

# The Dichotomy of U.S. Counter-terrorism Strategy

Carl Schmitt v. Carl von Clausewitz

# Schmitt v. Clausewitz

Indefeasible strategy - where your power is insufficient to carry out your designs.

# Schmitt v. Clausewitz

Neoconservative policy makers followed a natural progression from two sources of militarism.

# Schmitt v. Clausewitz



Militarism = Baathism, Bonapartism,  
Trotskyism, Leninism, Fascism,  
Naziism, and other forms of "national  
exceptionalism," such as Hosni  
Mubarrak's

# Schmitt v. Clausewitz

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(2006):

National Strategy is the art and science of developing and using the diplomatic, economic, and informational powers of a nation, together with its armed forces, during peace and war to secure national objectives (Also called Grand Strategy).

# Schmitt v. Clausewitz

“As Clausewitz recognized, military strategy should flow from, and be subordinate to, overall national security policy goals, even if the resultant potential for political interference in military planning and operations can often be frustrating for those in uniform.”

# Schmitt v. Clausewitz

“Policy is the guiding intelligence and war only the instrument, not vice versa. No other possibility exists, then, than to subordinate the military point of view to the political.”

Carl von Clausewitz

Schmitt v. Clausewitz

Defensive Form of War is Stronger than  
the Offensive



## Schmitt v. Clausewitz

We have already indicated in general terms that defense is easier than attack. But defense has a passive purpose: *preservation*; and attack a positive one: *conquest*.

Carl von Clausewitz

## Schmitt v. Clausewitz

“So in order to state the relationship precisely, we must say that *the defensive form of warfare is intrinsically stronger than the offensive. . .*

It is at odds with prevalent opinion, which proves how ideas can be confused by superficial writers”

Carl von Clausewitz

Schmitt v. Clausewitz

People in Arms (Guerilla Warfare)

“it is the natural law of the moral world that a nation that finds itself on the brink of an abyss will try to save itself by any means”

Carl von Clausewitz

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People in Arms (Guerilla Warfare)

"a general conflagration closes in on the  
enemy, driving him out of the country  
before  
he is faced with total destruction"

Carl von Clausewitz

# Schmitt v. Clausewitz

“war is nothing but the continuation  
of policy with other means”

Carl von Clausewitz

## Schmitt v. Clausewitz

“the reason always lies in some political situation,  
and the occasion is always due to some political object.  
War therefore, is an act of policy”

Carl von Clausewitz

Schmitt v. Clausewitz

National interests - what's good for the nation  
as a whole in international affairs.

U.S. Army Command and General Staff College

# Schmitt v. Clausewitz

Grounds for making peace include:

1. an inability to carry on the struggle;
2. the improbability of victory;
3. its unacceptable cost

Carl von Clausewitz



## Schmitt v. Clausewitz

"with the conclusion of peace the purpose  
of the war has been achieved and  
its business is at an end"

Carl von Clausewitz

## Schmitt v. Clausewitz

“Men are always more inclined to pitch their estimate of the enemy's strength too high than too low, such is human nature”

Carl von Clausewitz

## Schmitt v. Clausewitz

The first, the supreme, the most far reaching act of judgment that the statesman and commander have to make is to establish by that test the kind of war on which they are embarking; neither mistaking it for, nor trying to turn it into, something that is alien to its nature. This is the first of all strategic questions and the most comprehensive.

Carl von Clausewitz

## Schmitt v. Clausewitz

“war never breaks out wholly unexpectedly, nor can it be spread instantaneously”

Carl von Clausewitz

## Schmitt v. Clausewitz

"declared war against the United States in particular because of U.S. foreign policies, particularly the fact that U.S. troops in Saudi Arabia seemed to be a permanent military presence in the holy land of Saudi Arabia"

- Osama bin Laden

# Schmitt v. Clausewitz

## Strategy of Terrorists

Compellence - the use of violence in hopes of forcing another actor to stop or start doing something.

Leverage - an effort to induce actions on the part of others that may serve the terrorists goals.

# Schmitt v. Clausewitz

- three methods of leverage

1. provocation - incite over-reaction against own interests
2. polarization - divide and delegitimize a government
3. mobilization - to recruit and rally the masses to a cause using the over-reaction of the state that was attacked.

## Schmitt v. Clausewitz

We planned this battle to bring the Great Satan [that is, the United States] and its allies into this swamp [Afghanistan]. Afghanistan is one of the most unique [places in the world where a hunter has all sorts of traps to choose from. The traps might be set in deserts, rivers, mountains, or even in urban centers. This is our thinking. We are sick and tired of the Great Satan's global intrigues and aim for its demise to make this world a place of peace and justice. The Great Satan is full of the arrogance of its superiority and thinks of Afghans as helpless statues who can be easily hit by America's war machine without the power or capacity to retaliate.



## Schmitt v. Clausewitz

"It is evident that this method,  
wearing down the enemy,  
applies to the great number of cases where  
the weak endeavor to resist the strong."

Carl von Clausewitz

## Schmitt v. Clausewitz

“was to deal a strike to the head of the snake at home . . . and prompt it to come out of its hole . . . which would make it easier for us to deal consecutive blows to undermine it and tear it apart. . . and provoke him to make serious and sometimes fatal mistakes.”

# Schmitt v. Clausewitz

## Law of Unintended Consequences

“with limited information, . . . short time horizons, low feedback, and poor and misaligned incentives, attempt to regulate a complex, evolving social system . . . .”

## Schmitt v. Clausewitz

“What we are engaged in, more aptly, is ‘counterterrorism.’ Rather than a military focus, policing and intelligence should form the backbone of US and allied counterterrorism efforts. . . . Military force often has the opposite effect from what is intended. It is often overused, alienates the local population by its heavy-handed nature, and is a boon to terrorist recruiters.”

Seth Jones

## Schmitt v. Clausewitz

“The centralization of authority in the President alone is particularly crucial in matters of national defense, war, and foreign policy, where a unitary executive can evaluate threats, consider policy choices, and mobilize national resources with a speed and energy that is far superior to any other branch.”

Office of Legal Counsel, Sept. 25, 2001

# Schmitt v. Clausewitz

“(There will be) no stages,” he said.

“This is total war. We are fighting a variety of enemies. There are lots of them out there . . . If we just let our vision of the world go forth, and we embrace it entirely, and we don’t try to piece together clever diplomacy but just wage a total war,

our children will sing great songs about us years from now.”

Richard Perle,  
as quoted by John Pilger

## Schmitt v. Clausewitz

Vice President Dick Cheney, . . . has said the US is considering military or other action against “40 to 50 countries” and warns that the new war may last 50 years or more.

- as quoted by John Pilger

## Schmitt v. Clausewitz

- A world in which the possibility of war is utterly eliminated, a completely pacified globe, would be a world without the distinction of friend and enemy and hence a world without politics. It is conceivable that such a world might contain many very interesting antitheses and contrasts, competitions and intrigues of every kind, *but there would not be a meaningful antithesis whereby men could be required to sacrifice life, authorized to shed blood, and kill other human beings.* For the definition of the political, it is here even irrelevant whether such a world without politics is desirable as an ideal situation. (*Emphasis added.*)

Carl Schmitt



## Schmitt v. Clausewitz

“...from the mid-1920s onwards the Army leaders had developed and propagated new social conceptions of a militarist kind, tending towards a fusion of the military and civilian sectors and ultimately a totalitarian military state (*Wehrstaat*).”

## Schmitt v. Clausewitz

Now the rule of law has two defects, each of which suggests the need for one-man rule. . . .

. The best source of energy turns out to be the same as the best source of reason—one man. One man, or to use Machiavelli's expression, *uno solo*, will be the greatest source of energy if he regards it as necessary to maintaining his own rule.

Prof. Harvey Mansfield, Harvard

## Schmitt v. Clausewitz

- ◉ Constitutional rights should be relaxed so that the executive can move forcefully against the threat. If dissent weakens resolve, then dissent should be curtailed. If domestic security is at risk, then intrusive searches should be tolerated. There is no reason to think that the constitutional rights and powers appropriate for an emergency are the same as those that prevail during times of normalcy. The reason for relaxing constitutional norms during emergencies is that the risks to civil liberties inherent in expansive executive power – the misuse of the power for political gain – are justified by the national security benefits.

Eric A. Posner and Adrian Vermeule

Schmitt v. Clausewitz

A state of war only serves as an excuse for domestic tyranny.

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn