ON THE MACROFOUNDATIONS OF MICRODISASTERS

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I do not employ the ... familiar terms, “micro-” and “macro-sociological” study, for two reasons. One is that these two are not infrequently set off against one another, with the implication that we have to choose between them, regarding one as in some way more fundamental than the other. In Goffman's studied refusal to be concerned with issues of large-scale social organization and history, for example, there seems to lurk the idea that in microsociology is to be found the essential reality of social life. On the other hand, advocates of macrosociological approaches are prone to regard studies of day-to-day social activity as concerned with trivia. ... But this sort of confrontation is surely a phoney war if ever there was one.

—Anthony Giddens (1984:139)

A. A soldier-scholar's approach to paradigm integration

Karl von Clausewitz has had many detractors, and one of the major criticisms brought against his work is that, at bottom, it was anti-intellectual: A successful military mind, he implied, may have to be first rate, but an excellent soldier-scholar does not waste time learning about weapons or tactics or the history of noteworthy battles. Given the nature of war, says Clausewitz (1976:140,145-46),

... it is simply not possible to construct a model for the art of war that can serve as a scaffolding on which the commander can rely for support ... Whenever he has to fall back on his innate talent, he will find himself outside the model and in conflict with it ... In fact, ... distinguished commanders have never emerged from the ranks of the most erudite or scholarly officers ... Knowledge in war is very simple, being concerned with so few subjects, and only with their final results at that. But this does not make its application easy. ... This type of knowledge cannot be forcibly produced by an apparatus of scientific formulas and mechanics; it can only be gained through a talent for judgment, and by the application of accurate judgment to the observation of man and matter.

The soldier-scholar, then, draws his maps fast and free-handed and leaves the detailed cartography to the ordinary plodders. Perhaps this mental habit accounts
for the fact that, while we mainstream social scientists agonize over questions such as the interaction of macro- and micro-processes, the relative importance of "human agency" versus the material conditions that constrain behavior, and the subtle ways in which social organizations may become "dysfunctional" or cease to exist altogether, the soldier-scholar is likely to bring together a quick set of provisional definitions, to allow a few basic presuppositions to creep in unannounced, and to get on with the analysis. A book such as Kaufman et al. *U.S. National Security: A Framework for Analysis* (1985) belongs to this genre. The authors have not addressed the large presuppositional questions of social science theory, and yet they are entirely uninhibited in talking about deterrence as if human intentionality (or "credibility") were obviously a central component of it, in talking about the interrelationships of tactics and strategy (micro- and macro-processes) as if this realm of discourse were taken for granted, and in positing "survival" as one of the fundamental values around which strategic doctrine is organized.

When Randall Collins is writing in the Clausewitzian mode, moving back and forth among several paradigms, he is at his best. Collins' abiding interest in the microinteractionist tradition comes across clearly in his paper on war and "targeted disaster." As we read this paper we realize why it is that the interaction of microsocial and macrosocial processes has a central place in strategic doctrine—although military scholars may prefer to use the traditional terms "tactics" and "strategy." There is no such thing as strategic surrender (Kecskemeti, 1958), for instance, if the troops executing tactics have fallen into a state of forward or reverse panic (Collins, 1986:13,17-20). It may be that the fundamental strategy of most military confrontations is to create targeted disasters within enemy organizations (Collins, 1986:22-29), and it is therefore essential in understanding military confrontations that we make use of the organizational perspectives prominent in the work of, say, the Disaster Research Center (Kreps, 1981: 103-15).

Back in the days when Henry Kissinger was writing about the strategy of limited nuclear war (1957: ch. 6; cf. Collins, 1986:11), one was always intrigued by the claim that the emerging strategy would eliminate large troop concentrations (Kissinger, 1957:178) and replace them with small, highly mobile units capable of delivering low-yield nuclear weapons, of creating Collins' targeted disasters. The "flexible response" strategy remains with us to this day (Kaufman et al., 1985: Part III) although it is unclear whether the communication, command, and control systems essential to this strategy would perform adequately in an actual war (Ford,
1985a;1985b; Perrow, 1984:ch.8).

Finally, many of my favorite illustrations of the micromanifestations of macrosocial processes come from the realm of “diplomatic ceremonial,” a complex of interpersonal ritual that is said to be a nearly perfect mirror image of the larger surrounding social and geopolitical realities. Morgenthau (1954:68-73) provides fascinating examples involving the symbolic interaction of Napoleon and the Pope, Napoleon and Metternich (wherein Napoleon's role was essentially reversed), Louis XIV and emissaries of the Republic of Venice, Theodore Roosevelt and the Spanish ambassador, and several other instances. The choice of meeting places for international conferences is invariably a matter of elaborate symbolism, and the Tokyo summit conference of 1986 makes it clear that even the timing of one's arrival at a meeting place may be a matter of urgent symbolic significance (Newsweek, 5/19/86:7). Naval fleets, inherently impressive, have been a favorite instrument of symbolic display. And I have a vague recollection of an incident in which Napoleon, on learning of the death of one of his major symbolic (and substantive) competitors, asked immediately, “Now, what do you suppose he meant by that?”

B. Intention, capability, and macrostructural models

One cannot consider symbolic tactics for long without entering the esoteric realm of strategic doctrine. Targeted disasters, forward and reverse panic, and symbolic interchanges may express the larger strategic imagery, and to a degree they also comprise it. We cannot hope to understand these micromanifestations, however, without examining the free-hand brush strokes of the most uninhibited Clausewitzians. If there is such a thing as a targeted disaster and if disasters have the taxonomic complexity suggested by Kreps (1981, 1984) and others included in this volume, then we should entertain the general hypothesis that the probability of different sorts of targeted disasters will vary according to the evolution of military technology and strategic doctrine. A large part of this paper, in fact, will explore precisely that hypothesis.

(1) Global models. Karl Deutsch has been working for many decades with system theories of international processes, and in one of his latest works (1977:5-10) he makes it clear that “world modeling,” as practiced by social scientists without computers for hundreds of years and with computers for about twenty years, is an example par excellence of the macrosocial. “In order to make
intelligent plans or policies,” says Deutsch, “one has to take into account world conditions.” Although Deutsch is writing about inductive-deductive theories such as the Club of Rome world model, the Mesarovik-Pestel World Integrated Model, and his own work on international mail-flow linkages, this form of mental shorthand is the essence of strategic doctrine. One who holds any doubts about the role of human agency in world models would do well to read Deutsch's discussions of “steering models”; Deutsch believes, with the Club of Rome, that it is possible for the human race to avoid collision courses. And on the matter of collisions, it occurs to me that the processes represented by world models may be increasingly subject to “complexity, coupling, and catastrophe” (Perrow, 1984:ch. 3), features that underlie an assortment of man-made disasters. Perrow's hypotheses about causes and conditions of disaster in elaborate technological systems, such as nuclear power plants or jumbo jets or large ships, have much in common with Club of Rome hypotheses about causes and conditions of long-term ecological catastrophes. In Andersen's words (1985:103), “… some of the models currently being used to simulate social policies are so complex, involving tens of thousands of equations, that the people who construct the models no longer understand why they behave as they do.”

(2) Richardson processes. In the famous Richardson model of arms racing, the micro-macro linkage is made explicit. Richardson himself believed that his quantitative models could explain a wide range of “deadly quarrels,” and the generalizability of Richardson models permits Boulding (1962) to speak of “the individual as a party to conflict,” “the group as a party to conflict,” “economic” and “industrial” conflict, conflict among individuals, groups, and organizations, and so forth. One can purchase a version of the Richardson model that runs on personal computers, and it is a most edifying experience for a single individual to play macrosocial conflict games against a microcomputer as if player and machine were separate nations. One can gain a further appreciation of the microsocial character of Richardson models by considering what is likely to occur in a situation where a couple sharing a bed, using a dual-control electric blanket and having profoundly different preferences for warmth versus coolness, get their control switches crossed. The result is very much like a Richardson arms race.

It is arguably a major “error of omission” (Hughes, 1980:203-4) that several prominent world models say little about international conflict and war. This omission has been corrected in a few studies (e.g., Bremer and Mihalka, 1977). Beyond that, one should remember that the major theoretical synthesis that
combines the complexities of global models with the conflict perspectives of Richardson models goes under the name of Marxism-Leninism. A world model incorporating the instabilities of the typical Richardson process would be the perfect embodiment of Marxist-Leninist theory.

(3) **Balance models.** In a paper published at the beginning of the Second World War, Malinowski (Bramson and Goethals, 1964:267) expresses a strong sense of the continuity of the international balance of power system, a macrosocial system that, in Malinowski's view, was not likely to be modified in any substantial way by the war itself. In Malinowski's words,

> The possibility of a complete victory of one state does not exist. If Germany wins, she will have at least three more totalitarian powers to reckon with—Italy, Russia, and Japan. When Italy falls out and becomes a mere appendage of Hitlerism, the United States of America may have to enter the ranks of totalitarian countries. For, on the assumption that Great Britain is beaten and absorbed into the German-led totalitarian bloc, as France has become, the United States must continue in isolation. This will mean, again, either embracing totalitarianism or withdrawing into a precarious state of semi-independence ...

As we shall see in a moment, balance theory is one of the more highly developed macrosocial theories of international interaction, and power balances have a large impact on the day-to-day experiences of individuals.

(4) **Flexible response doctrines.** The large systemic processes of global models were the delight of Talcott Parsons, and it is arguable that it is only with the advent of large, fast, powerful computers that Parsonian sociology becomes feasible—the rapidly proliferating global models certainly lead one to this conclusion. In any case, I believe that it is possible to show that the evolution of strategic doctrine and associated military technologies have had a demonstrable impact on the nature and distribution of Collins' targeted disasters, i.e., disasters brought about through military or paramilitary action. In a recent work of my own (Faia, 1986:8; cf. Skolnikoff, 1985:131), I point out that

> the relationship between intention and capability in the military realm is highly volatile, due primarily to the high rate of change in military capabilities. In recent years strategic doctrine in the United States, and
perhaps in the Soviet Union, apparently has undergone radical change as a result of the fact that nuclear warheads can now be delivered with pinpoint accuracy. In terms of its impact (or expected impact) on intentions, missile accuracy may be far more important than “throw weight,” number of warheads available, location of missiles, and so forth, because highly accurate weapons may tempt governments to launch counterforce or first-strike attacks. If such changes of intention were to occur, they would be tantamount to the abandonment of the pure deterrence strategy of the last several decades, which has been based on the presumption that only second-strike capabilities are essential and that such retaliatory attacks would be made primarily against non-military targets. Such a change of intentions by either side, whether real or imagined, would bring about similar changes on the other side, producing a dangerous escalation ...

Neither side, of course, trusts the other not to make use of whatever capabilities seem to exist, and we observe a most un-Parsonian process of “technological drivenness.”

Increasing missile accuracy among other factors has stimulated the development of “flexible nuclear response” strategies (Kaufman et al., 1985:113) that envision a wide range of conflicts in which nuclear weapons might be used. To Kaufman et al. (1985:113), flexible response postures have the virtue of offering “... the prospect of terminating a conflict before nuclear weapons are used against population centers,” although such an outcome is never assured. A flexible response strategy, aside from imposing severe selectivity on the targeting of nuclear disasters, makes large demands on command, control, and surveillance capabilities and also assumes a more or less continuous ability to communicate with one's adversary (Ford, 1985a, 1985b). As Graham Allison (1971) has shown in the case of the 1962 Cuban missile crisis, command, control, surveillance, and communication-with-adversary are an excellent research focus for those interested in the interaction of macro- and micro-processes. And it goes without saying that the interaction of intention and capability will not be easily understood, or ever understood, by those who assume an ineluctable tension between “interpretative” and “structural” perspectives.

Limited nuclear war is not a new concept—it was discussed as a plausible strategy by Henry Kissinger thirty years ago (1957:ch.6), and several additional references to the standard literature are provided by Kaufman et al. (1985:159). In reading Kissinger one gets the strong impression that capabilities generally precede
intentions: It was the development of a strategic nuclear force-in-being by the Soviet Union that made it clear to U.S. strategists that development of limited nuclear and conventional war capabilities would be essential if the U.S. were to avoid nuclear blackmail (Kissinger, 1957:ch.10). In recent years, however, even strategic nuclear capabilities seem to be falling under the flexible response banner. In the words of Kaufman et al. (1985:113),

As the United States and the Soviet Union expanded their nuclear arsenals, there began to be increasing concern about what would happen should deterrence fail. The possibility that war might occur by accident or miscalculation meant that some controls on the escalation of nuclear conflict needed to be established. Further, the continuing buildup of Soviet nuclear forces reduced the credibility of U.S. reliance on a doctrine of assured destruction. In the event of nuclear war in Europe or Asia, an attack by the United States on Soviet cities would ensure a retaliatory strike against U.S. population centers. Decision makers concluded that greater flexibility in the targeting of U.S. nuclear forces was necessary to improve the credibility of the deterrent.

The upshot of all these developments is that if the United States and the Soviet Union ever have a direct military confrontation, and if flexible response strategists succeed in producing the various self-fulfilling prophecies necessary to make their approach workable, then there is likely to be a large though limited role for disaster-recovery specialists. Targeted disasters are comparable to natural disasters in the sense that, although nature does not have intentions, she does seem to entertain limitations.

The most obvious shortcoming of the flexible response strategy is that the capabilities it requires are hard to distinguish from those necessary for first-strike counterforce attacks. The distinction may be drawn as a part of the expressed intentions of the two sides, but neither side believes the expressed intentions of the other when capabilities tell a different story. Despite the fact that, as William F. Ogburn reminds us, capabilities may outrun intentions (Dandeker, 1984), nations tend to infer one another's intentions through observation of capabilities. Politico-military elites include some of the world's finest structural sociologists (broadly defined), and let us hope that these sociologists are endowed with an equal talent for expressing themselves in the microinteractional situations in which they make their intentions known.
Current strategic planning, then, seems to have large implications for disaster specialists. Yet one gets the impression on reading, say, the history of DRC (Kreps, 1981) that civil defense planning receives short shrift nowadays as compared with preparedness for natural disasters. A clue to this anomaly is found in my earlier remark about nature: Nature does not have intentions, nor do we negotiate with nature. As Collins says (1986:15), “nature ... is not deliberately aiming to terrorize and break down organization.” What is unique about targeted disasters is that they are man-made, their distribution is subject to substantial control through human agency, and they are subject to negotiation. When I first learned from Kreps (1981:104) that civil defense funding for the DRC essentially ended in 1968, I was surprised. Eventually, however, I came across a partial explanation in an excellent book by Thomas Schelling:

Another principle contrary to the usual first impression concerns the relative virtues of clean and dirty bombs. Bernard Brodie has pointed out that when one considers the special requirements of deterrence, in contrast to the requirements of a war that one expects to fight, one may see some utility in the super-dirty bomb ... This conclusion is not so strange if we recognize the “balance of terror” as simply a massive modern version of an ancient institution, the exchange of hostages.

And the fact that we appear to be moving away from the pure deterrence strategy does not seem to make hostages any less necessary. Note too that the purest form of dirty bomb—the neutron bomb—has been proposed seriously in recent years. If hostage taking is an element of strategic deterrence and also occurs regularly in the microsituations created by modern terrorists (Netanyahu, 1986), then it is probable that hostage-taking has a role in virtually all the forty-four levels of escalation defined by Herman Kahn (1965)—except perhaps for the final rung of Kahn's ladder, which he designates as a “spasm or insensate war.” In such a war, man reverts to nature in more ways than one.

(5) Modern terrorism and graduated disaster. Modern terrorism, as I say, creates microsituations. Yet we see in this instance also the interplay of macrosocial and microsocial phenomena, and it is this interplay, this multidimensionality, that should be our central focus. Although not much is known about modern terrorism, there are some fascinating hypotheses in current discussions. Netanyahu (1986: 49-52), for instance, proposes that terrorism receives strong support from two international movements, Communism and
Islamic nationalism; that the high risks of direct military confrontation provide terrorists an opportunity to wage war by proxy; that governments of the West do not have effective ways of retaliating against terrorists; and that state-supported terrorism is a large international conspiracy.

While I do not agree with all these assertions, I cite them because they illustrate my claim that we cannot understand the microsituations created by terrorists unless we view them both as microsituations and as situations that embody (and replicate) large ideologies, large historical forces, large social structures, and broad strategies. I am particularly impressed by Netanyahu's implication that recent terrorism gains impetus because deterrence has been successful against the many alternative forms of violence—apparently, several rungs have been removed from Herman Kahn's ladder. It has also become clear that the U.S. response to terrorism is now based on the belief that these attacks are typically produced and maintained by international networks with state support, a thesis that is macrosocial, highly debatable, and crucial. On the other hand, students of terrorism must remember, with Collins (1986:9), that “the prime finding of military sociology is that soldiers fight as members of small groups, out of a sense of mutual protection and loyalty ...”

C. Causes, conditions, and consequences of war: some macrostructural views

J. David Singer, a major contributor to the “correlates of war” project at the University of Michigan, remarked in a recent book that, in fact, international relations specialists already owe much to sociology (1979:17-18):

One of the most widely used paradigms of the politically developed social system comes to us from Weber, via Parsons, and embraces structural, cultural, and behavioral variables. Reference is to the bureaucratic society, manifesting the following general characteristics: First, there is a high degree of functional specialization and differentiation ... Second, associated with this structural condition are cultural norms that emphasize rationality over superstition ..., achievement over ascription ..., and impersonal universality ... Usually associated with these attributes are such cultural phenomena as loyalty to the regime, widely shared social values, a sense of collective identity and mutual trust, belief in the democratic process, a conviction of the importance of mass participation in the
political process ..., and often, an acceptance of broad political mobilization ...

It is not surprising to find this devotee of Weber and Parsons (along with co-authors Stuart A. Bremer and John Stuckey) doing excellent work in testing “preliminary models” about the impact of different balance of power systems on the probability of war (Singer, 1979:265-97). Macrosocial research of this scope has much to recommend it: It is historical, it is empirically oriented, and it uses a sophisticated theoretical model. Apropos of the theoretical model, the authors say that

Our concern here is to ascertain the extent to which the war-proneness of the major powers, from 1820 through 1965, can be attributed to certain structural properties of the subsystem which they constitute. The first of these properties is the distribution of national capabilities within it at given points in time, and the second is the direction and rate of change in that distribution between any two of those points in time. ... To recapitulate the theoretical argument, we have synthesized from the literature two distinct and incompatible models of the way in which the distribution and redistribution of capabilities affects the incidence of major power war. One ... predicts that there will be less war when there is: (a) approximate parity among the major nations; (b) change toward parity rather than away from it; and (c) a relatively fluid power hierarchy. The other ... predicts that there will be less war when there is: (a) a preponderance of power concentrated in the hands of a very few nations; (b) change, if any, toward greater concentration; and (c) a relatively stable rank order among, and intervals between, the major powers.

These conflicting perspectives permit a sort of experimentum crucis, and it turns out that one of the models is more appropriate for the nineteenth century and the other for the twentieth (Singer, 1979:294). The rationale for the “preponderance and stability” model, in part, is that a close but unstable balance of power among nations creates perceptual ambiguities and uncertainties, and that these are a source of danger. The difficulties arising from uncertainty and misjudgment (Fischer, 1983) led Fenelon to the conclusion that war is least likely in a bi-polar balance in which the two major contenders have a rough equality of power (Morgenthau, 1954:339-40,526); contemporaries can only hope that Fenelon was correct. Ambiguity, of course, can be used as a strategy in itself (Schelling,

If this is the sort of research encouraged by Weber and Parsons, then let us make the most of it! International balance-of-power systems are vast macrosocial phenomena, and yet it becomes clear that we cannot fully understand the nature and functioning of these systems without invoking the microsociologies of human interaction, perception, and intention. Balance-of-power theories strike me as macrostructural theories of the first order; nevertheless, they do contain a large element of human agency. And if this is true of the most abstract macrostructural theories, then surely it must be true of the biological, psychological, and microinteractionist theories of international conflict.

Another main tradition of war theorizing is the socio-psychological. In recent works Collins (1985:141-74; 1986:9-10,23) places a strong emphasis on the capacity of ritual to replicate social institutions. The most widely known replicative theory of warfare is that contained in the famous admonition that “the cause of war is war itself.” The replicative perspective, as Collins recognizes, is ripe with possibilities for microsociological investigation into, say, the socialization of children or the training of troops. Replicative theories of institutionalized conflict have been the major contribution of anthropology to war studies (Bramson and Goethals, 1964:Part II), and one is always impressed on finding in the Human Relations Area Files evidence of a strong correlation between, say, general pugnacity and the severity of socialization practices. The classic studies of national character, such as those of Brickner (1943), Gorer (1943, 1948, 1950, 1955), and Madariaga (1969) belong to the replicative genre as do the incisive socio-psychological studies of Harold D. Lasswell (1935). The major problem with replicative theories, however, is that they have not arrived at the point, as has the field of genetics, where the most important mechanisms have been identified; as Coleman (1986:1309) would say, there is little “... movement from the level of individual actions to macrosocial functioning ...” Collins’ recent emphasis on Durkheimian ritual is a valuable lead, however, if it does not tempt us to overlook the structuralist emphasis of the “early Durkheim.” The more I read about the impact of nuclear weapons on strategic doctrine, the more I become convinced that these weapons may be the Leviathan, the supranational force, that structuralists have invoked for many centuries as a solution to the problem of war. After all, from the standpoint of a given politico-military elite, nuclear weapons surely fulfill Durkheim’s definition of a “social fact”: they have anteriority, they have exteriority, and they exercise immense constraint.
D. The Clausewitzian view of diplomacy

Along with biological, replicative, and macrostructural theories of war causation, another important set of theories takes a functionalist point of view, explaining war with reference to its objectives—more broadly, its consequences whether anticipated or not. It is an essential feature of functional analysis that it explains social structures with reference to their consequences and with reference to feedback from those consequences (Faia, 1986). Consider the venerable notion that “... opposition is an essential element in the existence of any social entity ...” and that “the more the oppositions within the state become concentrated into oppositions between great classes, parties, or regions, the more necessary it is to intensify opposition to an external scapegoat if the identity of the state is to be preserved” (Wright, 1964:239,241). Clearly, this is a reciprocal-causation hypothesis: It claims that high internal tension produces high external tension and that the latter, in time, reduces internal tension. For a discussion of many such hypotheses, see Faia (1986).

Collins (1986) explores the functions of warfare in some detail, arguing that the major tactical objective of battle is the destruction of enemy organization. Again we note an instance in which academic social scientists encounter serious conceptual obstacles while soldier-scholars merely provide a series of quick provisional definitions. While functional analysis, for instance, has made an unrewarding search for the “requisites” of social organization, soldier-scholars have assumed over the centuries that one wins wars through genocide, high kill ratios, dispersal of the enemy, tactics of divide and conquer, annexation of enemy territory, and “pacification” of enemy sources of support. These tactics happen to correspond precisely to the conditions identified by Aberle et al. (1950) as conditions that terminate social organization.

1) Destructive objectives of war: killing and maiming through targeted disaster. Although Clausewitz was aware of the severe limitations of means and ends placed upon wars throughout history (cf. Morgenthau, 1954:341-43), he appears in many passages to be obdurate in his insistence that the ultimate objective of battle is death (1976:90,259,596):

The fighting forces must be destroyed: that is, they must be put in such a condition that they can no longer carry on the fight. Whenever we use the phrase “destruction of the enemy's forces” this alone is what we mean. ...
Battle is the bloodiest solution. While it should not simply be considered as mutual murder—its effect ... is rather a killing of the enemy's spirit than of his men—it is always true that the character of battle, like its name, is slaughter, and its price is blood. As a human being the commander will recoil from it. ... Basing our comments on general experience, the acts we consider most important for the defeat of the enemy are the ... destruction of his army, if it is at all significant ..., seizure of his capital ..., delivery of an effective blow against his principal ally ...

The basic thrust of these remarks is only slightly softened by the reference to capitals, or by the claim that “... while a battle is the principal means, it is not the only one. The capture of a fortress or a strip of territory also amounts to a destruction of enemy forces” (1976:529).

By contrast, Collins seems unduly sanguine about the prospect of finding what would amount to a moral equivalent of war, an aspiration that has eluded scholars such as William James as well as Presidents such as Jimmy Carter. When Collins speaks of military confrontation as a means of destroying organization, he expresses a moderate optimism; when he speaks of future wars and the likelihood that they will be fought entirely by robots, he expresses an incredible optimism. Once again we have a President, Ronald Reagan, who claims to be seeking the moral equivalent of war—the Strategic Defense Initiative. Although I agree with those critics of SDI who believe that it would be too expensive, would probably not work, would be perceived as a counterforce strategy and would therefore drive the Soviet Union toward determined efforts to overcome it, it clearly envisions a form of war in which neither death nor destruction of social organization is the final arbiter. The outcome of war, in fact, will turn on the ability of each contending nation to mount a sort of outer-space potlatch involving the destruction of large amounts of military hardware; President Reagan and his men believe that no nation will ever have the capacity to surpass an all-out Pentagon potlatch. The extraordinary character of SDI as a moral equivalent of war is reflected further in the fact that the administration has argued that, if the program proves feasible, future U.S. administrations should offer to help the Soviets prepare effective outer-space potlatches of their own. Such a re-orientation toward the Soviet Union would require radical changes in “psychostrategic” thinking comparable to those discussed by Singer (1979:46) in a slightly different context:

Let us suppose ... that a radical change in the concept of disarmament were
introduced. In place of the traditional reliance upon the scrapping of weapons or their conversion to peaceful purposes, let us assume that certain specified national weapons were instead transferred—slowly, cautiously, but regularly and in accordance with a prearranged schedule—to previously designated United Nations depots, where trained members of an international gendarmerie were prepared to receive, account for, maintain, and man such weapons. Further, let us assume that this gendarmerie had been assigned certain clearly defined and limited legal and political responsibilities for their operation and deployment. Might such a procedure not ultimately remove the greatest psychostrategic barrier to the policy makers' willingness to engage in any long-range and total arms reduction program?

If disaster specialists were able to show the way toward such psychic revolutions they would tend, like dentists, to put themselves out of business. I suspect that the disaster specialist's equivalent of fluoridated water will turn out to be neither the supranational Leviathan advocated by Singer nor the potlatch strategy implied by SDI and coincidentally by Collins. Rather, inhibitions against Clausewitzian slaughter will arise from the type of anomaly encountered by the Reagan administration within the last few weeks, during which the administration has been mounting military attacks against a nation in which five American oil companies are actively doing business. The inhibitions, again, are likely to involve hostage exchanges.

(2) Destructive objectives of war: disorganization through targeted disaster. If we assume that for the foreseeable future military disaster will continue to be targeted against persons and organizations, we must ask whether it would be possible to introduce a "flexible response" posture that would make organizations more vulnerable than individuals. A perspective that views war as a struggle among organizations would meet Giddens' (1984:232) demand that theories of social evolution show how "... the mechanism of change is linked to the displacement of certain types or aspects of social organization by others." Immediately we realize that while Collins is correct in the claim that it is social organization that makes warfare possible among humans, so too it is social organization that protects individual human beings from early mortality, from the Hobbesian state of nature that Collins (1986:8), incidentally, regards as a mere hypothetical possibility. As McKeown and Record (1962) have shown, medical science had almost nothing to do with the rapid decline of mortality in England and
Wales during the nineteenth century. The major factors were organizational: general environmental sanitation, technological innovations such as washable cotton underwear and improved transportation, rising levels of living, and generally less exposure to war.

In other words, military attacks upon social organization may be primarily a means of increasing human mortality, in the classic Clausewitzian mode. On the other hand, we must remember Clausewitz' famous dictum that "warfare is merely the continuation of diplomacy by other means," because this dictum reminds us that killing may be a means to assorted political objectives and that these objectives pertain largely to forms of social organization. Attacks on persons and attacks on organizations—for instance, the strategic hamlet program in Vietnam (Sheehan, 1971:112)—have a reciprocal relationship in the Clauswitzian scheme.

The important lesson for microinteractionists—the central lesson of the Clausewitzian theory of war—is that military confrontations must always be looked upon as "critical situations" in Giddens' (1984:60-64) meaning, situations in which face-to-face interactions of political elites and their diplomatic representatives are of paramount importance. Military confrontations create scores of critical situations each year, and model studies such as Allison's (1971) on the Cuban missile crisis or President Carter's on the Camp David negotiations between Menachem Begin and Anwar Sadat (Carter, 1982:319-403), are waiting to be carried out. We do justice both to Collins and Clausewitz by recognizing that diplomacy is typically a form of microinteraction that decides the outcome of a disaster-production contest either before or after the fact. Kecskemeti (1958:232-33) may be correct in the claim that the Allied demand for Japan's unconditional surrender in World War II "... exercised no major influence upon the stubbornness of enemy resistance and the duration of the war." He also claims, however (1958:163-64), that if the Japanese monarchy had been destroyed, as a few members of Congress demanded, there would have been no elitist circles in Japan with whom to negotiate an orderly surrender. The microinteraction between General MacArthur and Emperor Hirohito was crucial in this regard.