

# Interstate war

Francisco Villamil

War, peace, and political violence

UC3M, Fall 2023

# Introduction

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  - Invasion

Is this an inter-state war?

# FINANCIAL TIMES

FRIDAY 25 FEBRUARY 2022

INTERNATIONAL NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR

USA \$2.50 Canada C\$3.00

This reckless war could ultimately destabilise Russia itself — FT VIEW, PAGE 16

## Putin unleashes Ukraine assault

- World leaders unite to condemn Europe's biggest challenge in 80 years
- Scores of casualties reported in fierce fighting across the country
- Gas prices soar and benchmark Brent crude oil tops \$100 threshold



REUTERS/RIA Novosti

Is this an inter-state war?

## Azerbaijan and Armenia on the Brink of War After Deadly Clashes

Dozens are reportedly injured in the worst round of violence between the two countries in years.

BY DAN HAVERTY | SEPTEMBER 28, 2020, 6:14 AM



FT, September 2020.

# Is this an inter-state war?

## China holds naval exercises in Taiwan Strait

Live-fire drills send warning to Taipei over greater independence and closer US ties



Chinese warships and fighter jets take part in a military display in the South China Sea on April 12 © Reuters

Charles Clover in Beijing, Edward White in Taipei and Ben Bland in Hong Kong APRIL 18  
2018



FT, April 2018.

# Why is important to distinguish wars from ‘non-wars’?

- Because we want to know how it relates to other situations, e.g.
  - when do disputes escalate?
  - when do civil wars lead to an interstate conflict?
  - how frequent is unilateral aggression?

# Why is important to distinguish wars from ‘non-wars’?

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  - when do disputes escalate?
  - when do civil wars lead to an interstate conflict?
  - how frequent is unilateral aggression?
- This has to do with the understanding of violence or aggression as a *method* (not an end in itself) substituting for something else

## Inter-state wars

- Sustained, military clash between two or more countries  
→ ≠ unilateral aggression, ≠ disputes

# Inter-state wars

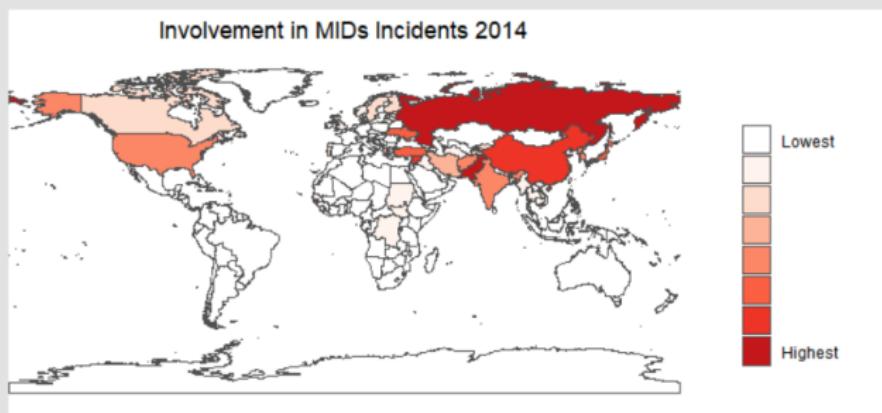
- Sustained, military clash between two or more countries
  - ≠ unilateral aggression, ≠ disputes
- How do we measure them?

We usually employ intensity thresholds

- We want to separate wars from minor clashes or skirmishes (e.g. the Himalaya battles between China and India in 2020)
- A war can also be short: the Six-Day War (Israel & Egypt) in 1967 killed +20,000



You are here: Home



## About the Correlates of War Project

Welcome to the Correlates of War (COW) project homepage. COW seeks to facilitate the collection,

### Recent News

- [New COW Co-Directors April 18, 2022](#)
- [NMC 6.0 Data Available July 22, 2021](#)
- [Dyadic MID 4.02 Data Available June 20, 2021](#)
- [Dyadic MID 4.01 Data Available February 21, 2021](#)
- [MID 5.0 Data and Materials Available November 9, 2020](#)

[More News...](#)

# Measuring interstate war

- Coding wars in the Correlates of War project  
(<https://correlatesofwar.org/>)
- “sustained combat, involving organized armed forces, resulting in a minimum of 1,000 battle-related fatalities (later specified as 1,000 battle-related fatalities within a twelve month period)”
- Differentiating interstate wars from other types of wars (extra-state, intra-state, non-state)

# Correlates of War data project

- COW War Data, 1816 – 2007
- Militarized Interstate Disputes
- National Material Capabilities
- Militarized Interstate Dispute Locations
- Others
  - Alliances, Contiguity, Territorial change, Defense Cooperation Agreement, etc

# Understanding war

- Why do wars break out?

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- (We've seen the main IR theories, but neither they only cover wars nor wars are only explained by IR)

# Understanding war



Jacques Callot's *Les Grandes Misères de la guerre* (1633)

# Understanding war

- “War is the continuation of politics by other means”



Carl von Clausewitz  
(*On war*, 1832)

# Understanding war

- “War is the continuation of politics by other means”
- Wars as a rational human phenomenon, against previous Enlightenment view of war as a deviation
  - Even in the 20th century, some still see it that way
- Part of the realist tradition: Thucydides, Machiavelli, Hobbes, etc



Carl von Clausewitz  
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( $\neq$  termination, consequences, conduct of war ...)
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  - **Balance of power works:** states pursue it internationally, (small) wars avoid larger ones, it deters aggression, etc
  - **International hegemony:** no, alliances are actually war-prone – given international anarchy, we need a Leviathan  
(be careful when hegemony switches, though)

## Liberal theories

- More popular explanations (nowadays), and also more geared to *specific cases*
- Realist explanations are perhaps more focused on explaining system-wide instability
- Liberal theories are more applicable to specific states or dyads
  - Even though they are also used to justify global systems
- Two main theories:
  - Democratic peace
  - Capitalist peace

# The democratic peace

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- Policy implications at the global and specific levels

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- Other theories point to the effects of economic prosperity
- Some say that the democratic peace is not because democracy itself, but because of economic interdependences between wealthy countries (which happen to be democracies)

# Liberalism nowadays

Forbes

## Why Putin Won't Invade Ukraine

Loren Thompson Senior Contributor ©

I write about national security, especially its business dimensions.

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Dec 6, 2021, 10:33am EST

**Inevitable sanctions.** NATO isn't likely to send troops to counter a Russian invasion of Ukraine, but its members would impose the mother of all sanction regimes on Moscow. Russia is already subject to U.S. **sanctions** for annexing Crimea, and legislation is pending in the Senate to block operations of the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline from Russia to Germany.

**Domestic opposition.** Russia has reverted to authoritarianism under Putin, but it is still far from being the totalitarian state of its Stalinist past. Putin has to worry about the domestic response to casualties in a Ukrainian war, and knowing this Kyiv (with Western assistance) would work hard to maximize Russian losses in any military campaign.

## Criticizing liberal theories

- These theories have also been challenged, for example:
  - Dyadic effects not taken into account: one side of the trading relationship could use war to increase their advantage
  - Asymmetry can lead to exploitation (Marxists & realists)
- Most empirical evidence suggests conflict-decreasing effect

# Constructivist theories



President of Russia | Events | Structure | Videos and Photos | Documents | Contacts | Search

## Article by Vladimir Putin "On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians"

July 12, 2021 17:00

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During the recent Direct Line, when I was asked about Russian-Ukrainian relations, I said that Russians and Ukrainians were one people – a single whole. These words were not driven by some short-term considerations or prompted by the current political context. It is what I have said on numerous occasions and what I firmly believe. I therefore feel it necessary to explain my position in detail and share my assessments of today's situation.

- Also remember discussion from last day on ethnic groups
  - probably more relevant in connection with other types of conflict

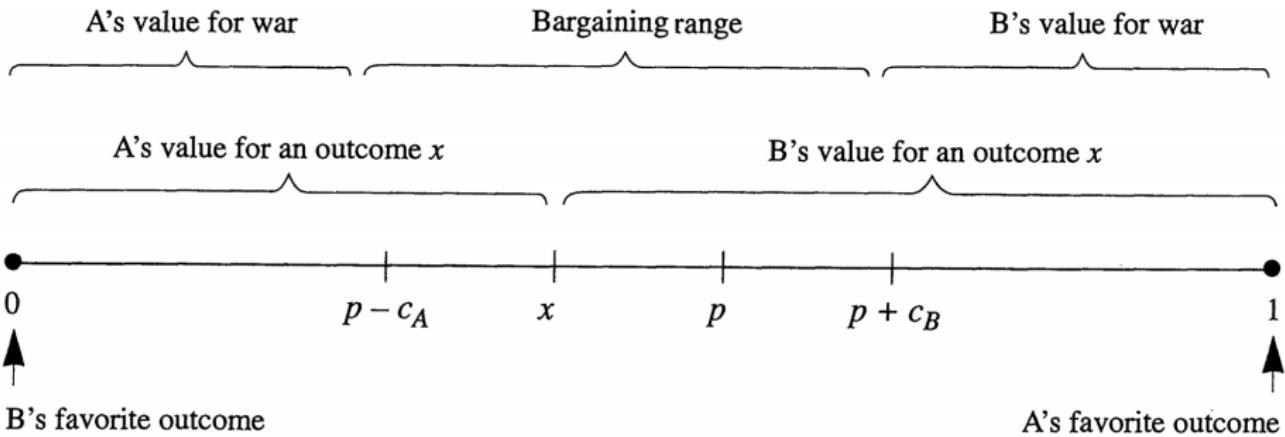
## Rationalist theories of war

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The central puzzle about war, and also the main reason we study it, is that wars are costly but nonetheless wars recur. Scholars have attempted to resolve the puzzle with three types of argument. First, one can argue that people (and state leaders in particular) are sometimes or always irrational. They are subject to biases and pathologies that lead them to neglect the costs of war or to misunderstand how their actions will produce it. Second, one can argue that the leaders who order war enjoy its benefits but do not pay the costs, which are suffered by soldiers and citizens. Third, one can argue that even rational leaders who consider the risks and costs of war may end up fighting nonetheless.



**FIGURE 1. *The bargaining range***

## Bargaining model of war

A ————— B

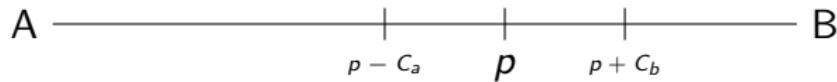
- Imagine A and B are fighting over control of a territory, and A is a bit stronger than B (and both know this)

## Bargaining model of war



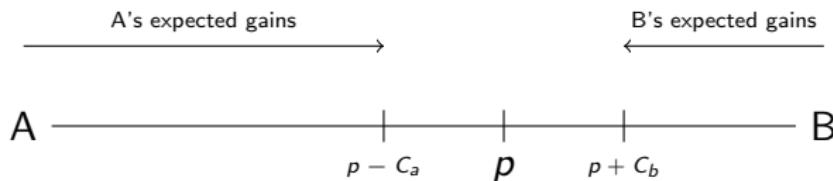
- $p$  is what they expect if they fight

## Bargaining model of war



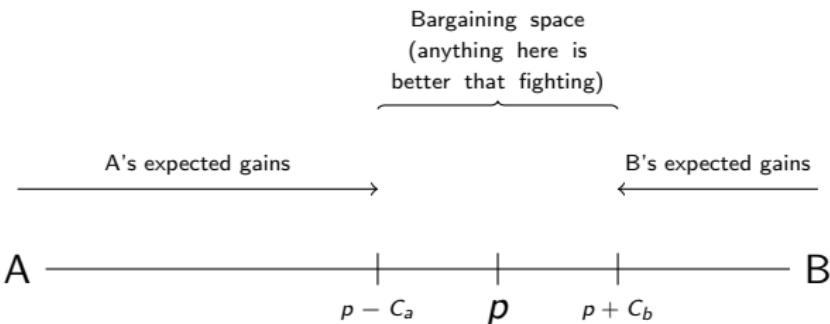
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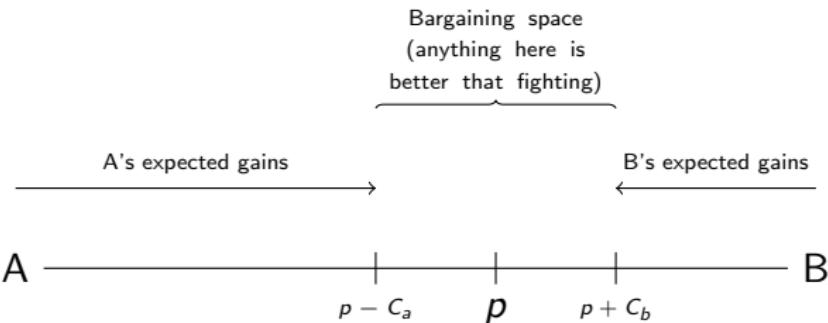
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# Bargaining model of war



- Therefore, under rational conditions, they would be better off if they negotiate before fighting

# Bargaining model of war



- This approach should be able to explain why there was never a **nuclear war**: the cost is just too high, even taking into account uncertainties

# Bargaining model of war

**War of attrition: How Russia's invasion has reached stalemate**

Area under Russian control



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  - Think about **preventive wars** or wars over bargaining issues that will affect **future balance of power**. Also, leaders could create or overcome them: sunk costs (e.g. mobilizing troops) or tying hands (e.g. domestic audiences)

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  - When any kind of deal is unsustainable because of the incentive structure (e.g. Prisoner's dilemma), as when a declining powerful state has a dispute with an emerging new power
- Indivisible issues
  - If we are fighting for a piece of land or commercial rights, maybe we can split it up, but what if we are fighting for something sacred, e.g. control of Jerusalem? (constructivism!)

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  - For instance, war could be beneficial to a leader that wants to avoid being seen capitulating
- Maybe rationality does not always apply
  - Psychological biases, bounded rationality, etc

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- Also, some people say that the historical context matter when comparing wars

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  2. Many wars are fought among contiguous states over territorial disputes (which doesn't mean that neighbors usually fight each other)
  3. Asymmetry does not usually lead to war, and wars are usually fought between strategic rivals

# Interstate war in context

	Target: State	Target: Non-State
Perpetrator: State	Interstate war	State repression Genocide Ethnic cleansing
Perpetrator: Non-State	Mass protests (rebellion) Military coup Political assassination* Civil War Terrorism (Organized crime)	Intercommunal violence*

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  - Syria 2011, 1936 coup in Spain, communal violence and civil war?
- **Substitution**
  - strategic choice between two types of civil wars
  - proxy wars during the Cold War, terrorists and civil wars, genocide and ethnic cleansing (Plan Madagascar)

# Friday seminar



LETTER FROM TAIWAN

## A DANGEROUS GAME OVER TAIWAN

*For decades, China has coveted its island neighbor. Is Xi Jinping ready to seize it?*

By Dexter Filkins

November 14, 2022

## Exam question from Dec 2022

- Tensions between China and the US have increased significantly during the last few months, related to the conflict over Taiwan. As a result, there has been some discussion lately about the risk of a potential open conflict between the US and China in the near future (*e.g.*). Yet, *beyond* a US-China war, how do you think this increase in tensions and the growing (military) power of China can affect patterns of political violence across the world? (1000 words)