

Interstate war

Francisco Villamil

War, peace, and political violence

UC3M, Fall 2023

Introduction

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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



© AP Photo/Dmitri Lovetsky

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.

Inter-state wars

- Sustained, military clash between two or more countries
 - Different from unilateral aggression
 - Different from disputes
(when do disputes *escalate* into war?)

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(when do disputes *escalate* into war?)
- 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

Understanding war

- Why do wars break out?

Why has Russia invaded Ukraine and what does Putin want?

By Paul Kirby
BBC News

⌚ 9 May

Understanding war



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

Understanding war



Carl von Clausewitz
(*On war*, 1832)

Understanding war

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



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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



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Understanding war

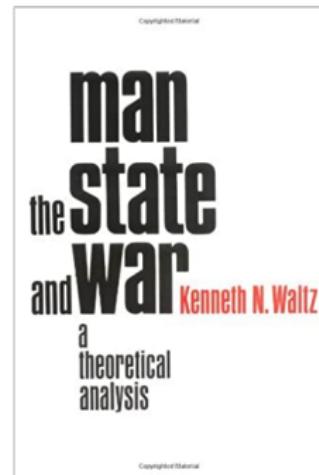
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- Wars are multicausal events and disagreements are about which factor is most important (some people were wrong, though)

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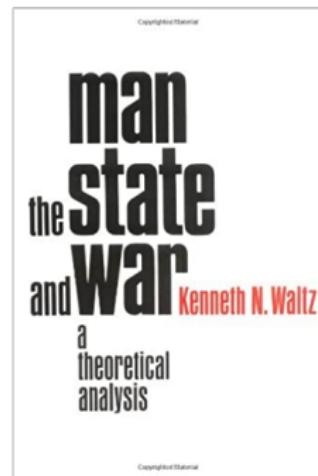
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Kenneth Waltz
(1957)

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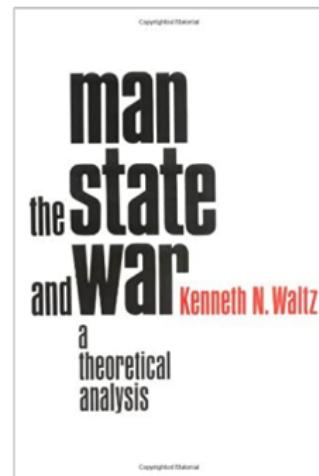
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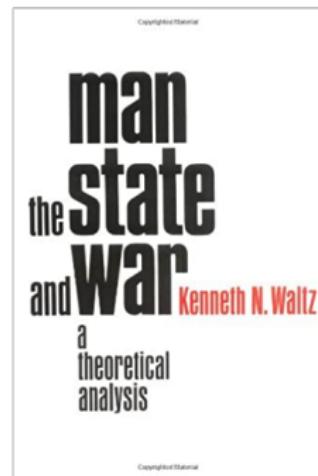
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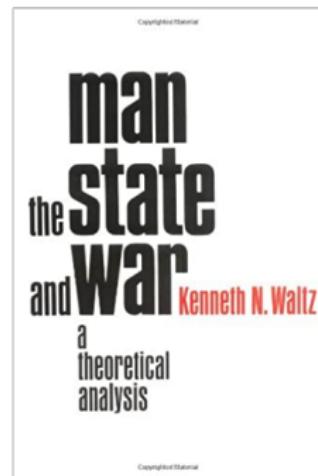
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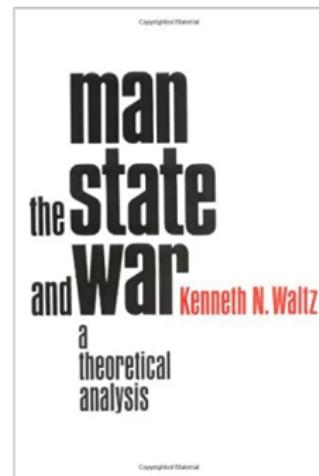
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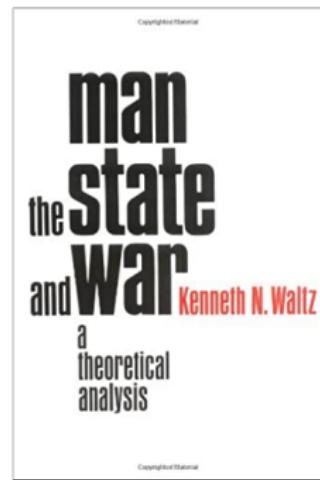
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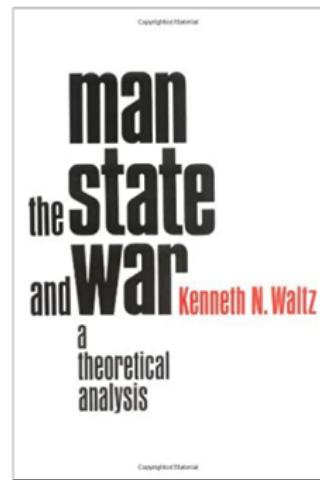
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 - Hobbesian view of the international system: no law, no constraints, no "automatic harmony"



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Realism

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- ‘Defensive’ (security) and ‘offensive’ (power) realists

Two groups of realist theories

- Balance of power
 - States' aim in the international arena (alliances, etc)
 - Works automatically: creating wars, deterring, etc

Two groups of realist theories

- International hegemony
 - Not really – alliances are war-prone
 - If there's anarchy, we need a Leviathan that polices the system
 - Be careful when hegemony switches (e.g. China)

Liberalism

- It's not about the game, it's about the players

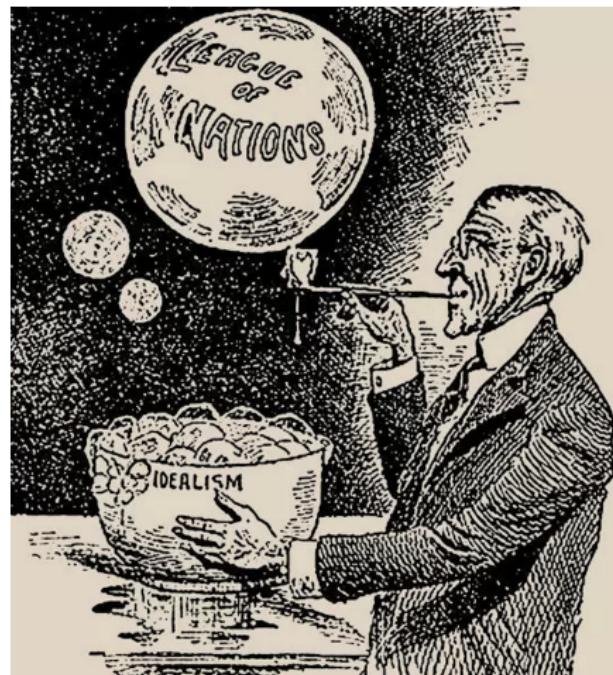
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- It's not about the game, it's about the players
- Liberals do not accept the pessimism of realism: the international arena is not so Hobbesian, and states are able to cooperate and not fight each other constantly, etc
- Institutional liberalism: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

Liberalism



Liberal theories: the democratic peace

- When scholars began to collect statistics, found one law-like regularity: democracies do *not* fight each other
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Liberal theories: the democratic peace

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 - 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)

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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)

Forbes

Why Putin Won't Invade Ukraine

Loren Thompson Senior Contributor ©

I write about national security, especially its business dimensions.

Follow

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 evidence suggests conflict-decreasing effect

Constructivism

- It's not only about material stuff, you have to pay attention to **ideology** (broadly defined)

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- Leaders' self-perceived position and goals, identities, etc are socially constructed
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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**

Constructivism



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

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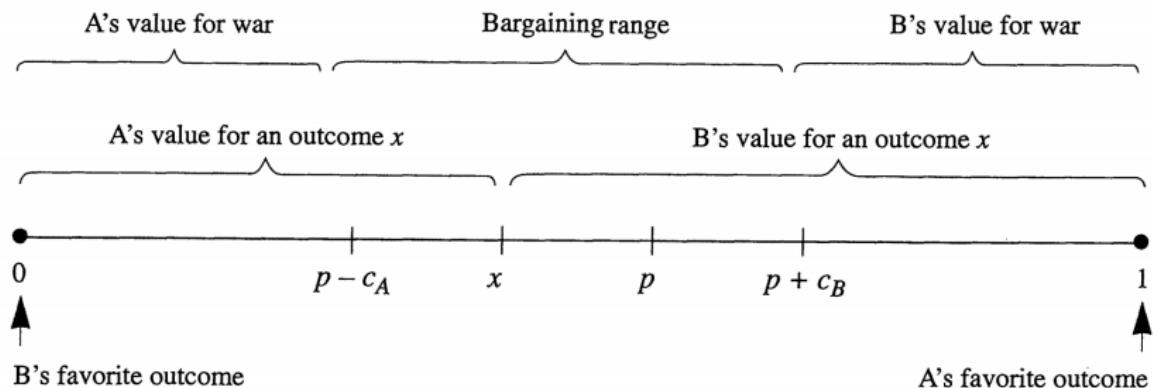


FIGURE 1. The bargaining range

Bargaining model of war

A ————— B

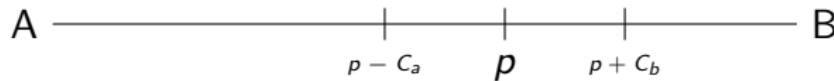
- Imagine A and B are fighting over control of a territory, and A is a bit stronger than B (and both know this)

Bargaining model of war



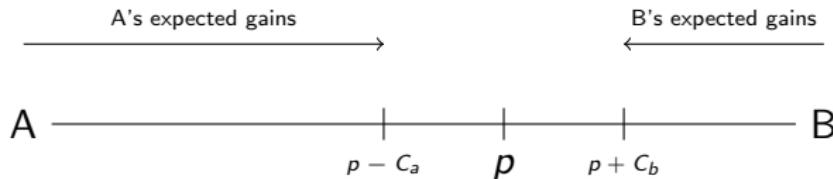
- p is what they expect if they fight

Bargaining model of war



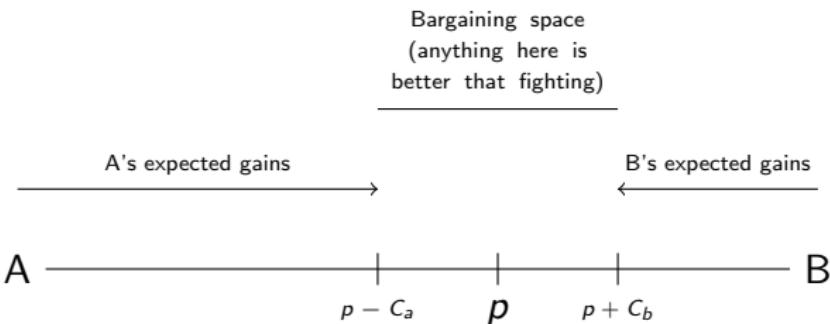
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Bargaining model of war



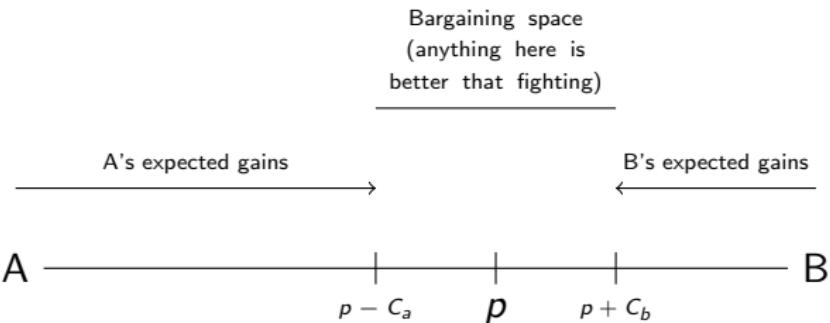
- But war has a cost, so they would end up with a bit less

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



Rationalist theories of war

- Why are states (or opposing parties) unable to reach a peaceful settlement before war? Three possibilities:

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)

Rationalist theories of war

- Why are states (or opposing parties) unable to reach a peaceful settlement before war? Three possibilities:
- 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

Rationalist theories of war

- Why are states (or opposing parties) unable to reach a peaceful settlement before war? Three possibilities:
 - 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?

Two problems

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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

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- 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

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- Many wars are fought among contiguous states over territorial disputes (which doesn't mean that neighbors usually fight each other)

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- But we do know some empirical regularities over which new theories can be built, for example:
- Democracies and capitalist societies rarely fight each other
- Many wars are fought among contiguous states over territorial disputes (which doesn't mean that neighbors usually fight each other)
- 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	Organized crime Mass protests (rebellion) Military coup Political assassination* Civil War Terrorism	

Connecting logics

- **Hierarchy**



Connecting logics

- **Hierarchy**

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- **Instrumentality**

→

Connecting logics

- **Hierarchy**

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- **Instrumentality**

→

- **Escalation**

→

Connecting logics

- **Hierarchy**

→

- **Instrumentality**

→

- **Escalation**

→

- **Substitution**

→

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