WHY NATIONS FIGHT

Past and Future Motives for War

RICHARD NED LEBOW

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1

Introduction

War is a poor chisel to carve out tomorrow.

Martin Luther King[1]

Organized violence has been the scourge of humankind at least as far back as the Neolithic era.[2] The twentieth century suffered through two enormously destructive world wars, each of which gave rise to major postwar projects aimed at preventing its reoccurrence. The victors of World War II were largely successful in making Europe a zone of peace, but not in staving off the fifty plus interstate wars fought in other parts of the world during the last six decades. These "small" wars wasted lives and resources that might have been more profitably directed to education, welfare and development. Anglo-American intervention in Iraq is estimated to have caused anywhere from 600,000 to one million lives and will cost the US upwards of US$3 trillion if veteran benefits and health are included.[3]

There is a consensus among scholars that interstate war – in contrast to intrastate violence – is on the decline. Figure 1.1 shows the number of ongoing interstate, colonial and civil wars across the decades since 1945. Wars of colonial independence end in the 1980s and civil wars show a sharp drop after the end of the Cold War. However, several nasty civil conflicts, including the rounds of violence associated with the breakup of Yugoslavia, were sparked by the end of the Cold War, the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the collapse of other communist regimes. Interstate wars, relatively few in number, show a slight decline.

If we take a longer historical perspective, the frequency of war has been dropping throughout the modem era.[4] The decades since 1945 have been

[1] Black, *Quotations in Black*, p. 260. [2] Keeley, *War Before Civilization*.
[3] Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iraq_casualties/ for a review of diverse attempts to assess casualties. Stiglitz and Bilmes, *Three Trillion Dollar War*.
[4] Wright, *A Study of War*, vol. 1, pp. 121, 237, 242, 248, 638; Levy, *War in the Modern Great Power System*, p. 139; Holsti, *Peace and War*; Hamilton, "The European Wars: 1815–1914."

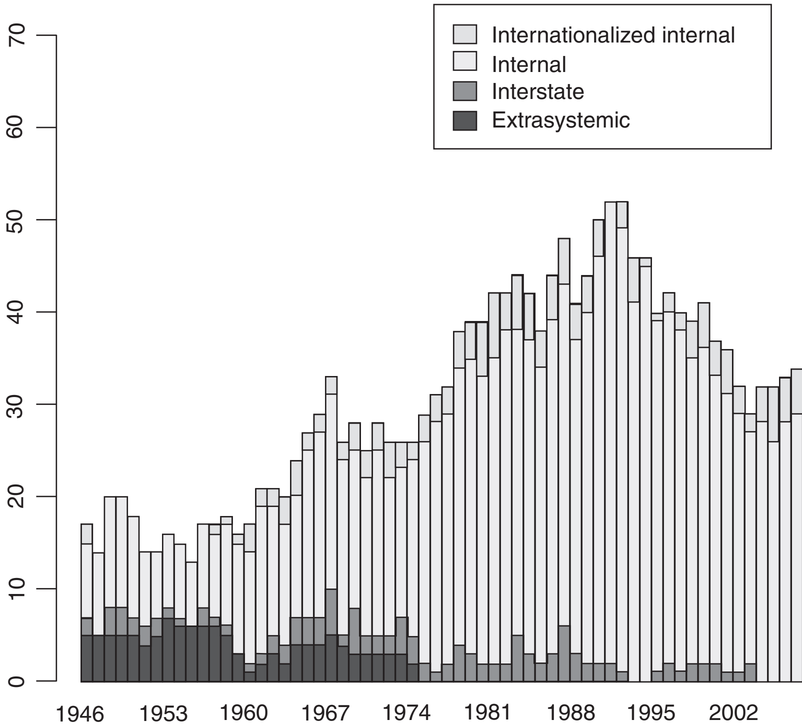

Figure 1.1 Wars by year, 1946–2007. The data are for wars that resulted in at least 1,000 deaths, military and civilian, in every year in which they are counted. I am indebted to Kristian Skrede Gleditsch for the table

the most peaceful in recorded history in terms of the number of interstate wars and the per capita casualties they have produced.[5] This encouraging finding needs to be evaluated against the pessimistic truth that the major wars of the twentieth century were often far more costly than their predecessors. World Wars I and II were the costliest wars in history, resulting in at least 10.4 and 50 million dead respectively.[6] The economic blockade of Germany and its allies in World War I seriously weakened

[5] Holsti, "The Decline of Interstate War."
[6] Tucker, *Encyclopedia of World War I*, pp. 272–273; Tucker and Roberts, *Encyclopedia of World War II*, pp. 300–301.

the resistance of civilian populations to the influenza pandemic that came hard on its heel, which is estimated to have killed another 1.1 million Europeans.[7] The Indochina War (1964–1978) killed perhaps 1.2 million Vietnamese, and 58,000 Americans lost their lives.[8] The Iran–Iraq War (1980–1988) produced upwards of 1.1 million casualties.[9] We judge the lethality of pathogens not on how frequently they infect populations but on the percentage of people they kill. By this measure, war became more lethal in the twentieth century even if it broke out less often. If we include intrastate war, domestic purges, and political and ethnic cleansing, the incidence and lethality of political violence increases considerably. Robert McNamara estimates that 160 million people died violent deaths in the twentieth century.[10] Our reassuring empirical finding is not so reassuring after all.

Against this pessimism, we can muster a powerful counterfactual: the number of people who would have died in a superpower nuclear war. In the 1950s, when the Cold War was at its height, US nuclear weapons were targeted on Soviet and Chinese cities. The first Single Integrated Operational Plan (SIOP), prepared by the Strategic Air Command, was expected to inflict 360–525 million casualties on the Soviet bloc in the first week of war.[11] With the increased accuracy of delivery systems, the superpowers could use less powerful warheads to destroy targets and shifted their emphasis from population to military assets and economic infrastructure. Not that this made much difference in practice. In the late 1970s, the US target deck included the 200 largest Soviet cities and 80 percent of Soviet cities with populations above 25,000 by virtue of their co-location with military and industrial targets. An all-out counterforce attack was expected to kill between 50 and 100 million Soviets, a figure that does not include casualties from attacks on Eastern Europe.[12] The number of nuclear weapons in superpower arsenals peaked at about 70,000 in the mid-1980s; a full-scale nuclear exchange would have been

7 Phillips and Killingray, *Spanish Influenza Pandemic of 1918–19*, p. 7.

8 Cook and Walker, *Facts on File World Political Almanac*, p. 325; McNamara, *Argument Without End*, p. 1, maintains 3.8 million Vietnamese died.

9 Cook and Walker, *Facts on File World Political Almanac*, p. 325; Chubin and Tripp, *Iran and Iraq at War*, p. 1, estimate 1.5 million.

10 McNamara, *Fog of War*, p. 233.

11 Brown, *DROPSHOT*, on the early 1950s and Richelson, "Population Targeting and US Strategic Doctrine," on the SIOP.

12 United States Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, *The Effects of Nuclear War*; United States Congress, Office of Technology Assessment, *The Effects of Nuclear War*; Richelson, "Population Targeting and US Strategic Doctrine."

more devastating still.[13] Some scientists, notably Carl Sagan, worried that such a war might threaten all human life by bringing about a nuclear winter.[14] Viewed in this light, war-avoidance in the late twentieth century seems an impressive achievement indeed.

War may be on the decline but destructive wars still occur. When I began this book, Israel was conducting military operations in Gaza, and India and Pakistan were reinforcing their border in the aftermath of a deadly terrorist attack in Mumbai. Three of the four protagonists in these conflicts possess nuclear weapons, making any war which they might fight that much more of an horrendous prospect. The study of interstate war accordingly remains important for humanitarian and intellectual reasons. The more we know about the causes of war the better able we are to design strategies and institutions to reduce its likelihood.

International-relations scholars have advanced a number of different but generally reinforcing reasons for the decline of war in the short and long term. These include economic development, the increasing destructiveness of war, the spread of democracy, growing trade and interdependence among developed economies, international institutions and norms and widespread disgust with war as a practice.[15] These explanations appeal ultimately to either ideas or material conditions and the constraints and opportunities they create for actors. In practice, all explanations rely on both, although this is rarely recognized and their interaction remains unexplored. To further muddy the waters, most explanations for war's decline appear to be reinforcing, making them difficult to disaggregate and raising the possibility that some are expressions of others or manifestations of underlying common causes.

Let me illustrate this causal complexity with the most widely offered explanation for war's decline: public revulsion. The strongest claim for the relationship between public attitudes toward war and its practice is made by John Mueller.[16] He compares war to slavery and dueling, noting that both practices disappeared when public opinion turned decisively against them. War, he contends, is now obsolescent. This comforting thesis is appealing but unpersuasive. People have always opposed war and anti-war literature has a long history. The bible enjoins readers to

[13] Natural Resources Defense Council, Archive of Nuclear Data, www.nrdc.org/nuclear/nudb/datainx.asp.
[14] Sagan and Turco, *Where No Man Thought*.
[15] Mueller, *Remnants of War*, pp. 162–171; Väyrynen, "Introduction," for overviews.
[16] Mueller, *Retreat from Doomsday*.

beat their swords into plowshares, and, in Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*, Athenian and Spartan women agree to withhold their sexual favors unless their men make peace. Erasmus exposed war as a folly in his *Praise of Folly*, as did Voltaire in *Candide*. Quakers, formed in England in 1652, in the aftermath of the English civil war, revered human life because it was the vehicle for god's voice. They were among the first religious groups to work for peace. Anti-war sentiment and writings became more widespread and popular in the latter part of the nineteenth century and more so still after each world war. Distaste for war was high in 1914, and authorities in many countries suspected that any great-power war would be long, costly and destructive to winner and loser alike.[17] European public opinion was even more anti-war in 1939, even in Germany, the principal perpetrator of World War II.[18] Anti-war sentiment was sufficiently pronounced that it became necessary for the most aggressive leaders – Hitler and Mussolini included – to affirm peaceful intentions. Japan in turn justified its invasion of China as intended to establish peace or restore order.[19] As this book goes to press, the US, another country whose public is anti-war in the abstract, has been militarily engaged in Afghanistan for almost a decade and Iraq for seven years.

Mueller is not wrong in insisting that Western publics have become increasingly disenchanted with war, but his analogy to slavery and dueling is misleading. Once public opinion turned against these practices, their days were numbered despite fierce rearguard efforts by their defenders. When outlawed, they largely disappeared and have not returned, although pockets of slavery are reported to remain, not only in remote regions of the world but in some of its most prosperous cities.[20] War is different. American opinion has consistently been strongly anti-war, yet the majority supported intervention in Korea, Vietnam, Afghanistan and Iraq. Many proponents of these interventions described themselves as strongly anti-war but considered war necessary on the ground of national security. At their outset, the "rally round the flag" effect – a phenomenon first described by

[17] On the German side, see Mombauer, *Helmuth von Moltke*, pp. 210–213, citing relevant correspondence between Moltke and Falkenhayn.
[18] Kershaw, *The "Hitler Myth,"* pp. 139–147; Frei, "People's Community and War."
[19] Luard, *War in International Society*, pp. 330–331, 366–367.
[20] Sage and Kasten, *Enslaved*; Bales, *Disposable People* and *Understanding Global Slavery Today*.

John Mueller – consistently trumped anti-war sentiment for a majority of the American population.[21] The inescapable conclusion is that public revulsion with war has not prevented it in the past or the present. In democratic countries, leaders have routinely been able to mobilize support for military budgets and war by arousing the powerful emotions of fear and honor.

Take the case of the Iraq War. A February 2001 poll conducted by Gallup showed that 52 percent of the American people favored an invasion of Iraq and 42 percent were opposed. By January 2003, a poll sponsored by the *New York Times* and CBS revealed that this support had dropped to 31 percent, largely due to the opposition expressed by France and Germany. Following Secretary of State Colin Powell's speech at the United Nations on February 5, in which he claimed to have incontrovertible evidence that Saddam would soon possess weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), CNN and NBC polls showed a 6 percent increase in support; 37 percent of Americans now favored an invasion. More significantly, those opposed to war dropped from 66 percent the month before to 27 percent. In March 2003, just days before the invasion, a poll by *USA Today*, CNN and Gallup revealed that 60 percent were now prepared to support a war if the administration secured authorization from the UN Security Council. This number dropped to 54 percent if the Security Council refused to vote support, and to 47 percent if the administration refused to ask the UN for support. In April 2003, a month after the invasion, 72 percent supported the war. According to Gallup, public support for the war rose to an impressive 79 percent. The increase in support in the months before the invasion reflects the all-out public-relations campaign by the administration to link Saddam to the attacks of 9/11 and to convince people that he had, or was on the verge of possessing, WMDs.[22] There was no real debate as Congress and the media were loath to voice dissenting opinions given the strength of public support for the President and the willingness of the Vice-President to excoriate reporters and newspapers who questioned his policies.[23]

When no WMDs were discovered and occupying forces faced an insurgency, public opinion polls revealed a steady decline in support

[21] Mueller, *War, Presidents, and Public Opinion* and Mueller, *Public Opinion and the Gulf War*; Oneal and Bryan, "Rally 'Round the Flag Effect in US Foreign Policy Crises."
[22] Lebow, *Cultural Theory of International Relations*, pp. 461–462, 469–472.
[23] Mermin, *Debating War and Peace*; Schechter, "Selling the Iraq War."

for intervention in Iraq.[24] By August 2004, a *Washington Times* poll found that 67 percent of the public felt betrayed, believing that the war had been based on false assumptions.[25] By September 2006, a *New York Times* poll found that 51 percent of Americans believed that the US never should have entered Iraq, while 44 percent felt the administration had done the right thing.[26] In May 2007, according to a CNN poll, only 34 percent of the American people still favored the war in Iraq, while 65 percent were opposed.[27]

British prime minister Margaret Thatcher benefited from the same "rally round the flag" effect in the Falklands War, and Tony Blair somewhat less so in the Anglo-American invasion of Iraq.[28] Thucydides was the first historian to describe this dynamic in his account of the Peloponnesian War. Pericles' masterful speech turned around Athenian opinion, which had previously rejected Corcyra's plea for a defensive alliance.[29] In the debate preceding the disastrous Sicilian expedition, Thucydides portrays the power of a third motive – material interest – in which the paired speeches of Alcibiades and Nicias moved the assembly to vote credits for the war.[30] Has nothing changed in two-and-a-half millennia? Realists would say no. Human nature and the anarchy of the international system, they insist, make war a recurring phenomenon. The anarchy of the international system encourages the powerful "to do what they want," as the Athenians put it to the Melians, while the weak "suffer what they must."[31] I believe this pessimism unwarranted. Nor was it shared by Thucydides, whom realists consistently misread.[32] History offers grounds for cautious optimism. Unlike Athens and Sparta and Rome and Carthage, the superpowers avoided war and ended their Cold War peacefully. This outcome defied the expectations of many realists, as does the growing zone of peace among the developed industrial states. The reasons why the Cold War ended peacefully and why war as an institution is on the decline are less clear.

[24] Polls reported at Wikipedia, "Popular Opinion in the US on the War in Iraq," http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Popular_opinion_in_the_US_on_the_invasion_of_Iraq/.

[25] www.washingtontimes.com/upi-breaking/20040820-115103-7559r.htm.

[26] Wikipedia, "Popular Opinion in the US on the War in Iraq." [27] *Ibid.*

[28] Lai and Reiter, "Rally 'Round the Union Jack?"; Lewis, "Television, Public Opinion and the War in Iraq"; Kettell, *Dirty Politics?*

[29] Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, I.32–44, for the speeches and assembly's decision.

[30] *Ibid.*, 6.9–24. [31] *Ibid.*, 5.85–113. [32] Lebow, *Tragic Vision of Politics*, ch. 3.

What is war?

Any study of war should begin by telling us what it is.[33] Superficially, this seems self-evident: when armies clash and people die. But this happens in civil wars and conflicts too. I exclude them from my study on the grounds that they generally arise in different circumstances and are characterized by different dynamics. There are, of course, important connections between inter- and intra-state war, as the same motives often guide their participants, and civil conflicts sometimes provoke interstate wars and *vice versa*.[34] International law distinguishes between civil war, waged between two parties of the same state, and interstate war, which it describes as an open and declared contest between two independent states that is waged by their governments. This definition is reasonable but not entirely suitable because it excludes conflicts where there is no official declaration of war (e.g. the Soviet–Japanese clash in Mongolia in 1939, the Korean War, American intervention in Indochina and Soviet intervention in Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Afghanistan). It also omits military confrontations between political units that have not been recognized as states by other states or their adversary (e.g. Boer War, Korean War). I consider both kinds of conflicts to be *de facto* wars.

Violence carried out by one group against another is a timeless practice. War is distinguished from violence by its political goals and the understandings participants have of its special character.[35] War was conducted on a large scale by ancient empires and over the centuries gradually made subject to certain rules. In the ancient world, rule-based warfare was most robust in classical Greece, where it was an accepted means of settling disputes over honor, standing and territory. Warring city-states would agree beforehand where to fight, agree to truces to reclaim wounded and dead combatants, and the victor – the side left in control of the battlefield – had the right to erect a trophy.[36] Aztec warfare was also highly stylized and intended to serve political and religious goals. Aztec political-military conventions interfered with their ability

[33] Vasquez, *War Puzzle*, pp. 21–28, for a good discussion of this problem.
[34] Petersen, *Understanding Ethnic Violence*, p. 52, makes an argument parallel to mine. He contends that civil violence is often a means used by groups in the hope of reordering the status hierarchy in an upward direction.
[35] Huntingford, "Animals Fight, But Do Not Make War."
[36] Van Wees, *Greek Warfare*; Lebow, *Cultural Theory of International Relations*, ch. 4.

to repel the Spanish invaders and may have been more responsible for their defeat than Spanish possession of horses and firearms.[37]

Rule-based warfare of this kind requires numerous intersubjective understandings.[38] By the nineteenth century, reinforcing feedback between understandings and rules had given rise to a highly differentiated European regional system in which states competed for standing, and those recognized as great powers assumed certain responsibilities for maintenance of the system. In the next hundred years, the system expanded to include non-Western and non-Christian political units and transformed itself into a global system. The definition of war and the rules governing it, initially European, are now effectively international. Modern war became an increasingly complex social practice. It was based on the concept of the state: a sovereign political unit with a near monopoly over the use of force on its territory. It required a system in which these political units not only functioned but understood they had an interest in maintaining. The system legitimated actors through their collective recognition by other actors – recognizing their sovereignty – and differentiated war from peace by means of legal definitions and associated practices.[39] War was linked to sovereignty because it was defined in terms of actions that encroached on sovereignty (e.g. invasion, economic blockade). Such transgressions also provided justifications for declaring war against another state. Conceived of in this way, war became a military contest fought for political goals, as Clausewitz famously recognized. Violence, he observed, is used to bend or break the will of an adversary, but its targets and modes of application are generally determined by rules or norms.[40] This conception of war is modern because before the seventeenth century we cannot really speak of states or effectively distinguish between intra- and inter-state violence. For these reasons, Hedley Bull argues that war "is organized violence carried on by political units against each other."[41] I add the proviso, common to many quantitative studies of war, that at least one of the participating political units must suffer at least 1,000 battle deaths. This is, of course, an arbitrary measure, but one that has become a convention in the discipline.[42]

[37] Hassig, *Aztec Warfare*.
[38] Winch, *Idea of a Social Science*, p. 52, on the relationship between intersubjective understandings and rules.
[39] Wright, *Study of War*, p. 698, on this point.
[40] Clausewitz, *On War*, Book 1.
[41] Bull, *Anarchical Society*, p. 184.
[42] Singer and Small, *Wages of War, 1816–1965*, pp. 37, 39, for the origins of this criterion.

The goals of warfare evolved over the centuries. We know little of prehistoric "war" but can reasonably assume that it arose from conflicts over women, watering holes, hunting grounds and territory considered valuable for religious or economic reasons. Early on, warfare became the principal means by which young men and their societies sought honor, prestige and standing. Homer's *Iliad* offers a sophisticated analysis of an aristocratic bronze age society in which war was a means of revenge and a vehicle for winning honor. For Greeks and Trojans alike, there was no distinction between king and state or private and public quarrels. With the development of the *polis*, and later, states, these categories emerged. Another important transition occurred as a result of nationalism and military conscription. The French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, Clausewitz observed, had become the concern of peoples, not just their rulers. War became correspondingly more costly as its objectives became "national" and more far-reaching.[43]

These developments led some scholars to distinguish modern warfare from everything that preceded it. Levy, Walker and Edwards assert that the "wars for personal honor, vengeance, and enrichment of kings and nobles that characterized the Middle Ages . . . were increasingly replaced by the use of force as an instrument of policy for the achievement of political objectives."[44] Such a claim unwittingly reflects the success of nineteenth-century German nationalist historians (e.g. Heeren, Ranke, Treitschke) in fostering a discourse on sovereignty intended to legitimize the power of the central government and the project of state building. Central to this discourse – and to contemporary realist and rationalist paradigms – is the depiction of foreign policy as strategically rational and intended to increase state power. While kings, nobles and empires are now history, they were responsible for foreign policy and war-making in Europe down to 1918 and more often drew their swords for reasons that bore little relationship to *Realpolitik*. Throughout the twentieth century and into the current one, honor, resentment, vengeance and sheer malice were – and remain – powerful motives in international affairs. States frequently go to war for reasons that have little, if anything, to do with security.[45]

43 Clausewitz, *On War*, Book 6.

44 Levy, Walker and Edwards, "Continuity and Change in the Evolution of Warfare"; Luard, *War and International Society*; Holsti, *Peace and War*, for variants of the claim that the goals of war have changed over the centuries.

45 Suganami, "Explaining War"; Lebow, *Cultural Theory of International Relations*, for evidence.

The causes of war

Ever since Herodotus, historians have written about war. Many studies are embedded in large narratives of the rise and fall of empires and states. Livy (Titus Livius, c. 59 BCE–CE 17) and Edward Gibbon (1737–1794) produced monumental and influential histories of Rome in which war featured prominently. Thucydides was the first to address the origins of a war as a subject in its own right, although he situates his analysis in a larger narrative of the Peloponnesian War. To my knowledge, the first studies devoted exclusively to the generic origins of war were written in the aftermath of World War I. The causes of that conflict were particularly contentious and politically significant as all parties insisted they were fighting a defensive war. The Treaty of Versailles justified German reparations on the basis of that country's responsibility for the war, giving rise to an emotional German response, the publication by all the major powers of archival documents to support their claims of innocence and a burgeoning literature on the underlying and immediate causes of World War I.[46]

Since Thucydides, the origins of war have been framed in terms of their underlying and immediate causes. They are generally associated with necessary and enabling conditions. International relations has focused almost exclusively on underlying causes and has sought to develop general accounts of war. Some researchers contend that the causes they identity are sufficient in and of themselves to account for war. Others claim only to have discovered conditions or dynamics that make war likely but not inevitable. Studies of both kinds are invariably based on great-power wars and a handful of these at best. Theories of balance of power, power transition, alliances, economic imperialism, militarism, offensive dominance, military rigidity, inadvertent war and misperception rely overwhelmingly on World War I for their evidence. Generalizations based on single cases must remain propositions. Statistical studies of war rely on large data sets. They encounter equally insuperable problems, among them the difficulty, if not the impossibility, of meeting the two conditions critical to data sets: comparability and independence of cases. They cannot cope well, or at all, with causal complexity caused by multiple pathways to war, non-linear confluence and the possible independent role of the precipitants of war.[47]

[46] Herwig, "Clio Deceived"; Lebow, *Cultural Theory of International Relations*, pp. 376–381.

[47] Levy, "Causes of War"; Vasquez, *War Puzzle*, pp. 9, 48–50; Lebow, *Forbidden Fruit*, chs. 1, 3, 9.

I have no solution to these problems and for this and other reasons advance no propositions about when war is more likely to occur. I approach the problem of war differently. I interrogate the motives of initiators to determine why they resorted to force. I am less interested in their immediate goals (e.g. removing a military threat, conquest of territory, trade concessions) than I am in the reasons why they sought these goals. Kal Holsti, John Vasquez and Paul Senese all make the case for territorial disputes as key causes of war and control of territory as a key objective of their participants.[48] This finding, while interesting in its own right, tells us nothing about why territory was so contested. States can seek territory for reasons of security, economic interests or standing. Their motives for territorial expansion can change over the centuries, as Vasquez acknowledges. Territory, moreover, is only one of the ways in which these generic motives find expression. I am interested in motives at this deeper level, and following my argument in *A Cultural Theory of International Relations*, I contend that most, if not all, foreign-policy behavior can be reduced to three fundamental motives: fear, interest and honor. I believe that we can learn something important about the causes of war by understanding the underlying reasons why leaders go to war. This assumes, as I do, that most wars are set in motion by conscious decisions by leaders to use force, or at least to pursue initiatives they recognize have the potential to escalate into war.

To understand the causes of war we need to start with motives and the foreign-policy goals to which they lead. War offers a window into the minds of leaders and policymaking elites as decisions for war tend to be better documented than many other kinds of foreign policies. Analysis of the motives behind wars can provide important insights into general goals of foreign policy and how they have changed over the centuries. It can tell us how war was and is seen to advance or retard these goals and why this is so. Tracking the evolution of motives and their links to war might also allow us to make some educated guesses about the future likelihood of war. Such an approach finesses many of the problems associated with qualitative or quantitative efforts to find causes of war.

My analysis draws on a data set that I have assembled but, as I explain in Chapter 4, I do not use it to search for correlations. My data set is best understood as a poll of history based on indirect observation. It describes the motives associated with wars, not when wars arise. I assume these

[48] Holsti, *Peace and War*, pp. 46–63; Vasquez, *War Puzzle*; Senese and Vasquez, *Steps to War*. See Hensel, "Territory," for a literature review.

motives are equally in play when no war occurs, so they tell us nothing about the immediate causes of war. They do allow us to infer something about the frequency of war, the central question of this book. My approach takes a macro versus a micro perspective. I seek to understand the frequency and character of war across the centuries, not the reasons why individual wars arise. I posit a relationship between motive and risk-taking at variance with realist, power transition and rationalist theories of war. I do not attempt to establish this relationship through correlations but via case studies. Qualitative analysis of wars and their contexts are also the basis for my claim that general wars involving the great powers arise largely from miscalculated escalation. In contrast to the conventional wisdom, I argue that such wars are rarely intentional.

Consistency with evidence is a necessary but insufficient ground for provisional confidence in a theory or, in this instance, a set of related propositions. As a general rule, theories and propositions must be compared to other theories and propositions to determine how well, relatively speaking, they account for the observable variance. As I do not make causal claims of this kind, I do not engage in this kind of testing. I do not engage individual theories so much as I do competing paradigms. They are rooted in different motives and I attempt to determine the extent to which these motives are implicated in historical cases of war-initiation. I subject my propositions to the same test and find strong support for the spirit as the principal motive for war in the European system down to the present day.

My dissatisfaction with the existing literature on war, and with international-relations theory more generally, provided the incentive to write *A Cultural Theory of International Relations*. It develops a theory of international relations based on a parsimonious model of human motivation. Following Plato and Aristotle, I posit spirit, appetite and reason as fundamental drives, each with distinct goals. Each also generates different logics of cooperation, conflict and risk-taking. These motives further produce characteristic forms of hierarchy based on different principles of justice. Order at the individual, state, regional and international levels is sustained by these hierarchies; it weakens or breaks down when the discrepancy between behavior and the principles of justice on which they rest becomes obvious and intolerable.[49] Order and disorder at any level have implications for order and disorder at adjacent levels.

[49] Ray, "Democracy," for a recent, thoughtful assessment.

A fourth motive – fear – enters the picture when reason is unable to constrain appetite or spirit. Fear is a powerful emotion, not an innate drive. The unrestrained pursuit of appetite or spirit by some actors deprives others of their ability to satisfy these drives, and, more fundamentally, makes them concerned for their physical security. All four worlds I describe are ideal types. Real worlds are mixed in that all four motives are usually to some degree present. Real worlds are also lumpy in that the mix of motives differs from actor to actor and among the groupings they form. Multiple motives generally mix rather than blend, giving rise to a range of behaviors that appear inconsistent, even contradictory.

Existing theories of international relations are rooted in appetite (i.e. liberalism and Marxism) or fear (i.e. realism). In modern times, the spirit (*thumos*) has largely been ignored by philosophy and social science. I contend it is omnipresent and gives rise to the universal drive for self-esteem which finds expression in the quest for honor or standing. By excelling at activities valued by our peer group or society we win the approbation of those who matter and feel better about ourselves. Institutions and states have neither psyches nor emotions. The people who run these collectivities or identify with them do. They frequently project their psychological needs onto their political units and feel better about themselves when those units win victories or perform well. In classical Greece, the *polis* was the center of political life and a citizen's status was usually a reflection of that of his *polis*. Transference and esteem by vicarious association are just as evident in the age of nationalism where the state has become the relevant unit.

In *A Cultural Theory*, I use Homer's *Iliad* as a prototype to develop a paradigm of politics and international relations based on the spirit. I document its importance in domestic politics and critical foreign-policy decisions in case studies ranging from classical Greece to both world wars and the Anglo-American invasion of Iraq. I subsequently introduce the other motives and devise a set of cultural indicators to determine their relative distribution among the actors in question. I then predict the kinds of foreign-policy behavior this mix should generate, predictions that are on the whole validated by my case studies. In this volume, I draw out the implications of my theory for warfare and use the data set I have assembled to evaluate propositions derived from this understanding. The data set classifies states in terms of their power (leading great powers, great powers, declining great powers, rising powers, weaker states), identifies initiators of war, their motives (i.e. security, material

well-being, standing, revenge and other) and outcomes (win, lose or draw). The data offer strong support for all six propositions and indicate the extent to which standing has been the principal motive for war since the modern state system came into being.

Overview of chapters

My book is divided into three parts. Part I reviews and critiques the literature on war and its causes. Chapter 2 engages explanations for war associated with the realist, power transition, Marxist and rationalist paradigms. Each paradigm has enriched our understanding of war, but each encounters serious problems. Part II offers a succinct recapitulation of my theory of international relations and derives from it six propositions concerning the kinds of states likely to initiate it and the kinds of states they are likely to attack. Chapter 3 offers the overview and propositions, and Chapter 4 describes the data set, which is reproduced in the Appendix. Part III explores the likelihood of war in the future. Chapter 5 investigates the changing relationship between fear, interest and war. Chapter 6 does the same for standing and revenge. I make the case for increasing disaggregation between these several motives and war, and as a result, predict a general decline in the frequency of war. This does not mean – especially in the next decade or two – that there will be no wars.

A theory about war must also be a theory about peace. It should tell us something about the conditions in which conflicts are resolved peacefully, or at least prevented from escalating into war. Paul Schroeder rightly observes that "it is often more difficult to detect the origins and growth of peace and even harder to explain them."[50] Peace is generally considered the opposite of war, although in Chapter 4 I argue it is more accurate to frame peace and war not as a simple binary but as anchors of opposite ends of a continuum. Theories within the liberal paradigm, most notably the Democratic Peace research program, speak to the question of peace; they do the reverse of theories of war by positing conditions in which war will *not* occur. I do not engage the controversy surrounding the Democratic Peace but in Part III offer arguments as to why war is becoming less likely across regime types.

[50] Schroeder, "Life and Death of a Long Peace."

What is novel about this book?

My approach and my findings challenge powerful components of the conventional wisdom about war and its causes. I analyze war-initiation in terms of motive and relative power of states. To my knowledge, this is the first attempt to do this. Contrary to realist expectations, I find security responsible for only nineteen of my ninety-four wars. A significant number of these wars pitted great powers against other great powers, but none of them were associated with power transitions. This does not mean that security is unimportant in international affairs; it had to be a primary concern of all states who were attacked. Material interests are also a weak motive for war, being responsible for only eight wars, and most of those in the eighteenth century. Moreover, security and material interest sometimes act in concert with one another and more often with other motives. In some wars they are secondary to these other motives. Standing, by contrast, is responsible for sixty-two wars as a primary or secondary motive. Revenge, also a manifestation of the spirit, is implicated in another eleven. There can be little doubt that the spirit is the principal cause of war across the centuries, and that it and its consequences have been almost totally ignored in the international-relations literature.

The salience of motives is a function of culture, not of any supposedly objective features of the international environment or the governance of states. The character and robustness of domestic, regional and international societies also determine the extent to which the several motives I analyze are implicated with war. Interest shows a sharp decline in this regard once mercantilism gave way to more sophisticated understandings of wealth. Security-motivated wars show no similar decline by century but come in clusters associated with bids for hegemony by great or dominant powers. I contend that the material and social conditions that channel these motives into warfare are associated with particular stages of history. The most recent clusters of security-related wars were associated with the run-up to and conduct of the two world wars of the twentieth century. They were in turn a product of the dislocations brought about by modernization in an environment where great-power competition and the drive for hegemony were conducted primarily by violent means. Now that this era has passed in Europe and is receding in much of the Pacific rim, and hegemony achieved by force is no longer considered a legitimate ambition, the security requirements and fears of great powers should be in decline.

There has been a sharp drop in wars of revenge since the eighteenth century, which I attribute to their close association with territorial conquest. All the wars of revenge in my data set represent efforts to regain territory lost in previous wars. As territorial conquest has been delegitimized and become more difficult and less rewarding for this and other reasons, it is likely that wars of revenge will become even less frequent. Against this optimistic forecast, we must recognize that wars of revenge can be triggered by other causes, as in the American invasion of Afghanistan.

As for wars of standing, they too can be expected to decline. During the postwar era, and even more so since the end of that conflict, war and standing have become increasingly disengaged in the sense that successful war-initiation no longer enhances standing. It may actually lead to loss of standing in the absence of UN approval of the military initiative in question. The Anglo-American intervention in Iraq – a war in which territorial conquest was not an issue – is a case in point. Changing values and norms encourage rational leaders to find other, peaceful ways of claiming standing. To the extent that this happens, the frequency of war involving either rising or great powers can be expected to diminish sharply.

Looking at motives for war in historical perspective, our attention should be drawn to three significant shifts in thinking. The first, noted above, concerns the nature of wealth and its consequences for interstate relations. Until Adam Smith and modern economics, the world's wealth was thought to be finite, making interstate relations resemble a zero-sum game in which an increase in wealth for one state was believed to come at the expense of others. Once political elites learned that total wealth could be augmented by the division of labor, use of mechanical sources of energy and economies of scale, international economic cooperation became feasible, and ultimately came to be seen as another means of generating wealth. Trade and investment, and the economic interdependence to which this led, did not prevent war, as many nineteenth- and early twentieth-century liberals hoped, but it did more or less put an end to wars of material aggrandizement.

The second shift in thinking began in the nineteenth century and accelerated during the twentieth. It is about the collective versus autarkic pursuit of security. Alliances, informal or formal, have always been part and practice of foreign policy, but they took on new meaning at the Congress of Vienna. The victors of the Napoleonic Wars sought to act collectively to maintain the postwar *status quo* and thereby prevent the

resurgence of revolution and interstate war. This was a short-lived and ultimately unsuccessful experiment, due in large part to the unrealistic goals of Austria, Prussia and Russia, not only of restraining France, but of holding back democratization and the unwillingness of Britain to support this project.[51] Periodic congresses later in the nineteenth century were to a large degree effective in reducing great-power and regional tensions by means of agreements and suasion. Following World War I, the League of Nations was given the more ambitious task of preventing war by means of collective security.[52] For many reasons it was an abject failure, but the principle of collective security endured, and actually strengthened its hold in English-speaking countries. The United Nations, established in 1945, made it the principal mission of the Security Council. This institution's record has been mixed, as was that of the numerous regional alliances that came into being during the Cold War. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is by far the most successful, although there is no evidence that it ever prevented a Soviet attack on Western Europe. NATO and other international groupings have played a prominent and arguably successful role in keeping the peace or helping to terminate wars in the post-Cold War era. Collective security has become the norm and an important source of regional and international stability.

The third and most recent shift in thinking concerns the nature of standing in international affairs. Since the emergence of the modern international system, great powers have always sought to maintain control over standing, the means by which it is determined and who is allowed to compete for it. Throughout this period, military power and success in using it was the principal means of gaining standing and recognition as a great power. There are many ways of achieving status within states, and the more robust regional and international orders become the more multiple hierarchies will also emerge at the international level. States will feel more confident about seeking standing in diverse ways and devoting resources toward this end that might otherwise be reserved for security. Such behavior is likely to be rewarded. A BBC World Service poll conducted in early 2007 indicates a significant increase in standing of countries associated with alternate visions of the international system. When asked what countries exerted a positive

[51] Nicholson, *Congress of Vienna*; Gulick, *Europe's Classical Balance of Power*; Kissinger, *World Restored*.

[52] Northedge, *League of Nations*; Walters, *History of the League of Nations*.

influence in the world, Canada and Japan topped the list at 54 percent, followed by France (50 percent), Britain (45 percent), China (42 percent) and India (37 percent).[53]

Positive responses at home and abroad create a positive reinforcement cycle in which praise and respect from third parties build national esteem, play well politically and strengthen the link between such policies and national identity. Such a process has been underway for some time in Germany and Canada and to a lesser extent in Japan.[54] If an international orientation remains dominant in Japan, China plays a responsible role in Asia, India and Pakistan avoid another military conflict, the Middle East remains troubled but its problems do not contaminate other regions, the European Union prospers and strengthens its economic and political links with both Russia and China, fear is likely to decline as a foreign-policy motive and those of appetite and spirit correspondingly increase. States will have stronger incentives to seek standing on the basis of criteria associated with these motives and to spend less on the maintenance of powerful military forces. Claims for standing on the basis of military power will become even less persuasive. As standing confers influence, states will have additional incentives to shift their foreign policies to bring them into line with the dominant incentive structure. In such a world, states would view even more negatively the use of force in the absence of unqualified international support or, at the very least, authorization from the UN Security Council. From the vantage point of, say, the year 2030, we might look back on the Iraq war as one of the defining moments of the international relations of the twenty-first century because of the way it delegitimized the unilateral use of force and foregrounded and encouraged alternative, peaceful means of gaining standing.

These three shifts have two common features. Each developed slowly and progressed in fits and starts. Changes in beliefs took a long time to become sufficiently widespread to affect practice, and practice was at first halting and unsuccessful. Over time, however, patterns of behavior changed and the motives in question became increasingly disaggregated from war. These shifts in thinking did occur at the same time and certainly did not have immediate practical effects. The revolution in thinking about wealth begun in the late eighteenth century did not

[53] *The Age* (Melbourne), March 6, 2007, p. 7.

[54] On the Japanese debate, Rozman, "Japan's Quest for Great Power Identity"; Hughes, "Japan's Re-emergence as a 'Normal' Military Power"; Samuels, *Securing Japan*.

fully become the conventional wisdom until the late nineteenth century, and did not act as a check on war until at least a half-century later. Collective security, a product of the early nineteenth century, took almost 150 years to show meaningful political consequences. Shifts in thinking about standing is a twentieth-century phenomenon, and only began to affect political practice during the Cold War. As norms and practices have shifted more rapidly in the last fifty years, there is reason to hope that the delegitimization of standing through military conquest will become even more robust and further encourage the rise of alternative means of claiming standing.

The three shifts in thinking are to some degree related. The economic shift was largely independent of any putative lessons of international relations. It arose in response to studies of domestic political economy but was quickly seen to have important implications for foreign policy. Trade and investment are forms of international economic cooperation and encouraged hopes that this might be extended into the political sphere. Costly wars undoubtedly provided another incentive to experiment with collective security. Shifts in standing, like collective security, are largely a response to costly wars. But they are also facilitated by economic interdependence and collective security. They create closer, more cooperative relationships with other states at the official and unofficial levels, making the use of force against them increasingly costly and inappropriate. To the extent that this cooperative grouping constitutes the group which confers standing, or is important in this regard, associated states must find non-violent and even non-confrontational means of claiming standing. Of equal importance, cooperative relationships carry with them the expectation that the circle of states included in such relationships can be expanded. The use of force in circumstances where it will retard this process, or be seen to damage or undermine the security of the existing community, will be frowned upon and will damage the reputation of war-initiators. Both dynamics are currently at work in the international system.

As the shift in conceptions of standing is still in its formative stages, this author can only hope that a book that demonstrates how traditional conceptions of standing have been responsible for war can help accelerate this change and, with it, the search for and acceptance of alternative means of claiming and receiving standing.