"Cry, 'Havoc!' and Let Slip the Managers of War"
The Strategic, Military and Moral Hazards of Micro-Managed Warfare

Paul Cornish

Abstract

If intrusive political, media and public oversight into the fine detail of the conduct of military affairs were to become the norm, what could be the implications? This paper argues that the micro-management of warfare, and less intensive military operations such as humanitarian intervention and peacekeeping, can distort and unbalance the broad political-military relationship. The consequences of that unbalancing could be described in terms of three related hazards: *strategic* (where the Clausewitzian model, predominant in the West, of the linkage between society and armed forces, and between politics and war, becomes strained); *military* (where modern western military practices such as manoeuvre warfare, mission command and rules of engagement become difficult if not impossible to sustain); and *moral* (where the western liberal project to contain and moderate the effects of warfare is undermined).

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> We make love by telephone,
> we work not on matter but on machines,
> and we kill and are killed by proxy.
> We gain in cleanliness,
> but lose in understanding.
>
> *Albert Camus*[1]

Introduction[2]

For most of the second half of the twentieth century, most western armed forces prepared extensively and expensively for a war that did not take place. Whether Cold War preparations actually caused the non-war is, of course, more a matter of conjecture than of proof. What can be said with more confidence is that the threat of Soviet and Warsaw Pact ground, air and naval aggression in and around Europe was taken seriously and urgently, so much so that 'fighting' the non-war with a combination of deterrence and defence became, over the decades of the Cold War, the central preoccupation of the greater part of the West's armed forces. In a curious way, the western military tradition during the Cold War thus became one of *non*-use of military force. This state of affairs ended suddenly with the breaching of the Berlin Wall in 1989, and the subsequent collapse of both the Warsaw Treaty Organisation and the Soviet Union. With the disappearance of the common external threat, the West's armed forces seemed for a moment to have even less not to do. But as the 1990s wore on, it became clear that these forces – albeit at lower levels and configured with much less emphasis on heavy armoured warfare – would be confronted by many new tasks, challenges and dangers. With the armoured manoeuvring of the 1991 Gulf War widely seen as an echo of a bygone military era, a new strategic paradigm was assumed to lie somewhere in the politico-military smorgasbord of the 1990s. The quest for this new strategic orthodoxy has proved to be a protracted affair, and the outcome so far unclear. Nevertheless, there has been no

shortage of confidence in the new cause, and a growing willingness to discard the strategic *morés* of the Cold War. In late summer 2002, as this paper was being finished, the prospect of extensive armoured operations against and in Iraq was viewed, even in some military circles, as an antique curiosity and as something for which, in any case, most western armoured forces were no longer adequately prepared.

The evolving strategic paradigm of the post-Cold War West reveals four distinctive political-military themes; distance, variety, publicity and precision. *Distance* indicates a shift in strategic thinking from geopolitics, territorial self-defence and wars of national survival, to 'expeditionary' operations far from home for a variety of traditional and non-traditional purposes, and to 'taking the fight to the enemy' in the context of the so-called 'war on terrorism'. It might also be said that as the geographical distance has increased, so too has the historical and conceptual 'distance' between the traditional rationale for armed forces as the guardian of national territory and interests, and the new, more normative mission to protect the world's oppressed and depose the world's tyrants (I return to this point below). *Variety* refers, of course, to the range of tasks to be performed by armed forces once they get wherever they have been sent. During the 1990s western armed forces have been involved in interpositional ('traditional') peacekeeping operations, protection of humanitarian intervention operations, large-scale armoured warfare, the direct provision of humanitarian assistance, capturing alleged war criminals, operations against criminal networks and piracy, sanctions monitoring, state re-building and security sector transformation, policing and forensic assistance, response to natural disasters, and most recently in the US-led counter-terrorism coalition. *Publicity* expresses the fact that military operations, conflict and disasters all make good news, always, for saturation-coverage, '24-7' international media organisations. Furthermore, publicity is of great concern to those western governments most sensitive to the risks and opportunities of image and presentation. *Precision* refers as much to technological matters of targeting and weapon accuracy as to the expectation that military force is itself a precise tool, to be used in a focused and careful way, and for a finite and attainable purpose.[3]

To these four strategic themes must be added a fifth; humanitarianism – the expectation that the West's potent and sophisticated military forces can and should be seen as a 'force for good'. The 1990s saw the rise of what might best be called militant humanitarianism; the determination to use military force in response to aggression, state collapse, tyranny and repression, human rights abuses and natural disasters around the world. Indeed, humanitarianism came close to being the military motto of the 1990s; by one account, 'virtually every great power has tended to claim that its military interventions served a humanitarian purpose.'[4] The conceptual accompaniment to all this frenetic activity has been a complex debate on the very nature of the modern international system, the relative importance of states as against other political and economic forces and organisations, and the elasticity of two

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[3] Precision is increasingly expected by the public, by political leaders and by military practitioners alike: 'The [UK] Armed Forces are to bid for extra money from the Treasury to buy weapons that avoid politically embarrassing damage to civilian property in bombing campaigns'; 'Forces want funds for 'safer' weapons', *The Times*, 16 July 2001.

[4] J. Kurth, 'Humanitarian intervention: lessons from the past decade', *Orbis*, Fall 2001.

concepts which have hitherto been understood to be basic to a predominantly state-centric international system; the sovereign rights of states, and the corresponding duty of non-intervention. This meeting between the (seemingly) unstoppable force of humanitarianism and the (apparently) immovable object of the state-based international system has prompted broad debate on the ethics of military intervention, one manifestation of which has been renewed interest in the West in the just war tradition as a framework for reflecting upon the rights, wrongs, imperatives and consequences of resorting to armed force. The ethics of intervention and the merits of the just war tradition have captured the interest and imagination of many scholars, generating an enormous literature.[5] The discussion has also resonated more widely. Some indication of the extent to which just war-style thinking and language penetrated the upper levels of Western political debate in the 1990s – principally in the form of the *jus ad bellum* reflection on the resort to armed force[6] – can be found in arguments presented by US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright while the air campaign against Serbia was underway in early 1999: 'We are resolute because it is in our interests and it is right, to stop the ethnic cleansing…;'[7] 'NATO is responding forcefully to the assault on fundamental human values…;'[8] 'Because our cause is just, we are united.'[9] And at the time of writing this paper, the prospect of western military action against Iraq had provoked considerable public debate on the ethical basis of military intervention and the coercive use of military force, in many cases using the just war tradition as a framework for argument.

My point of departure in this paper is that, taken together, these five themes or features have created the conditions for a sixth – increasing political interest and oversight in military affairs. *Distance*, as I have employed that term, could invite or require a greater political effort in justifying and managing the use of military force. *Variety* could extend a similar invitation, by ensuring that military force is perceived

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[5] There is no shortage of excellent and provocative work on both the just war tradition and the ethics of contemporary coercive intervention. For the former, the works of Michael Walzer and James Turner Johnson have become standards. For a review of the academic debate on intervention, see M.J. Smith, 'Humanitarian Intervention: An Overview of the Ethical Issues', *Ethics and International Affairs* (12, 1998). Walzer's 'legalist paradigm' is a popular starting point here; state sovereignty and non-intervention are to be upheld, and aggression resisted and punished, in order to protect the rights-based and rights-fulfilling international society of states, and therefore the idea of the state itself. See M. Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars* (New York: Basic Books, 3rd Edition, 2000), especially pp.58-63 and the preface to the third edition. An effort to go beyond Walzer's arguably state-centric approach, and an early attempt to articulate a so-called *jus ad interventionem*, can be found in S. Hoffmann, 'Sovereignty and the Ethics of Intervention' in S. Hoffmann et al, *The Ethics and Politics of Humanitarian Intervention* (Notre Dame University Press, 1996). The most recent exposition of this argument can be found in International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, *The Responsibility to Protect* (Ottawa: IDRC, 2002), p.xi; 'Where a population is suffering serious harm… and the state in question is unwilling or unable to avert it, the principle of non-intervention yields to the international responsibility to protect'. For a spirited rejection of most of the above, see E. Luttwak, 'Give War a Chance', *Foreign Affairs* (78/4, July/August 1999).

[6] In essence, the just war tradition is concerned with two problems: when is it right to resort to force, and what are the parameters of acceptable military practice and behaviour during conflict. The first problem is addressed in the *jus ad bellum*, the second in the *jus in bello*.

[7] M. Albright, text of speech, Washington, 6 April 1999 (US Information Service, Official Text, 7 April 1999).

[8] M. Albright, text of speech, Washington, 14 April 1999 (US Information Service, Official Text, 15 April 1999).

[9] M. Albright, text of speech, Washington, 20 April 1999 (US Information Service, Official Text, 21 April 1999).

to be more multi-functional than in the Cold War, and as a result much less of a monolith impenetrable to politicians and other military amateurs. *Publicity* speaks largely for itself – which is of course why opinion poll sensitive, democratically elected governments take such an interest in it. *Precision* could express political expectations (sometimes, in practice, conflicting) of minimal 'collateral damage' to civilians and non-combatants, minimal risk of death or injury to forces engaged in operations, and of relatively quick and easily comprehensible results, after which troops can return home triumphant. As for *humanitarianism*, Kurth has aptly observed that, particularly in democracies, the support of 'the well-educated, politically informed, and morally concerned upper-middle class, especially the liberal professionals (and the professional liberals)' is sought by governments contemplating intervention, and that this support will require there to be a respectable 'humanitarian purpose.'[10]

For liberal democratic polities there is, in principle, nothing wrong and everything right about 'political interest and oversight in military affairs.' This interest and oversight ought also to be vigilant, dynamic and adaptive to change, particularly as direct military experience among the West's political classes becomes more rare, as the purpose to which military force is put becomes a matter of public contention, and as military operations become more complicated (and therefore arcane) technologically. But when both parties in a relationship are changing or reviewing the style and substance of their participation, there is at least a possibility that the equation that binds them might also change or become unbalanced, perhaps without it even being noticed. Very broadly, there could be two ways in which the political-military relationship could become unbalanced. In the first, national political and economic life could become militarised by one means or another. Militarism is, of course, a real issue in many parts of the world, and should serve as a warning against complacency for even the most stable liberal democratic polities. That said, militarism is not the concern of this paper, largely because it represents the collapse of liberal democracy, and therefore the curtailing of the ethical debate – which this essay seeks to join – about the place of armed force in liberal democratic national and international politics. The second possibility reverses the trajectory and sees the military function being incapacitated by an excessive level of otherwise laudable and well-intentioned political oversight. It is this problem, to which I apply the term 'micro-management', which is the straw man (albeit one whose family tree goes back several generations) at the centre of what follows.

In her 2002 Reith lectures, Onora O'Neill complains of an ever-expanding culture of centralised control, accountability and suspicion of public servants and professionals.[11] My concern here is with the implications of this phenomenon in a narrow and specific context. Having mentioned briefly the extensive debate on the legitimacy and morality of coercive intervention in the international system, my main purpose here is to ask what might be the effects of an unbalanced political-military relationship – i.e., one characterised by micro-management – on the other half of the western just war tradition known as *jus in bello*; the laws, expectations, customs and procedures by which the conduct of military operations is constrained ethically.

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[10] Kurth, 'Humanitarian intervention'.
[11] O. O'Neill, *A Question of Trust: The BBC Reith Lectures 2002* (Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp.viii, 57, 99.

Militarism represents a fundamental, but also an explicit challenge to liberal democracy. Micro-management is a more complex and cryptic challenge, and I will argue should be treated just as seriously. Because micro-management begins as a manifestation or extension of the liberal democratic style of civil-military relations, it appears unnecessary and unfashionable to hold it up to critical scrutiny. As a result, it is difficult to know when or whether micro-management might become a problem, and harder still to accept that micro-management might even result in the liberal democratic project working against itself.

I begin this essay by describing micro-management, showing how it has been manifested and what might be its implications, strategically (i.e., in terms of the conceptual and practical relationship between politics and the military) and militarily (i.e., in terms of operational military practice in pursuit of strategic objectives). I then discuss how, in such micro-managed circumstances, the moral project to contain the effects of armed conflict might be affected. My aim is to draw attention to a paradox, whereby the desire at the strategic level to shape the use of armed force by moral, humanitarian and other considerations, actually makes moral praxis harder to achieve. It is widely understood that to will the ends without ensuring that the appropriate means are available is, at best, inconsistent. The inconsistency can only be compounded when the appropriate means are effectively inhibited, intentionally or otherwise. I will argue that those whose task it is to engage in combat are in the best, if not the only position to ensure that combat is conducted within prescribed legal and moral parameters. But it is precisely these practitioners whose autonomy and judgement are challenged by micro-management, and who are in danger of being crowded out of the moral debate, which then becomes deficient where the use of armed force is concerned.

Micro-management
Complaints about political intrusion into the military domain are not a new phenomenon. A few examples from modern history illustrate the general theme, as well as showing that the phenomenon is particularly well-rooted in both the British and the American strategic tradition – two countries which, coincidentally, have been significant players in the search for a new, post-Cold War strategic paradigm.

During the American War of Independence, the British Governor General of Canada wrote to General 'Gentleman Johnny' Burgoyne, after the latter's surrender at Saratoga in October 1777:

> This unfortunate event, it is to be hoped, will in future prevent ministers from pretending to direct operations of war in a country at 3,000 miles distance, of which they have so little knowledge as not to be able to distinguish between good, bad, or interested advices, or to give positive orders in matters which from their nature are ever upon the change: so that the expediency or propriety of a measure at one moment may be totally inexpedient or improper at the next.[12]

Helmuth von Moltke, mid-nineteenth century Chief of the Prussian General Staff, once voiced 'the universal wish of military commanders: "The politician should fall

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[12] R. Harvey, *A Few Bloody Noses: the American War of Independence* (London: John Murray, 2001), p. 278.

silent the moment that mobilization begins."'[13] Douglas MacArthur, commanding US forces during the Korean War, was a celebrated advocate of von Moltke's approach, as he explained to the US Senate after his dismissal:

> A theatre commander is not merely limited to the handling of his troops; he commands the whole area, politically, economically and militarily. At that stage of the game when politics fails and the military takes over, you must trust the military… I do unquestionably state that when men become locked in battle, that there should be no artifice under the name of politics which should handicap your own men, decrease their chances for winning, and increase their losses.[14]

MacArthur's warnings were evidently not heeded in the US political-strategic establishment, which became progressively more interested and involved in the conduct of military affairs as the Cold War reached its height. To a large degree, this was a function of improved communications technology:

> The desire to control military operations more closely at the civilian level in the [Office of the Secretary of Defense] and in the White House coincided with advances in communications technology that made possible the detailed monitoring of military activities in faraway theaters. During the Cuban missile crisis, communications equipment established in the White House after the Bay of Pigs incident allowed the president to monitor and control military operations from his desk in the Oval Office. The Defense Department installed high-volume communications and data display systems that let the White House Situation Room monitor closely the most technical aspects of military deployments and activities. Rather than give the military the mission to enforce the blockade, McNamara and the president orchestrated the specific activities of U.S. ships.[15]

As the Vietnam War escalated during the 1960s, so it became clearer that, at least from McNamara's perspective, the US military had lost its discrete, professional status and become a tool of communication in the new strategy of 'graduated pressure'. McNamara's strategy 'rested on the principle of precise control of the application of force. As a corollary [McNamara] had to control the military precisely.'[16] That control was indeed, at times, precise:

> Target selection was done in Washington, often in the White House itself, with the President at times personally monitoring the outcome of particular missions. Extraordinary precision was demanded of pilots - one 1966 order specified that piers at Haiphong could be hit only if no tankers were berthed at them, that vessels firing on American planes could be struck only if they were "clearly North Vietnamese," and that no attacks were to be launched on Sunday.[17]

The Vietnam experience left a deep, historical impression on US society in general, and on the US political-military establishment in particular. One of the consequences of Vietnam has been a lingering aversion to micro-management of military operations. During the US-led coalition's operations against Iraq in 1990-91, the prospect of 'Lawyers running a war' alarmed both US Defence Secretary Dick

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[13] Quoted in J. Snyder, 'The Cult of the Offensive in 1914', in R.J. Art and K.N. Waltz, *The Use of Force: Military Power and International Politics* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 1999), p.118.
[14] Quoted in M. Howard, 'The influence of Clausewitz', in Clausewitz, *On War*, p.43.
[15] H.R. McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty: Lyndon Johnson, Robert McNamara, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Lies That Led to Vietnam* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1998), p.31.
[16] McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty*, pp.73, 96.
[17] J.L. Gaddis, 'Flexible Response and Vietnam', in Art and Waltz, *The Use of Force*, p.221.

Cheney and Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff Colin Powell – a Vietnam veteran.[18] But if micro-management could be resisted during a high-intensity, high tempo but relatively brief armoured conflict in the Gulf, it proved much more difficult to do so as the Balkan wars developed during the mid 1990s. In his polemic account of Britain's involvement in former Yugoslavia in the early 1990s, Brendan Simms describes a government distancing itself both from the crisis in general and from the practices of its armed forces. In the early years, there was no centralised control or micro-management, because Whitehall considered the conflict unimportant enough to be left, not even to generals but to captains and corporals in their twenties.[19] It was perhaps, Britain's early lack of interest and involvement in the detail of military operations that contributed to the hurried and exaggerated attempts to tighten control as the conflict wore on. General Rupert Smith, British commander of the UN Protection Force (UNPROFOR) in Bosnia from 1995 described in detail the circumstances of political micro-management that he was to confront:

> Political factors are being included at ever-lower levels in the military command hierarchy; politicians or administrators and other agencies of a political nature are actively involved in the operation. The reason for this, in these circumstances where force is not to be used to decide the matter, is that it is difficult to break the malleable objectives down into objectives or targets to be achieved by force, and this is even more difficult in coalition where each capital tends to have a different perception of risk and reward. In conducting their business the generals, colonels, captains, and occasionally corporals have a political effect, it is they who deal with the local leaders and with other agencies, both military and political, be they governmental or non-governmental; the fire department or police, UNHCR or Human Rights Watch, or the media. The result is that our decision process, and our staff systems including its [sic] supporting technology are often found to be unsuitable; authorities and decision points shift, different information is required, small tactical actions have unforeseen consequences at the strategic level, and so on.

Later in the same article, Smith extended his description of micro-management into the colourfully metaphorical complaint of a highly-experienced, professional military practitioner:

> We are conducting operations now as though we are on a stage, in an amphitheatre or Roman arena; there are at least two producers and directors working in opposition to each other; the players, each with their own idea of the script, are more often than not mixed up with the stage hands, ticket collectors and ice cream vendors, while a factional audience, its attention focused on that part of the auditorium where it is noisiest, views and gains an understanding of events by peering down the drinking straws of their soft drink packs.[20]

As the 1990s drew to a close, NATO's Kosovo operation in 1999 added yet more fuel to the micro-management debate. The Kosovo operation was, essentially, an air campaign, the planning, conduct and outcome of which have prompted a host of questions. Was too much being expected of air power acting alone? Was it wise to foreclose, publicly, the option to use ground forces? Was military advice ignored? Was the decision to escalate gradually a repetition of past errors?[21] Did the flow of

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[18] C. Powell, *My American Journey* (New York: Ballantine, 1995), pp.482-83.

[19] B. Simms, Unfinest Hour: Britain and the Destruction of Bosnia (London: Allen Lane, 2001).

[20] R. Smith, 'Wars in our time – a survey of recent and continuing conflicts,' *World Defence Systems* (3/2, 2001).

[21] P.S. Meilinger, 'Gradual Escalation: NATO's Kosovo Air Campaign, though Decried as a Strategy, may be the Future of War', *Armed Forces Journal International* (October 1999), p.18. For a

information and advice from military to political leaders work well enough? How successful was the campaign? Who made the decision to rely on air power, and for what reasons? For some commentators, the Kosovo campaign also illustrated the tendency for military operations to be micro-managed at senior levels in the politico-military relationship, resulting in military 'guns' being 'spiked'.[22] The report of the Independent International Commission on Kosovo came to a similar conclusion:

> The campaign was a complex, constantly evolving military operation. Decision-making throughout the campaign was influenced by micro-management and political judgment calls from several key NATO member governments. The need for consensus among all 19 members of the Alliance, including three new member states – Poland, Czech Republic, and Hungary – and those, like Greece, with close historical ties to Serbia, put additional constraints on the military decision-making process.[23]

Claims that Kosovo was a micro-managed operation are, however, contested. If micro-management is closely defined as the requirement for political approval (target by target) before every air attack or tactical operation on the ground, then this is precisely what senior NATO officials and military officers have argued did not take place during the Kosovo operation – at least as far as NATO's political body was concerned. Britain's ambassador to NATO reported that: 'Micro-management did not occur at any stage. [The North Atlantic Council] cleared targets generically… We never sat in judgement on an individual target.'[24] And from the senior military perspective, Britain's Chief of Joint Operations 'strongly denied that the campaign was micro-managed by politicians'.[25] Nevertheless, there is a good deal of circumstantial evidence to suggest that micro-management – or something close to it – did in some way influence the Kosovo operation. The perceptions of military people who took part in the Kosovo operation (or who have been involved in Kosovo subsequently) might be exaggerated, but they might just as easily contain a grain of

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contrasting assessment of the operation, see E.H. Telford, 'Operation Allied Force and the role of air power', *Parameters* (Winter 1999-2000).

[22] 'NATO politicians "spiked our guns"', *Sunday Telegraph*, 5 March 2000. See also a British military view that ruling out the ground offensive was a 'strategic mistake' in 'Ground war 'error'', *The Times*, 24 March 2000.

[23] Independent International Commission on Kosovo. *The Kosovo Report* (Oxford University Press, 2000), p.92. See also R. Funnell, 'Military history overturned: did air power win the war?', in A. Schnabel and R. Thakur (eds), *Kosovo and the Challenge of Humanitarian Intervention* (United Nations University Press, 2000), pp.443-4; D. Keohane, 'The Debate on British Policy in the Kosovo Conflict: An Assessment', *Contemporary Security Policy* (21/3, December 2000), p.87; P.E. Gallis, *Kosovo: Lessons Learned from Operation* Allied Force (Washington: CRS Report for Congress, November 1999), pp.9-11; K. Naumann, 'Democracies fighting a war: lessons learned from Kosovo' (MSLS 310-3-38, pp.22-23; C.C. Hodge, 'Casual War: NATO's Intervention in Kosovo', *Ethics and International Affairs* (14, 2000), p.48;

[24] House of Commons, *Lessons of Kosovo* (London: HMSO, Select Committee on Defence, Fourteenth Report, [WWW edition], October 2000), para.95.

[25] House of Commons, *Lessons of Kosovo*, para. 95. See also Ministry of Defence, *Kosovo: Lessons from the Crisis* (London: HMSO Cm 4724, June 2000), p.34: 'Targets for air strikes were selected by the NATO Military Authorities, acting in accordance with guidance agreed by the North Atlantic Council on broad sets of targets and the requirement to minimise collateral damage. The North Atlantic Council was not involved in the detailed process of target selection. Individual allies were responsible for the clearance of the targets assigned to them by NATO.' Clearly, while this statement appears to rule out the possibility of political micro-management *by* NATO, it is more ambiguous where NATO's national governments are concerned, although the same report goes on to describe British pilots being given authority to drop unguided bombs through cloud where, in their own judgment, the risk of 'collateral damage' was outweighed by the military benefit – para. 7.33, p.40.

reality. There appears to be a widespread sense, at the very least, of political interference in military matters, reflected in the common military usage of such terms as 'casualty aversion', 'the body-bag syndrome', 'total force protection', the 'long screwdriver' and 'reach down'.[26] And perhaps Britain's Chief of Joint Operations was simply shifting his criticism of micro-management to another quarter? Having denied micro-management, the same officer proceeded to refer to his targeting directive which 'described to me the sort of targets that UK forces were allowed to attack, the ones that we were not allowed to attack, the degree of collateral damage that we should seek to avoid, the risks to civilians and many other factors like that, which constrained, in essence, what targets, generated by NATO, UK forces could accept.'[27] Elsewhere in the same House of Commons report, it was noted that given 'the failure fully to suppress Serbian air defences, combined with the *overwhelming political requirement* to minimise the risk of casualties [among bomber crews], UK pilots were unable to exercise their highly prized low-flying skills.' [My emphasis][28] Furthermore, the sense that the British government is veering towards micro-management as a deliberate policy preference might reasonably be inferred from observations made in the July 2002 'New Chapter' of the UK's 1998 Strategic Defence Review. The new policy document describes the benefits of 'network-centric capability' as, *inter alia*, 'greater precision in the control of operations' and 'greater precision in the application of force.'[29]

We begin to glimpse the likely provenance of micro-management; whereas NATO's political and military authorities were apparently able to resist the impulse to micro-manage (possibly because micro-management by a committee of nineteen would have been impossible to achieve), perhaps the governments of troop contributing countries found it more difficult to remain aloof. Looking more closely, we can say that micro-management has a number of closely connected components: technological, political, legal and – once again – humanitarian. The technological component suggests that advances in communications, and intelligence gathering and collation, have changed the political-military relationship fundamentally. A real-time data link between a surveillance aircraft and a national capital not only provides top-level political and military leaders with high-quality intelligence, it also invites comment and instruction, which can return to the operational theatre from the capital just as rapidly. In north-east Afghanistan in late 2001, satellite communications proved invaluable tactically and operationally, as a means with which to co-ordinate the various anti-Taleban factions. The same devices also served a strategic purpose, in briefing western capitals on the progress of the campaign and in enabling instructions to be passed back quickly into the theatre of operations. At the very least, therefore, we can

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[26] 'Force protection' is a standard military procedure, referring to the security of bases and individuals, to enable operations to be carried out. 'Total force protection' takes the procedure to the extreme, such that physical and personal security is guaranteed; it has been claimed that a very large proportion of US forces in Kosovo – perhaps as high as fifty per cent – had the job of protecting their colleagues. 'Reach down' is a loosely metaphorical reference to the hand of government reaching into the pilot's cockpit and taking over the controls, or changing settings with a 'long screwdriver'. For a useful comparative study, see R. Caniglia, 'US and British approaches to force protection,' *Military Review*, July-August 2001.

[27] House of Commons, *Lessons of Kosovo*, para. 95.

[28] 'Why Kosovo bombs missed mark,', *The Times*, 25 October 2000.

[29] Ministry of Defence, *The Strategic Defence Review: A New Chapter* (London: HMSO, Cm 5566 Vol. I, July 2002), para. 35-6.

say that technologically, political leaders increasingly have the opportunity to comment upon and direct military activity.[30] At the most, it might even be that one or more 'levels of war' – political-strategic (or 'grand strategic'), military-strategic, operational and tactical – will be removed as the political-military command and control hierarchy becomes ever flatter. Technology in another guise - precision-guided munitions - has also led to what might be termed structural micro-management, in the form of the political and public expectation that deaths and injuries to innocent bystanders (sometimes euphemistically referred to as 'collateral damage') can and must be minimised if not excluded altogether.[31]

The political impulse to micro-manage stems from the well-documented and almost overwhelming presence in conflict situations of the international media (accredited and otherwise) with very sophisticated means of communication, introducing another realm of real-time debate which does not merely enable political involvement in the conduct of the campaign, but insists upon it.[32] The legal component of micro-management refers to the question of Rules of Engagement, which I discuss more fully below, and to the presence of legal advisors further and further down the military command chain, even to the extent that in the Balkans NATO foot patrols (of around 30 men) were on occasion reportedly accompanied by a military lawyer.

Finally, the humanitarian dimension of micro-management reflects political unease with the prospect of a military operation being seen vividly and immediately to have caused the so-called 'collateral damage' referred to above. A humanitarian intervention which results in the death and injury of the innocent on whose behalf the intervention might have been ordered, would come uncomfortably close to one of the more celebrated travesties of the Vietnam War, whereby a village was reputedly destroyed in order that it might be 'saved'. But there is a second strand to humanitarianism that is not always compatible with the first; governments also feel obliged to minimise the risk of death and suffering to their own combatant troops – an impulse notoriously reinforced by the US experience in Somalia in 1993. For some commentators, what best characterised and explained the Kosovo operation, and the Afghanistan air campaign in 2001, was the preference for a low-risk application of armed force, with ground forces being held back and with targets being attacked by aircraft flying more safely at medium altitude. The effects of risk- and casualty aversion on the conduct (military and moral) of humanitarian operations are a subject of growing interest,[33] not least because an operation which shifts the risk of death and injury largely onto non-combatants can scarcely be called humanitarian: 'High tech warfare is governed by two constraints – avoiding civilian casualties and avoiding risks to pilots – that are in direct contradiction. To target effectively you have to fly

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[30] The relative ease with which governments can now monitor and control the operations of their troops, even at very great distance, can also undermine any other, subsidiary chain of command under which the troops have been deployed, such as the UN; M. Goulding, *Peacemonger* (London: John Murray, 2002), pp. 77, 329.

[31] 'Forces want funds for 'safer' weapons', *The Times*, 16 July 2001.

[32] It has been said that when the 10,000-strong NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR) moved across the border into Kosovo in June 1999, it was accompanied by 2,500 accredited media representatives; a soldier/media ration of 4:1.

[33] See F.Harbour and P. Cornish, 'Planning for Casualties: Insights from World War II and Kosovo', paper presented to the International Studies Association, Chicago, February 2001.

low. If you fly low you lose pilots. Fly high and you get civilians.'[34] The only escape from this dilemma would seem to lie in the context of the intriguing but as yet oxymoronic possibility of a genuinely 'painless war.' The main difficulty with risk-aversion or casualty-intolerance in military operations, however, is that these are exaggerations upon a theme – force protection – that must be part of any responsible military plan. For both military and moral reasons, force protection is rightly a central consideration in the planning and execution of the military mission. Casualty intolerance, on the other hand, is militarily debilitating, and describes the paradoxical point at which force protection becomes the decisive or distinctive feature of the mission.[35]

Historically, circumstantially and conceptually, the idea of micro-management now has enough substance for discussion to proceed. My purpose in this paper is, to repeat, not to argue that micro-management occurred in this or that operation. Nor is it my aim to argue that micro-management is necessarily bad whenever it occurs, repeating the exaggerated claim heard in some quarters that military advice and expertise is now *always* ignored or bypassed by an over-anxious political process. In the Kosovo case, for example, by some views more political involvement in military affairs was preferable; it was, after all, Britain's Prime Minister Blair who 'supported the British military view that planning for a land campaign had to begin',[36] and was vocal in pressing NATO into considering the ground option.[37] And from the perspective of the combat soldier, political involvement need not be all bad. In modern military operations, intelligent and highly proficient professional soldiers (and their families) expect to feel close to – and to understand – the political purpose and military mission which frames their activity, and are nowadays more sensitive to, and critical of any perceived shortcomings in the political-military hierarchy. McMaster writes of his time as a tank troop commander in the 1991 Gulf War: 'it was clear to me that our unit's experience was dramatically different from the Vietnam accounts that I had read. The ease with which we could connect our combat mission to strategic objectives that seemed clear and attainable contrasted starkly with combat actions in Vietnam, which seemed to achieve nothing beyond adding more enemy dead to the weekly body count.'[38] But if micro-management becomes the norm rather than the occasional urgent necessity, that would suggest that the political-military relationship has indeed changed, and become unbalanced. My aim in this paper is to describe the likely hazards of that unbalancing; strategic, military and moral.

Micro-management: the Strategic Hazard
'Strategy' stems from the ancient Greek '*strategia*', meaning generalship or the art of the

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[34] M. Ignatieff, *Virtual War: Kosovo and Beyond* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2000), p.62.

[35] For a good discussion of casualty aversion, which takes much of the hysteria out of the issue, see R. Caniglia, 'US and British approaches to force protection,' *Military Review*, July-August 2001.

[36] 'Britain had detailed plan for ground war', *The Times*, 25 March 2000.

[37] See John Little's BBC2 documentary *Kosovo: Moral Combat*, 12 March 2000.

[38] McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty*, p.xiv. I would not, however, wish to make too much of this point, least of all to suggest that all those involved in military operations see themselves as part of a complex and fascinating historical and political process, the meaning of which they must pause to debate at frequent intervals. Most soldiers on operations are probably more driven by the need to fulfil their (often rather dull) tasks effectively, promptly and safely, than by lofty strategic debate. One anecdote illustrates my point; in Afghanistan in late 2001, when asked how things were going in this particularly complex and controversial operation, one British soldier reportedly replied 'different country, same old s**t.'

military commander. The term has long since been diluted to mean little more than 'planning ahead', but still retains some of its original reference to the application of military force, popularly understood to be primarily the business of generals and admirals. All strategy – military, commercial, industrial, political, criminal, individual etc.– is a purposive activity. But according to an intellectual tradition deeply embedded in the West, where generalship is concerned 'purpose' and 'activity' are not to be conflated; when military force is applied, the purpose should be not merely to achieve military ends, but to serve some overarching and legitimising political goal. Since at least Carl von Clausewitz, the early nineteenth century Prussian soldier-philosopher, we have been familiar with the idea that the first 'strategic' task is to establish the political goal, and only then to consider the role of military force in achieving that goal. This level of activity – the highest organisation and planning of defence and war – has attracted a variety of labels, such as 'high politics', 'war policy'[39] and 'total strategy'[40]. In one attempt to articulate this meeting of two ostensibly very different worlds, British military doctrine divides strategy into two – *grand strategy* ('the co-ordinated use of the three principal instruments of national power: economic, diplomatic and military') and *military strategy* ('the art of developing and employing military forces consistent with grand strategic objectives').[41] Thereafter, at the level of *operations* (elsewhere sometimes known as 'grand tactics'), the military commander takes his instructions, reviews the resources available, and devises a plan that will best serve military strategic and therefore the political/diplomatic goals. For the sake of clarity (and suspecting that in Britain and other countries with diminishing armed forces 'military strategy' and 'operational' are probably in practice becoming difficult to distinguish), in this paper I use *strategy* to refer to the outcome of the meeting between politics and the military, and *operational* to refer to the military implementation of that strategy.

Any discussion in which Clausewitz features must acknowledge that the Prussian general has been much derided. Critics note that Clausewitz's analysis was based on a very narrow, socially and historically unique experience; Napoleon's mass warfare in early nineteenth century Europe. Furthermore, Clausewitz's work reflected assumptions – principally regarding sovereignty and the state's monopoly prerogative on the legitimate use of armed force – which are now more contested than accepted. For all these reasons, the claim is made that Clausewitz has too little to offer to students of early twenty-first century international politics with its diffusion of actors, and to students (and practitioners) of modern armed conflict where non-state armed forces have an important role and where the 'political' and the 'military' are not simply held in a relationship – however close – but are fused into one. Martin van Creveld has been at the forefront of the critique of Clausewitz, offering the prospect of 'non-trinitarian' warfare (i.e., warfare which does not conform to Clausewitz's Westphalian-style 'trinity' of people, army and government, which I discuss further below).[42] And in another celebrated critique of Clausewitz's influence on strategic thinking, the British military historian John Keegan cited many misgivings about

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[39] B.H. Liddell Hart, *The Strategy of Indirect Approach* (London: Faber & Faber, 1941), p.11.
[40] C. Barnett, *The Collapse of British Power* (Gloucester: Alan Sutton, 1987), p.xi.
[41] 'British Defence Doctrine' (Second Edition), Joint Warfare Publication 0-01 (London: JDCC, 2001), p.1-2.
[42] M. van Creveld, *The Transformation of War* (New York: The Free Press, 1991). See also E.J. Villacres and C. Bassford, 'Reclaiming the Clausewitzian Trinity', *Parameters* (Autumn 1995).

Clausewitz while arguing for 'culture' (rather than the intermediary phenomenon of 'politics') to be acknowledged as the main influence on warfare:

> Clausewitz was a man of his times, a child of the Enlightenment, a contemporary of the German Romantics, an intellectual, a practical reformer, a man of action, a critic of his society and a passionate believer in the necessity for it to change. […] Where he failed was in seeing how deeply rooted he was in his own past, the past of a professional officer class of a centralised European state. Had his mind been furnished with just one extra intellectual dimension – and it was already a very sophisticated mind indeed – he might have been able to perceive that war embraces much more than politics: that it is always an expression of culture, often a determinant of cultural forms, in some societies the culture itself.[43]

But if Clausewitz has his detractors, his work has also received a great deal of acclaim as a milestone in western political philosophy. In the late 1970s the English philosopher Philip Windsor described Clausewitz's *On War* as 'the only work of philosophic stature to have been written about war in the modern period.'[44] At about the same time, in an introductory essay to what has since become the standard edition of *On War*, Bernard Brodie wrote 'His is not simply the greatest but the only truly great book on war.'[45] In another introductory essay to the same volume, Michael Howard warned against reading too much into *On War*, or expecting more than Clausewitz intended to give: 'It remains the measure of his genius that, although the age for which he wrote is long since past, he can still provide so many insights relevant to a generation, the nature of whose problems he could not possibly have foreseen.'[46] More recently, the British strategist Colin Gray has taken up the cause of Clausewitz, describing *On War* as 'the gold standard for general strategic theory' and its author's insights as 'intellectually inescapable.'[47]

This brief paper is not the place to evaluate the contending arguments regarding the relevance of Clausewitz and the importance of *On War*. The schism seems likely to persist; the late Field Marshal Michael Carver, with much experience of war and conflict, and of every level of military activity from 'grand strategy' down to humble tactics, wisely noted how '[*On War*] quickly became, and has remained ever since, the strategist's Bible; and, as with the Bible, quotations can be found in it to suit all tastes and to justify conflicting opinions.'[48] But a fence does not make a comfortable resting place, and in the name of scholarly transparency I should declare my allegiance to the Clausewitzian camp. My suspicion is that much of the contempt for Clausewitz amounts to what might be called 'praxis envy', stemming from the fact that his insight into the relationship between politics and the military was not only philosophically sophisticated but also – and more annoyingly for his critics – politically and militarily very simple, persuasive and adaptable. Clausewitz's best-known assertion that 'war is not a mere act of policy but a true political instrument, a continuation of political activity by other means'[49] emerges from *On War* as a nugget of durable wisdom. Some would doubt whether a brief maxim such as this could

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[43] J. Keegan, *A History of Warfare* (London: Hutchinson, 1993), p.12.

[44] P. Windsor, 'The Clock, the Context and Clausewitz', *Millennium* (Autumn 1977), p.193.

[45] B. Brodie, 'The Continuing Relevance of *On War*', in M. Howard and P.Paret (ed. and trans.), Carl von Clausewitz, *On War* ((Princeton University Press 1976), p.53.

[46] M. Howard, 'The Influence of Clausewitz,' p.43.

[47] C. S. Gray, *Modern Strategy* (Oxford University Press, 1999), p.112.

[48] M. Carver, *A Policy for Peace* (London: Faber and Faber, 1982), p.15.

[49] Clausewitz, *On War*, p.87.

really go to the heart of something so complex as the relationship between politics and the military, and endure over time. One obvious, albeit unfair response to such scepticism is to point out that the past fifty years of strategic debate in the West and elsewhere can scarcely be imagined without the intellectual and doctrinal presence of Clausewitz. The pervasiveness of Clausewitz in late twentieth century western strategic thinking, and the deep penetration of *On War* into military doctrine and practice, indicate that even if Clausewitz's analysis is flawed in one way or another, his work has nevertheless proved remarkably popular and influential. Western military academies are more than just familiar with his work, they have become dependent upon Clausewitz, prompting the judgement that if *On War* had never been written, it would have become necessary to reverse-engineer it.

If *strategy* in the West is a largely Clausewitzian meeting (explicitly or implicitly) between politics and military, we can now begin to gauge the strategic implications of micro-management. Clausewitz's model of the political-military relationship has been often – and easily – discounted by critics preoccupied with Clausewitz as the advocate of unlimited (and therefore anti-political) war. The twentieth century British strategist, Basil Liddell Hart, notoriously described Clausewitz as 'the Mahdi of mass and mutual massacre' and 'the source of the doctrine of "absolute war," the fight to the finish theory.'[50] In other words, Liddell Hart's claim (albeit later moderated) was that the effect of Clausewitz upon strategy was to diminish the moderating and legitimising role of politics, and perhaps even to *remove* politics from the equation. For Liddell Hart and other critics who equated Clausewitz with the disproportionate and inhumane military practices witnessed during the First World War, Clausewitzian strategy was pursued with at best a diminished sense of political proportion, and encouraged the military means to consider itself an end in its own right. However, Herberg-Rothe argues that much of this criticism is aimed at an intellectually incomplete Clausewitz in awe of Napoleon's military triumphs, particularly his overwhelming defeat of the Prussians in the campaign of Jena-Auerstadt (October 1806). Witnessing Napoleon's later defeats in Russia (1812), at Leipzig (October 1813) and finally at Waterloo (June 1815) brought Clausewitz to a more durable and sophisticated conception of war as a political act, and as an act which is and should be limited.[51] Clausewitz's best known definition of war is cited above, a less sophisticated version of which appears earlier in *On War*, in which war is 'simply a continuation of political intercourse, with the addition of other means.'[52] But in earlier work, the reality of Napoleon's defeat is felt more keenly, and the importance of the political-military relationship conveyed more directly. As Herberg-Rothe explains, 'In his analysis of this war campaign [Napoleon's escape from Elba and defeat at Waterloo], [Clausewitz] formulates the proposition that war was a "modification of political transaction", the accomplishment of political plans and interests by means of battle.'[53] In Clausewitz's conception, war begins in, is rationalised by, and in the end must return to political discourse and decision-making;

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[50] Quoted in S. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: the Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap, 1957), p.57.

[51] A. Herberg-Rothe, 'Primacy of "Politics" or "Culture" Over War in a Modern World: Clausewitz Needs a Sophisticated Interpretation,' *Defense Analysis* (17/2, 2001), pp.177.

[52] C. von Clausewitz, *On War* (Princeton University Press, 1976, ed. and trans. M. Howard and P. Paret), p.605.

[53] Herberg-Rothe, 'Primacy of "Politics" or "Culture"', p.177.

'The political object is the goal, war is the means of reaching it, and means can never be considered in isolation from their purpose.'[54]

If, in Clausewitz, the use of military force is always to be seen as a political act, or military action in pursuit of a political goal, then does the influential Clausewitzian strategic model *invite* political micro-management of military affairs? Clausewitz has an especially clear response to this question, one that usefully distinguishes between politics as the source of rationale, purpose and legitimacy for the use of military force, and politics as intrusive micro-management of military force. For Clausewitz, when the use of military force is being contemplated, the soldier's task is to advise the political leadership on the military implications of their grand strategic deliberations. The soldier's task is not to decide on policy, commit to the use of armed force, or to seek a peace settlement. Put bluntly and honestly, the soldier's professional function is to kill and destroy, or to threaten these things credibly. And his professional responsibility is to explain to his political authorities what can – and cannot – be achieved by carrying out his professional functions in a given set of circumstances. As we have seen, Clausewitz also insists that political discourse is not suspended when war breaks out, but continues to shape and constrain the conduct of warfare. That said, when war begins and 'other means' are employed, something, which clearly could not be described as 'normal' politics, has begun. What, then, of the function of politicians and policy when these 'other means' are being used? Here, Clausewitz's prescription works in reverse. While generals should advise – rather than overwhelm – the political process, so politicians should resist the temptation to think of themselves as effective military commanders: 'Policy, of course, will not extend its influence to operational details. Political considerations do not determine the posting of guards or the employment of patrols.'[55] Interestingly, similar sentiments can be found in another staple of western strategic thought, Sun Tzu's *The Art of War* written in the 4th century BCE:

> 19. Now there are three ways in which a ruler can bring misfortune upon his army:
> 20. When ignorant that the army should not advance, to order and advance or ignorant that it should not retire, to order a retirement. This is described as 'hobbling the army'.
>   > *Chia Lin*: The advance and retirement if the army can be controlled by the general in accordance with prevailing circumstances. No evil is greater than commands of the sovereign from the court.
> 21. When ignorant of military affairs, to participate in their administration. This causes the officers to be perplexed.
> 22. When ignorant of command problems to share in the exercise of responsibilities. This engenders doubts in the minds of the officers.[56]

For the purposes of this paper, the essence of the Clausewitzian model of strategy, as represented in *On War* and other works, thus becomes clear. 'Policy' and 'military' are discrete provinces, but war (or armed conflict) brings these two elements together in a balanced, constitutive relationship, one which not only contextualises politically and explains the resort to armed force and the conduct of military operations, but which also sets clear limits on the scope of political management of such operations.

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[54] Clausewitz, *On War*, p.87.
[55] Clausewitz, *On War*, p.606.
[56] Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, S.B. Griffith trans. and ed. (Oxford University Press, 1971), p.81.

Strategy (in the Clausewitzian mould) and micro-management are fundamentally incompatible. But Clausewitz also provides tools for a deeper investigation and dissection of the straw man of micro-management. The next section of the paper deals with the 'military hazard' of micro-management, where I discuss the effect of micro-management upon three key features of modern western military practice – 'manoeuvre warfare', 'mission command' and 'rules of engagement' – all of which at least derive from (if not openly express) the Clausewitzian strategic relationship between politics and the military; a relationship which might usefully be summarised as balanced, or 'semi-detached'. Thereafter, when discussing the 'moral hazard' of micro-management, I draw upon a framework for the ethical evaluation of warfare – the just war tradition or theory – which not only dovetails neatly with Clausewitz in a number of respects, but which also benefits from the ethical enabling function of the Clausewitzian model.

Micro-management: the Military Hazard
From a military perspective, micro-management might simply be the modern analogue of the operational and tactical 'friction', to which Clausewitz was so sensitive.[57] By this view, advanced communications, with data links and tele-conferencing, together with highly accurate and immediate intelligence gathering and collation, all make it possible and likely that political leaders will delve deeply into military activity (even down to the tactical level) for no better reason than they are able so to do. Too much political involvement in general operational planning, in targeting decisions (whether generic or detailed), and in the deployment and movement of ground troops, together with the presence of legal advisors further and further down the command chain, could all reduce the spontaneity and responsiveness of military decision-making and action. And real-time media coverage could also impinge upon military effectiveness. But this is merely to address symptoms. A more trenchant objection to micro-management is that it is fundamentally incompatible with modern military practice. Micro-management is obviously centripetal, and as such it runs precisely counter to the centrifugal, decentralising system of military judgement, decision-making, command and organisation as embodied in the doctrine of 'manoeuvre warfare', the principle of 'mission command', and in the elaborate process known as 'rules of engagement', all of which are the mark of modern and effective post-Cold War armed forces. And the subtlest and most elaborate objection to micro-management is that it is, paradoxically, enabled and encouraged by that modern military practice with which it is so incompatible.

Manoeuvre Warfare and the Manoeuvrist Approach
Manoeuvre warfare – perhaps better understood as '*out*-manoeuvre warfare'[58] – is the expressed doctrinal preference of Australian, British, US and other armed forces. At its most straightforward, manoeuvre warfare amounts to the timely movement of forces to exploit geographical and other advantages (weather, surprise, deception etc.), and in some circumstances to create such advantages, in order to defeat or destroy the enemy. But it is at this most straightforward level that misunderstanding often develops, principally between *manoeuvre* and *mobility*:

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[57] Clausewitz, *On War*, pp.119-121.
[58] A senior British Army officer, in informal remarks at the Royal United Services Institute, London, 19th September 2002.

> Manoeuvre is quite distinct from battlefield movement – this is mobility. It should not be merely equate with mechanised or armoured forces, which have inherent speed, or the potential for rapid movement. Not should it be equated with a rote tactical procedure such as envelopment, which can be pulled out of the commander's bag of tricks – this is a battle drill. The theoretical ideal of manoeuvre warfare is to achieve the aim without the requirement for the actual application of decisive lethal force.[59]

If manoeuvre warfare, as described, has become the orthodoxy for western armed forces in the early twenty-first century, its intellectual antecedents can be found as far back as Sun Tzu, noted for his maxim of manoeuvre warfare: 'For to win one hundred victories in one hundred battles is not the acme of skill. To subdue the enemy without fighting is the acme of skill.'[60] Sun Tzu's understanding of the risks and benefits of manoeuvre warfare is set out in the following excerpts from *The Art of War*:

2. Nothing is more difficult than the art of manoeuvre. What is difficult about manoeuvre is to make the devious route the most direct and to turn misfortune to advantage.
3. Thus, march by an indirect route and divert the enemy by enticing him with a bait. So doing, you may set out after he does and arrive before him. One able to do this understands the strategy of the direct and the indirect.
12. Now war is based upon deception. Move when it is advantageous and create changes in the situation by dispersal and concentration of forces.
16. He who knows the art of the direct and the indirect approach will be victorious. Such is the art of manoeuvring.[61]

In modern western strategic thinking, Liddell Hart – the leading twentieth century exponent of the manoeuvrist approach – was both impressed and influenced by Sun Tzu's work, and produced some strikingly similar conclusions: 'The perfection of strategy would be, therefore, to produce a decision without any serious fighting.'[62] This standard of 'bloodless victory' serves to indicate both that manoeuvre warfare is much more than merely a description of tactical preferences, and that it is something other than the doctrine of mass confrontation and attrition.[63] That said, it is inaccurate simply to describe manoeuvre and attrition as discrete and incompatible alternatives in the use of armed force, and grossly inaccurate to suppose that the object of manoeuvre warfare is to avoid combat at any cost. As Bellamy points out, manoeuvre and attrition are best understood to be in 'a form of creative tension', with each determining the nature of battle, as circumstances require.[64] But if manoeuvre warfare

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[59] S. Davison, 'Manoeuvre', *Australian Defence Force Journal* (No. 152, January/February 2002), p.43.

[60] Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, p.77.

[61] Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, pp.102-110.

[62] From B.H. Liddell Hart, *Strategy, the Indirect Approach* (New York: Praeger, 1954), extracted in G. Chaliand (ed.), *The Art of War in World History: From Antiquity to the Nuclear Age* (University of California Press, 1994), pp.927-931. See also B.H. Liddell Hart, *The Strategy of Indirect Approach* (London: Faber and Faber, 1941).

[63] The notion of 'bloodless' or 'painless' combat is contested, and is perhaps best understood as a theoretical absolute and aid to analysis, rather than an achievable standard – at least for the present. See Davison, 'Manoeuvre', p.43: 'The reality is that [manoeuvre warfare] will rarely be possible and that there will be human and material cost. It is not bloodless. There will always be the requirement to close with the enemy… There will be casualties on both sides, non-combatants may suffer and there will be collateral damage.'

[64] C. Bellamy, 'Manoeuvre warfare' in R. Holmes (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to Military History* (Oxford University Press, 2001), p.541.

is more than mere battlefield mobility and movement, is concerned to engage with the enemy, yet stops short of attrition, then what precisely is its essence?

For the purposes of this paper, manoeuvre warfare has three key attributes, the first of which is that it calls for independence of mind and speed of judgement on the part of commanders and soldiers. Manoeuvre warfare places a very high premium on individual initiative and the ability to exploit changes in circumstance as they arise:

> Emphasis is on the defeat and disruption of the enemy – by taking the initiative and applying constant and unacceptable pressure at the times and places the enemy least expects – rather than attempting to seize and hold ground for its own sake. [Manoeuvre warfare] calls for an *attitude of mind* in which doing the unexpected and seeking originality is combined with a ruthless determination to succeed. [Emphasis added][65]

This stress on individual judgement and initiative goes far beyond mere battlefield procedure to become a matter of political-military culture in the broadest sense:

> [Manoeuvre Theory's] influence is all-pervading, carrying with it not just tactical innovation but changes to their very military culture [in British and other manoeuvrist armies]. It demands a fundamentally different approach to military problems, not just by adopting the Manoeuvre Theory tools such as 'mission-style' orders and 'reconnaissance pull', but *through institutionalising the acceptance of risk and the delegation of decision-making.* [Emphasis added][66]

The second key attribute of manoeuvre warfare is decentralised command, which encourages the exercise of initiative and the rapid exploitation of opportunities in order to decide and act faster than the enemy (otherwise known as 'high tempo'):

> Fundamental to the achievement of high tempo … is decentralised command. Clearly a command system in which decisions are only allowed at high level, or which requires proposed decisions to be passed upwards for ratification, will result in slow tempo. But so that activity is focused and not dissipated or mutually interfering, there are two fundamental principles which must be followed: all subordinates must work within the commander's overall intent; and, in turn, the commander must clearly specify that intent, together with the mission of each subordinate, and the focus (or main effort) of activity, but leave to the subordinates the method of achieving their mission. In short he must tell them 'what' and 'why', but not 'how'. Finally, to work effectively, decentralised command requires *openness, honesty and mutual trust* between commanders at all levels. [Emphasis added][67]

The final key feature of the manoeuvrist approach is that it could, conceivably, be neither necessarily nor exclusively about the movement and use of military forces. Liddell Hart and others have stressed that manoeuvre warfare is as much a psychological struggle as it is a battle between men and materiel, however 'indirect' and 'high tempo'. Simpkin wrote of the need to create '"a picture of defeat" in the opposition's mind, rather than simply wearing him down by attrition.'[68] If the

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[65] Bellamy, 'Manoeuvre warfare', p.544. Quoting *Design for Military Operations – The British Military Doctrine* (Army Code 7145, 1996).

[66] J.J.A. Wallace, 'Manoeuvre Theory in Operations Other Than War', in B. Holden Reid (ed.), *Military Power: Land Warfare in Theory and Practice* (London: Frank Cass, 1997), p.207.

[67] J. Kiszely, 'The British Army and Approaches to Warfare since 1945', *Journal of Strategic Studies* (19/4, December 1996), p.180.

[68] R.E. Simpkin, *Race to the Swift* (London: Brassey's, 1988), p.133, quoted in Wallace, 'Manoeuvre Theory', p.208.

enemy's self-confidence is as much the target as his army (or perhaps more so), then the desired end of defeating the enemy could admit a variety of means. The words of Winston Churchill often feature in recent writing on manoeuvre warfare:

> There are many kinds of manoeuvre in war… some only of which take place on [or near] the battlefield. There are manoeuvres to the flank or rear. There are manoeuvres in time, in diplomacy, in mechanics, in psychology; all of which are removed from the battlefield, but react often decisively upon it, and the object of all is to find easier ways, other than sheer slaughter, of achieving the main purpose.[69]

How would the doctrine of manoeuvre warfare fare in a climate of micro-management? Two broad conclusions can be drawn, relating respectively to the style and the scope of manoeuvre warfare. In terms of style, I have said that manoeuvre warfare is about identifying and exploiting opportunities as quickly as possible, and being prepared to 'do the unexpected.' It might be said that manoeuvre warfare requires military *cleverness*; it is about intuition, initiative, judgement and the exercise of intelligence (in the general sense of that word). We can go further to suggest that manoeuvre warfare is as much about the commander's or soldier's 'state of mind',[70] as it is about his personal courage, his professional competence, his physical fitness and so on. My contention is simply that these conditions are most likely to be found in a chain of command that has the robustness and self-confidence to devolve authority, decision-making and risk-taking, to trust the judgement of subordinates 'on the ground', and accepts in other words that the subordinate must be permitted to have his own mind before it can be moulded into the right 'state'. If, on the other hand, the chain of command is characterised by micro-management and centralisation, is centripetal rather than centrifugal, is suspicious (for whatever reason) of tactical and operational initiative, and unprepared to trust military practitioners (often very junior), then the prospects for manoeuvre warfare cannot be said to be good.

If the style of manoeuvre warfare indicates *prima facie* incompatibility with micro-management; what can be said of its scope? Here we come to the paradox – which will be seen below with rules of engagement and to a lesser extent with mission command – in that when these two ostensibly incompatible practices are nevertheless brought together, the effect of the manoeuvre warfare doctrine is to magnify the damage done by micro-management. Manoeuvrism, I have suggested, can involve more than simply military operations (however intelligently conceived, whatever the tempo). As well as 'military manoeuvrism', we can conceive of several variations on the same theme: 'political manoeuvrism'; 'media manoeuvrism'; 'diplomatic manoeuvrism', 'economic manoeuvrism' and 'psychological manoeuvrism'. In other words, manoeuvrism can be a *strategic level doctrine*, where a government exploits whatever assets and advantages – military and non-military – are appropriate to ensuring that its decision-making 'loop' is tighter and quicker than an adversary's. If manoeuvrism is the preferred military doctrine, and if at the same time it is acknowledged that the military function is but one element of strategic manoeuvre, then it becomes apparent that politicians and military practitioners are not only acting in the same play, but can be on stage at the same time. In these circumstances, when

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[69] W.S. Churchill, *The World Crisis* (1923), quoted in DG Joint Doctrine and Concepts, *Joint Operations* (UK Joint Warfare Publication 3-00, 30 March 2000), para.109.
[70] Davison, 'Manoeuvre', p.43.

the task of defeating the enemy becomes one for diplomats, politicians and economists as much as for soldiers, the Clausewitzian model of a co-operative division of labour can only become more difficult to sustain.

The overlap between military and political responsibilities could, finally, be said to broaden when military advocates of manoeuvre warfare argue that it offers an opportunity to avoid attrition warfare and Churchill's 'sheer slaughter'. There are always sound military reasons to avoid excessive waste of life and destruction, but the military's aversion to slaughter also reflects the general moral preferences of the society of which they are part. By adopting manoeuvre warfare, partially on moral and cultural grounds, as well as military, and by having collaborated with the extension of the manoeuvrist idea to the level of strategy – the meeting-place of politics and military – military practitioners can scarcely be surprised at any intrusive interest in their profession. Not only have they implicitly accepted that their profession can no longer (if it ever did) offer a complete solution to the problem of defeating an enemy, they have also admitted that the military profession is not even self-sufficient in its own, narrower professional terms, but must draw upon external sources for elements of its moral authority and *modus operandi*. Thus, the military profession has not only settled upon a means (the doctrine of manoeuvre warfare), which enables and magnifies micro-management, it could be said actively to have sought this state of affairs.

Mission Command
The central idea of mission command is that subordinates should be issued with a *mission* (setting out the commander's intent), rather than a *task* or set of tasks (where the commander's intent remains best known to himself).[71] In short, subordinates should be instructed what to *achieve* and why, rather than what to *do* and how. Although mission command was not formally adopted by the British Army until the late 1980s, the idea has a lengthy pedigree. In contrast to the traditional and more restrictive style of *Befehlstaktik* (loosely translated as 'task-oriented tactics'), the 1930s German notion of *Auftragstaktik* ('mission-oriented tactics') is widely understood to be the source of contemporary mission command thinking:

> *Auftragstaktik*, the concept praised by advocates of manoeuvre warfare, was not so much a tactical doctrine, as many mistakenly believe, it was a cultural *weltanschauung* (worldview). Through *Auftragstaktik*, the Germans were able to establish a paradoxical framework in which the martial virtues of discipline and obedience could coexist with independence and initiative. The commander's intent – what he wanted to accomplish – was the unifying force in tactical and operational decision making. Within this framework, the subordinate commanders were expected to use their initiative and judgement to fulfil the commander's intent and act independently when their initial orders no longer reflected the reality of a changed situation – as long as their actions operated within the framework of the commander's intent.[72]

The idea of 'mission command' therefore amounts to well-trained field officers and soldiers being encouraged to use their own judgement, intelligence and initiative in pursuit of their commander's overall goal.[73] The competence and initiative of junior

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[71] W. Roberts. 'Mission Command', *Journal of the Royal Artillery*, Spring 1998, p.14.
[72] C. Kolenda, 'Technology, leadership and effectiveness', *Military Review*, July-August 2000, p.88.
[73] Historically, mission command was a response both to the human and military disaster of World War I, and to the opportunities heralded by mechanisation and communications in the 1920s and 1930s. More recently, the British Army has become a leading advocate of the idea of mission

ranks, and their exposure to risk, might be supposed to be at a premium – and the mission command ethos valued most highly – where armed forces are dispersed thinly, as might be expected on peace operations.[74] In such circumstances, mission command makes a virtue out of a necessity, by encouraging the devolution of responsibility and decision-making. But peace operations can also be highly-charged politically, and it is precisely on such operations that mission command could be most challenged by the micro-management ethos. In a micro-managed peace operation, local commanders and individual soldiers could be exposed to extraordinarily intrusive interest in their professional activity, from the highest levels of the political-military chain of command, to the breadth of national and international public and legal opinion.

The real test of a mission command system is surely whether it has the confidence and elasticity to trust and to cope with a subordinate's errors and misjudgements, without his authority and responsibility being usurped by centralised *befehlstaktik*. O'Neill notes that 'All trust risks disappointment.'[75] In the military context, 'disappointment' might be a consequence of the subordinate's lack of judgement, tactical error, or even failure to complete his mission. But all these things do, of course, happen, and to try to exclude 'disappointment' entirely risks dismantling the military command ethos. The point is borne out strongly in the literature on mission command. Roberts, cited above, goes on to argue that:

> Careful supervision, *encouragement and trust* is required but subordinates should be given the chance to make decisions on their own. If mistakes are made then so be it, as a great amount of positive learning can be achieved. If the individual is well monitored the mistake can always be rectified before it becomes too serious. [Emphasis added]

With a similar point being made by Sturtivant:

> Mission Command seeks to exploit battlefield risk and uncertainty; it aims to do so by enabling and encouraging those who are best placed on the battlefield to identify and take advantage of brief opportunities. It relies utterly on superiors delegating responsibility to subordinates who then will pursue their missions vigorously, intelligently and largely unsupervised. *A climate of deep trust* must therefore exist between commanders and subordinates. [Emphasis added] [76]

A subordinate who is given responsibility – as a matter of course rather than in an ad hoc fashion – to take the initiative, and to take risks, might make the wrong decision, but will certainly learn from his or her mistakes.[77] And in an atmosphere that is mature, trusting and open, there will be a readiness to recognise and admit mistakes, rather than hide them for fear of adverse consequences. But in a micro-managed

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command; see *Design for Military Operations - The British Military Doctrine* (London: Ministry of Defence Army Code 71451, 1996), p.4-17. For a succinct explanation of mission command, see A. Duncan, 'Mission Command in Practice', in P. Mileham and L. Willett (eds), *Ethical Dilemmas of Military Interventions* (London: RIIA, 1999), pp. 40-41.

[74] Marrack Goulding, when Under-Secretary-General in charge of UN peace operations, was keen 'to correct any misconception that peacekeeping is a risk-free activity'; *Peacemonger*, p.220.

[75] O'Neill, *A Question of Trust*, p.24.

[76] P. Sturtivant, 'Escaping from the prison of history,' *The British Army Review* (No. 122, Autumn 1999), p.29.

[77] D. Schmidtchen, 'Developing Creativity and Innovation through the Practice of Mission Command', *Australian Defence Force Journal* (146, January-February 2001), p.16.

scenario, it is difficult to see the field officer or soldier, however much initiative, self-confidence and understanding of the commander's plan he or she may have, ever being allowed to make a mistake; even a minor tactical error could have 'grand strategic' implications. A professional military mistake can quickly become politicised, and perhaps even lead to an electoral change of fortunes. And if, with such sensitivities in mind, military errors are simply 'not allowed', then the exercise of military judgement and decision will be stifled. It might then be argued that the idea of levels of warfare – strategic, operational and tactical[78] – has indeed finally begun to lose its meaning, as the pyramid of politico-military command begins to be flattened from the top downwards, by mounting political and military anxiety. The following plea from the pen of a junior officer in the British Army summarises the point precisely:

> When delegating responsibility *trust in the subordinate is of utmost importance*. […] there is a tendency to micro-manage activities that have been delegated but are ultimately the Commander's responsibility. […] Trust in and of the subordinate is necessary if Mission Command is to be successful on operations. A subordinate must be given the freedom of action to solve the given task in his own way. […] Commanders must accept mistakes from their subordinates […] Only when Commanders stop over-managing and start giving their subordinates the necessary freedom of action will the appropriate trust develop to facilitate Mission Command on operations. [Emphasis added][79]

And the following US military perspective on the value of mission command in peace enforcement operations makes doubly clear the danger to mission command of over-zealous micro-management:

> A component of the high discipline required for peace enforcement operations is the need for leaders who can operate independently on mission-type orders. The infinite challenges liable to be encountered by a rifle squad on patrol, for example, cannot possibly be covered by a "battle book" from higher headquarters. Further, the imposition of detailed instructions from on high restrains the natural initiative of American troops and nibbles away at the moral edge that troops in such situations must have and use. However well-trained and -equipped soldiers may be, their effectiveness is degraded if they have to "phone home" for orders in every situation. In peace operations today, the Army has a confluence of young, intelligent junior leaders who want the authority to make decisions, and challenges that are best met by letting them do it. This also imposes on officers at higher headquarters a stern demand that they *permit soldiers to exercise initiative*, and that they consequently support decisions made at the tactical levels. [Emphasis added][80]

Rules of Engagement

If the principle of mission command and the doctrine of manoeuvre warfare are incompatible with micro-management, something similar could be said of national and multinational 'rules of engagement' (ROE).[81] In one form or another, ROE have been a feature of military operations for many years. ROE are not intended to provide a detailed plan for a specific military mission, or to provide a general statement of operational and tactical doctrine. Neither are ROE simply a compendium of all the rules and laws - military, national and international - according to which armed forces must operate. Instead, ROE seek to provide political guidance on the use of force

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[78] See *British Defence Doctrine* (London: MOD CS(M)G, JWP 0-01, 1996), pp.1.8-1.13.

[79] W.P.C.J. Roberts, 'In order to implement mission command during operations, it needs to be practised in camp', *Journal of the Royal Artillery* (Spring 1998).

[80] R.B. Killebrew, 'Deterrence with a vengeance', *Armed Forces Journal International*, October 1998.

[81] For UK Rules of Engagement see JSP 398 (2000). For NATO Rules of Engagement see MC 362.

within known legal constraints, in order that the military commander may be aware of the limitations on armed force when planning and conducting an operation. ROE, typically, comprise a list of situations or scenarios in which armed forces might find themselves involved, with in each case a range of prohibitions and permissions from which a selection will be made as circumstances require. The scenarios tend to be those which, in the event of a misunderstanding or misinterpretation of orders, could present difficulties legally or politically: should a soldier be allowed to carry a loaded weapon?; should electronic jamming equipment be used?; should people, ships and aircraft be detained?; should protective minefields be laid? In each scenario, the range of prohibitions and permissions attempts to be as crisp and unequivocal as possible. In Britain, as in NATO, the setting of ROE is a layered process. Political leaders impose an overarching, strategic ROE 'profile' on the most senior military commanders. These commanders then pass on to their subordinates an operational ROE profile, derived from and within the constraints of the strategic profile. The operational profile cannot be more permissive than the strategic profile, but may be more restrictive. And so the process continues, down the chain of command into unit and sub-unit tactics, and to the level of individual soldiers. Clearly, whatever its merits might be, the ROE system as described is vulnerable to the problem of the 'precautionary principle', to which I return later.

The ROE process complements the mission command system rather well, in that both seek to push responsibility and decision-making further down the chain of command. Within boundaries, ROE give military commanders scope for the exercise of their own discretion. Although commanders may not break any prohibition imposed upon them from above, they have discretion not to employ all the permissions granted to them. The ROE process privileges individual judgement in other ways. Typically, ROE guidance cards or instructions for opening fire begin with the injunction: 'In all situations you are to use the minimum force necessary. FIREARMS MUST ONLY BE USED AS A LAST RESORT.' Clearly, use of the terms 'minimum', 'necessary' and 'last resort' presupposes judgement on the part of the soldier involved. Military personnel are also constantly reminded that ROE – whatever their origin and substance – do not inhibit or overrule the basic and inherent right of self-defence. Self-defence of the unit or the individual remains a rule-bound activity, but it is also an absolute right, premised on the discretion of local commanders and soldiers, and not moderated by the ROE process. The following comment, attributed to a British officer serving in Sierra Leone in 2000, illustrates the point clearly enough:

> Our rules of engagement do not compromise our right to defend ourselves against a hostile act. […] It's what the British Army has lived with for 30 years in Northern Ireland. Any direct threat to me, our mission, critical equipment, my soldiers or UN forces will be responded to.[82]

Commanders and individual soldiers will also be warned that conformity to ROE may not be considered an effective defence in the event of the commission of an otherwise illegal act. As noted earlier, ROE simply offer *political guidance on the use of force within known legal constraints*. Ultimately, the individual (commander or soldier) is responsible for his or her interpretation of ROE. Where there is a need for the individual to make a decision regarding the use of armed force in a set of

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[82] 'British forces clear about robust rules of engagement,' *The Times*, 16 May 2000.

circumstances, the guidance received is emphatically not expressed as an order, and the individual is thus reminded that he or she remains accountable in law for their decisions and actions. Commanders and soldiers must, in short, retain and exercise the capacity to judge and decide.

One difficulty with the ROE ethos and system thus described is that while it is a valuable device for managing complexity, it serves less well when confronted with uncertainty. Both complexity and uncertainty are characteristic of military operations. But whereas complexity can best be managed by devolved command and decision-making, uncertainty can have a centripetal effect, prompting advice and solutions from distant observers. Like the idea of mission command, the ROE process is therefore only as robust and disciplined as the political-military system it serves; both ROE and mission command are vulnerable to misuse from the centre. As I have suggested earlier, if political leaders incline towards micro-management of military operations, then the levels of war – strategic, operational, tactical – could begin to flatten. The layered chain of command and responsibility could begin to lose its structure and internal discipline, and in these circumstances the ROE system could not only be damaged, but could also be damaging. The convention that says that politicians should set the broad ROE profile for senior military commanders (and so on, down the chain of command) is just that; a convention. There is nothing in the ROE system that necessarily prevents a politician (or senior military commander) from setting ROE down as far as the tactical. Indeed, given the necessary technological capacity, there is everything in the ROE system to facilitate those inclined to micro-management in becoming more closely involved in setting prohibitions and permissions further down an increasingly porous and loosely structured chain of command. The ROE process and micro-management are in principle functionally incompatible. But, as with manoeuvre warfare, closer inspection reveals that if this principle were to be ignored and micro-management allowed to take hold, then the ROE process could perversely magnify the damaging effects of micro-management on military judgement and decision-making.

It is important to reiterate here that this paper discusses the *possible* implications of micro-management for military operations; my intention is not to create the impression of a finely-tuned ROE system collapsing under the weight of ill-informed and inexpert political intrusion. When challenged on this issue, British military experts are typically sanguine about the vulnerability of ROE to micro-management: 'Providing the politicians understand what the rules mean, and the rules are legal, then they generally let the military have what they want.' But there is also, typically, some sensitivity that the ROE system might not always be incorruptible: 'Providing the politicians do not seek to impose specific restrictions at the tactical level, we don't see any particular problem.'[83] In Britain, the ROE infrastructure is also preoccupied with alliance and multinational operations that become politically more complex as the membership increases. In such circumstances, it can become difficult to reach consensus on ROE profiles, and in good time.

Nevertheless, it is legitimate to ask how the coincidence of micro-management and ROE might be viewed from the standpoint of the military practitioner. There could well be complaints at increased interference in planning, decision-making and

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[83] Private information.

operations, and a sense that commanders and soldiers are becoming increasingly exposed to control and criticism from above. But far more seriously than either of these, is the possibility that badly managed ROE could become a device for apportioning blame, rather than one for devolving responsibility. On any military operation, it is inevitable that misunderstanding will occur and that errors of judgement will be made. A centralised political-military command system is one that, by definition, draws in decision-making and responsibility (even for remote actions) to the centre. Responsibility (again, even for remote actions) is also drawn in to the centre, but the same thing tends not happen when errors of judgement are made. At that point, the chain of command does become selectively centrifugal, insofar as it devolves culpability for such mistakes. Plainly, this is a rather cynical misconstruction of the Clausewitzian model. It could also be very significant for operational and tactical decision-making. Denied the capacity to make his own decisions and the opportunity to exercise his professional judgement responsibly, and confronted by a chain of command which facilitates a culture of blame, the rational military commander's precautionary response could well be to ignore the permissions and make his or her level of ROE as prohibitive as possible, seeking some level of self-protection from a system which might become malign. This would not make him, or her, much good as a commander, and it is easy to see that this scenario amounts simply to the circumvention of the basic ideas driving ROE (and the manoeuvrist approach, and mission command). But the scenario is a credible one. ROE are an attempt to encapsulate and explain a given political-legal-ethical framework. At the best of times, trying to produce crisp and unequivocal ROE must be a demanding process. But if the political-legal-ethical framework is more than usually in flux (and perhaps deliberately so), and if the pattern of change is unpredictable, then ROE can scarcely serve the task expected of them. Once again, in such circumstances, the rational response must be to follow the precautionary principle, to err on the side of caution and to prohibit rather than permit.

Micro-management: the Moral Hazard
I have so far suggested that whenever micro-management is in evidence, then the problem with it begins at the strategic level, where civil governance and the military profession meet. My contention has been that micro-management could have a destabilising effect on the political-military relationship. My description of that relationship as 'Clausewitzian' was an explicit reference to my own preferences in this matter. I then extended my complaint against the likely unbalancing of the Clausewitzian model into a discussion of the 'military hazard' of micro-management, covering manoeuvre warfare, mission command and rules of engagement. I argued that micro-management and modern, western military doctrine and practice – as represented in these three ideas – are incompatible, and that when they are forced together the result could undermine military practice and effectiveness. The professional military competence of the individual soldier (or sailor, or airman/woman) is, plainly, the basic building block for tactics, operations and strategy. But when the individual is constrained and stifled by centralisation and micro-management, I have argued that his capacity for judgement and decision-making, and therefore his effectiveness militarily, could be undermined.

My next step is to gauge the effect of the strategic and military hazards of micro-management, on moral practice in military operations, otherwise known in the

Western just war tradition as *jus in bello*.[84] I will argue, first, that with my enthusiasm for Clausewitz I have not – as some might have it – selected a political-military framework that necessarily excludes ethical considerations. I will go further, to claim that particularly with the idea of the trinity, Clausewitz's model enables ethics, even if it cannot be said to be evangelically ethical. I will then claim that functionally, just war thinking parallels the Clausewitzian model in important ways; by being a reflection on practice rather than a guide to it, by following a broadly similar layered structure, and above all, by being concerned to seek a balance between means and ends. Finally in this section, I will turn to the commodity which is common and essential both to modern Western strategy and to modern military practice in the West, and to just war thinking, but which suffers most under micro-management – individual judgement and responsibility. We have seen that micro-management tilts the strategic balance and then undermines military effectiveness by constraining the individual's capacity for judgement and decision-making. My complaint against the straw man of micro-management will be complete when I argue that it is the same centripetal force that undermines the soldier's capacity to be moral on the battlefield. Since it is the individual soldier who has the greatest responsibility for honouring the rules and the spirit of *jus in bello*, without which the idea of just war would be hollow and pointless, we come to the paradox whereby an impulse to resort to armed force for a just cause (in self defence, on humanitarian operations, to prevent human rights abuses, etc.) can be activated in such a (micro-managed) way that not only the use, but more importantly the *just* use of armed force are rendered difficult.

Clausewitz and Ethics

To venture into a moral argument from the broadly Clausewitzian perspective which I advocate might be considered unusual, given that Clausewitz is popularly perceived to be a state-centred realist, an historicist, a scientist, a pragmatist, a technologist, a theorist of warfare; anything but a moral philosopher. Gray notes that while Clausewitz 'certainly had ethical views', these views 'played no formal role in the development of his general theory of war and strategy', adding almost wistfully; 'It is a limitation upon his enduring value that Clausewitz's culture cannot recognize war itself as an ethical question.'[85] Others have detected a more explicit morality at work in *On War*; thus, Michael Ignatieff writes that Clausewitz 'believed that violence ought to observe certain moral proprieties: His vision of total war did not include the indiscriminate slaughter of civilians or the murder and torture of prisoners. Such practices, he assumed, were beneath a soldier's dignity.'[86] Nevertheless, it would appear that Clausewitz himself was unwilling to dwell for too long on such matters. At one point in *On War* he asks whether 'mankind at large will gain' from the advent

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[84] I know that the Western just war tradition is but one approach (in the West, and globally) to the moral constraining of warfare. I have also tended to use 'tradition' and 'theory' interchangeably when discussing just war thinking. That said, I acknowledge Rengger's complaint that the modern rediscovery of just war thinking is too fixed on theory, on producing a generally valid 'moral slide-rule' with which to provide answers to awkward questions (of humanitarian intervention, etc.). Just war thinking is richer than this, and is better understood to be 'a tradition of practical reasoning' and to be essentially casuistical, whereby the idea and its application share equal weight. See N. Rengger, 'On the just war tradition in the twenty-first century', *International Affairs* (78/2, 2002), pp.360-61.

[85] Gray, *Modern Strategy*, p.106.

[86] M. Ignatieff, *The Warrior's Honour: Ethnic War and the Modern Conscience* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1998), p.116.

of 'people's war' and from 'war itself', but seems content that the answer to such questions should be left 'to the philosophers.'[87]

But in several ways, Clausewitz's political-military framework does not after all preclude ethical reflection, and actually facilitates it (albeit, it must be said, largely passively). In the first place, it should not be inferred from the fact that Clausewitz was not a moral philosopher, that ethics played no part in his understanding of war. Azar Gat argues that Clausewitz was a 'true child of his time', with a 'political and ethical outlook', which expressed the historical, cultural and intellectual context – the evolving German national consciousness of the early nineteenth century – in which he worked, thought and wrote.[88] This context was one in which Enlightenment arguments for humanitarianism and cosmopolitanism would not have been unfamiliar, least of all to sceptics of such universalist moralising, such as Clausewitz. As an antidote, Clausewitz developed a moral view which steered clear of what he saw as the deficiencies and dangers of cosmopolitan liberalism, and which responded to the awakening of the German national and state consciousness that was taking place around him. Clausewitz set himself the task of 'exposing reality as it actually was, as against liberal illusions',[89] in the process becoming an advocate of the 'German conception of the state', which itself was based upon a number of assumptions:

> By and large, the state was the framework in which civilized communities developed; internally, the state was the higher and unifying expression of communal life; externally, owing to the natural dynamics in a society of sovereign entities, the interaction between states was governed by considerations of *raison d'état* or *Realpolitik*; within such a framework of relations, war had an integral part.[90]

This position is neither non-ethical, nor anti-ethical. For Clausewitz, it was the state that made order, society and civilisation – and perhaps even ethics – possible. It was the limitations and inadequacies of the international environment in which the sovereign state existed, which made it all the more necessary for the state to be physically robust and morally coherent. In a foretaste of nineteenth century social Darwinism, war – and all that went with it – could even be seen as a positive preference, if it made for a more spirited society and one more fit to struggle and survive.[91] Conversely, it might on this basis reasonably be argued that to paint Clausewitz's world-view and his understanding of war in a favourable ideological and perhaps even ethical light, is at best to dignify, and at worst to disguise militarism; 'a form of moral particularism that systematically excludes universal values and ruthlessly subordinates the good of humanity to the good of a particular race, state or nation.'[92] Yet whatever else he was – German nationalist, political realist –

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[87] Clausewitz, *On War*, p.479.

[88] A. Gat, *The Origins of Military Thought: From the Enlightenment to Clausewitz* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), p.237.

[89] Gat, *The Origins of Military Thought*, p.241.

[90] Gat, *The Origins of Military Thought*, p.239.

[91] Gat, *The Origins of Military Thought*, p.243. Gat quotes a telling passage from *On War*: 'Today practically no means other than war will educate a people in this spirit of boldness; and it has to be a war waged under daring leadership. Nothing else will counteract the softness and the desire for ease which debase the people in times of growing prosperity and increasing trade. A people and nation can hope for a strong position in the world only if national character and familiarity with war fortify each other by continual action.' [Clausewitz, *On War* p.192].

[92] A.J. Coates, *The Ethics of War* (Manchester University Press, 1997), p.41.

Clausewitz was of course not a militarist. The goals of militarism are achieved by the maintenance and use of armed force; there is a preference for war in itself, which goes beyond a mere willingness to consider war if in the interests of the state, or an uneasy acknowledgement that on occasion war might be necessary and unavoidable. The military means are preferred, not only instrumentally in order to achieve certain ends, but also non-instrumentally as an end in themselves: 'For militarists war and the 'war community' have an intrinsic, and not just an instrumental, value.'[93] It is this merging of means and ends which is so different from Clausewitz's model, in which military means and political ends are in a close relationship but nevertheless distinct, and in which the former emphatically does not take precedence over the latter; 'Subordinating the political point of view to the military would be absurd, for it is policy that creates war. 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.'[94] I return below to the matter of balancing means and ends.

Throughout the post-Cold War West, Clausewitz's subordination of the military to the civil is now instinctively and uncritically regarded as politically and ethically preferable. In bilateral defence diplomacy, security sector reform and other 'outreach' projects, and multilaterally through schemes such as NATO's Partnership for Peace, whenever Western governments are involved in democratisation and post-conflict reconstruction, something like a Clausewitzian model of the political-military relationship is explicitly preferred. But a loose correlation of this sort is scarcely firm evidence of Clausewitz's worth, least of all of his contribution to the ethical constraining of warfare. It is, instead, in his idea of the 'trinity' that the deeper significance of his insight becomes clear. Clausewitz saw in war a 'remarkable trinity', comprising 'primordial violence, hatred, and enmity' (the concern mainly of 'the people'); 'the play of chance and probability' (the concern of 'the commander and his army'); and 'subordination, as an instrument of policy, which makes it subject to reason alone' (the concern of 'the government').[95] What Clausewitz advocates, therefore, is a separation of functions or powers. The proper use of armed force then becomes a matter of balanced, mutually constitutive co-operation between these separated elements; the 'dynamic relationship' which by one view has never quite taken hold in the United States.[96] In this relationship, government (which embodies and enables politics and ethics) is essential for the functioning of the whole. Yet Clausewitz, as we have seen, prefers not to dwell on the nature of politics and particularly ethics, and so it would be difficult to identify precisely an ethical proposition at the heart of the trinity. Instead, what we have with the trinity is a device that, importantly, creates space for ethics.

Clausewitz and the Just War Tradition

If Clausewitz's political-military model and his explanation of war can be said at least to be open to the possibility of ethics, we also have in just war thinking an ethical

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[93] Coates, *The Ethics of War*, p.69.

[94] Clausewitz, *On War*, p.607.

[95] Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 89. Clausewitz's 'trinity' is another much-discussed and much-misunderstood Prussian totem. For a useful commentary on that discussion, see Villacres and Bassford, 'Reclaiming the Clausewitzian Trinity'.

[96] R. Callum, 'War as continuation of policy by other means: Clausewitzian theory in the Persian Gulf War', *Defense Analysis* (17/1, 2001), p.67.

tradition which seeks to engage with war as a practical reality. Just war thinking has of course had no shortage of critics. AJP Taylor notably saw it as a source of conflict, rather than a doctrine of restraint: 'Bismarck fought "necessary" wars and killed thousands, the idealists of the twentieth century fight "just" wars and kill millions.'[97] Nevertheless, in its modern, secularised form, just war theory has many supporters, who see in it 'a defensible middle ground between pacifism and realism,'[98] a set of laws and customs from which to begin the project to make war less inhumane, even if not to eradicate war altogether. It would not be an exaggeration to describe just war theory as the hardest of ethical frameworks, insofar as it represents the meeting of the moral and the real and insists that choices must be made, and all in the most demanding, frightening and dangerous of human environments.

Clausewitz did not intend *On War* to be a manual for Prussian army field operations, but a means with which to reflect upon and understand the nature and purposes of war. The same could be said, in terms of style and function, for just war thinking, which also embodies a relationship between two levels or stages of moral evaluation of the use of armed force – justice of war, or *jus ad bellum*, and justice in war, or *jus in bello*. As such, just war thinking parallels rather closely the strategic-operational-tactical hierarchy at the heart of Clausewitz and contemporary strategic thinking in the West. Johnson's description of the purposes of the just war tradition emulates the hierarchical system so familiar to any Western military academy or staff college:

> A guide to statecraft [i.e., '*strategic morality'?*]
>> Theory of the use of force by the political community
>> Understanding of the moral qualities of political leadership
>> Protection of fundamental rights and values
>> Relation of ends to means in political life
>
> A guide to commanders [i.e., '*operational morality'?*]
>> Relation of military command to authority/purposes of political community
>> Understanding of the moral qualities of military leadership
>> Protection of fundamental rights and values in situations of armed conflict
>> Moral limits on means and methods in conflict situations
>
> A guide to the consciences of individuals [i.e., '*tactical morality'?*]
>> Claims on moral consciousness of individuals at all levels of political and military life
>> Definition of responsibility in relation to the use of force by the political community
>> Definition of the individual's rights and responsibilities in the use of force [questions posed in parentheses are mine][99]

But it is in the requirement to relate means to ends that Clausewitz and just war thinking come closest. War, writes Clausewitz, 'is a serious means to a serious end.'[100] And elsewhere; 'No one starts a war – or rather, no one in his senses ought to do so – without first being clear in his mind what he intends to achieve by that war and how he intends to conduct it. The former is its political purpose; the latter its

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[97] Quoted in G. Best, *Humanity in Warfare: The Modern History of the International Law of Armed Conflicts* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1980), pp.6-7.

[98] J. McMahan, 'War and Peace', in P. Singer (ed.), *A Companion to Ethics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), p.386.

[99] J.T. Johnson, *Morality and Contemporary Warfare* (Yale University Press, 1999), p.26.

[100] Clausewitz, *On War*, p.86.

operational objective.'[101]   Azar Gat stresses this point in his analysis of Clausewitz: 'The relationship between political aims and military means was, of course, not one-sided. The means had to suit the ends, but the ends too could not be divorced from the available means […] A continuous interplay exists between the aims and the means.'[102] As for just war thinking, McMahan describes it as dual in nature, embodying 'a theory of ends and a theory of means'.[103] In *Just and Unjust Wars*, Walzer observes that *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello* are 'logically independent'.[104] While it would certainly be possible in war to satisfy just one or other set of criteria – by fighting an unjust war according to the rules of *jus in bello*, or by satisfying *jus ad bellum* but then fighting disproportionately and without discrimination – to qualify as a *just* war, both standards must be met. Compliance with just one set of criteria (either means or ends) cannot be allowed to compensate for failure in the other; moral reflection on warfare cannot therefore be fully represented in either dimension. 'The just war tradition', notes Coates, 'upholds the moral determination of both the recourse to war and the conduct of war: the *jus ad bellum* and the *jus in bello* carry equal weight in that tradition.'[105] Walzer, again, makes a related point when he refers to 'the <u>dualism</u> of *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello* (my emphasis).'[106]

Individual Judgement and Responsibility
Jus in bello – moral reflection on the means to be used in war – is central to Western notions of justice and restraint in warfare. My argument is centred around the claim that the principal agent for *jus in bello* can only be the individual soldier. Certainly, many other agencies and individuals are involved in framing the laws of armed conflict and broader operational law, and in devising rules of engagement, but what matters morally (and militarily) about means is their application, and in both respects this is the province of the soldier, rather than the distant political (or, indeed, military) leader. Just as the foundation of western strategy, military thinking and effectiveness is the soldier able and willing to exercise his professional judgement, so an essential component of the western moral project is the capacity of that same soldier to make moral judgements and decisions, and even moral mistakes. Since it is precisely this capacity for individual judgement and decision-making that is so endangered by micro-management, the contradictions (both military and moral) are obvious.

At the core of this discussion are questions concerning the soldier's individual responsibility: how (and how broadly) that responsibility is defined; how it is manifested and facilitated; and how it is put to use. The Clausewitzian approach to the provision and use of military force for political ends is multi-layered, going from the strategic (grand and military), through the operational, to the tactical and then to the individual. Within this model, we have developed an understanding of the political-military process as being action- and outcome-oriented, with action on each level driven by a sense of responsibility to a higher purpose:

> [Strategy] is the use of an engagement for the purpose of the war. Though strategy in itself is concerned only with engagements, the theory of strategy must also consider its chief means of

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[101] Clausewitz, *On War*, p.579.
[102] Gat, *The Origins of Military Thought*, p.244.
[103] McMahan, 'War and peace', p.386.
[104] Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars*, p.21.
[105] Coates, *The Ethics of War*, p. 98.
[106] Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars*, p.21.

execution, the fighting forces. It must consider these in their own right and in their relation to other factors, for they shape the engagement and it is in turn on them that the effect of the engagement first makes itself felt. Strategic theory must therefore study the engagement in terms of its possible results and of the moral and psychological forces that largely determine its course.[107]

Two mitigating observations might be made about Clausewitz's notion of purposive responsibility, by which military actions are defined, rationalised and justified. The first is that the Clausewitzian version of responsibility is emphatically not merely blind obedience in another guise; Clausewitz, we know, was always at pains to point out that he had no wish to write a manual for training or operations. Some scholars have taken this discussion further, asking whether the Clausewitzian model is solidly Newtonian and linear, or something more sophisticated – even to the extent of preconceiving chaos theory.[108] Clausewitz, it might fairly be said, was fully aware of the part played by 'chance' in the conduct of war; 'No other human activity is so continuously or universally bound up with chance. […] absolute, so-called mathematical, factors never find a firm basis in military calculations. From the very start there is an interplay of possibilities, probabilities, good luck and bad that weaves its way throughout the length and breadth of the tapestry.'[109] On this basis, Beyerchen has argued that 'On War is suffused with the understanding that every war is inherently a non-linear phenomenon, the conduct of which changes in ways that cannot be analytically predicted.'[110] Windsor came to a similar conclusion; 'The point at which Clausewitz transcends the eighteenth century is in his recognition of the inapplicability of the scientific paradigm, and in his framing a mode of thought for the non-predictive.'[111]

The second point to note as far as Clausewitz's idea of responsibility is concerned, is that it was not necessarily values-free. Howard's description of Clausewitz's theory of war not only captures very clearly the sense of a layered process, it also introduces the possibility of values into that process:

> Clausewitz's theory was teleological. In warfare, every engagement was planned to serve a tactical purpose. These tactical purposes were determined by the requirements of strategy. The requirements of strategy were determined by the object of the war; and the object of the war was determined by State policy, the state being the highest embodiment of the values and the interests of the community. Thus the objectives of state policy ultimately dominated and determined military means the whole way down the hierarchy of strategy and tactics. War was not an independent entity with a value-system of its own.[112]

Clearly, Howard's interpretation is at variance with Keegan's criticism of the 'pernicious' Clausewitz, wherein war is presented as a 'value-free activity.'[113] In Howard's account of Clausewitz, 'values' – although not made explicit – are part of

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[107] Clausewitz, *On War*, p.177.

[108] See B.D. Watts, *Clausewitzian Friction and the Future of War* (Washington: NDU/INSS, McNair Paper No. 52, 1996), p.106; S.R. Mann, 'Chaos, criticality and strategic thought', in T.C. Gill (ed.), *Essays on Strategy IX* (Washington: NDU Press, 1993); A. Beyerchen, 'Clausewitz, Nonlinearity and the Unpredictability of War', *International Security*, 17/3 (Winter 1992/93).

[109] Clausewitz, *On War*, pp.85-6.

[110] Beyerchen, 'Clausewitz', p.61.

[111] P. Windsor, 'The Clock, the Context and Clausewitz', *Millennium*, Autumn 1977.

[112] M. Howard, *The Causes of Wars* (London: Temple Smith, 1983), p.57.

[113] J. Keegan, *War and Our World: The Reith Lectures 1998* (London: Pimlico, 1999), p.42.

politics and could plainly contribute to the political decision to use armed force. Arguably, through the overlapping levels of war, these values, however defined, could then become the ethical standard against which actors could ultimately be held responsible for their behaviour. But we should not read too much into Howard's comment when his main point, with Clausewitz, would seem to be that the use of armed force should be 'responsible' in the sense of being purposive and professional. An ethical dimension is not precluded in this view, but neither is it defined or positively encouraged. Barkawi, however, suggests that the teleological style embedded in Clausewitzian strategy has prompted a parallel in the realm of ethical evaluation:

> An ethic of responsibility underlies the strategic approach to international relations. It involves the rational selection of appropriate means to secure a state's political values, which, in questions of *strategy*, always contemplate the use of organised violence. The ethic of responsibility embraces the dictum that at least in politics the end can justify the means. [114]

Barkawi distinguishes his 'ethic of responsibility' from 'an ethic of absolute conviction in which only actions ethical from the point of view of one's ultimate values are undertaken. The dictum here is 'if I act rightly, good is attained.''[115] Walzer, on the other hand, seems as uncomfortable with the idea that ends can justify means (largely because such an approach goes against the essential dualism of just war thinking), as he is with the 'ethic of absolute conviction'. For Walzer, otherwise good intentions and acts can have bad consequences, and the soldier must be conscious of this possibility. Walzer insists that soldiers should be 'responsible for what they do',[116] for their decisions and errors, for their observation of the laws of war, and of course for any crimes 'against the conscience of mankind.'

Evidently, without some device such as these – Howard's 'ultimate' responsibility to the political-military system (which may or may not have ethical ingredients), Barkawi's teleological 'ethic of responsibility', or Walzer's individual responsibility for consequences – the project to place the use of armed force within an ethical framework could scarcely begin, and would most likely be discarded at the first indication of so-called supreme emergency or military necessity. But I am more interested here in what might, inelegantly, be termed 'contemporaneous practical moral responsibility'; *the values-based constraining of the activity of armed conflict by its morally aware practitioners*. This is not the same as asking to what extent the initiation of warfare and military intervention can be said to be values-based, or whether practical military activity matters less (morally and militarily) than the ends to which it is put, or whether military activity should be constrained by a values-based calling to account after the event. In Howard's assessment, the relevance of a community's 'values' as the standard against which to assess military action could well diminish as we move further down the levels of war. Surely, the professional soldier will first consider himself responsible to the complex, phased strategic process itself, with his duty being to accept a task, having understood its significance in the broader scheme of things, carry out the task effectively and efficiently, and be able to serve new or changed plans as they are issued by his superiors? There is little if any

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[114] T. Barkawi, 'Strategy as a vocation: Weber, Morgenthau and modern strategic studies', *Review of International Studies*, 24/2, April 1998, p.163.
[115] Barkawi, 'Strategy as a vocation', p.163.
[116] Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars*, p.40.

account taken here of the moral sense of the individual soldier. For his part, Barkawi relies upon a wholly teleological ethical perspective. Arguably, as a result, he places too high a priority on ends over means, loses a sense of balance between the two, and treats the individual soldier's moral sense in a similarly abrupt way. Walzer's understanding of responsibility is equally sparse and prohibitive where the individual is concerned; the soldier is regarded as a potential (perhaps even actual) moral hazard, to be constrained and regulated in the actions he may take and – when appropriate – to be punished for any wickedness.

To complement these ideas, what is also required is an understanding of responsibility that operates across the political-military spectrum, from government down to individual soldier, that gives space to the moral sense and judgement of the individual soldier, that enables the soldier to be responsible to himself, and that takes full account of means as well as ends. It has evidently been tempting, and with some justification, to regard soldiers as a moral disaster waiting to happen, and to seek to pre-empt such disasters by constraining soldiers' behaviour as tightly as possible. Certainly, some soldiers are morally barren, inadequate or worse. But moral inadequacy is not usually considered a prerequisite for military service, and is certainly not a necessary consequence of having chosen the military profession. On the contrary, military people are generally well aware of the various legal and moral constraints upon their profession and, more to the point, accept that their behaviour should be so constrained.[117] If military professionals are often sceptical of the durability and coherence of the various ethical frameworks that have been imposed upon them, this might have less to do with who or what they are, than with what they confront in the course of their professional life. In this respect, rather than insist loudly upon obedience, purpose or culpability, the goal of the ethical project ought to be to find a means to introduce a moral reference into scenes such as that described by Caputo in his vivid and salutary description of the soldier's life in Vietnam:

> Everything rotted and corroded quickly over there: bodies, boot leather, canvas, metal, morals … We were fighting in the cruellest kind of conflict, a people's war. It was no orderly campaign … but a war for survival waged in a wilderness without rules or laws; a war in which each soldier fought for his own life and the lives of the men beside him, not caring who he killed in that personal cause or how many or in what manner and feeling only contempt for those who sought to impose on his savage struggle the mincing distinctions of civilised warfare – that code of battlefield ethics that attempted to humanise an essentially inhuman war.[118]

Clearly, if this scene represents the challenge for the moral project and its 'mincing distinctions', there is only one person who can meet that challenge; if the soldier is a potential moral hazard, he is also the principal vehicle for the moral constraining of the conduct of warfare. More than any other profession, individual soldiers have the primary responsibility for introducing the moral component into the conduct of warfare. As Michael Ignatieff has written:

> The decisive restraint on inhuman practice on the battlefield lies within the warrior himself, in

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[117] For an excellent discussion of the moral dimensions of military service, see M.L. Cook, '"Immaculate War": Constraints on Humanitarian Intervention', *Ethics and International Affairs* (14, 2000).

[118] P. Caputo, *A Rumor of War* (London: Book Club Associates, 1978), p.229: quoted in Coates, *The Ethics of War*, p.29.

his conception of what is honorable or dishonorable for a man to do with weapons.[119]

The military profession, so often confronted by extremes of physical risk and mental anguish, ought to be and can be a deeply ethical profession, insofar as it seeks to inject morality into the harsh reality of warfare, the least conducive of moral environments. I would argue that soldiers must be permitted and encouraged to carry out this function, and that it is the responsibility of the political-military hierarchy to secure this freedom of judgement, decision and action. Certainly, not all soldiers will wish to be saddled with this moral burden, and there will always be others whose instincts and behaviour run precisely counter to all talk and expectations of moderation, decency and honour. But the very ideas of discrimination, proportionality and justice in armed conflict presuppose that there must be enough soldiers willing and able to act morally on the battlefield. Soldiers must understand their position as a valued cog in Howard's teleological machine, but they must also, in Barkawi's terms, 'act rightly', on their own behalf and on behalf of the moral project to contain warfare. In part, no doubt, they will do so for fear of what will happen if they do not (Walzer's sense of responsibility). But they must also 'act rightly' because if they fail, then the moral project fails with them. If the use of armed force is to be constrained on moral grounds, the field soldier must be enabled and encouraged to foster the moral dimension – a task only he can perform. Responsibility must be normative and restrictive – checking actions against values – and it must be distributive, ensuring that each part of the strategic process plays its part. But responsibility must also be permissive. The strategic process must be constructive of individual judgement (military and moral), and accepting of mistakes, if effectiveness (military and moral) is sought. The individual soldier must, in other words, be permitted to call upon his own moral sense. Just as there is more to the soldier's professional military responsibility than merely carrying out his orders, so the soldier's capacity to be moral – which I have argued is the basis of just war thinking – must be more than simply being forbidden, constrained or dissuaded from doing wrong. 'In the last resort', wrote John Hackett in *The Profession of Arms*, 'a man is answerable to his own conscience for what he does, and nowhere else. He must be prepared to say 'I will not' if his conscience tells him that he must, and take the consequences.'[120]

Conclusion

I have not sought to make the argument that political control of military operations is misconceived, and that military commanders should be allowed to complete their task without interference from politicians and the media. To allow such a schism would be to return to the unhappy and illiberal situation of the First World War, when British Prime Minister Lloyd George complained of his inability 'to impose my strategical views on my military advisers'.[121] Political involvement in military operations must in general be welcomed and encouraged. To follow Helmuth von Moltke's line would be unthinkable in a modern liberal democracy, would be counter-intuitive for most modern military professionals, and would in any case undermine the Clausewitzian political-military framework which many regard as profoundly important as a means to place warfare in a restraining and rationalising political

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[119] Ignatieff, *The Warrior's Honor*, p.118.
[120] J. Hackett, *The Profession of Arms* (London: Book Club Associates, 1983), 174.
[121] J. Keegan, *The First World War* (London: Hutchinson, 1998), p.384.

context, and as an enabling device for the moral constraining of war. And looking to the future, if the rationales for the use of armed force are to become more complex, and if military technology is to provide new capabilities, then here are additional reasons why armed forces should not be permitted to sequester themselves from political and moral interest.

But neither do I argue that since military force is now employed in such a wide variety of complex situations, each offering unique challenges politically, militarily and ethically, that governments should expect to take a more directive line and become more closely involved in the planning and conduct of military operations. Rather, I argue that the middle ground is being lost, and that as a result strategic and military effectiveness, and the possibility of morally constraining the activity of warfare are all being undermined. Micro-management of military operations threatens to homogenise the political-military relationship, doing away with the notion of levels of war (political-strategic, military strategic, operational, tactical and individual), and rendering the political, military and moral functions indistinguishable. In the process, we lose sight of – and respect for – the breadth and richness of the just war tradition, and find ourselves lacking a formal procedure to ensure that morality remains a real component of the real application of armed force. The proper use of armed force – by which I mean, when it is informed and shaped by moral reflection – requires there to be a mature, mutually respectful relationship between the political and the military. Each must intrude into the other's domain, up to a point, but the mistake must not be made of imagining the two domains to be co-extensive, or that one can consume the other. When the relationship becomes unbalanced, either the military's capacity to act effectively is undermined – to the point of paralysis – by conflicting ethical demands from the centre, or its capacity to act ethically is disregarded altogether for reasons of 'military necessity'.

The doctrine of 'manoeuvre warfare', the principle of 'mission command', and the system known as 'rules of engagement' are all in important respects centrifugal. In each, the military significance accorded to the individual soldier and his judgement is considerable. The same should be said of the moral constraining of combat, where it is difficult to see how the principal participants in that activity – soldiers – can be anything other than central to our reflection. For the moral as much as the military, the effect of micro-management is to unbalance the political-military relationship by drawing decision-making and responsibility into the centre. This is not to say, of course, that *without* micro-management the ethical project to contain the conduct of warfare (as represented by the just war tradition) would be perfect, and perfectly implementable. The just war tradition has never been a counsel of perfection, but a reasonable attempt to place enough of the practice of warfare in enough of an ethical framework. And I readily accept that the just war tradition reflects a predominantly western intellectual, cultural and historical heritage that might limit its broader relevance and application. The central point remains, however, that for its advocates and adherents, the just war tradition, with its benefits as much as its deficiencies, is simply not compatible with micro-management.

To resist any tendency to micro-manage, and thus to preserve enough of the just war approach, what is required is a broader, more permissive understanding of responsibility on the part of political leaders and high-level military commanders in

the West. Walzer's insistence that soldiers should be 'responsible for what they do' is of course vital if *jus in bello* (and, hence, just war thinking more broadly) is not to be overlooked *in extremis*.[122] But what is also essential is to appreciate that the individual soldier is a moral individual who is central to the moral constraining of warfare. Soldiers must exercise their moral judgement on their own behalf, and on behalf of the moral project to contain warfare. In part, no doubt, they will do so for fear of what will happen if they do not (Walzer's sense of responsibility). But they must also do so because if they fail, then the moral project must fail as well. Soldiers have to grasp the moral framework represented in *jus in bello* and apply it – as best they can – to the reality only they face. Just war thinking is, therefore, more than simply the moral constraining of the soldier, ensuring that he is responsible for his actions and providing grounds for punishment where necessary and appropriate. The soldier is, properly, an instrument of war morality, as well as the object of it. The extent to which war can be made moral – or less immoral – must be a direct function of the extent to which the combat soldier is enabled and encouraged to take responsibility and make moral judgements in the context of tasks only he can perform.

During 2002, the Israeli/Palestinian conflict continued to cause deaths, injuries and destruction on both sides. Without seeking to enter the debate on the moral, legal and political standing of either the Israeli government and its armed forces, the Palestinian administration, or the terrorist organisations known or alleged to have encouraged suicide attacks, I find in the following news report from the action around Jenin in April/May 2002, a useful representation of the argument for the moral sense of the individual soldier, which I have been trying to make:

> In a review of aerial videotape and radio recordings provided by the squadron commander here, *Defense News* was able to verify at least one instance in which a Cobra [helicopter gunship] crew declined orders from ground commanders to launch missiles at suspected Palestinian terrorists operating in mid-April in the West Bank town of Jenin. According to radio and video data of the event, a pair of Cobras was directed to the location where the ground commander insisted Palestinian snipers had fired on his forces, injuring one Israeli soldier. Although the helicopter crew's infrared sensors showed four people on the ground, pilots were unable to tell whether the suspects were armed. Nor did they witness shots fired. "Fire. I repeat. Fire. Your targets are in sight," the ground commander blared over the radio. Less than a second later, according to the recording, one of the Cobra crew responded, "I don't know, something here stinks… It seems like cold-blooded murder." Several seconds later, after the Cobra crew consulted with their own Air Force commanders at base, the ground commander was informed of the decision not to launch the [TOW IIA] missiles. "These kinds of exchanges are not infrequent," the squadron's ground commander said in his May 2 briefing. "We are expected to follow instructions of the ground commanders. But if we believe our actions will be hard to justify after the fact, we may seek authorization to disregard those instructions… Obviously this causes much friction."[123]

Clausewitz used the term 'friction' at some length, referring to the unforeseeable circumstances of battle and battlefields that ensure that 'the simplest thing is difficult'.[124] Since Clausewitz, generations of military commanders have sought ways to anticipate and avoid friction wherever possible (inevitably coming to the conclusion that whatever the quality of their command and their troops, friction can

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[122] Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars*, p.40.
[123] 'Older Cobras key for Israel now', *Defense News*, 27 May 2002.
[124] Clausewitz, *On War*, pp.119-121.

never be eliminated entirely). But far more important than an inconvenient but inevitable fact of military practice, is the *moral* friction described above. Moral friction is a precious and vulnerable commodity, and one that ought to be cultivated and protected for the sake of the ethical constraining of the conduct of warfare.

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