

BEYOND THE BATTLEFIELD: CLAUSEWITZIAN STRATEGIC LOGIC AS A FRAMEWORK FOR UNDERSTANDING COGNITIVE AND HYBRID WARFARE IN THE EUROPEAN SECURITY ENVIRONMENT

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Abstract: *The resurgence of hybrid warfare and the emergence of cognitive operations as instruments of strategic competition have prompted renewed debate about the adequacy of classical strategic theory in explaining contemporary conflict. This article argues that Clausewitz’s theoretical architecture (specifically the paradoxical trinity, the grammar/logic distinction, and the concept of friction) retains substantial analytical utility for understanding cognitive and hybrid warfare in the European security environment. Drawing on recent scholarship on ambiguity as the defining characteristic of hybrid warfare and on NATO’s evolving cognitive warfare framework, the article identifies a critical gap: neither debate has systematically employed Clausewitzian theory as an integrative analytical lens bridging operational ambiguity and cognitive effects within a unified strategic framework.*

Employing conceptual analysis and selected case material from the European security environment, the article demonstrates that hybrid warfare’s deliberate manufacture of ambiguity functions as engineered cognitive friction within adversary decision cycles, disrupting the Clausewitzian dialectic of war while sustaining its political logic. Cognitive operations do not invalidate Clausewitz’s framework but expose its underutilized dimensions, particularly his understanding of war as a clash of wills and the primacy of political purpose over military means. These findings carry direct implications for NATO doctrine development and for European resilience strategies aimed at countering hybrid threats below the threshold of armed conflict.

Keywords: *Clausewitz, cognitive warfare, hybrid warfare, European security, paradoxical trinity, friction, NATO doctrine, resilience*

1. INTRODUCTION

The character of warfare in the European security environment has undergone a fundamental transformation. State and non-state actors increasingly pursue political objectives through combinations of kinetic and non-kinetic means, deliberate ambiguity, and systematic targeting of adversary cognition, operating across and below the threshold of conventional armed conflict. Russia’s hybrid operations against Ukraine, its interference in European democratic processes, and its sustained information campaigns targeting NATO’s eastern flank have demonstrated that the battlespace of the twenty-first century extends well beyond geographic terrain into the cognitive domain. At the same time, NATO’s recognition of cognitive warfare as a distinct operational challenge (reflected in its Warfighting Capstone Concept and the Allied Command Transformation’s cognitive warfare exploratory concept) signals institutional acknowledgment that the human mind has become a primary arena of strategic competition.

These developments have generated a substantial body of scholarship on hybrid warfare and, more recently, on cognitive warfare as an emerging concept. Nevertheless a significant theoretical gap persists. The hybrid warfare literature has largely concentrated on the operational characteristics of ambiguity and the mechanics of below-threshold conflict, while the cognitive warfare discourse has focused on conceptual definition and doctrinal integration. Neither strand has systematically returned to classical strategic theory to ask a foundational question: *does Clausewitz's theoretical architecture retain analytical utility for understanding warfare that targets cognition and operates through deliberate ambiguity rather than overt force?*

This article argues that it does, and that the failure to engage Clausewitz systematically in both debates represents a missed analytical opportunity. Clausewitz's paradoxical trinity, his distinction between the grammar and the logic of war, and his concept of friction are not artifacts of industrial-age conflict. They are structural features of his theory that speak directly to the mechanisms through which hybrid and cognitive warfare achieve their effects. Hybrid warfare's deliberate manufacture of ambiguity disrupts the Clausewitzian dialectic of war, but it does so in service of a clearly Clausewitzian political logic. Cognitive operations generate friction within adversary decision cycles, targeting the clash of wills that Clausewitz identified as the essence of war. Far from rendering his framework obsolete, contemporary hybrid and cognitive warfare in Europe expose its underutilized dimensions.

The article proceeds as follows. Section 2 reviews the existing literature on hybrid warfare and cognitive warfare, identifying the theoretical gap this article addresses. Section 3 examines the relevant Clausewitzian concepts and establishes the analytical framework. Section 4 applies this framework to selected case material from the European security environment, focusing on Russian hybrid and cognitive operations. Section 5 addresses the implications for NATO doctrine development and European resilience strategies. The conclusion reflects on the broader question of classical strategic theory's enduring relevance in an era of cognitive and hybrid conflict.

2. HYBRID WARFARE, COGNITIVE WARFARE, AND THE THEORETICAL GAP

The academic debate on hybrid warfare has expanded considerably since Frank Hoffman's foundational definition in 2007, which characterized it as the simultaneous employment of conventional capabilities, irregular tactics, terrorist acts, and criminal disorder by a single actor [1, 2]. The war in eastern Ukraine in 2014 marked a decisive turning point, shifting the debate from a focus on non-state actors toward state-centric interpretations of hybrid conflict and generating a substantial body of scholarship on Russian and Chinese hybrid strategies. Despite this expansion, the literature has remained predominantly concerned with operational and doctrinal dimensions (the mechanics of how hybrid warfare is conducted) rather than with its deeper strategic logic [3].

The methodology employed in this article is conceptual analysis, understood as the systematic mapping of theoretical constructs onto empirical phenomena to assess explanatory adequacy. The selection of Clausewitzian concepts for examination (the *paradoxical trinity*, the *grammar and logic distinction*, and the *concept of friction*) is determined by their structural fit with the mechanisms identified in the hybrid and cognitive warfare literatures: deliberate ambiguity, targeting of adversarial will, and disruption of decision cycles. The three illustrative cases examined in Section 4 (Russian hybrid operations in Ukraine 2014-present, cognitive operations targeting European democratic institutions, and NATO's institutional response) were selected because they

represent the most extensively documented and analytically tractable instances of hybrid and cognitive warfare in the European security environment, allowing systematic application of the framework across offensive operations and institutional response dimensions. The article engages primarily with Clausewitz's own theoretical architecture as set out in the Howard and Paret translation [9], while situating its interpretive claims within the secondary literature on Clausewitz's contemporary relevance [21, 22]. Alternative interpretations of Clausewitz (particularly Echevarria's combat-centric reading and Strachan's critique of the primacy of policy) are acknowledged where they bear on the analytical framework employed.

A significant conceptual contribution has been made by Mumford and Carlucci, who argue that ambiguity constitutes the defining essence of hybrid warfare rather than any particular combination of means [4]. In their framework, hybrid warfare forces adversaries into a state of cognitive impasse by simultaneously presenting multiple plausible political and military intentions, thereby inhibiting effective defense and delaying coordinated response. This ambiguity operates across four parameters: the utility of uncertainty in delaying adversary response, the strategy of dispersion that forces defenders to allocate resources across multiple contingencies, tactical creativity in combining kinetic and non-kinetic means below the threshold of legitimate response, and the capacity for rapid de-escalation that ambiguity affords. Critically, Mumford and Carlucci identify that ambiguity in hybrid warfare functions precisely by inhibiting what they term the Clausewitzian dialectic of war, however they do not develop this observation into a systematic theoretical engagement with Clausewitz's framework. The Clausewitzian dimension remains a reference point rather than an analytical instrument.

The cognitive warfare literature presents a parallel limitation from a different direction. Deppe and Schaal, in their conceptual analysis of NATO ACT's cognitive warfare exploratory concept, demonstrate that the field currently lacks a unified scientific definition and that existing conceptualizations suffer from unclear boundaries, conceptual stretching, and insufficient differentiation from adjacent concepts such as hybrid threats, foreign information manipulation and interference, and information warfare [5]. NATO's own definition "*activities conducted in synchronization with other instruments of power to affect attitudes and behavior by influencing, protecting, or disrupting individual and group cognition to gain advantage over an adversary*" is comprehensive but maximalist, incorporating a broad range of attributes that complicate operationalization and empirical measurement. Deppe and Schaal explicitly call for reconceptualization that connects cognitive warfare more precisely to established strategic frameworks and improves its analytical utility in both military and academic contexts [6].

Taken together, these two strands of literature converge on a shared lacuna. The hybrid warfare debate has identified cognitive impasse as a primary effect of ambiguity-based operations but has not theorized this effect within a classical strategic framework. The cognitive warfare debate has called for integration with established strategic concepts but has not identified which classical framework is best suited to serve this function. Neither strand has systematically examined whether Clausewitz's theoretical architecture possesses the structural features necessary to bridge operational ambiguity and cognitive effects within a unified analytical lens.

This gap is not just academic. As Deppe and Schaal note, the role of the military instrument in the cognitive dimension remains unclear, particularly below the threshold of armed conflict, generating gaps in policy, defense planning, and capabilities [5]. NATO's Warfighting Capstone Concept identifies cognitive superiority as one of five core warfare development imperatives, yet the conceptual foundations for understanding how adversaries contest cognitive superiority through hybrid means remain underdeveloped [7].

The author's prior comparative analysis of cognitive warfare defense frameworks in Central and Eastern Europe further underscores this gap, demonstrating that defensive architecture development in the region has proceeded without an adequate theoretical foundation for understanding the strategic logic of the threats being countered [8].

The following section argues that Clausewitz's theoretical architecture provides precisely the integrative framework that both literatures require, not because his concepts map neatly onto contemporary conflict, but because the structural logic of his theory illuminates the mechanisms through which hybrid warfare manufactures ambiguity and cognitive operations generate strategic effect.

3. CLAUSEWITZ'S THEORETICAL ARCHITECTURE: TRINITY, GRAMMAR, LOGIC, AND FRICTION

Carl von Clausewitz's *On War* is frequently cited in strategic studies but less frequently examined with the analytical precision its theoretical architecture demands [9]. The secondary literature on Clausewitz has expanded considerably in recent decades, with Echevarria demonstrating that *On War* is most coherently understood through its combat-centric methodology rather than through the aphoristic primacy of policy [21], and Strachan tracing how selective reading (reducing the framework to the formula that war is the continuation of politics by other means) has generated successive layers of misinterpretation that obscured Clausewitz's more nuanced trinitarian conception of war's dynamics [22].

The present article's interpretive approach aligns more closely with Strachan's insistence on the equal weight of the trinity's three elements, while engaging the full breadth of Clausewitz's theoretical architecture rather than any single dimension. The selective reading of Clausewitz in both the hybrid warfare and cognitive warfare literatures has contributed to a narrow understanding of warfare that privileges physical violence over the clash of wills that Clausewitz himself identified as war's essential character. This section examines four interconnected elements of Clausewitz's theoretical architecture and establishes their relevance as an analytical framework for understanding cognitive and hybrid warfare in the European security environment.

3.1. The Paradoxical Trinity

Clausewitz's paradoxical trinity describes war as a dynamic interplay among three forces: primordial violence, hatred, and enmity, associated primarily with the people; the play of chance and probability, associated with the military commander; and war's subordination to rational political purpose, associated with the government [9]. Clausewitz was explicit that these three tendencies are not fixed attributes of their respective actors but rather gravitational forces whose balance shifts continuously throughout the conduct of war.

This trinitarian framework carries direct analytical implications for hybrid and cognitive warfare. Hybrid warfare in the European context has systematically targeted the first element of the trinity (*the people*) through disinformation, narrative manipulation, identity weaponization, and the deliberate erosion of social trust, precisely the mechanisms identified in NATO's cognitive warfare exploratory concept as primary vectors of cognitive attack [5]. By operating against the population as the primary battlespace, hybrid and cognitive operations seek to decouple the trinitarian relationship: to sever the bond between popular will, military instrument, and political leadership that gives a democratic state its coherence and capacity for coordinated response.

3.2. The Grammar and Logic of War

Among the most productive of Clausewitz's theoretical distinctions for understanding contemporary conflict is his separation of war's grammar from its logic. The grammar of war refers to its technical and operational conduct. The logic of war refers to its political purpose, the rational objective that war serves as an instrument of policy. Clausewitz's central insight is that while the grammar of war changes with technology, doctrine, and circumstance, its logic remains constant: war is always, at its foundation, a political act pursued in service of political ends [9].

This distinction maps with considerable precision onto the hybrid and cognitive warfare debate. The grammar of contemporary hybrid warfare (deniable proxy forces, information operations, cyber intrusions, lawfare, and economic coercion) is radically different from the grammar of industrial-age warfare. However the logic of hybrid and cognitive warfare in Europe remains unmistakably Clausewitzian: Russia's hybrid operations in Ukraine, its interference in European democratic processes, and its sustained cognitive campaigns targeting NATO cohesion are all directed toward identifiable political objectives. The grammar has changed; the logic has not [4].

3.3. Friction and the Cognitive Domain

Clausewitz's concept of friction (the force that makes the apparently simple in war difficult in reality) is perhaps his most enduring contribution to strategic theory [9]. For Clausewitz, friction is an inherent and unavoidable property of war as a complex system: it arises from the interaction of uncertainty, danger, physical exertion, and chance, and cannot be designed out of warfare by any degree of planning or technical sophistication. This original conception of friction as an emergent property of war's complexity must be distinguished from the reinterpretation this article advances: friction as a deliberately manufactured strategic instrument. The distinction is analytically significant because it marks the transition from friction as a condition that affects both sides equally to friction as an asymmetric weapon directed selectively at the adversary's decision cycle.

Hybrid warfare's manufacture of ambiguity functions precisely as the deliberate introduction of such engineered friction: by simultaneously presenting multiple plausible intentions, maintaining deniability, and exploiting the gaps between legal thresholds of response, hybrid actors deliberately generate in their adversaries the cognitive conditions that Clausewitz identified as friction's defining effect (the degradation of judgment, the erosion of will, and the collapse of coordinated action) while retaining clarity and coherence in their own operations. This is not a conceptual stretch of Clausewitz's framework; it is a recognition that the mechanisms Clausewitz described as inherent to war can be deliberately reproduced in an adversary's cognitive environment without triggering the grammatical conditions of war itself.

The deliberate manufacture of cognitive friction targets the cognitive processes through which adversary governments, military commanders, and populations form judgments and sustain the will to respond. The author's parallel research on human-AI teaming in cognitive electronic warfare systems demonstrates that trust calibration between human operators and AI decision-support systems represents a small-scale version of the same friction dynamic at the platform level, adversaries who can degrade cognitive clarity in human-machine teaming achieve the same strategic friction effect through technological rather than informational means [10].

3.4. The Primacy of Political Purpose and the Clash of Wills

The fourth element of Clausewitz's theoretical architecture most relevant to this analysis is his insistence on the primacy of political purpose and his characterization of war as fundamentally a clash of wills rather than a clash of arms.

War's essential dynamic is not the destruction of the adversary's physical capacity to resist but the breaking of the adversary's will [9]. This characterization aligns precisely with the strategic logic of cognitive warfare. Cognitive operations in the European context are not primarily directed at the physical destruction of adversary capabilities. They are directed at the adversary's will, at the beliefs, identities, narratives, and decision-making processes through which democratic societies sustain the political coherence necessary for coordinated strategic response [5]. Cognitive warfare does not contradict Clausewitz's framework; it operationalizes its deepest insight through means he could not have anticipated.

4. CLAUSEWITZIAN ANALYSIS OF HYBRID AND COGNITIVE WARFARE IN THE EUROPEAN SECURITY ENVIRONMENT

The theoretical framework established in Section 3 is applied in this section to selected case material from the European security environment. The cases are not intended as exhaustive empirical studies but as illustrative applications of the Clausewitzian analytical framework, demonstrating its utility for interpreting the strategic logic and operational mechanisms of hybrid and cognitive warfare as they have manifested in Europe.

4.1. Russian Hybrid Operations: Manufacturing Friction and Inhibiting the Dialectic of War

Russia's hybrid operations in Ukraine beginning in 2014 represent the most extensively documented case of hybrid warfare in the European security environment. The operational design employed by the Russian Federation combined special forces, proxy militias, Battalion Tactical Groups, information operations, and political manipulation in a carefully sequenced architecture designed to achieve strategic results while maintaining plausible deniability and avoiding the threshold of conventional armed conflict that would trigger a coordinated NATO response [11].

Analyzed through the Clausewitzian framework, the strategic logic of these operations is transparent even where their grammar is deliberately obscured. The political objective (the contestation of Ukraine's westward orientation, the annexation of Crimea, and the establishment of a frozen conflict preventing Ukraine's integration into Euro-Atlantic structures) is definitely Clausewitzian in its rationality and political coherence. The grammar through which this objective was pursued was designed precisely to inhibit the Clausewitzian dialectic of war by denying Ukraine and its Western partners the clarity of attribution necessary to formulate and execute a coherent strategic response [4, 12]. In Clausewitzian terms, manufactured ambiguity functioned as engineered friction, not the unavoidable friction of conventional warfare but the deliberate introduction of uncertainty into every level of the adversary's decision cycle.

Through the exploitation of ethnic Russian identity narratives in eastern Ukraine, the manipulation of historical memory, and the manufacture of political legitimacy for separatist forces, Russian hybrid operations applied precisely the trinitarian pressure established in Section 3: by decoupling popular sentiment from the Ukrainian government's political authority and military instrument, they sought to fracture the coherence that sustains a democratic state's capacity for organized resistance [13].

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 provides a critical analytical extension of this framework. The initial phase of the invasion demonstrated that the hybrid model developed between 2014 and 2022, premised on manufactured ambiguity, subversion, and cognitive friction applied below the threshold of attributable armed attack, was predicated on a fundamental miscalculation of trinitarian coherence: Russian

planners appear to have overestimated the degree to which prior hybrid operations had fractured Ukrainian popular will and the bond between the Ukrainian population and its government [23]. Ukraine's demonstrably robust trinitarian coherence under full conventional assault, and its sustained capacity for coordinated resistance, represents a significant empirical test of both the limits and the enduring logic of the Clausewitzian framework. The failure of Russian unconventional operations to establish the cognitive and political preconditions for rapid military success confirms, from the negative, that trinitarian coherence is the decisive variable that hybrid and cognitive warfare seek to undermine [23].

4.2. Cognitive Operations Targeting European Democratic Institutions

Beyond the Ukrainian theater, Russia has conducted sustained cognitive operations across the broader European security environment, targeting the democratic institutions, social cohesion, and political processes of NATO member states. These operations have included documented interference in electoral processes, large-scale disinformation campaigns amplified through social media platforms, covert funding of populist and extremist political movements, and the systematic exploitation of societal divisions. The European Union External Action Service detected almost 400 foreign information manipulation and interference incidents in 2022 alone, with pro-Kremlin disinformation cases exceeding thirteen thousand documented instances [14, 15].

The Clausewitzian grammar and logic distinction illuminates the strategic coherence of these operations. The grammar of cognitive operations in the European context (deepfakes, algorithmic amplification, proxy media outlets, coordinated inauthentic behavior) is technologically novel. Yet the political logic these operations serve is entirely consistent with Clausewitz's understanding of war as the pursuit of political objectives by other means: the erosion of European democratic solidarity, the weakening of institutional trust, and the contestation of NATO's political cohesion all serve the same overarching political objective [4, 16].

Unlike authoritarian systems, democratic governments derive their authority and their capacity for sustained strategic action from popular legitimacy, which makes the people-government relationship the most structurally vulnerable point of the trinity in democratic societies. Cognitive operations that erode social trust, weaponize identity, polarize political discourse, and undermine confidence in democratic institutions achieve strategic effect by degrading precisely this element, thereby attenuating the government's capacity to mobilize political will and sustain the military instrument [5, 17].

4.3. NATO's Institutional Response as a Site of Trinitarian Contestation

NATO's response to hybrid and cognitive threats constitutes a third analytical case. The Alliance's institutional response, including the development of the cognitive warfare exploratory concept, the identification of cognitive superiority as a warfighting imperative in the NATO Warfighting Capstone Concept, and the establishment of specialized centers of excellence for countering hybrid threats, represents an attempt to restore trinitarian coherence at the Alliance level in the face of adversarial operations designed to fragment it [7].

The analytical challenge NATO faces is precisely the one that the Clausewitzian grammar and logic distinction illuminates. NATO's institutional frameworks and decision-making procedures were designed for a grammar of warfare (overt armed conflict between identifiable state actors above a recognized threshold) that hybrid and cognitive warfare systematically circumvents. The political logic of adversarial cognitive operations, however, is directed at the Alliance's trinitarian coherence: when cognitive operations erode popular support for Alliance commitments, amplify political divisions within member states, or undermine confidence in NATO institutions, they attack the political logic of collective defense without triggering the grammatical conditions that would activate NATO's response mechanisms [7, 18].

5. IMPLICATIONS FOR NATO DOCTRINE AND EUROPEAN RESILIENCE

The analytical findings of the preceding sections carry concrete implications at three levels: NATO doctrine development, European resilience architecture, and the theoretical integration of hybrid and cognitive warfare concepts.

5.1. NATO Doctrine Development: From Grammatical to Logical Response

NATO's current doctrinal architecture reflects a foundational tension that the Clausewitzian framework makes visible with particular clarity. The Alliance's core response mechanisms are triggered by identifiable armed attack, conducted by attributable state actors, above a recognized threshold of violence. Hybrid and cognitive warfare are designed precisely to operate below, around, and through these grammatical conditions while pursuing political objectives that are no less consequential for their operational ambiguity [7].

The Clausewitzian framework offers a theoretical foundation that can address these challenges directly. By grounding cognitive warfare within Clausewitz's understanding of war as a clash of wills in which friction, trinitarian coherence, and political logic are the primary analytical categories, NATO doctrine can move beyond taxonomic debates toward a strategic framework that identifies what adversarial cognitive operations are designed to achieve. Concretely, this implies three doctrinal directions. First, NATO's response framework must develop mechanisms capable of operating at the level of political logic (protecting trinitarian coherence), rather than waiting for adversarial operations to reach the grammatical threshold of armed attack. Second, friction reduction must be recognized as a strategic priority equivalent to force projection. Third, attribution and threshold frameworks must be adapted to recognize that the cumulative cognitive effect of sustained below-threshold operations may exceed the strategic consequences of a discrete armed attack [5, 7].

5.2. European Resilience Architecture: Protecting Trinitarian Coherence

At the level of European states individually and the European security community collectively, the Clausewitzian framework generates a specific and practically useful prescription: resilience strategies must be designed to protect the trinitarian relationship between populations, governments, and military instruments against adversarial operations designed to decouple it. Current European resilience frameworks tend to organize their responses around the operational grammar of hybrid and cognitive threats (countering disinformation, securing electoral infrastructure, protecting critical information systems, and building media literacy). These are necessary and valuable measures. However, analyzed through the Clausewitzian trinitarian framework, they address the vectors of cognitive attack rather than its strategic objective [19].

Social trust, identified by Deppe and Schaal as a critical macro-level vulnerability to cognitive attack, is not primarily a communications or information literacy problem [5]. It is a political and institutional problem requiring sustained investment in the legitimacy and responsiveness of democratic governance. European resilience strategies that address only the informational grammar of cognitive attack without investing in the political and institutional foundations of trinitarian coherence will remain structurally vulnerable regardless of their technical sophistication.

5.3. Theoretical Integration: Toward a Unified Framework

The hybrid warfare and cognitive warfare literatures have developed largely in parallel, each generating substantial scholarship but remaining insufficiently integrated at the theoretical level [20]. The Clausewitzian framework developed in this article provides a theoretical bridge between them. The paradoxical trinity offers a unified analytical architecture within which both hybrid and cognitive warfare can be understood as

targeting the same structural relationship. The grammar and logic distinction resolves the conceptual confusion generated by hybrid warfare's operational novelty. The concept of friction, reinterpreted as a deliberately manufactured strategic instrument, bridges the hybrid warfare literature's focus on ambiguity and the cognitive warfare literature's focus on decision-making disruption within a single analytical concept [4, 5, 9].

CONCLUSIONS

This article has argued that Clausewitz's theoretical architecture retains substantial analytical utility for understanding the logic and conduct of cognitive and hybrid warfare in the European security environment, not despite the novelty of contemporary conflict forms but precisely because of it. The paradoxical trinity, the grammar and logic distinction, the concept of friction as a manufactured strategic instrument, and the primacy of political purpose in a clash of wills constitute an integrative analytical framework that bridges two bodies of literature which have developed in productive but insufficiently connected parallel.

The analysis has demonstrated three core findings. First, hybrid warfare's deliberate manufacture of ambiguity functions as engineered cognitive friction within adversary decision cycles, disrupting the Clausewitzian dialectic of war while simultaneously serving an unmistakably Clausewitzian political logic. Second, cognitive operations targeting European democratic institutions operationalize Clausewitz's deepest insight (that war is fundamentally a clash of wills) through means directed at the most structurally vulnerable element of the paradoxical trinity in democratic societies. Third, NATO's doctrinal challenge in responding to hybrid and cognitive threats is precisely the challenge that the Clausewitzian grammar and logic distinction illuminates: current response mechanisms are calibrated to the grammar of conventional armed conflict while adversarial operations pursue their political objectives through a deliberately subthreshold grammar that those mechanisms are structurally ill-equipped to recognize and counter.

A number of limitations of this analysis deserve acknowledgment. The article has employed a conceptual analysis methodology with illustrative case material rather than a systematic comparative case study design. Chinese hybrid and cognitive operations, which present a distinct strategic logic and operational grammar, fall outside the scope of this analysis but represent an important direction for future research. Similarly, the article has focused on the offensive dimension of hybrid and cognitive warfare rather than on the full spectrum of defensive responses available to NATO and European states.

The broader question this article addresses (whether classical strategic theory retains relevance in an era of cognitive and hybrid conflict) admits of a clear answer on the basis of the analysis presented. Clausewitz provides something analytically valuable: a theoretical architecture that reveals the strategic logic beneath the operational grammar of contemporary adversarial operations, identifies the structural vulnerabilities that logic exploits, and locates the points of intervention at which effective strategic response must be directed. The European security environment of the twenty-first century has not made Clausewitz obsolete, but made him indispensable.

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