



# Clausewitz Delusion: How the American Army Screwed Up the Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan (A Way Forward)

*Stephen L. Melton*

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In the aftermath of defeat in Vietnam, the American military cast about for answers--and, bizarrely, settled upon a view of warfare promulgated by a Prussian general in the 1830s, Carl von Clausewitz. This doctrine was utterly inappropriate to the wars the U.S. faced in Iraq and Afghanistan. It led the U.S. Army to abandon its time-honored methods of offensive war--which had guided America to success from the early Indian campaigns all the way through the Second World War--in favor of a military philosophy derived from the dynastic campaigns of Napoleon and Frederick the Great. It should come as no surprise, then, that the military's conceptualization of modern offensive war, as well as its execution, has failed in every real-life test of our day.

This book reveals the failings of the U.S. Army in its adoption of a postmodern "Full Spectrum Operations" doctrine, which codifies Clauswitzian thinking. Such an approach, the author contends, leaves the military without the doctrine, training base, or force structure necessary to win offensive wars in our time. Instead, the author suggests, the army should adopt a new doctrinal framework based on an analysis of the historical record and previously successful American methods of war. A clear and persuasive critique of current operative ideas about warfare, *The Clausewitz Delusion* lays out a new explanation of victory in war, based on an analysis of wartime casualties and post-conflict governance. It is a book of critical importance to policymakers, statesmen, and military strategists at every level.

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