

Interstate war

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War, peace, and political violence

UC3M, Fall 2024

Why did WWII break out?

DAILY HERALD September 4, 1939.

ON YOUR FEET
FOR HOURS?
Then Don't Forget That
ZAM-BUK
Kensore Pain, Soreness & Cramps

No. 7349

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 4, 1939

ONE PENNY

Daily Herald

SAUSAGES GO
BETTER WITH
H-P SAUCE

WAR DECLARED BY BRITAIN AND FRANCE

*We Have Resolved
To Finish It*—PRIME
MINISTER

GREAT BRITAIN DECLARED WAR ON
GERMANY AT 11 O'CLOCK YESTERDAY
MORNING.

Six hours later, at 5 p.m., France declared war.

Britain's resolution to defend Poland against Nazi aggression was described by the newly-formed Ministry of Information in one of its first announcements, as follows:

"At 11.15 this morning (Sunday) Mr. R. Dunbar, Head of the Treaty Department of the Foreign Office, went to the German Embassy, where he was received by Dr. Kordt, the Charge d'Affaires.

"Mr. Dunbar handed to Dr. Kordt a notification that a state of war existed between Great Britain and Germany as from 11 o'clock B.S.T. this morning. This notification constituted the formal declaration of war."

**WAR
CABINET
OF**

Unthinkable
We Should
Refuse The
Challenge

—THE KING
Broadcasting last evening from his study at Buckingham Palace, the King said:—
"IN this grave hour, perhaps the most fatal in our history, I send to every household of my people, both at home and overseas, the message I have spoken with the same depth of feeling for each one of you as if I were able to cross the room and speak to you myself.

For the second time in the lives of most of us we are at war."

Over and over again we have tried to find a peaceful

POLES SMASH WAY INTO E. PRUSSIA

OFFICIALS in Warsaw stated late last night that the Polish army has smashed a way across the Northern border into East Prussia, after driving the Germans from several Polish towns in bitter fighting.

London Hears Its First Raid Warning

LONDON was calm yesterday when it heard its first air raid warning.

This is the official statement issued by the Air Ministry—

At 11.30 a.m. yesterday an aircraft was observed approaching the South Coast.

As its identity could not be readily determined an air-raid warning was

On the Northern Front the Poles are reported to have defeated the German effort to drive a barrier across the upper part of the Corridor. The Germans fell back behind their frontiers.

The Poles say they have broken through the German fortifications as far as the railway terminus of Deutsch Eylau.

One of the most important towns recaptured is stated to be Zbąszyń. Recaptured from the troops still the furious fighting is continuing at Czestochowa and Katowice. German reports that they have captured Katowice are not confirmed.

Warsaw was again raided yesterday by German aircraft. (Continued on Page 2; Earlier

**BLACK-OUT TIME
TO-NIGHT—7.40**

Introduction

- What is a war?
- An inter-state (or international) war?
- Is it different from? How?:
 - Disputes
 - Unilateral aggression
 - Civil war
 - Invasion

Understanding war



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

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
(*On war*, 1832)

IR and war



First meeting of the League of Nations, 1920

Main perspectives in IR

- **Realism**
- **Liberalism**
- **Constructivism**

- There are others: Marxism, feminism, rationalism, etc
- Again, usually applied to wars but can also explain many other things (e.g. trade agreements, EU integration, climate norms)

Early realism

- **Human nature** is what explains international relations
 - You have wars because humans are predisposed to fight wars, kind of
- And the context is **power politics**
 - Political actions are constrained by political and economic power and want to increase it
- Classics: think Machiavelli's Prince (also Thucydides, Hobbes)
- More modern ones: E. H. Carr, Morgenthau (*animus dominandi*), Niebuhr (*sinful nature*), etc

Early liberalism

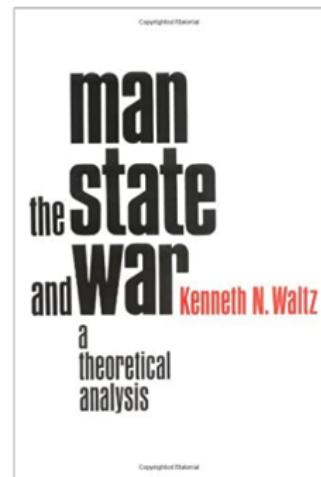
- Also called **liberal idealism**
- Basic idea is that war is **not inevitable** as long as liberal political principles are also present in the international system
- Explains the League of Nations, but also Wilson's Fourteen Points
 - open int'l treaties, open trade, settle colonial struggles, association of nation-states...



Woodrow Wilson

Waltz's neorealism (or structural neorealism)

- Understanding war through different levels of analyses ('images')
- **First image: the man** (aka. individuals)
 - Wars caused by the psychology of political leaders, or human nature (classical realism)
- **Second image: the state**
 - Wars caused by the internal structure of a state (back then, Marxism)
- **Third image: the international system**
 - War explained by the relationships between states: international anarchy
 - Hobbesian view of the international system: no law, no constraints, no "automatic harmony"



Kenneth Waltz
(1957)

Realism

- Basic ideas behind structural realism:
 - Main actors in world politics: sovereign states
 - Context: international anarchy
 - Goal of each state: security, power, wealth
- This perspective understands that war is explained by the *distribution of power* at the international level
- Wars break out because of predatory dynamics, conflict spirals (e.g. security dilemma), or pure preventive wars
- ‘Defensive’ (security) and ‘offensive’ (power) realists

Modern liberalism

- It's not about the game, it's about the players
- Liberals do not accept the pessimism of realism: the international arena is not so Hobbesian, and states are able to cooperate and not fight each other constantly, etc
- **Institutional liberalism** : we need to foster cooperation through *international organizations* and *regime type* (or regime change)
- We'll see next the main arguments for war: democratic peace and capitalist peace

Constructivism

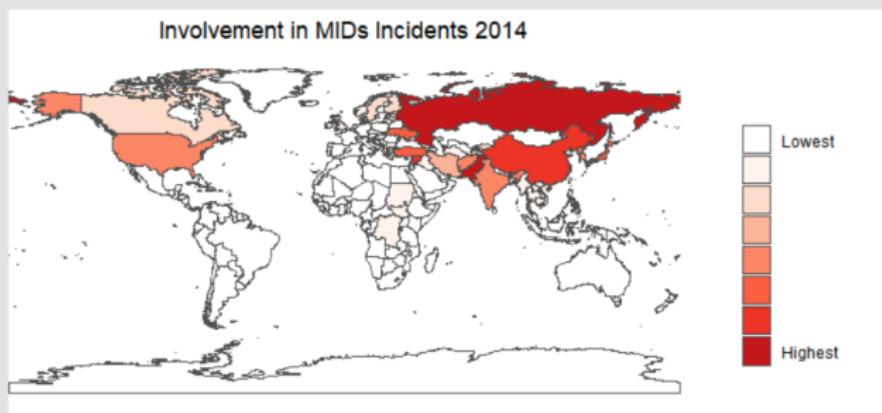
- It's not only about material stuff, you have to pay attention to **ideology** (broadly defined)
- Leaders' self-perceived position and goals, identities, etc are socially constructed
- 'Anarchy is what states make of it' (Alexander Wendt)
- Importance of **norms**

Perspectives, theories, and evidence

- These are lens to understand war (and IR)
- There are *specific theories* linked to each of them
 - usually linked to practical solutions
- People use data to test different theories



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...](#)

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

Specific theories on war

- Focus on the **causes** of war:
(\neq termination, consequences, conduct of war ...)
- Main realist theories:
 - **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, whereas liberal theories let us 'predict' specific conflicts
- Two main theories:
 - Democratic peace
 - Capitalist peace

The democratic peace

- When scholars began to collect statistics, found one law-like regularity: democracies do *not* fight each other
 - Kant already suggested it
- Even if the regularity exists, no agreement on the *why*
 - Democratic culture is more peaceful, democratic leaders are constrained by public opinion... (second image explanations)
 - Common interests of democracies, historical learning process (system-level)
- Policy implications at the global and specific levels

The capitalist peace

- Main idea: ‘don’t bite the hand that feeds you’
 - Related to 19th-century economic liberalism against mercantilism or nationalism: trade could improve the well-being of all countries, which also includes war
- “Opportunity cost” hypothesis: if we benefit from trade, and war disrupts trade, the cost of fighting will be higher
 - role of **domestic politics**
- 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.

Constructivist theories



President of Russia

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

July 12, 2021 17:00

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.

Rationalist theories of war

- If we think of states as unitary rational actors, war is actually not rational, your theories do not have microfoundations

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.

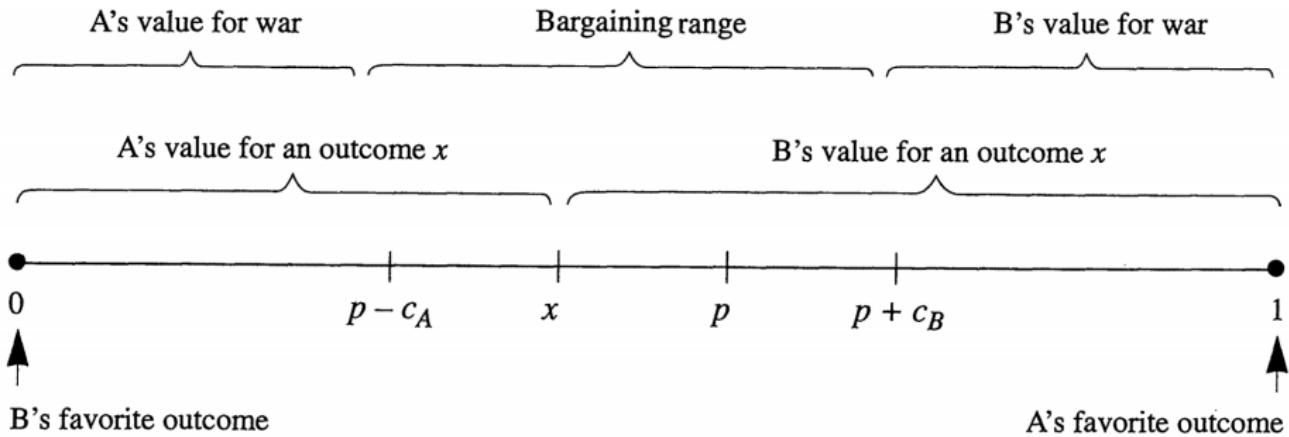
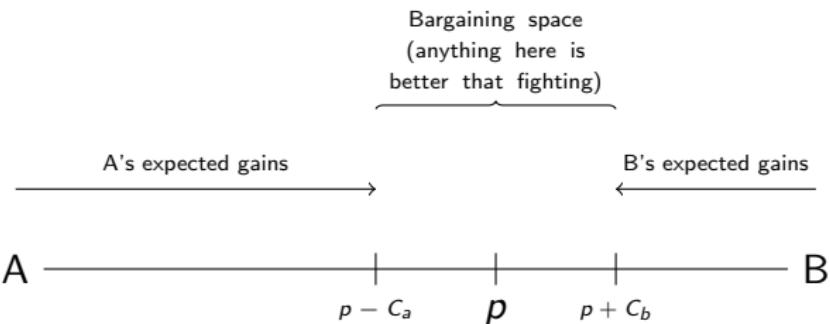


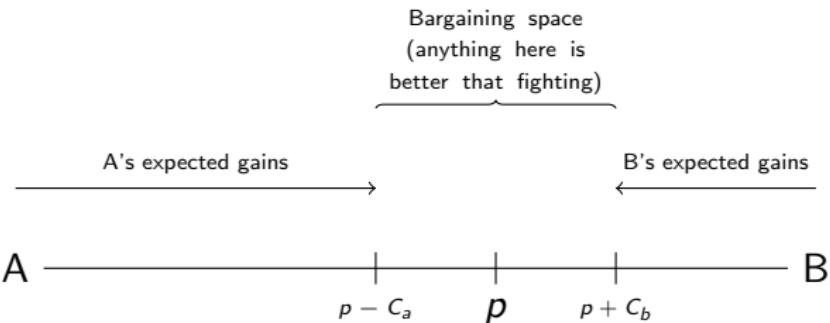
FIGURE 1. *The bargaining range*

Bargaining model of war



- Imagine A and B are fighting over control of a territory, and A is a bit stronger than B (and both know this)
- p is what they expect if they fight
- But war has a cost, so they would end up with a bit less
- 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



Rationalist theories of war

- Why are states (or opposing parties) unable to reach a peaceful settlement before war? Three possibilities:
- **Private information**
 - States do not have full information regarding the balance of power (like a Poker game, and war is like showing your cards)
- **Commitment problems**
 - 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
 - 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)
- **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.

Two problems

- Assumes that states are rational unitary actors, but what if they are not?
- Within a state, there might be internal tensions (i.e. leaders are playing two games, one domestically and another one internationally)
 - 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

Wrapping up: what causes wars?

- This is just something very difficult to predict: 'war is in the error term' (Gartzke)
- A general theory of war is probably impossible: even if we account for system-level and state-level factors, individual characteristics and the decision-making process are hard to capture (especially empirically)
- Also, some people say that the historical context matter when comparing wars

Wrapping up: what causes wars?

- But we do know some empirical regularities over which new theories can be built, for example:
 1. Democracies and capitalist societies rarely fight each other
 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

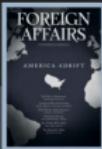
Interstate war in context

	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*

Connecting logics

- **Hierarchy**
 - some types create the conditions for others to emerge within
 - interstate wars can create genocides or revolutions
- **Instrumentality**
 - 'using' a type of political violence as a tool to implement another
 - terrorism can be used to win a civil war, or inter-communal violence to engage in a genocide
- **Escalation**
 - kind of like hierarchy, but in the opposite direction
 - 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



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Israel's Next War

The Mounting Pressure to Fight Hezbollah in Lebanon—and Why That Is So Dangerous

By Amos Harel July 23, 2024



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Why the Future Global Order
Alexander Gabuev

Past exam question

- 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)