

**NATIONAL DEFENSE UNIVERSITY
NATIONAL WAR COLLEGE**

**THE UN INTERVENTION IN SOMALIA:
CLAUSEWITZ AT THE CROSSING OF THE MOGADISHU LINE**

**COMMANDER CHARLES W. FOWLER III/ CLASS OF 2000
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DR. LANI KASS, FACULTY SEMINAR LEADER

CAPT JAMES MADER, FACULTY ADVISOR

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"It has become impossible. I don't read the Security Council Resolutions any more because they don't help me...There is a fantastic gap between the Resolutions of the Security Council, the will to execute those resolutions, and the means available to commanders...The peacekeepers are like a goat tethered to a fence."

*General Francis Briquemont
UNPROFOR Commander
Le Figaro, 18 January 1994*

Lieutenant General Sir Michael Rose, former commander of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) in Bosnia, reportedly coined the expression “crossing the Mogadishu line” while describing the key dilemma faced by UN troops in Bosnia: how do armed peacekeepers maintain the appearance of neutrality in the midst of civil war while achieving the political objectives for which they were sent? Indeed, when one considers the difficulties the United States has experienced in a long string of recent interventions, to include Lebanon, Somalia, Haiti, and the Balkan wars of Bosnia and Kosovo, the historical record suggests that the solution to this dilemma has yet to be identified.

Like General Rose above, one can easily identify the key problem faced by the peacekeepers; the tougher challenge is to identify those component factors which conspire to complicate, frustrate, or even terminate a humanitarian mission before achieving the political ends desired. How then does one provide clarity to what is obviously a very complex problem? Numerous experts have, in fact, analyzed these interventions and subsequently published well considered "lessons learned" on what went wrong. Yet, despite these lessons learned, every intervention or limited war fought in the post-Cold War era has produced the same results: the desired political objectives were seldom achieved and those outcomes that were achieved were never entirely conclusive. This paper proposes to search for the reasons why by looking at the

nature of modern limited war from the perspective of Carl von Clausewitz and his "remarkable trinity."

Some scholars and experts would undoubtedly oppose this approach as they consider the applicability of a Clausewitzian perspective, conceived in the era of Napoleon, to be irrelevant to modern day warfare. Writers such as Martin van Creveld and John Keegan assert that Clausewitz's trinitarian approach involving "the people, the army, and government," is an obsolete social paradigm no longer useful as an analytical tool.¹ This school of thought cites the demise of the nation state and the emergence of hostile ethnic/cultural populations, with the army and people fighting as one entity, as indicators of "non-trinitarian" future warfare. They go on to propose technological or cultural/ethnic based theories as better descriptors of the modern phenomenon of war.

However, the basic premise they use to reject Clausewitzian theory is flawed from the start as it fails to recognize the true essence of the Clausewitzian trinity; it is not simply a triangle made up of the people, armies, and nation states. Instead, the "remarkable trinity" encompasses a complex set of dialectical relationships between passions, military creativity, and rational political calculations for each party to a conflict. Furthermore, the one-dimensional cultural or technological theories fail to explain why great powers like the United States and Russia experience defeat in such places as Somalia and Chechnya. True theory should be applicable to every conflict.

Therefore, is the Clausewitzian trinity, properly understood, still relevant to modern day limited wars with limited political objectives? If so, then how does the trinitarian approach explain why recent UN interventions have failed to achieve the political objectives desired? To

¹ See Martin van Creveld, *The Transformation of War* (New York: The Free Press, 1991); and John Keegan, *A History of Warfare* (New York: Knopf, 1993).

answer these questions, I'll examine the case of Somalia from the perspective of Clausewitz. In order to do this effectively it is first necessary to understand the background of the intervention prior to examining how the three elements of "the trinity" influenced the outcome.

After 20 years of dictatorial rule, Siad Barre fled from Somalia in 1991 leaving behind a country facing civil war, drought, widespread starvation, no central political authority, and one of the lowest standards of living in the world. Somalia no longer functioned as a nation state. Soon after, massive numbers of refugees fled into neighboring Ethiopia, Kenya, and Yemen. Clan warfare and widespread banditry were commonplace throughout the country. In the capital of Mogadishu, two Hawiye clan warlords, Ali Mahdi Mohammed and General Mohammed Farah Hassan Aideed, battled for control of the city. "Struggles among other factions and subclans occurred elsewhere in the country. In May (1991), northern Somalia declared independence...and the already fragile unity of southern Somalia collapsed, as did state institutions."²

By early 1992, the drought, continued civil war, and the theft of relief supplies by the warlords combined to create a famine of enormous proportions: "one half million Somalis had perished of starvation and at least a million more were threatened."³ Confronted with the widespread suffering, the UN commenced a humanitarian intervention in April 1992 and ended it in March 1995. This period included three distinct operations, mandates, and sets of resources: UNOSOM I, from 15 Aug 1992-9 Dec 1992; UNITAF, from 9 Dec 1992-4 May 1993; and UNOSOM II, from 4 May 1993-31 Mar 1995. To examine the intervention in Somalia in terms

² Lynn Thomas and Steve Spataro, "Peacekeeping and Policing in Somalia," *Policing the New World Disorder: Peace Operations and Public Security*, ed. by Robert Oakley, Michael Dzedzic, and Eliot Goldberg (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 1998), 176.

³ Kenneth Allard, *Somalia Operations: Lessons Learned*, (Washington DC: National Defense University Press, 1995), 13.

of the “remarkable trinity,” it is first necessary to understand properly the three components of the trinity before applying them to each of the three operations listed above.

CLAUSEWITZ AND THE TRINITY

In his classic book *On War*, Clausewitz defines the phenomenon of war as a “remarkable trinity” at the end of Book One:

“War is more than a true chameleon that slightly adapts its characteristics to the given case. As a total phenomenon its dominant tendencies always make war a paradoxical trinity—composed of primordial violence, hatred, and enmity, which are to be regarded as a blind natural force; of the play of chance and probability within which the creative spirit is free to roam; and of its element of subordination, as an instrument of policy, which makes it subject to reason alone.”⁴

With this passage, Clausewitz makes the distinction that war is a unique phenomenon. Unlike the chameleon, the three elements that comprise his trinity may take on radically different forms and thereby change the face of war. For clarification purposes, he went on to match each element of the trinity with three sets of human actors, all of whom are subject to the forces of the trinity:

“The passions that are to be kindled in war must already be inherent in the people; the scope with which the play of courage and talent in the realm of probability and chance depends on the particular character of the commander and the army; but the political aims are the business of government alone.”⁵

Here, Clausewitz associates the people with the emotions of primordial violence, passion, and hatred, all of which influence the conduct of war. The army and commander are matched with probability, friction and chance. Those warfighting organizations and commanders blessed with creativity and genius are more capable of handling the chance, fog and friction of war than those

⁴Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 89.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 89.

not so blessed. Finally, the government is matched with the rational force of calculation which subjects policy to reason. Thus, Clausewitz inserts his famous maxim that “war is an instrument of policy” into the calculus of war, though he cautions the military commander that “rational” policy is not always the policy put forth by the government: “That (policy) can err, subserve the ambitions, private interests, and vanity of those in power, is neither here nor there...here we can only treat policy as representative of all interests of the community.”⁶ It is also important to note that his conception of the trinity applies equally to all sides of a conflict and that all three elements are variable in their relationship with one another. Moreover, in conflicts involving alliances or multi-lateral institutions such as the UN, one must apply the trinity to each of the parties involved, thereby significantly complicating the analysis but also highlighting the advantages and disadvantages of this type construct on war.

Interestingly, Clausewitz suggests that one must strike a balance between the three elements of the trinity “like an object suspended between three magnets.”⁷ This is a useful simile because it graphically demonstrates the dialectical relationship between elements of the trinity and the very reason why war is so dynamic and unpredictable. The path of a swinging pendulum suspended between three magnets is never determined by the force of one magnet alone; instead, the path is determined by a shifting interaction of forces from all three magnets, resulting in a non-linear path. So, too, is the conduct of war. With this background, let us view UNOSOM I from the perspective of the trinity.

PHASE ONE-UNOSOM I

Between January and August 1992, the UN Security Council passed five resolutions (733, 746, 751, 767 and 775) pertaining to the humanitarian crisis in Somalia. Unfortunately, the

⁶ Ibid., 606.

⁷ Ibid., 89.

actions called for in the resolutions did little to address the two primary problems in Somalia: how to get relief supplies into the country and how to provide security for relief workers and supplies? For example, Resolution 733 called for an arms embargo but included no enforcement mechanism. Another, Resolution 751, called for a 90-day humanitarian assistance plan which badly underestimated the scope of the crisis. Finally, Resolution 767 called for 50 observers to monitor a tenuous cease-fire and a UN military force of 500 soldiers “to provide security in a country of 6 million people whose warlords had already killed 4,000 people and wounded 20,000.”⁸

Despite the obvious disconnect between the ends desired and the means approved, the U.S. responded to a request by the UN in July for increased airlifts of food with Operation *Provide Relief*. During the next six months, “a daily average of 20 sorties delivered approximately 150 metric tons of critically needed relief supplies...into Somalia.”⁹ While the increased shipments of food helped to stave off starvation in many areas of the country, the security situation only worsened with time.¹⁰ “In September (1992), 500 Pakistani troops finally arrived; they were pinned down at the airport, unable to move, much less provide protection to humanitarian agencies. They were lightly armed, authorized to use their weapons only in self-defense.”¹¹ This force was clearly not sufficient to accomplish the second political objective sought by the UN: facilitating the end of hostilities in Somalia. Yet, the introduction of the small

⁸ “Somalia: Pause to Bury.” *The Economist*, February 1, 1992, 44.

⁹ Allard, 15.

¹⁰ Frederic L. Kirgis, Jr., *International Organizations in Their Legal Setting* (St. Paul, MN: West Publishing Company, 1993), 802. With regards to the plan submitted by the Secretary-General to send in the small team of observers and the 500-member infantry force, Kirgis writes that the United States tried to persuade Saudi Arabia and other countries to finance a larger force. Most members of the Security Council resisted any financing plan, however, that bypassed the regular peacekeeping assessment process (under which the United States is assessed about 30 percent of the cost). In an election year, the U.S. share of the costs estimated for a larger force was thought to be unpalatable to the Congress, particularly in view of the decision made two months earlier to create UNPROFOR in Croatia at an estimated cost of \$630million.

¹¹ Thomas and Spataro, 179.

armed force as a policy tool of the UN effectively changed the entire complexion of the intervention. How would Clausewitz view the UNOSOM I situation through the perspective of his “remarkable trinity?”

General Colin Powell’s memoirs provide an excellent portrayal of one element of Clausewitz's trinity, the desire of the American people to do something to help:

“...but television hovered over Somalia and wrenched our hearts, night after night, with images of people starving to death before our eyes. The UN had planted a humanitarian relief effort there, and the United States...provided C-130 transports to fly in food. We rarely knew what happened to the relief supplies. Local warlords stole the food from warehouses. They hijacked relief agency trucks. The UN effort was practically at a standstill, while images of the fleshless limbs and bloated bellies of dying children continued to haunt us.”¹²

If world opinion was mobilized to support the humanitarian effort, why then was the UN at a standstill unable to achieve the two political objectives which precipitated the intervention? The answer lies in the linkage between the third element, represented by the UN forces, with that of the UN or government element. Certainly, the US troops in the Joint Task Force and the 500 Pakistani troops authorized under Resolution 767 were highly motivated to help the people of Somalia. The fundamental problem was that the deployed UNOSOM force structure was inadequate to effect a change in the security situation; they were vastly outnumbered and outgunned by Somalia’s clans whose warlords were locked in a struggle for power. If one recalls Clausewitz's assertion that "the political objective is the goal, war (or the use of force) is the means of reaching it, and means can never be considered in isolation from their purpose,"¹³ then it is clear that the UNOSOM trinity was not in balance. Thus, the political objectives were unlikely to be achieved.

¹² Colin Powell, *My American Journey*, (New York: Random House, 1995), 564.

¹³ Clausewitz, 87.

Interestingly, a number of Somalis did propose an alternative to "more troops," to the first UN Special Representative to Somalia, Mohamed Sahnoun. They proposed that former western-trained policemen, numbering almost 15,000, help provide security assistance to UN forces; unfortunately, the idea was never approved by Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali.¹⁴ Consequently, with the "commander's creative proposal" ignored, a bad situation grew worse. "By the end of 1992, many Somalis felt they had been forsaken by the world. The feeling was reinforced by the 8-month UN effort that had done nothing to address the overriding problem of security"¹⁵ and haunting memories of UN and relief agencies fleeing Somalia in 1991. At this point, the United States reluctantly decided to take the lead. General Powell recalled the moment: "I was not eager to get us involved in a Somalian civil war, but we were apparently the only nation that could end the suffering."¹⁶

PHASE TWO-UNIFIED TASK FORCE (UNITAF)

On December 3rd, 1992, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 794 which authorized the establishment of UNITAF as a Chapter VII (UN Charter) peace-enforcement operation in Somalia. This unprecedented action "marked the first-ever UN sanction for the *use of force* to ensure the delivery of humanitarian relief."¹⁷ The United States was given the lead. On December 4th, President Bush authorized Operation Restore Hope and soon deployed up to 28,000 American troops under a UN mandate to enforce peace by "all necessary means to

¹⁴ Mohamed Sahnoun worked tirelessly for six months throughout Somalia seeking political reconciliation with Somali citizens and political leaders. He earned the respect of Somalis and humanitarian aid workers for his efforts to obtain sufficient resources from the UN and Member States; regrettably, he felt he was double-crossed by Boutros-Ghali after the sudden assignment of an additional 3000 peacekeepers immediately following his efforts to gain approval from the warlords for the initial 500-person force. This infuriated Aideed. Surprisingly, the extra troops were never sent as financing considerations discussed previously in note 10 temporarily outweighed operational considerations. Several months later Sahnoun was forced to resign by the Secretary-General for his criticisms of the UN and Secretary-General. See Thomas and Spatoro, "Peacekeeping and Policing in Somalia," 179.

¹⁵ Thomas and Spatoro, 182.

¹⁶ Powell, 564.

establish as soon as possible a secure environment for humanitarian relief operations in Somalia.”¹⁸ The initial goal, as envisioned by the President, was to move into Somalia in force, restore order, deliver the food, and turn the operation over to a permanent UN force. He hoped to accomplish this before January 19, 1993, so as not “to stick Clinton with an ongoing military operation.”¹⁹ It was also clear to the White House, however, that this goal was unlikely to be achieved. Ultimately, more than 38,000 troops from 21 coalition nations participated in the only successful phase of the intervention. Indeed, UNITAF succeeded beyond all expectations in its mission of stabilizing the security environment, removing the armed technicals and heavy weapons from the streets which had paralyzed UNOSOM I, and ensuring relief supplies were again flowing throughout the country. Colin Powell observed: “Within weeks, we were so successful that we had upset the economics of the marketplace. So much free food came pouring into Somalia that it became tough to make a living by farming.”²⁰ Yet, the seeds of disaster experienced in Phase 3 of the UN intervention were sown in Phase 2. The primary issue was a critical divergence of view over UNITAF’s mission in Somalia: was it to enhance security to ensure the delivery of humanitarian aid or was it to disarm the warring factions threatening the humanitarian aid?

The view from UNITAF commander LGEN Robert Johnston, USMC, and the U.S. government was that Security Council Resolution 794 did not require UNITAF to disarm the Somali factions as this effort would require many more troops and divert the force from accomplishing its primary mission of humanitarian assistance. In line with this view, USCINCCENT was given a very clear mission statement:

¹⁷ “U.N.-Mandated Force Seeks to Halt Tragedy: Operation Restore Hope.” *UN Chronicle* 30, no 1 (New York: U.N. Dept. of Public Information, 1993), 13.

¹⁸ United Nations, Security Council Resolution 794 (1992), December 3, 1992.

¹⁹ Powell, 565.

“When directed by the NCA, USCINCCENT will conduct joint/combined military operations in Somalia to secure the major air and sea ports, key installations and food distribution points, to provide open and free passage of relief supplies, provide security for convoys and relief organization operations. Upon establishing a secure environment for uninterrupted relief operations, USCINCCENT terminates and transfers relief operations to U.N. peacekeeping forces.”²¹

Boutros Boutros-Ghali did not, however, agree with the U.S. viewpoint. It was his considered opinion that to create a “secure environment presupposed disarming the gunmen...this would be necessary for a lasting cessation of civil strife as well as for a UN mission to replace UNITAF.”²²

Despite the growing differences over the objectives of the mission, UNITAF quickly employed a common sense approach to Rules of Engagement issues and, without a mandate from the UN, proceeded with an initiative to create a Somali Auxiliary Security Force (ASF) designed to improve security by employing former Somali policemen. By empowering these Somali police to help regain control of their society,²³ UNITAF helped legitimize the UN humanitarian effort in the eyes of the Somali people. At this point, Clausewitz would observe that “the trinity” had returned to a state of balance, with the passions of the people, the rational policies subjected to reason by the governments (UN/US), and the play of chance and creativity within UNITAF all reasonably in sync. Security was improving and the food was flowing into the country.

The critical factor during this phase was the successful implementation of the UNITAF Rules of Engagement (ROE). In attempting to finesse the issue of the armed militias controlled by the warlords, LGEN Johnston issued a set of ROE remarkable for their simplicity: no technicals (e.g., trucks mounted with machine guns); no banditry; no roadblocks; and no visible

²⁰ Ibid., 565.

²¹ Allard, 16.

²² Thomas and Spataro, 184.

²³ This effort to establish an auxiliary interim police force was accomplished without legal precedent or mandate from the UN. The UNITAF Commanders and UN Special Envoy Robert Oakley pushed through the effort and within months the ASF became popular with the local population as Somalis began to look after Somalis. Notably, the UN Secretary-General, Security Council, and other governments to include the

weapons. UNITAF was authorized to employ “all necessary force” to confiscate and disarm heavy weapons in the UNITAF operating areas while light weapons were not to be confiscated from the clans if they were not carried on the streets.

Concerning the technicals, the question quickly arose whether “all necessary force” meant shoot on sight. “Johnston decided it did not and directed commanders to challenge and approach the technicals, using all necessary force if the weapons were not voluntarily surrendered.”²⁴ These rules, combined with the overwhelming force of UNITAF, resulted in the virtual disappearance of weaponry from the streets within several weeks. Clausewitz would have applauded General Johnston’s approach, for it recognized and neutralized the key Somali center of gravity which threatened his mission of providing humanitarian relief: the armed militias and their technicals. This concentration of force at the Somali center of gravity additionally addressed the necessity to neutralize the warlords slowly, but in a way which would not threaten their political aspirations. In Clausewitzian terms, this exemplifies a commander’s genius at work.

Looking back on the entire intervention, Clausewitz would further observe that Johnston’s interpretation of the ROE and decision when to use force would dictate the culminating point for the UN intervention; as soon as the ROE was changed in UNOSOM II, the UN was placed back on the defensive with “the trinity” again out of balance. To illustrate this point, consider if the alternative approach “shoot on sight” had been applied and the Marines had started to attack the technicals “on sight.” Clearly, the impact on both sides would have been significant, as the events of UNOSOM II would soon prove.

Phase III – UNOSOM II

US did little or nothing to offer recognition or provide financial support for the expansion of police and judicial/penal systems. Thus, the success of the ASF varied from region to region.

In March 1993, Security Council Resolution 814 established UNOSOM II as a peace-enforcement operation under Chapter VII. This time, however, the operation would be controlled by the Secretary-General and his new Special Representative in Somalia, Admiral Jonathan Howe. Given Boutros-Ghalis' continued influence, it was not surprising that the UN mission was specifically broadened at this time to include the rehabilitation of Somalia and disarmament of all unauthorized armed elements. This was a significant change, although the ramifications of the change may have not been apparent to policymakers in the new Clinton Administration who began to ask the question: well, why shouldn't UNOSOM disarm the Somalis? In contrast, the change in mission was painfully apparent to the military in Somalia trying to stay on the neutral path.²⁵ General Anthony Zinni, USMC, recalled that newly stated political objective for UNOSOM II was to "marginalize, isolate, and minimize the 'warlords.'" He responded: "Does that mean I shoot them? Does that mean I capture them...what does that mean? In effect, it [the political objective] never got translated into military action except by General Aideed who understood what it meant – he understood...that he was the enemy."²⁶ Also disconcerting was the fact that UNOSOM II only had about 4500 U.S. troops with which to back up the ROE and accomplish the newly expanded mission. The means, again, were no longer sufficient to achieve the policy. Equally alarming was the demise of the Somali ASF.²⁷

"UNOSOM II did not have any CIVPOL on its staff to manage the ASF and had no funds to pay them. Military personnel were removed from the ASF stations and joint patrolling

²⁴ Allard, 36,37.

²⁵ General Zinni provides the perspective of "the guy on the ground" in response to the building pressure in Washington to physically disarm the Somalis. Zinni recalls on page 255 of *Capital "W" War* the following: "First of all, arms in Somalia is like 'crack cocaine' on the streets of Washington, D.C. I don't have a clue how much is there, but I'm sure it's a lot. And I know for sure that if I go house-to-house, building to building and attempt to take weapons in that manner, physically disarm Somalis, two things are going to happen. I'm going to piss off the Somali people. And I'm going to take casualties while killing a lot of Somalis in the process.

²⁶ Zinni, 253.

²⁷ Ironically, it was the apparent success of the ASF in the UNITAF phase which was cited as justification for the lower number of troops in UNOSOM II.

ceased just as factions brought weapons out of hiding into Mogadishu. Outgunned by the militia and...demoralized by the loss of military support, the ASF became incapable of performing viable missions.”²⁸

Consequently, within days, General Aideed began to challenge the UN and violence thus returned to the streets of Mogadishu. In response, UNOSOM II Commander, LTGEN Cevik Bir, issued Fragmentary Order 39 which stated: “Organized, armed militias, technicals, and other crew served weapons are considered a threat to UNOSOM Forces and *may be engaged without provocation* (emphasis added).”²⁹ With Johnston’s ROE now in tatters, the fog and friction of war would begin to hinder UNOSOM’s mission at every step. Was that militia man with an AK-47 one of Aideed’s men or not? The new ROE made that point irrelevant and very quickly the enemy became not Aideed but a new center of gravity: an angry Somali people. As UNOSOM slowly became sucked into the vortex of war, the Master, Clausewitz, would have sounded the alarm that the UN peacekeepers had already crossed “the Mogadishu line;” the peacekeepers were no longer “neutrals.” Regrettably, no one else observed the changing dynamics of the affected trinities and unintended consequences soon followed.

On June 5th, less than one month after UNOSOM II took command, 24 Pakistani peacekeepers were killed during an unannounced inspection of a suspected arms cache and radio station belonging to Aideed. In response, the Security Council passed Resolution 837 condemning the attack and calling for the “arrest and detention” of the perpetrators. For Admiral Howe and UNOSOM, the arrest of Aideed became the focal point of the intervention at precisely the time when the psychological dimension of war began to play a larger and larger role in the decisions made; it was only a matter of time before one of the fiercest firefights in the history of the U.S. Army would take place. To understand why 18 American Rangers and Special Forces

²⁸ Thomas and Spataro, 202.

²⁹ Allard, 37.

soldiers were killed at the Battle of the Black Sea in Mogadishu, one needs only to understand the impact of the recent UN political decisions on the Somali trinity.

One observer, recalling the tragic events of 3 October 1993, provides the Somali perspective:

"It had been easy to believe, prior to this day, that the Somali warlord Aideed lacked broad popular support. But this fight had turned into something akin to a popular uprising. It seemed like everyone in the city wanted suddenly to kill Americans. They were burning roadblocks everywhere."³⁰

The three elements of the Somali trinity were now in balance: the people were infused with primordial rage and passion; the warlords and clans were temporarily reunited with the common political goal of removing the UN from Somalia; and, General Aideed effectively mobilized his irregular army to confront the hated Rangers. Although suffering a tactical defeat on 3 October, the Somalis achieved a strategic victory on television the next several days as the bodies of several Americans were dragged through the streets of Mogadishu; within days, the United States and UN would begin the process of withdrawing from Somalia.

In sum, an analysis of the UN intervention in Somalia in 1992-1995 demonstrates that Clausewitz's "remarkable trinity" remains relevant to the modern phenomenon of war--to include limited wars with limited political objectives. Secondly, the trinitarian approach helps explain why the political objectives in recent humanitarian interventions have not been achieved. If one recalls Clausewitz's famous maxim that "war is a continuation of politics by other means," one could argue that war, or the decision to employ "force" as in Kosovo, is simply a continuation of the remarkable trinity *that comprises politics*. In other words, the trinity, which describes the phenomenon of war, is a duplicate of the trinity which describes the phenomenon

³⁰ Mark Bowden. *Black Hawk Down: a story of Modern War*, (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1999), 230.

of politics. Consider the following: in politics, you have an element of passion, in politics you have an element of chance, probability and friction (e.g., a recession), and in politics there is rational calculation and reason employed by decision makers. With wars of limited objectives, the linkage between the political trinity and the trinity of war is even tighter than that of a total war, which could help explain why limited wars with limited objectives are so inconclusive. In other words, one small change in the political trinity of a party has a disproportionate affect on the associated trinity of war. As was shown in Somalia, a simple political decision to disarm the clans had a profound impact on the trinitities of both sides. Therefore, understanding the degree to which this political linkage affects wars of limited aims is perhaps the key lesson for statesmen and strategists to consider, as they seek to avoid crossing “the Mogadishu line” in future.

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