ultimate self-annihilation of military conquest. The volume opens with three substantial introductory essays by the editors, authorities in the fields of critical and literary history, social and cultural anthropology, and the philosophy of history and the history of ideas; they provide their explanatory and contextual notes to guide the reader through the texts. *The Philosophy of Enchantment* brings hitherto unrecognized areas of Collingwood's achievement to light, and demonstrates the broad range of Collingwood's intellectual engagements, their integration, and their relevance to current areas of debate in the fields of philosophy, cultural studies, social and literary history, and anthropology.

war is the continuation of politics by other means: *Queer lawfare in Africa: Legal strategies in contexts of LGBTIQ+ criminalisation and politicisation* Adrian Jjuuko, Siri Gloppen, Alan Msosa , Frans Viljoen, 2022-11-21 About the publication This book focuses on the strategies that activists for LGBTIQ+ equality in Africa deploy to challenge deep seated homophobia and transphobia, as well as the politicisation of LGBTIQ+ issues. It is a peer-reviewed, edited volume with scholarly contributions from lawyers, anthropologists, and LGBTIQ+ activists. It covers different country

situations – those where equality is taking root, as the case is in South Africa, Botswana and Mozambique; those where homophobia reigns and LGBTIQ+ rights are politicised such as, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, Senegal, Uganda, and Zambia; and those where traditional LGBTIQ+ activism is almost a nonstarter, such as in Ethiopia, Sudan and The Gambia. Table of Contents Acknowledgments Acronyms and abbreviations Introduction Queer lawfare in Africa: Introduction and theoretical framework Siri Gloppen, Adrian Jjuuko, Frans Viljoen & Alan Msosa PART I: LAWFARE IN THE CONTEXT OF LIBERALISATION AND PROTECTION OF THE SEXUAL RIGHTS OF LGBT PEOPLE IN AFRICA Chapter 1 War by other means: The law and politics of sexual minority freedom in post-apartheid South Africa Jaco Barnard-Naudé & Pierre de Vos Chapter 2 Progressive legislation in the context of generalised conservative public opinion: The case of LGBT rights in Mozambique Carmeliza Rosário & Camila Gianella Chapter 3 Queer lawfare in Botswana Monica Tabengwa & Anthony Oluoch PART II: LAWFARE IN THE CONTEXT OF ACTIVE POLITICISATION Chapter 4 Queer lawfare in Kenya: Shifting opportunities for rights realisation Nicholas Wasonga Orago, Siri Gloppen & Matthew Gichohi Chapter 5 Court focused lawfare over LGBT rights: The case of Uganda Adrian Jjuuko & Stella Nyanzi Chapter 6 LGBT+ rights lawfare in Malawi Alan Msosa & Chrispine Gwalawala Sibande Chapter 7 Against ‘the order of nature’: Towards the growth of queer lawfare in Nigeria Ayodele Sogunro PART III: LAWFARE IN THE CONTEXT OF RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL NATIONALISM Chapter 8 LGBT lawfare in response to heterosexual nationalism and the retention of the anti-sodomy laws in Zambia Landilani Banda Chapter 9 LGBTIQ+ lawfare in response to the politicisation of homosexuality in Ghana Ernest Yaw Ako & Amanda Odoi Chapter 10 Senegal: Mobilising for gay rights in the shadow of HIV/AIDS Vegard Vibe Chapter 11 From a ‘crusade to root out homosexuality like malaria’ to a ‘non-issue’: The absence of sexual minority lawfare in The Gambia Satang Nabaneh Chapter 12 Digital lawfare and activism by lesbian, gay and bisexual persons in Ethiopia Getnet Tadele & Woldekidan Amde Chapter 13 Activism from the closet: Fear of a double backlash against a nascent queer movement in Sudan Liv Tønnessen, Samia al-Nagar & Samah Khalaf Allah Conclusion The kaleidoscope of queer lawfare in Africa Adrian Jjuuko, Frans Viljoen, Siri Gloppen & Alan Msosa

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