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Q2

(a) Carl von Clausewitz once said, "War is a diplomacy by other means." Critically analyse the above statement in the present context of contemporary geo-political conflict. (b) Keeping the national security in mind, examine the ethical dilemmas related to controversies over environmental clearance of development projects in ecologically sensitive border areas in the country.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2025 · GS IV · 10 marks · Ethics in Public Administration

Public / Civil service values and Ethics in Public administration: Status and problems; ethical concerns and dilemmas in government and private institutions; laws, rules, regulations and conscience as sources of ethical guidance; accountability and ethical governance; strengthening of ethical and moral values in governance; ethical issues in international relations and funding; corporate governance.

Core demand of the question

- (a) Read **Clausewitz**; test war as politics in today's conflicts; add ethics of jus ad bellum and civilian harm
- (b) Border-area clearance: development, ecology, security, consent - name the dilemmas without a cartoon

Revision summary

Clausewitz is right that wars have political aims; he is incomplete because civilians, nuclear weapons and non-state actors change the moral math.

Just-war rules and **Gandhi**'s stress on means still bind a democracy.

Border projects pit delay-as-threat against forest, landslide and tribal consent.

The ethical path is necessity with least harm, not a fake choice between soldier and tree.

Integrity is a file that records both the threat and the ecology.

Introduction

Clausewitz wrote that **war is the continuation of policy by other means**. He was describing **Europe's cabinets**. Part (a) asks whether that line still explains **today's wars**, and whether it **should**. Part (b) brings the same tension home: a road or a radar in an **ecological border**, where **security, forest and people** do not vote as one.

Body**(a) Clausewitz in contemporary conflict**

- **The insight still holds in one sense: Hamas and Israel, Russia and Ukraine, the Red Sea** are not earthquakes. They are **political projects** that chose force. Diplomacy did not vanish; it **failed or was refused**, and the gun became the memo.

The critique is ethical and empirical. **Nuclear weapons** make a "continuation" that can end the continuer. **Non-state actors** do not sit in **Clausewitz**'s cabinet. **Information war** harms

civilians without a front. **Just war** tradition - jus ad bellum (just cause, last resort, right authority) and **jus in bello** (distinction, proportionality) - says that even a political aim does **not** wash **every means**. **Gandhi** rejected the means-ends split: "They say 'means are after all means'. I would say 'means are after all everything'." A civil servant of a nuclear democracy should hear both: war can be policy, and policy can be a crime if it targets a hospital.

So the statement is **analytically useful** and **morally incomplete**. Diplomacy remains the first means; war is the last, and even then **law of armed conflict** binds.

(b) Environmental clearance in sensitive borders

A **highway in Arunachal**, a **radar in a sanctuary**, a **hydel dam in a seismic Himalaya**: the Ministry of Defence will say **delay is a Chinese gift**. The forest officer will say **a landslide is also a security failure**. Tribes will say **consent under FRA** is not anti-national.

- **Dilemmas: secrecy versus EIA public hearing; strategic time versus ecological time; national security versus local livelihood; temporary camp versus permanent town.** Ethics of **prudence** (**Aristotle**) asks for the **least harmful adequate project: tunnel over a scarified slope, night-time restriction, no-go core, compensatory** that is real. **National security is a public good**; so is a **standing forest that holds a border river**. The officer's integrity is to **write both in the file**, not to bury the bird survey or to leak the map.

The ethical frame is **stewardship plus honest necessity**, not "green versus jawan" as a television fight.

Flow diagram

Clausewitz: war as policy -> Just war limits
 Border project -> Security
 Border project -> Ecology FRA
 Security -> Reasoned clearance
 Ecology FRA -> Reasoned clearance

Conclusion

War still continues politics, but ethics and nuclear risk refuse a blank cheque to force. In border clearances the same mind must hold security, ecology and consent in one reasoned file.

Facts & figures

Clausewitz

Prussian theorist of On War; the famous line treats war as an instrument of policy, not as a separate world of pure violence.

Jus in bello

The law and ethics of how force is used: distinguish civilians, keep harm proportionate, avoid forbidden weapons.

FRA consent

Forest Rights Act processes that require gram sabha involvement before forest land is diverted, including in many border districts.

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